



# ENCATC

The European network on cultural management and policy

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## Congress Proceedings

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Artists in the spotlight!  
In search of new  
agendas for education  
and research in the  
cultural management  
and policy field

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**Artists in the spotlight!**  
In search of new agendas for  
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field

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# Memory and Communities - *A new day has begun* for Industrial Heritage and Trails

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## ABSTRACT

Main objective of this research is to investigate how much industrial museums and trails have recently developed their legacy and commitment within the governance, communities and stakeholders they connect with thanks to different communication channels and either with the echo of a main story and memory (the entrepreneur's and the corporate) or with a challenging vision of a different governance and a separate supply.

The analysis of a sample of Italian industrial museums is confirming effectiveness and focus on community issues, while the use of communication channels varies depending by different role-players in the governance, from corporate to non-corporate staff.

The paper provides an overview of evolution of these heritages in Europe and in Italy. Marketing and fundraising uniqueness, revenues and grants diversification, segmentation of stakeholders and causes, the range of communication tools and the specific governance, they all show a new value chain within a different and versatile evolution.

## Keywords:

Industrial  
Heritage  
Trail  
Marketing  
Fundraising

## 1. Introduction

Industrial museums, heritages and trails were meant as a reconciliation tool with a past of manufacturing pressure and burden, which might have damaged environments and might stimulate a new vision for growth. As a matter of fact, these assets were recovered and converted to sustainable opportunities for a supply chain, which might have declined without innovation. In Europe these are widespread story and memory of administrations and communities around heritages, whose cultural and touristic added value might have compensated the economic loss of industrialization. Trails were above all implemented in order to connect either different destinations of the same (memory of) supply chain or industrial heritages combined with other cultural and creative surroundings (industrial heritage as location for multiple-goals events, industrial trails and ecology programs, industrial museums and universities, ...)

Today, industrial museums, heritages and trails are still a growing and evolving matter for industrial tourism. Nevertheless, *a new day has begun* for these assets, which might be public or private-owned, for communities and also for international visitors, within the legal framework and governance of corporations and also looking for self-sufficiency, with their own marketing and fundraising.

Main objective of this research is to investigate how much industrial museums and trails have recently developed their legacy and commitment within the governance, communities and stakeholders they connect with thanks to different communication channels and either with the echo of a main story and memory (the entrepreneur's and the corporate) or with a challenging vision of a different governance and a separate supply.

The European scenario will be discussed for segments of stakeholders, commitments, relevance of media, with the meaning of diversified efforts for different missions and issues: from community to international visitors' engagement, from creativity to environment, from education to welfare. The choice of the sample concerns Italian museums, above all. Italian Museums will be investigated for their ownership, governance, staff, stakeholders, skills, marketing, fundraising and grant-making, communication, communication tools and branding, so that two poles are now emerging with a traditional museum and a 'new' one, with trends for uniqueness and distinctiveness next to the founders, private or public founders.

The analysis is confirming effectiveness and focus on community issues, while the use of communication channels varies depending by different role-players in the governance, from corporate to non-corporate staff. The founding corporation can still be an attracting pool of resources and staff, though some singularity is emerging. Heritage trails are evidence of self-determination of activities and strategies within national and international boundaries.

The paper provides an overview of evolution of these heritages in Europe in the last decade. Marketing and fundraising uniqueness, revenues and grants diversification, segmentation of stakeholders and causes, range of communication tools and the specific governance inside of the corporation (and outside), they all show a value chain and a benchmark for the same issues within different geographical boundaries.



## 2. Insight about Industrial Museums

The domain of Industrial Heritage in Europe involves very differentiated realities. The contents can be relict or physical survival from the past (i.e., such as heritage railway stations, heritage industry); objects and artifacts from the past, that represent creativity, skill, and artistic productivity (Graham, 1994); heritage industry (Parker, 1998) that preserves the history of things, shapes time and collective identity to which both artefacts and works of art contribute.

Industrial Cultural Heritage has been called the landscapes of nostalgia (Xie, 2015; Halewood, Hannam, 2001) in which former brownfield sites are transformed into valuable assets. It has long been viewed as sites of memory (Finley, 2004) where the historic and cultural past are preserved.

Industrial museums should be considered as primary players in the conservation and enjoyment of the country's cultural heritage, as the Italian cultural heritage, in its complexity and stratification, is also the result of a tradition of private intervention. They testify to Italy's creativity and cultural excellence in different manufacturing sectors that are still important for the Italian economy.

According to Quintilani (2015), the phenomenon of corporate museums – that we consider as the main form of enhancement of Industrial Cultural Heritage – is not attributable to an unequivocal definition because it belongs to an area in constant evolution. On the other hand, Montella (2010), tries to classify corporate museums among museums which attest to “belonging directly or through an instrumental entity to a still active company; be dedicated to the history of the company and / or to questions related to the activity of the company; be intended to contribute to the creation of value for the company by the dissemination of the brand and the image of the company.

Industrial Museums pass on the historical experience of a company and at the same time they convey the experience and the history of a territory. In this perspective, Industrial museums are promoters of a renewal of the past, of the local history - sometimes even in a global approach- while they turn the present into the future. They are bearers of “economic, social, educational, tourist and, finally, productive messages. And why not cultural too?” (Zane, 2018).

Indeed, the mission of Industrial Museums is to reach as many people as possible with their collections and cultural heritage, pursuing social purpose, rather than accumulation of artifacts or information (Skramstad, 2000). The goal of these museums is to change people by bringing them into contact with new and potentially inspiring experiences that can involve and improve society.

In addition, according to Negri (2003), other facets of the mission can be identified, such as preserving a collection; tell the story of the heritage site; provide the company with a place and a tool for carrying out cultural activities; highlight and communicate the company's values, and so on.

Last, but not least, enhancing the museum's tourist appeal can be an indirect motivation compared to those above mentioned. In other words, Industrial Museum may be oriented at increasing the visibility of the company, its products and, at the same time at developing strong links between the company and the

territory. In fact, Industrial museums often provide rich exhibition programs that deepen the engagement of local community as well as tourists.

In 2017, the Italian Ministry of Culture and Tourism (MiBACT) recognized the cultural mission and contents of Italian Industrial Museums by signing an agreement with the Italian Association of Corporate Archives and Museums (Museimpresa). The collaboration deal affirms the role of Italian Industrial museums in supporting the activities of protection and enhancement of the cultural heritage stored in them. In addition, it encompasses the enhancement and the integration of Industrial museums in the national heritage and museum system, as they are crucial to the social and economic development of the Nation.

### **3. Governance, Staff, Stakeholders and Skills in Industrial Museums**

Different aims urge Companies to give birth to a Company Museum and the governance implied is often strictly connected with the one of the Firm. Depending on being a Family- or State- owned company or even a Public Company, the mission that shapes the display and the aim of the Museum varies broadly and marks the imprint to the activities of the museum.

In general, Family-owned company museums are organized as a flagship of the same company: the direction and the key-posts of the management are in the hands of the family or in those of company's managers, who run the museum as a branch of the communication and marketing department of the Company. Contents display the history of the enterprise and of the founders, the success, and the reputation worldwide, sometimes, and due to the level of awareness of CSR requirements they depict the impact on the territories and the communities. Objects on display belong to the collections of samples manufactured and produced during the company life correlated to archive materials – when the historical archives are available, and other multimedia supports usually always connected to past trade-fairs, interviews, commercials, and other past events. The storytelling of this kind of museums is often very specialized and professional, since it must match and be consistent with the one of the Family brand.

It is rare, but not excluded, that in Family-owned company museums there is staff with specific museology, educational or curatorial skills. The lack of this kind of professional competencies limits the action of the museum to those of flagship or showroom of the company and lead the cultural offer to the stricter circle of the company stakeholders. More and more often, though, thanks to the increase of awareness about the claims of Company Social Responsibility and the need to retribute something to the communities often deprived of jobs due to delocalization or the introduction of robotic and automatism in the production chain, Family-owned Company museums tend to externalize the educational activities and promote school visits or study tours. These actions contribute to transfer and foster the knowledge of the so-called traditional skills and know-how of the company itself therefore, consciously, or unaware, these company museums can help young generations to recover and innovate techniques and, in certain cases, traditional craftsmanship, contributing to a win-win trade-off between the Company and the communities of the area.

On this trend, fundraising for educational activities (visits and workshops and laboratories) could be enhanced including in the aims of the Family-owned Company Museum also Research & Development, that nowadays can encompass also the research in the climatic and sustainable fields in which the Firm might be interested. Nonetheless, it is very common that in this kind of museums, specific fundraising is not required being on the balance of the main Company as a financial asset and costs of additional services (restaurant/coffee shop, bookshop and educational activities) are maintained as direct costs for the Company.

State-owned Company museums, instead, can be included in the number of National Museums, with a governance and a budget that, despite in many cases not completely autonomous, resemble the other national museums. Professional staff is usually hired by public exams, but it can comprehend pensioned former company staff both in top managerial posts (director) or in the assistance, welcoming, educational, and eventually in the curatorial and archival roles thanks to the long-term knowledge of the functioning of the Firm and its story. The allocated budget has to be integrated with private or public sponsorships and fundraising.

Contents and storytelling are targeted to a broad public, domestic and from abroad, in order to narrate not only the story of the Firm but, more widely, the history of the nation. Whereas the venues and the displays might be planned at international level following international tenders, the ambitions of such State-owned Company museums sometimes do not tween the real capacity to target the aspirational public, due to the lack of economic and financial support and to generally limited staff. General sustainability then is limited so for the outgoing activities.

Another different situation is the one characterizing the Public Companies owned museums. In this case, as for some Family-owned Company museums it might happen, most of them represent the asset of a Foundation. Also in this case, the most delicate sector, that is communication, is generally managed by someone who is strictly tied to the mother company to avoid messages not consistent with the main brand and to face media risk management without generate reverberation to the mother house's reputation.

In this kind of museums, contents might be connected either to the core business or to side activities like art collections in general contemporary art. Public of this kind of museums is restricted by geographical boundaries or definitions but is quite segmented by the subject of the contents, generally described throughout all the media available in the most up-to-date and fashionable way.

Being, mostly part of Foundations, this kind of Public Companies owned museums might be grant givers to the communities around them or to the artists participating in their activities, in some cases it is up to their Foundations to fund-raise on their behalf.

## 4. Italian Industrial Museums from tradition to a *New Day*

In April 2019, the Industrial Heritage Barometer counted 325 operators for industrial museums, heritage and trails in Europe. 113 of them participated to the survey whose main focus was the property, the finance and the employment of the interviewed target.

The industrial heritage sites target broad sections of the population (general public: 98%, families: 86%). With a prevailing educational mission, for 88% of the locations, school groups are an important target group, as communities remain the main audience of their storytelling. Nevertheless, industrial tourism is not at all excluded as target groups (Best Ager Over 50s: 74%, Educational Travellers: 65%, Young People: 50%, and Mice Group: 40%) are constantly investigated and highly rated. Due to their attractiveness, the industrial heritage sites have a trans-regional appeal, so that trails among them are not at all excluded. With a steady growth for last three years, their attractiveness for themselves and their trails depends on the echo of the same manufacturing techniques and industrial history, their size, the storytelling, and the design of the heritage (Bozoglu, Whitehead, Eckersley & Daugbjerg, 2019; Heidenreich & Plaza, 2015).

As concerns main activities in order to maximize growth, most their governance is concentrated on: marketing and communication, with the challenging engagement of social media and the research of new targets; exhibition development and innovation in order to increase the attractiveness; building restoration together with energy efficiency and accessibility; multiculturalism and inclusion; cost reduction and the comprehensive sustainability of heritages and landscapes (Bazazzadeh, Nadolny, Attarian, Safar & Hashemi, 2020; Heidenreich & Plaza, 2015; Xie, 2015).

According to the latest surveys and interviews we developed from March 2021 with a panel of more than 10 operators, the Italian framework can be different from the European landscape.

Industrial museums are mainly owned by corporations, whose (family) governance founded them (in the North of Italy) and today recalls memory thanks to a versatile storytelling (Zazzara, 2020). Industrial heritages like mines, industrial and archeological sites, monuments and buildings of past and manufacturing supply chains, they are mainly owned by public administrations or public-private foundations and associations.

When the corporate ownership prevails, most of funds are delivered by the corporate governance, whose staff is all year managing the site, with opening on request and for at least two or three days per week. Some of these museums, they are fully opened for their libraries, laboratories and permanent collections for school, university groups and researchers. Next to permanent collections, industrial museums can guest temporary exhibitions for the passion and own collections of the founder. When either the public or the public-private ownership of heritages and sites is prevailing, public funds are the main resource, while the day-by-day opening and activity is granted by volunteers and (very) small staffs.

The target is educational, though some industrial tourism has been growing around mines, parks and sites, where twin and European partners grant for the promotion of heritage trails in different languages and in all twinned locations (Nikolić, Drobnjak & Kuletin Čulafić, 2020; Del pozo & González, 2012).

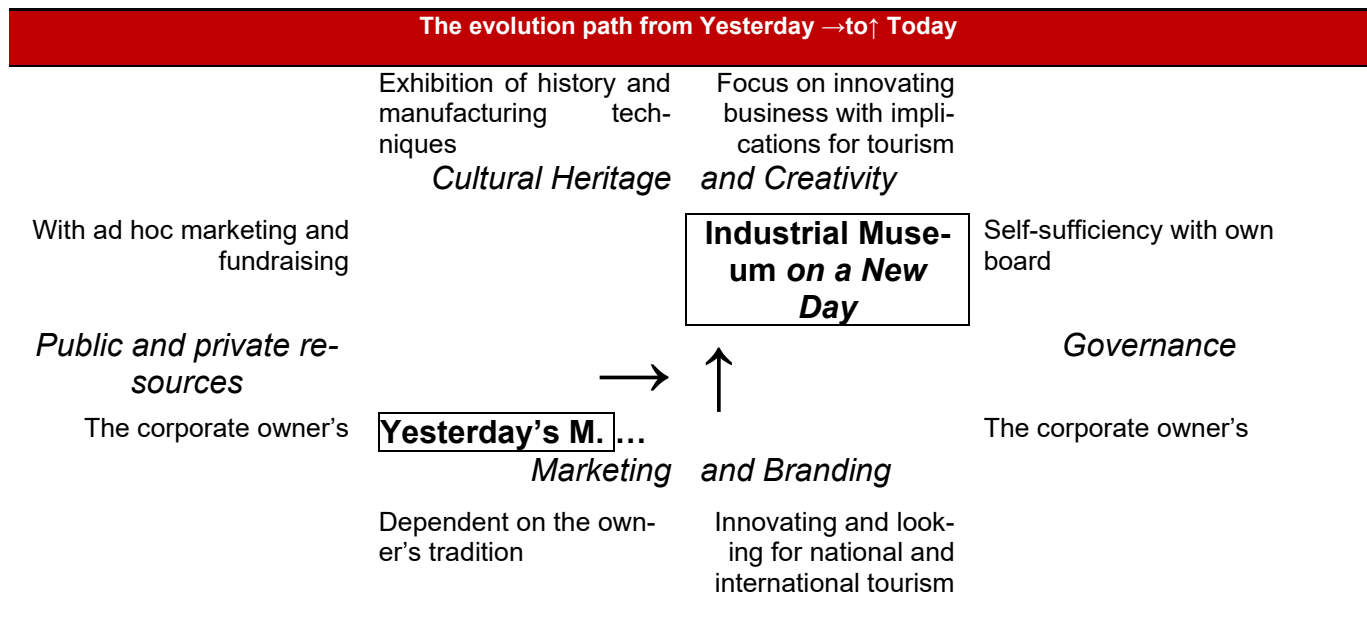
In Italian museums, the maturity in the life cycle of some of these locations – some of them recall industrial sites of the beginning of 1900 – is now discussed. As a consequence, a new life cycle is meant with the separation from the founding (corporate) organization. In interviews with the panel, respondents suggested that corporate owners are giving birth to foundations as spin-offs from corporate owners. Foundations are anticipated with their staff for all activities, with their own marketing and fundraising. Branding is still connected with the founder, but it is prophesied for uniqueness, freshness or, at least, partial distinctiveness from the founder's iconic references. In order to grant this self-governing evolution, some of them are joining with universities, research centers and also travel agencies, in order to develop a capable management and a widespread signaling to new audiences and for new contents. As a consequence, targets are not only communities and schools on an educational purpose, but also national and international travelers. Travelers are attracted for passion of memories and storytelling of the Made in Italy. These travelers can be any age and some of them are young and very young, with nostalgia for the comprehensive Italian way of being.

The methodology consisted of interviews to a sample of Italian industrial museums (in the North of Italy) who were asking for partnerships with universities during the pandemic in order to implement internships with skilled students and laureates. Above all, these museums were deeply investigated about conservation and promotion of heritage, their governance, investments, marketing and branding, innovative tools like social media and innovative contents like touristic bundles for industrial heritages and trails among these heritages (Yuan, Song, Chen, & Shang, 2019). From March to April 2021 they participated to meetings in MTeams in order to explore network, research and skills-knowledge transfer opportunities. In the following Table 1, two main profiles can be given evidence as the evolution from yesterday's model to a new day's one after the elaboration of these interviews and collection of visions and trends evolution.

Growing the poles and intersections of features from the left to the right and from the bottom upwards as concerns resources, governance, creativity, marketing and branding, museums show an evolving path from a traditional to a new framework. Marketing includes both relationship and social media marketing. It's not only a matter of who is included and attracted, but it is also a matter of tools and media. The delivery of contents is mediated in brands, too. Some of them are memories of the manufacturing past. Some of them are icons of a new and sustainable start-up.

Private resources can prevail or they can be matched with public ones, European and international ones. Governances and staff can include management and fundraising skills next to museology, engineering, climate and environment responsibility. Stakeholders' engagement can be maximized next to the growth of resources. Commitment and trust, pillars of relational Marketing, are the conditions for these museums and stakeholders' engagement. To begin a good relationship, mutual trust is necessary, so as personal esteem, and a consolidated network of institutions that create the ideal environment for the development

of these relations. With this evolution path, self-sufficiency with an own museum board can be implemented.



**TABLE 1. ITALIAN INDUSTRIAL MUSEUMS WITH MEMORY TURNING ON A NEW DAY**

Source: own elaboration

The first-best solutions regard multi-stakeholders' engagement inside with a new governance and outside of the museum, for communities and tourists; public and private resources from ad hoc fundraising: focus on heritage and creativity with other museums, within local and out of local boundaries; marketing and branding while their governance is taking into account new targets, thanks to co-branded trails, too (Corá, Alcántara Bittencourt & Merlotti Herédia, 2019). These museums are mostly privately-owned and they are separate from the founding organization. In their boards we could count both marketing officers and fundraisers, who are an innovation for Italian cultural organizations. At the same time, marketing and fundraising are both offline and online. Targets are different and differently combined: students and schools for a marketing goal, young and proactive donors and volunteers for a fundraising goal.

The second-best solutions can be limited in the potentialities of governance and accessibility to adequate funding channels (Goulding, Saren & Pressey, 2018). Their board is quite mature, as for dependency on the main corporate owner and it is bounded by resource scarcity. Sometimes, the lack of professionally trained and skilled personnel is negatively concerning the process making. The support of public administration can strictly refer to shared and common sustainability projects, call for action on the renewal of urban surroundings and to the cobranding of events. Otherwise, these collaborations may not depend on money transfer or grants and contribution, while public administrations are constrained by diminishing budgets.

A relationship marketing approach is important in both poles, which have many links that are vitally important, as they are multi-stakeholdersmulti-, purpose and service-oriented organizations (Bussel,

Forbes, 2006, 2007). During the latest crisis and the pandemic, diminishing resources pushed museums to differentiate, segment and maximize their relations with past and new stakeholders, with the commitment of a governance, in which roles can be clearly allocated, either for marketing or fundraising. Without a trade-off in the allocation of resources for marketing and fundraising, museums both poles should focus on building effective relationships among and with board, staff and volunteers, in order to enhance their engagement and ultimately to improve their performances in multi-stakeholders' environments (Kumar, Pansari, 2016; Bussel, Forbes, 2006). Benefits of the cooperation are relevant for all partners involved in it. On one hand, entrepreneur, universities, public administrations and relevant stakeholders can speed up the process and product innovation, can improve reputation, build strategic networks, and expand target market. On the other side, museums can strengthen skills, research and knowledge transfer, improve reputation and obtain greater visibility, strengthen placement, create networks, and finally help students and young researchers to start up new and sustainable businesses.

Adopting a marketing approach allows museums to generate stakeholders' trust and commitment (Hussain, Rawjee, Penceliah 2014), and to exploit strategically valuable sustainable resources and capabilities, among governance, staff and volunteers. Furthermore, according to Scholars (Colbert 2001; Hill, O'Sullivan and O'Sullivan 1995; Radbourne, Fraser 1996) the more the organization learns about and monitors the stakeholders' needs, preferences, attitudes and concerns, the more their satisfaction and commitment levels grow.

## **5. The study of a sample of Italian Industrial Museums**

In order to deeply understand the Italian Industrial Museum context, a desk analysis of all 40 corporate museums (Aboca Museum; Museo Mondo Milan; Museo Amaro Lucano; Museo del Cavallo Giocattolo; Museo dell'Orologio da Torre G.B. Bergallo; Collezione Branca; Galleria Campari; Collezione Cannon "Civiltà della Plastica"; Museo Aziendale Cassa Depositi e Prestiti; Museo Cifa; Museo del Caffè Dersut; Museo Ducati; Cantine Ferrari; Fapim Museum; Museo Salvatore Ferragamo; Fondazione FILA Museum; Museo Artistico Industriale Bitossi; Fondazione FS italiane; Museo Fratelli Cozzi; Molteni Museum; Il Paesaggio dell'Eccellenza; Museo Storico Iris Ceramica Group; Kartell Museo; Museo della Chiave Bianchi 1770; Museo privato de La Fabbrica della Pasta di Gragnano; Museo Nicolis dell'Auto, della Tecnica, della Meccanica; Fondazione Mansutti; La Centrale dell'Acqua di Milano; Museo del Confetto Giovanni Mucci; Museo OM Carrelli Elevatori; Museo del Pane di Vito Forte; Poli Museo della Grappa; Poltrona Frau Museum; Officina Rancilio 1926; Museo Agricolo e del Vino Ricci Curbastro; Galleria Storica Cantiere Riva; Spazio Strega; Museo del Tartufo Urbani; Museo della Calzatura di Villa Foscari Rossi; Museo Zambon), which join the Italian Association of Corporate Archives and Museums Museimpresa, was done.

Data were collected between the 23rd and the 27th of August 2021 in the corporate museum websites, when available. The information collected concerned: main target stakeholders, pricing and promotion, online ticketing, museum activities i.e., guided tour, virtual tour, workshop. Special attention was given to

fundraising activities and communication activities, as well as to the presence of newsletter, blog, social media profile.

As first result we found that 20 museums only have an own website, and of these, only 16 museums are presented and have an own section on the company website. For the remaining 4 museums, it was not possible to find neither the website nor a reference on the company website. Furthermore, considering other communication activities, only 15 museums have an own social media profile, 7 use the newsletter as communication tool and only 2 have blogs on the website.

Considering the funding mix, only 8 out of 40 museums charge entrance fees – only 2 of them use promotional tools as, for example, 50% off in some days and 5 have different fares for different targets. Finally, only 8 out of 40 museums (but not the same 8) invest in external fundraising activities.

The main service offered by Italian Industrial Museums is guided tours, often in different languages. Virtual tours could be taken only in 8 out of 40 museums. A museum – i.e., Aboca Museum – has developed two gaming activities: escape room and online gaming.

The main target seems to be the educational one. In fact, nearly every site has a section for programming students' visit or activities as laboratories. On the contrary, tourists seem not to be always a target: only few museums provide an English version of the website, most of the sample has not opening hours and visits are by appointment only. More, online ticketing is available only for 7 museums. Only a museum – i.e., Museo dell'Orologio da Torre G.B. Bergallo – is part of a tourist circuit, that is the Ligurian Riviera Tourist Card.

## 6. Conclusions

The phenomenon of industrial museum is not attributable to an unequivocal definition because it belongs to an area in constant evolution. Ownership, governance, staff and skills are changing as well as the cultural and creative supply. Contents and mission can encompass multiple displays: from craftsmanship to innovating technologies their history can imply (robotics and automatism at the very latest step); from archive storytelling to contemporary arts; from the manufacturing past to the research in the climatic and sustainable fields. Staff can be educated to competences, which can increase economic and relational opportunities. Skills can enlarge to museology, relationship marketing, fundraising, grant-making (to local communities' projects), social media marketing, project management and benchmarking, curatorial and story-telling, sustainability and branding, so that the stakeholders' range may increase within national and international boundaries.

The analysis of the European and, above all, Italian industrial museum confirmed that two poles are still present and evolving in the landscape. Few of them (one tenth) have developed marketing, branding and communication tools with a strong advocacy for their uniqueness, their being one attraction for communities and tourists, who grant their support so that the museum governance can be inspired to an increasing autonomy from corporate founders. This is one pole and their governance includes fundraisers, who are coping with the scarcity of resources and the ambition to self-sufficiency through revenue diversifica-



tion. The memory in this pole is not contradicting the past, but it is showing it in an innovative way with new visioning and inspirations. Education and entertainment is signaling a combination of contents, which are not only attracting students but also national and international researchers and tourists.

This *new day* is the opposite of industrial museums, which are still dependent on the corporate founder, who is prevailing as for governance, marketing and resources. This pole is not the 'bad or regressive' pole, but it is confirming a framework where the corporate manager is fully inspiring the museum with supply and visions of the immediate future. Marketing and fundraising of this 'tradition pole', they do not usually include revenue diversification, as the main resource is corporate.

The yesterday's tradition of the strong connection with the corporate owner can grant private resources. As for museums and heritages which are owned by public administrations, public resources are matched with strong commitments of small teams of employees and volunteers. This governance is very lean and it can be agile and flexible, though these museums can mostly afford their collections for communities and tourists are a target to be investigated and stimulated in the very next future.

The implications for the need of skills in both poles of industrial museums are very relevant. Some skills for fundraising are precluded if corporate teams are absorbing all urgencies and scarcities. Some skills must be adapted to star-ups and visions, which must be foreseen in the competitive arena where cultural supplies of other museums may conflict. Trails are here an opportunity to verify sustainability and networks within communities and territories, where *new days have begun*. Museum entrepreneurship as for levels of activated relations is efficient, when boards are visionary, and they emphasize the unique value proposition to any present and prospect stakeholder like other museums in the same trail.

Professional implications of the findings suggest that governances of these cultural and creative organizations should clearly separate in-museum roles in order to concentrate efforts, costs and results (revenues, gains and net assets) on different segments of out-museum stakeholders. Marketing and fundraising should deserve separation in skills, timing, efforts and expenses, without a trade-off for resource allocation. Both strategies can push museums out of a recent pandemic crisis, with keen competition of several cultural and creative supplies, while the willingness-to-pay and the willingness-to-donate may remain stable or decrease.

Managerial implications can concern both the university and the museum as a partner, like in IULM with the starting point of stages at industrial museums. Universities monitor, test and upgrade their degree programs thanks to these stakeholders' engagement, too and they upgrade as for their management and entrepreneurship, when they integrate partners, sponsors and ex-alumni in their project and event management, too. Entrepreneurs do not only provide stages, resources and suggestions about curricula, but they can also join up with universities for common projects. These common projects can revise the governance of a destination or a cultural attraction. Policy makers and public administrations are, as a consequence, attracted in, so that networks can grant better managerial standards both at a local and a regional level. Industrial museums are already partners in the research and they can evolve to co-leaders of heritage trails, for example, universities and policy-makers are project managers for.

Today, event management is a core business of the tourism industry. Milan EXPO was an opportunity: universities managed events and locations, in order to show benefits of the Mediterranean diet and Italian food and cultural districts. During EXPO Milan universities, like IULM, started with new collaborations and partnerships. Dialogue with entrepreneurs and professionals - museums boards are included - is essential to grasp new trends, especially in tourism field, that is undergoing through a profound transformation after the pandemic and also considering the fact that it is the one of the few industries in which the resilience can be immediate and it can have a positive and accelerating effect on a regional, national and international scale.

The next research will engage in a longer-term analysis and a bigger sample, in order to explore how much relationship marketing can connect these museums with any other stakeholders and grant growth within frameworks of two or different poles. Further research will refer to understand benchmarks of networked sciences and innovative partnerships between universities and industrial museums for social sciences like marketing, social media marketing and fundraising. Museums and universities can be a platform for the assessment of degree programs, fundraising and crowd funding for research and innovative post-graduate programs like masters about management of sustainable environments and tourism. These topics will be further investigated in order to appreciate kinds and resources of collaborations.

Pandemic forced cultural organizations to rethink products, formats and sources of income. They optimized new channels, communication media and contents in the attempt to retain sponsors and grant-makers, who had to face a dramatic economic crisis and could change their sensibility on cultural issues, as well as to find new sources of funding, and reorient the way to establish and co-implement relationships with the different stakeholders. Industrial museums coped with the pandemic and they were inspired to connect with universities through meetings and interviews. At first, they stopped and stabilized partnerships for post-pandemic. After the fear, their boards and governances had to focus on management of key-relations and allocation of scarce resources in order not to collapse and to plan the recovery. Relationship marketing was pivotal in order to maintain connections and media, from websites to social media, they granted this 'crisis communication'. If partnerships were meant by a high level of engagement, deep interaction, bidirectional exchange of interdependencies, and sharing of resources, risks, revenues and benefits, they had to be postponed in such frames. As evidence of this first elaboration and this analysis, industrial museums wanted to be engaged and engaging for the University target. As evidence of this analysis, they will innovate through and after the pandemic, for sure. Their missions and their contents are in their memories. Their memories are delivered for the very next future in a new day's visions and tools.

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# Communication in a digital environment in the performing arts

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## ABSTRACT

The Culture sector, after a moment of great unpredictability due to the Covid-19 pandemic, was forced to accelerate its digitalization process, which encompassed communication. The time is now to check its relevance and how the performing arts agents are capturing and retaining their audience.

## Keywords:

digital communication, network society, platforms, culture

## Introduction

The new global environment in which we are inserted has introduced new forms of communication. Two important pillars in the communication process have gained a new dynamic and meaning: space and time. Without contemplating radical changes in its structures, time will be even faster, but space is the pillar that revealed the most renovations.

Castells' network society, or Jenkins' convergence models, Van Dick's platforms, concepts that have already been widely studied, but which as a whole are contributing to a realignment of the social structure and contradict Bourdieu's cultural campus theory, the hierarchy that he defended is increasingly attenuated and much supported by the impact of the internet and that Gambetti translates today into a new designation of digital habitus, compatible with the models Tuten (2020) describes of social media

When the pandemic emerged, Culture had the opportunity to reinvent itself through new media channels. Several cultural institutions enhanced the space, with their creativity it was reconstructed and expanded, providing the combination of two worlds in a "hybridization", between the stage and the digital, despite the resistance of some more purist sectors, in a clear division of opinions between the transgression and transformation.

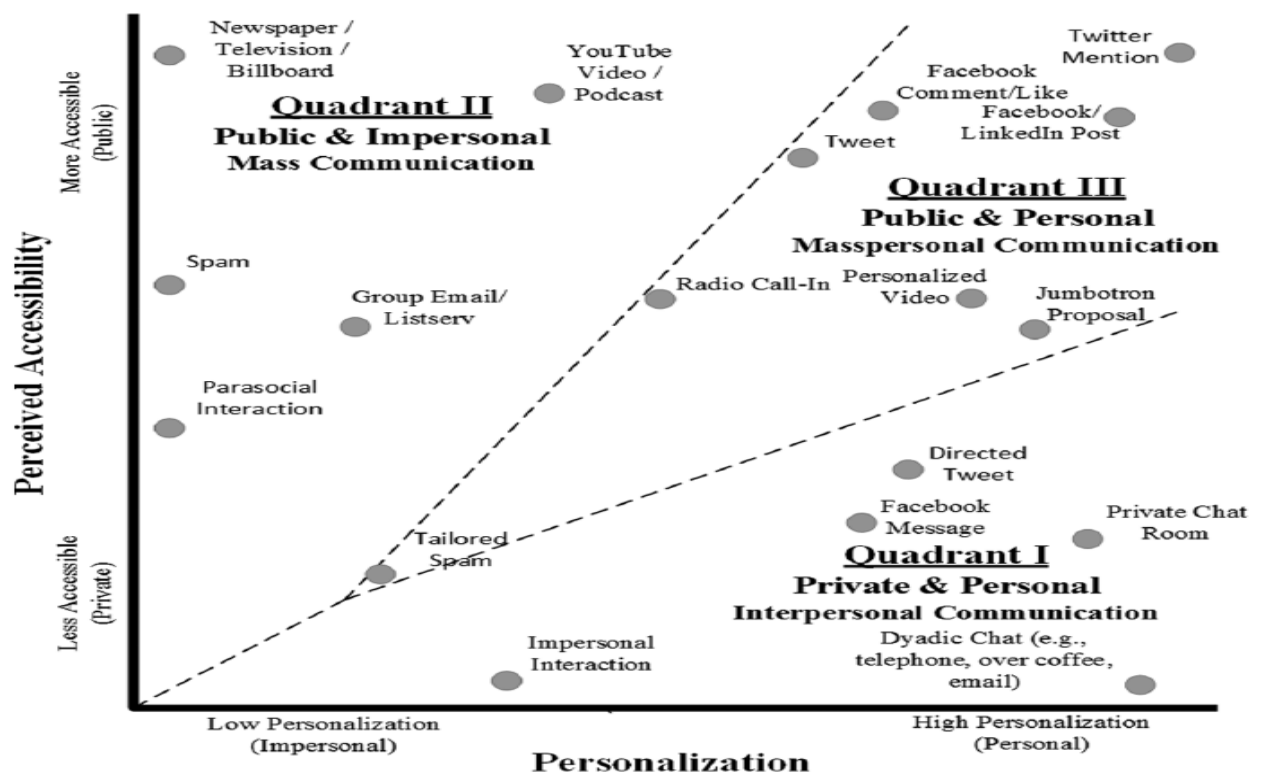
### 1) DIGITAL ENVIRONMENT

#### 1.1) ***Mass communication and its evolution into mass personal communication***

Despite all the transformations we have observed in the field of communication, the initial concept of mass communication, advocated by Janowitz (1968) has not been totally metamorphosed "mass communication comprises the institutions and techniques by which specialized groups employ technological devices to disseminate symbolic content to large, heterogeneous and widely dispersed audiences.

Currently, one can consider an expansion or crossover of theories in this field "in the sense of a large-scale unilateral flow of public content, remains unshakable, and comes out along with different types of content and flows that are also performed online on a large scale" states Deuze (2020). Another author agrees but goes further "Most theories of *media* and mass communication need to be readjusted to some degree to reflect the changes brought about by new media patterns of flow, structure, access and ownership (Weimann et al, 2014: 821). And Deuze continues "alongside mass communication, a new type of information and communication system emerges on a global scale the *mass self-communication*". Since the mid-1980s, Readon and Rogers (1988) were warning about the false dichotomy, anticipating what is now the reality of communications mediated by technological means, i.e. they predicted that the borders would blur and create this concept advocated by Castells (2007, 248) of *mass-self communication* "is mass communication because it potentially reacts to a global online audience and is simultaneously self-communication because it is self-directed in the preparation and sending of the message, self-selected in the reception of the message; and self-defined in terms of the for-

mation of the communication space". This concept is further elaborated by O'Sullivan & Carr (2018) and demonstrated in Quadrant frameworks, where we can locate the 'bridge' that is built when individuals use conventional mass communication media for usual interpersonal communication situations; when interpersonal communication channels to issue communication messages catalogued usual mass communication; individuals use both channels simultaneously.

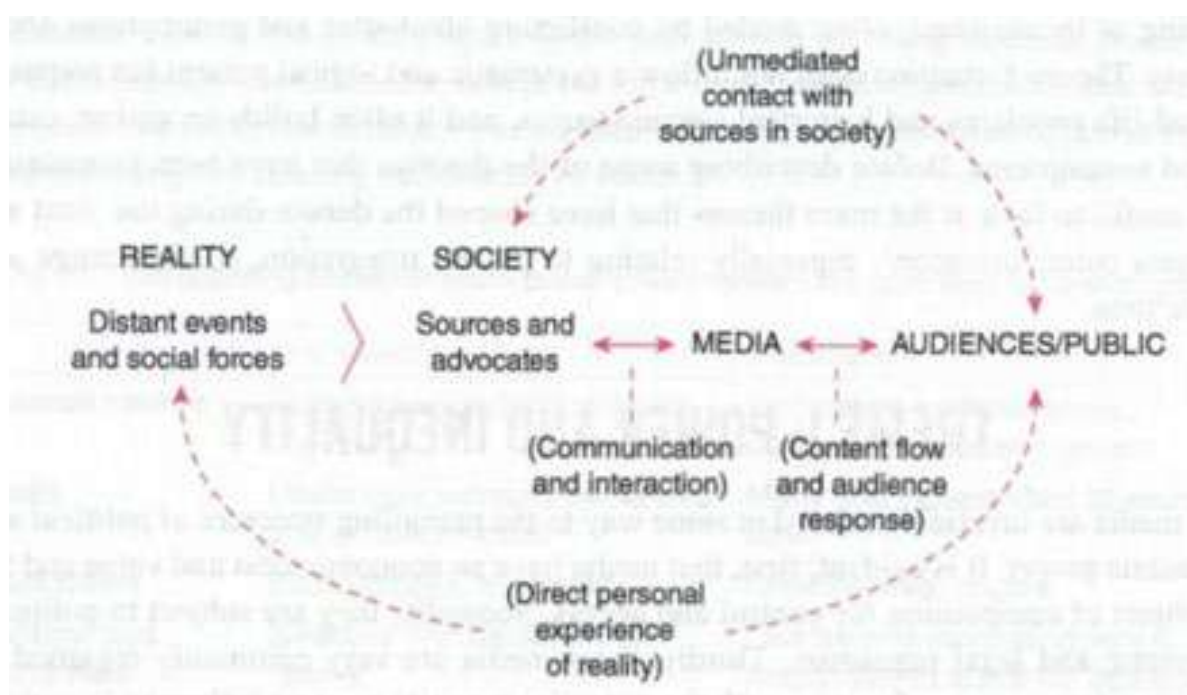


In this table we can see that in Quadrant I, the most personalized messages, but less accessible, constituting the interpersonal communication; in Quadrant II, the messages of low personalization, but more accessible, already in the scope of mass communication; in Quadrant III, the messages of high personalization and more accessible, where the concept of *masspersonal communication* is fundamentally developed; and finally Quadrant IV, mentioned for just a matter of foreseeing the technological evolution, the private and impersonal messages, only that in this field the dimensions of personalization and accessibility, both low, do not change deeply the concept.

It is not in this confrontation of concepts and theories that I am developing this work, but as a central point, because without covering the bases of the whole communication process, not to mention also its motivations, whether at the individual or collective level, as the media meaning "everything is mediated - from childhood to war, from politics to sex, from science to religion - and more than ever. Communica-

tion has always been constitutive of society, fundamental to all human action" clarifies Livingstone (2011).

Among models of mass communication already widely disseminated, the most complete was introduced by Westley and Maclean (1957). These two authors recognized that the process must involve the intermediation of a professional, a journalist or other type of organization, and the society and audience. In the contemporary context is in fact what we verify, the sequence is not necessarily linear with the elements that constitute it, such as the sender, the message, the channel and many potential receivers, are fundamental in their combination for the communication processes.



In his opinion, this sequence can be changed to 'events' or 'voices of society'; the channels and the role played by those who communicate, followed by the messages and the receivers. The revision of this model is associated with the transformations in the dissemination of messages or communication objectives by the various institutions (political, religious, business or other social institutions such as the family, and even at the individual level), but with the "retransmission" to a potential audience and its selection and interpretation. To complete the model designed Westley and MacLean three decisive factors: 1) the choice of functions of mass communication; 2) how the audience will choose and consider relevant the contents according to their motivations; 3) understand the intentionality of communication, even if related to the previous one.

But the new communication environment consists of several actors, among communication professionals and also in the digital space by the respective receivers. It is still fragmented and customized as



Carah (2021) explains "the work of professional communication involves more than just the creation of persuasive or valuable content, it extends to the management of space, populations and the complex process of communication" because despite the participation of audiences in new flows, concludes that "the relationship between meaning and power" are fundamental in all the dynamics of communication processes.

### 1.2) *New media versus traditional media*

Addressing the differences between traditional and *new media* may seem excessive at this point, when their impact is already indisputable. The author Griffey (2020) answers in two words what separates the two worlds: user interaction. To justify in more detail "when a user tries other forms of *media* (image, text, audio) and this does not respond to the user. These forms of *media* may trigger some kind of response, but the user does not have the opportunity to interact with it".

Each time a new technology or trend emerges the enthusiasm is significant, but not always shared by all authors at different times or from different perspectives "generally, the *new media* were created with intense interest, positive and even euphoric expectations and forecasts, and a general overestimation of their importance" (Rossler, 2001). In the historical perspective of Fidler (1997) "the *new media* and their applications do not replace the traditional ones; they only tend to accelerate the process of renewal of the traditional media".

It is also important to consider what leads to the cataloging of *new media* and what framework, i.e., its technical characteristics, its forms of application and benefits for users, and finally the socio-economic context in which the medium is used, or the content and services that are provided through a device, platform or interface. Digitization that allows text, image and sounds can be converted into binary codes for their symbolic meanings (messages or content) and be shared, transmitted and stored.

Many questions are raised in comparison in this relationship between traditional and *new media*, including the roles of authors, production, distribution and reception. Still others that address more recent doubts, the role of intermediation, of platforms, the management of algorithms in influencing choices, data protection and surveillance, and finally the replacement of the term audience by user. A little before all these transformations already Neuman and Pool (1986) invoked the idea of a balanced model "according to the discomfort of the audience with the overload is avoided by reducing the quality to the attention". Which translates into less time and motivation diluted in a potential reduction of *media* connection and consumption. But the present and future of the term "audience" gains new dimensions, such as the degree of activity or passivity, also the degree of interactivity and interlunation, size and duration, location in space and time, group characteristics, also in the social domain and cultural identity; simultaneity with the sources; the social relations between sender and receiver; message as a result of social behavior; perceived degree of social presence; and finally the use in context of sociability. In all these situations pointed out by Deuze (2020) concludes that the term "audience" cannot be stripped and despite all the alter-

natives and conditions or motivations "there is no feasibility for another designation" and justifies "our concern with the audiences as collectivities that relate people to their social and cultural contact.

And here we come across two theoretical divergences in communication sciences. While Rice (1983: 18) "the notion that the communication channel can be as important a variable in the communication process as source, message, receiver, and feedback may have been forgotten" well removed from the Toronto school "one need not be a technological determinist to agree that the medium can be a fundamental variable in the communication process, or the most representative reference, McLuhan (1964: 17) "the medium is the message". Basically, the author foresaw the transformations of the media and their technological evolution, similarly to what he observed throughout the evolution of society and media over the centuries. In his time, which corresponds to the period that foresaw the unleashing of the electronic age, it gave rise to a new environment, but in reality the new "content" is the old, renewed and does not create a disruption. Moreover, in his opinion about each new technology that appears on the market, "what determines its value is how it is used".

Within this discussion and in the attempt to distinguish between two *media* worlds, not very consolidated, Baym (2015) with regard to capacity, functions and applications, raises a set of questions: What kind of interactivity does the medium provide? What kind of temporal structure is possible; synchronous or asynchronous? How available are social cues, including physical, non-verbal and social / identity cues? Is the medium recorded? Is it replicated? How many people can the messages reach using this medium? What kind of mobile engagement does this medium offer?

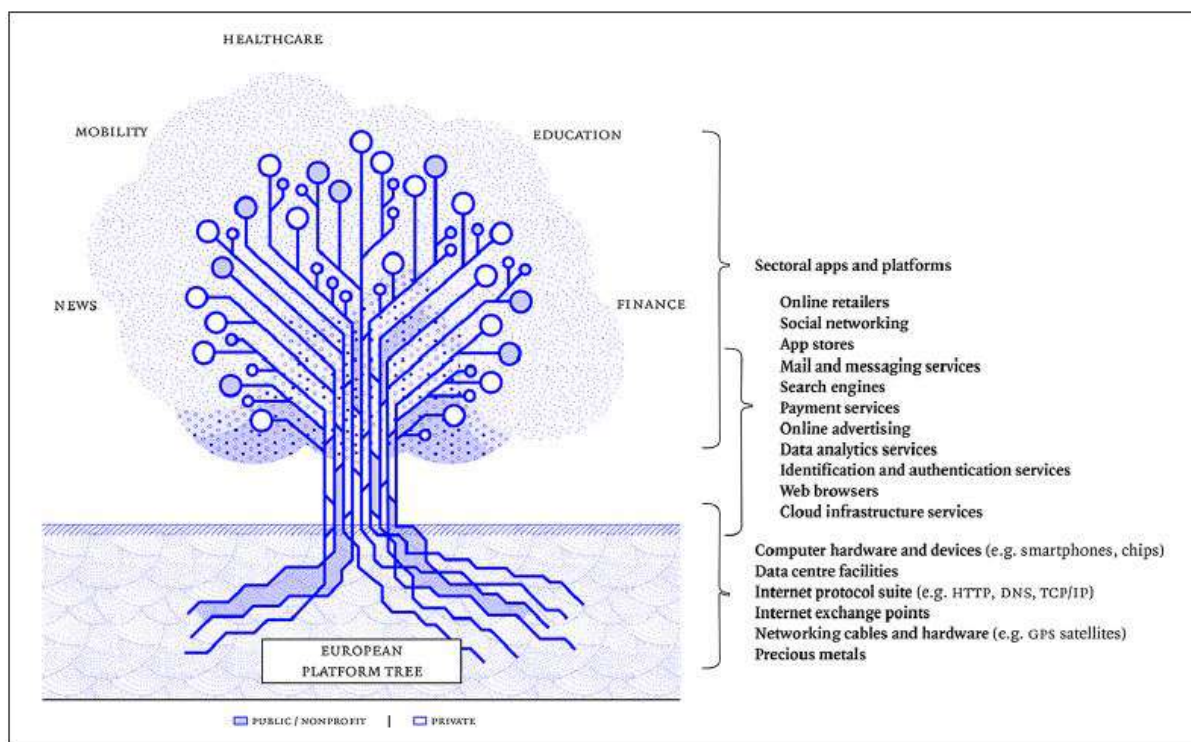
In all of them there are three characteristics: use, content and context. But they are inserted into five categories: 1) interpersonal communication, in general the content is private and perishable, as the relationship established and strengthened may be more important than the information conveyed; 2) interactivity, personal computers and also video game consoles, the main innovation lies in interactivity and mastery of the process, rather than in the gratification of its use; 3) research, is the broadest because it covers the entire space of the World Wide Web and especially search engines, in an unprecedented access to information either in quantity, timeliness and accessibility; 4) collective participation, the Internet as a space for sharing and exchange of information, ideas, experiences and development of personal relationships; 5) replacement, access to *media* products, both information and entertainment, in a logic that is no longer just reception, but downloading, because they are not distributed and disseminated exclusively by means of radio.

To better understand this phenomenon of mediatization and 'internetization' of mass media, its convergence and resources Fortunati (2005) highlights for *new media*: 1) interactivity and virtuality capacity; 2) real-time access; 3) more intuitive content creation, distribution and consumption; 4) hybridization, i.e. the convergence of different types and forms of media and mediated communication, offering platforms for mass and interpersonal communication (Baym et al. 2012).

From the user's point of view, there was also a set of variables and benefits for using *new media*, such as interactivity, virtuality, social presence, content, autonomy, privacy and personalization. While the first may be the most relevant, Downes and MacMillan (2000) point out five of its dimensions: the directionality of the communication; the flexibility in time and rules or forms of operation; the sense of space in the communication environment; the opportunity to obtain a control on the level, also of the environment; and finally the perceived purpose, oriented towards exchange or persuasion.

## Convergence and platforms

The platforms even though they enjoy the same space and digital environment, are in contemporary society a field where not only many economic activities take place, but where individuals and organizations communicate and seek information or entertainment. The platform ecosystem is anchored in paradoxes, as Van Dijck explains "it seems egalitarian yet hierarchical; it is almost entirely corporate but seems to serve public values; it seems neutral and agnostic but its architecture carries a particular set of ideological values, its effects seem local while its design is global; it seems to replace 'top-down' big government with 'customer power' from the bottom up, but accomplishes this through a highly centralized structure that remains opaque to its users".

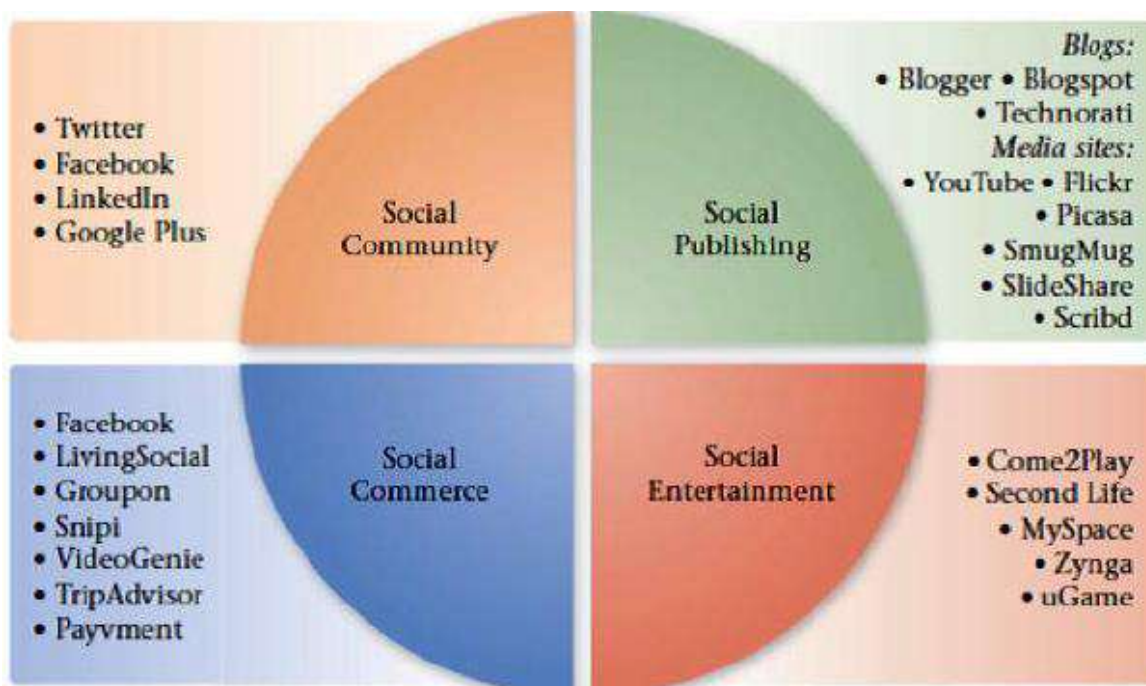


The author clearly demonstrates her vision of platforms, from the 'roots' where all the technological infrastructure installed for its operation is found, composed of hardware, networks and software; the 'trunk' where we perform the activities; and the 'branches' that influence our behavior.

The complexity of all these elements was studied earlier by Jenkins (2006) in the celebrated term convergence "should not be understood primarily as a technological process only, bringing together multiple functions with the same devices. Instead, convergence represents a cultural shift as consumers are prompted to seek out new information and make connections between dispersed content". While another author presents another perspective, "it is an ongoing and dynamic phenomenon that continues to shape the world of traditional media", opposes Pavliv (2019), that is, his vision translates into a corollary of social and cultural changes (values and attitudes), technological, and economic.

### 1.3) Social networks

The advancement from passive or static internet, where it was only almost as a space for depositing information and opportunity to collect information or cognitive, to a web 2.0, where it allows to establish connections of people and information. Communication is potentiated in most cases through social media, which Tuten (2020) describes "is the online means of communication, transmission, collaboration and cultivation between interconnected and independent networks of people, communities and organizations enhanced by technological capabilities and mobility". In essence, this is where the intersection between mass communication and interpersonal communication is consummated, where borders and the complexity of the new world are crossed. But the author divides the number of channels and options into four zones:



In the context of digital environment communication of performing arts, the most relevant are: *social community*: sharing, socialization and conversation; and the second: *social entertainment*: games,

music and art. The use of *social media* for personal or commercial purposes, some area of activity, as is the case of the object under study, overlaps two or more zones. That is its nature, the fluidity, where all communications are networked around relationships and based on the principles of shared participation.

More in detail, Tuten explains that the *social community* channels that focus on relationships and common activities in which people participate with others who share the same interest or identification. They feature two-way and multifunctional communication, conversation, collaboration and sharing of experiences and opinions, or even content without barriers or traditional *gatekeepers* and the so-called *user generated content* (UGC). While *social entertainment* covers events, performances and activities that aim to provide the audience with pleasure and joy, experiencing and sharing. The distinction between the two is orientation. In the former knowledge sharing versus entertainment sharing, in the latter.

#### 1.4) **Culture**

The definition of culture, even in the area of social sciences, is not always pacific. Over the last decades there have been many studies and theories presented. From Williams (1976) with his revision of concepts between the dynamics and dimensions to the meaning of the webs that man himself generates by Geertz (1973), as a model of reality depending on the context of the moment, or Douglas' (1975) argumentation in which "jokes" are subversions of collective norms and practices, recognizing the subversion or getting the joke suggests a deep understanding of a culture in its non-subversive state, and coming to a more structural analysis from Bourdieu (1977) who took an approach to culture when he introduced the concept of "habitus", which defined a structured mental space that a collective inhabitant that shaped their behavior, beliefs and practices. Inspired by this theory Gambetti (2020) advances with the concept of

"*digital habitus*," as "a set of learned preferences, dispositions, and behavioral models through which individuals create of themselves by using information and communication tools and devices within a technologically mediated social space that includes the social media ecosystem." But Wright summarizes that these views converge "cultural analysis, whatever method is used, reveals several fundamental assumptions: first, culture is contingent dependent and not fixed in time or space; second the thought that people do together from speaking the same language to common behaviors and repertoires of evaluation manifests itself in practice; and third, culture is embedded in symbols or material objects or ritualized forms, which provide a diversity of elements for the sociological field from different media. A more economic view is always exposed by Towse (2020) "Cultural goods are tangible objects, such as a work of art or a book; others are intangible services, such as a musical performance or a visit to a museum. Besides this cultural element, what creative goods have in common with all other goods and services is that their production uses resources." In his interpretation, the performing arts are "the live art forms".

In terms of the performing arts, one of the discussions of the moment, partly created by pandemic, are the transmissions of the plays in digital channels, but Lowe (2020) explores how cultural values can be articulated in the performance act between the two media "the interaction between a screen and the theatre, rather than emphasizing the differences between the two media, the emphasis should be on the elements they share, in particular the emphasis on performance and participation in an event", as opposed to more purist or conservative thinking "there is an invisible territory in a live work that claims critical thinking the relationship between scene and audience, but concretely its affective dimension (Pais, 2018).

### 1.5) **Communication on culture**

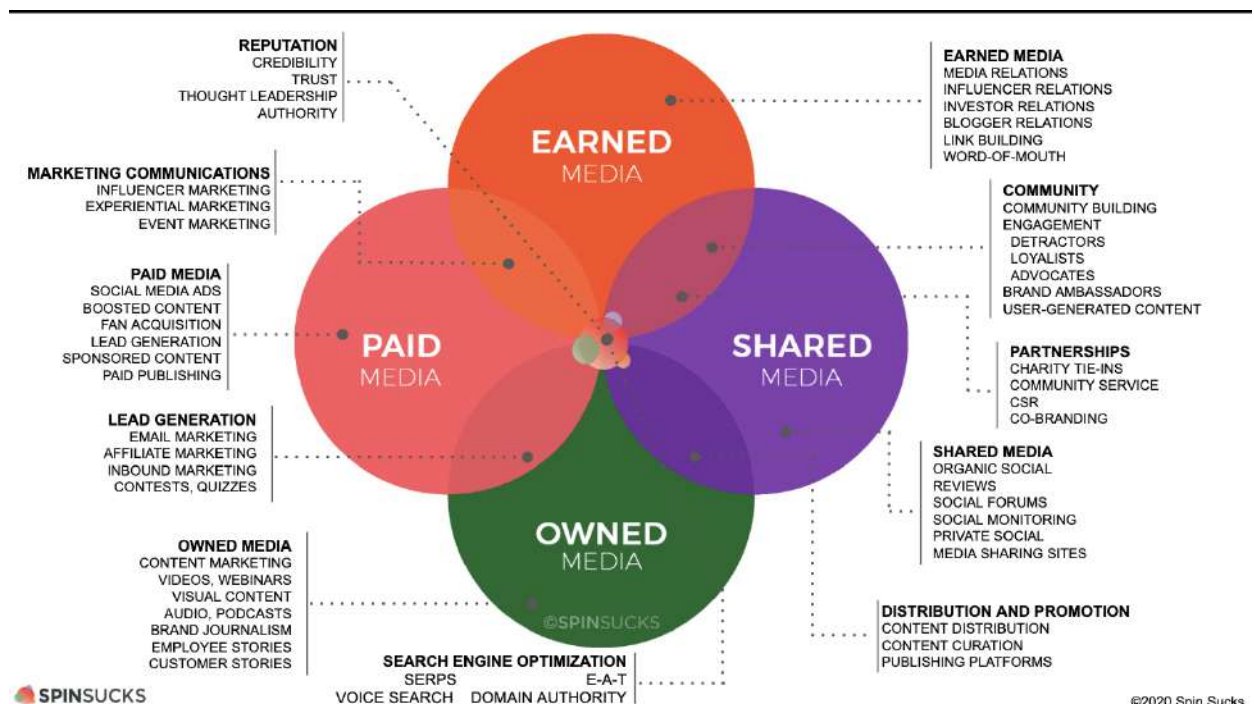
The culture sector is not an intuitive area to develop in terms of communication, Kolb (2021) indicates some of the particularities, or even difficulties, such as "the relationship with audiences of higher education and above all available information, which has also changed influenced by *social media*". The essence of the culture sector and performing arts in particular, provides its audiences with an intangible product, as unique and often difficult to establish comparisons. Even more so the boundary between producer and consumer, which has blurred in the "*prosumers*", in the term created by Toffler (1980), the neologism that joined two functions and that should also make cultural agents think to look at their audiences, no longer exclusively in a passive mode, as essentially the characteristics of the product "the creative industries are differentiated from other businesses by the people they employ, because the production of the product requires some form of human creativity. As a result, the product they produce embodies symbolic or personal meaning." Who best finds a concept to be applied to the world of the arts is Colbert (2018) "we can define cultural marketing as the art of reaching the market segments likely to be interested in the product, adjusting to the product the commercial variables - price, place and promotion, to the product in contact with a sufficient number of consumers, providing good customer service and achievement of objectives consistent with the mission of the cultural organization".

With the new habits and the profile of the younger generations, in the environment where this study is developed, the problem of audiences and *engagement* are relevant. The author Walmsley (2019) "Considers that audiences have always been undervalued by the agents of culture, from artists to producers and that the time has come to analyze the situation in a more profound way, especially at a time when society is changing due to the change of audiences' behavior and their expectations, as other challenges that go through *big data* and *streaming*". Some authors are determining the "end" or even the "death" of audiences, while others question: to what extent the audience constitutes a congregation, a collective, a community or even a public? These questions should be relevant, because it is through them that the answer or the development of the aesthetic contents can be obtained, that messages are conveyed and interpreted, or not... Blau (1990) defines the public as a constructed consciousness, an initiated body of thought and desire. But Stanislavsky goes further, "playing for no audience is like hearing echoes in a space without resonance", and further on he warns "one of the main roles of the audience is to provide resonance and meaning". In *engagement* marketing profes-

sionals use this *key word* more and more frequently, to measure the influence and success of their products and services. In the performing arts we should see the same apprehension, ultimately "the audience is an active agent whose performance encounters are aligned and individualized (Sedgman, 2016). Another line of thought on this matter is Ashley (2014)" a process to generate, enhance or repair relationships between cultural institutions and society at large" and finally again from a marketing perspective Radbourne (2013) argues "that engagement is all about convergence with the audience".

In summary, theoretical definitions merge around the notion of *engagement* as a psychological process that aims to develop intimate, meaningful, convergent and lasting relationships with audiences and viewers.

To another extent of this phenomenon and in a new world where the consumer has greater control over what he sees, reads and watches, Ktaz (2020) warns "the consumer must remain the center of everything we do in the *media*. But today, developing a media and communication plan is a much harder task, because in the not too distant past there were two universes that complemented each other, the *print* and the *electronic*, i.e., the former included for example the press, billboards and *direct mail*; the latter included television, radio and the internet. Only the division with this last element, which is the central part of the research, the new terms are: *paid, owned and earned*.



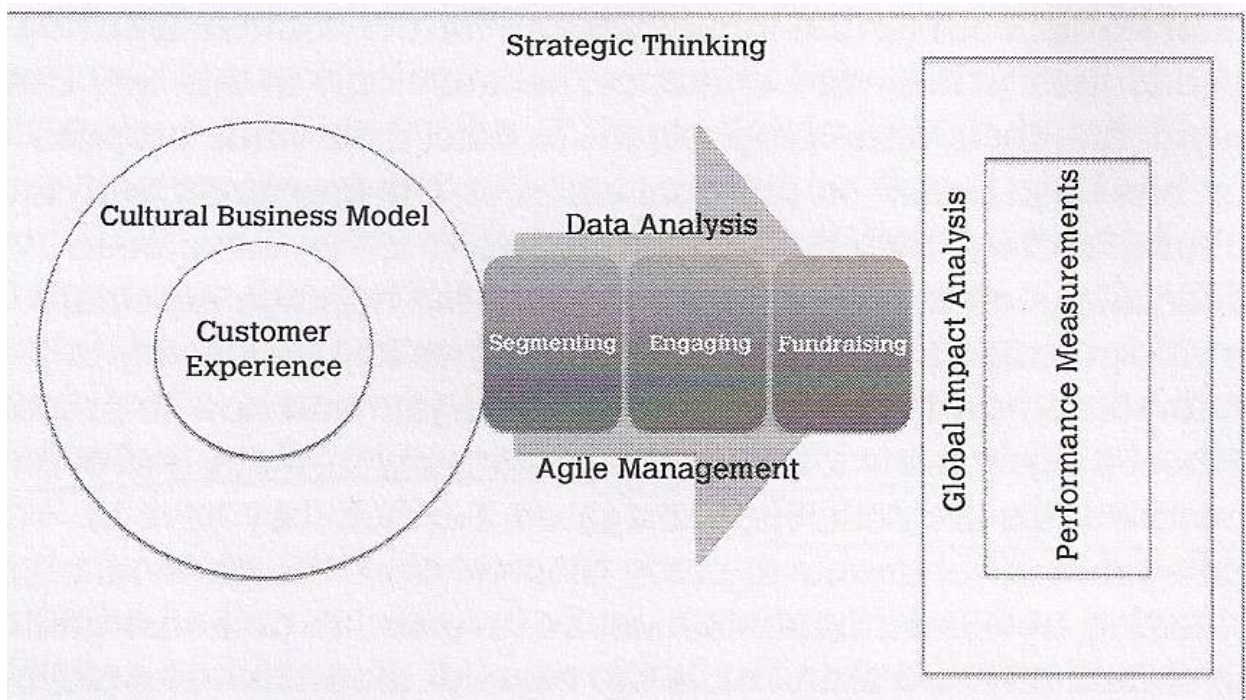
Although the value of *media* has not been fully renewed, in the opinion of Ktaz (2020) "a medium can be defined as a vehicle through which something is accomplished, transmitted or transferred". Several studies show that the decision processes consumers make their decisions are made up of three stages: thinking, feeling and acting. However, with the fragmentation of the media, from traditional media, to the digital environment with websites, apps, social networks, video channels, or techniques such as *content*

*marketing, brand equity, eWOM or influencer marketing, transmedia marketing.* These tools together lead to even deeper decision processes: need, awareness, preference, research, selection, purchase, use, satisfaction.

With these typologies or communication concepts, such as *content* marketing, which Pulizzi (2012) defines "is a marketing technique of creating and distributing relevant and valuable content to attract, acquire and engage a clearly defined and understood target audience, with the aim of driving a profitable customer action". Or the second and has now more notoriety, *influencer marketing* which may even seem simpler or more objective in its implementation "a company's attempt to identify key opinion leaders on the internet and use their influence and reach for its own purposes, motivating or rewarding them to share brand messages with their target groups (Kost, 2020, 53). Both may be favored by the saturation of the communication eco-system and today people seek recommendations from their friends, colleagues or family members in their choices to purchase products or services. However, as Jahnke, 2018,4) warns "influencers are people who have expertise in certain topics, act as multipliers and can reach a much larger target group very quickly, which can have positive but also far-reaching negative consequences".

But the sector of culture and performing arts, was undoubtedly one of the most devastated with the pandemic Covid-19 and today faces new and additional challenges. Because in this period people may have had the possibility to know other types of activities for their leisure and entertainment. This crisis has clearly demonstrated the weaknesses and weak strategies, when the world is flooded with transformations and at a dizzying speed. For this reason Addis & Rurale propose a new model for ACO (Arts and Cultural Organizations), based on more economic parameters, without forgetting that the sector has its processes like other economic activities with the availability of resources such as capital, technology and human knowledge.





The primary objective of their theory is that ACOs should place the generation and exchange of value at the heart of their business models. From this perspective, they advocate a market orientation. The development of any activity should have as its purpose the generation and exchange of value, which in the *framework* proposed by the authors is divided into four categories: 1) identity, 2) economic, 3) creative, and 4) well-being.

The first observation is that all activities must have a strategic thinking and a guideline that is fundamental to their success, i.e., all decisions must be made taking into account this "guideline" and that will influence the results of the organization. However, ACOs and their managers assume that their attitude is more distant from the market and believe that their knowledge and value proposition is what the public needs. Secondly, their tasks and occupations do not allow them to make a real assessment of the outside world and its offerings and they end up investing their time and resources in compliance, in daily tasks to the detriment of medium and long-term strategy. And if the external environment is marked by a strong dynamic of modifications, consequently the level of competitiveness increases.

Customer experience is a holistic concept based on any direct or indirect interaction with the brand, in the consumer behavior concept of Holbrook and Hirschman (1982) also recovered in the proposal of Ad-dis & Rurale "the experiential and emotional value is especially relevant for this type of organization, because its success depends on its ability to engage visitors in an attractive, personalized and open experience. To achieve this goal, three modes must be met: unique, to be perceived as different and unique from any other alternative, regardless of whether it operates in the same sector or not; relevant, to deal with its reference market through important associations. Attracting the attention of visitors by working on themes and areas that interest them. Thus, one can overcome and defend selective attention; perceived, convey your message and positioning clearly and impact.

## 2) Methodology

The nature of a scientific research is born from a social fact or in this case the need to seek an answer to a problem, which in this case under study has two distinct dimensions: the first, the levels of cultural participation; and the second with all the changes that we have already verified in the research and literature review, a world in permanent change, a communication sector with a strong impact of information technologies. The two combined are further reinforced by a public health problem, which at a certain moment not only conditioned the activity of cultural organizations in their physical spaces and performance halls, but in some periods prevented it completely. For this set of reasons and in a scenario of resumption of activity, it becomes more pertinent the study and a survey of how communication is taking place in the digital environment by these institutions. Simultaneously we observe changes in the habits of new generations, technological transformations, which affect not only communication, but also distribution and consequently the forms of access and consumption of culture and its contents.

The research method will not be unique, but the qualitative method will predominate, corresponding to the demands of the environment and the entire involvement, as the tendency of research in our area in social sciences, as already supported by Howe (1988, 1992) who denies the obligation of univocal methodological options "only the positivist paradigm is unsustainable and the questioning incomplete, we must find an epistemological perspective to overcome the antagonism by integrating aspects of both paradigms". The complementarity of methods provides a broader view of reality and also blurs the dichotomy, but as Creswell (2021) emphasizes, "qualitative studies represent the complexity of situations".

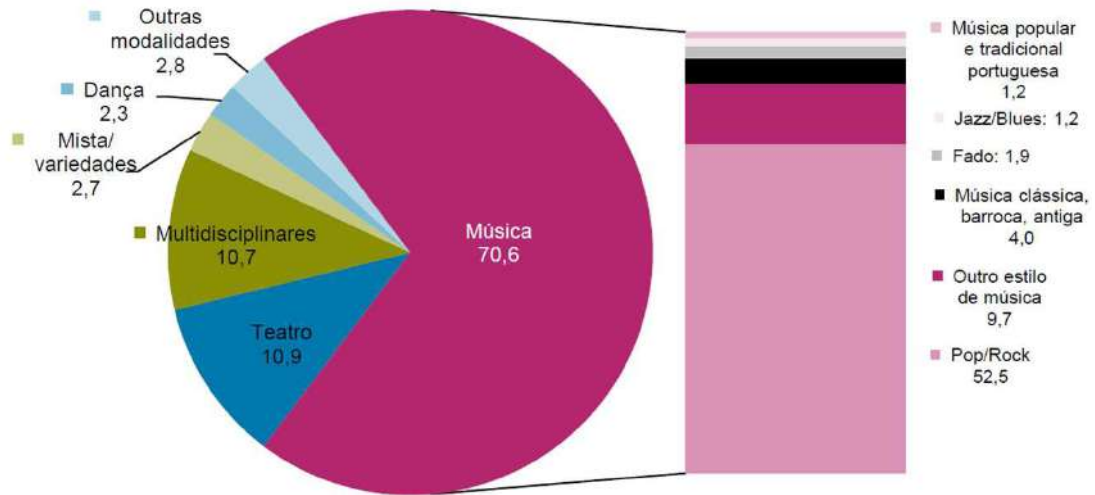
### 2.1) The sources

For the development and implementation of the study, some sources will be previously consulted, as a way to prepare the next phase, the application of the various research instruments. The sources that will be used, are produced by official public bodies and a report of a private marketing consulting firm.

**Report by Direção Geral das Artes (DgARTES); Instituto Nacional de Estatística**

In the latest report released by the Directorate General for the Arts (DgARTES) which analyses the data on activities supported by the State in Portugal, we find a wide range of statistics regarding funding, in a logic of the entities benefited, the activities supported and also the audience, both by artistic area and in the field of audiences. The most recent data provided by the Instituto Nacional de Estatística, with data for the year 2018 and related to participation and consumption of cultural products:

Gráfico 9.5: Receitas de espetáculos ao vivo, por modalidade (%), 2018



The performing arts and in particular the focus of our research in the theatre sector, which only 10.9 % of revenues. In the following table we can see in more detail the number of spectators and their audiences:

QUADRO 9.1.4

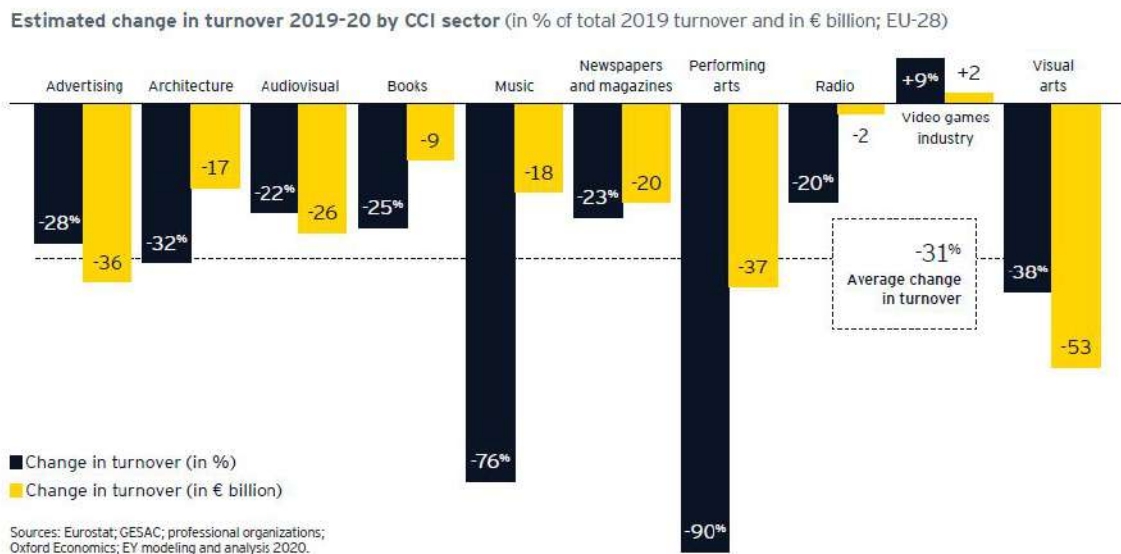
Espectáculos ao Vivo – Total das sessões, bilhetes vendidos e oferecidos, espectadores, receitas e preço médio, por região (NUTS II) e modalidades

2018

| Âmbito Geográfico e Modalidades | Total de Sessões | Bilhetes vendidos | Bilhetes oferecidos | Espectadores/as | Receitas de bilheteira | Preço médio dos bilhetes vendidos |
|---------------------------------|------------------|-------------------|---------------------|-----------------|------------------------|-----------------------------------|
|                                 | N.º              |                   |                     | Euros           |                        |                                   |
| <b>PORTUGAL</b>                 | 36 620           | 5 546 727         | 11 326 889          | 16 873 616      | 109 010 598            | 19,7                              |
| Teatro                          | 13 279           | 1 170 343         | 996 210             | 2 166 553       | 11 901 007             | 10,2                              |
| Ópera                           | 95               | 24 305            | 12 334              | 36 639          | 686 371                | 28,2                              |
| Música                          | 12 590           | 2 961 656         | 4 677 312           | 7 638 968       | 76 945 300             | 26,0                              |

### 2.1.1) Study by Ernest & Young

At the beginning of 2021 and in order to have more updated data, the international business and market consultancy Ernest & Young presented a report, where it presented a set of data on all sectors of economic activity, to try to understand the impact that the pandemic had on the dynamics of each market segment. It was found that along with the aviation sector, in the set of activities of the creative and cultural industries, only video games were those that recorded an increase, as people were confined to their homes. On a more detailed analysis, the performing arts sub-sector suffered the most, with a 90% drop in revenue.



## Research instruments

As we are going through a period of enormous unpredictability, due to the effects of the pandemic and the cultural activity is in a period of adaptation to the rules imposed by the authorities, as well as a period of resumption of its activity with transformations and new challenges, the mixed methodological option may be the one that most benefits the study. Therefore, we will use different types of instruments:

### Interview with professionals in the sector

This option also allows for an insight to be given firstly into the 'senders', and their practitioners (Appendix 1 list), i.e. again Creswell's argument is put into practice "qualitative research involves reporting how people talk about things, how they describe things and how they see the world". In qualitative research, the inductive process is used to collect data and then, in order to make sense of it, group into segments of data into codes, then themes, and finally broader perspectives. The interviews were face-to-face or through a digital platform, individual and semi-structured, i.e., a set of previously prepared themes to flesh out the research and the study according to its objective.

- 1) The differences of developing and implementing a communication plan between a cultural institution and a product/service company
- 2) Strategy to attract new viewers or build loyalty among current viewers
- 3) In the overall communication plan, the commitment reserved for the digital domain
- 4) The assessment reserved for the digital component

5) In periods of confinement the adjustments in the scope of communication

## Questionnaire

We are investigating communication in a digital environment, the processes in this domain are no longer unidirectional, as in the past, but rather two-way. A survey distributed online is justified, also to ascertain demographic data, with the use of nominal scales and ordinal scales, for the social profile, and finally also to be related to the study objectives and hypotheses.

Distribution with indirect administration, 12 questions with the following objectives:

- 1) Understanding the consumption of culture
- 2) Investigate the influence of digital media on audiences

As the distribution will also be mostly in the digital environment, through digital social networks, or database, i.e., with a sample that goes beyond personal contacts, since the sample may include people either private or linked to the culture sector that do not know personally.

Another important data to mention, is in the table presented in the statistics in INE already mentioned above, about the number of theater spectators in Portugal, this audience corresponds to a number of 2.166.553 spectators. Therefore, to obtain the minimum confidence level of 95% and a margin of error of 5%, as Neyman (1937) advocated, the minimum number of responses to this survey would have to be 385, or for a margin of error of 3% 1067 responses.

## Study

The reason for the development of the research, is assimilated and established between two worlds that converge, communication, involved in technological developments and changes in consumer habits; and culture, a sector that by tradition unfortunately presents low levels of participation. Without naturally intending to influence or have any kind of anticipated idea of the final results, as a result of the bibliographical research and the instruments applied to the investigation, the following hypotheses can be put forward:

H1 - are the available tools being applied by cultural operators

H2 - communication in the digital environment reaches audiences and is well interpreted

These two hypotheses are associated with the theoretical part developed in the literature review, where the first chapter is dedicated to the digital environment; the second directly related to the object of study, i.e. Culture and in particular focus on the performing arts; and a third more focused on the media and types of communication under study.

## The interviews

Among the six communication professionals at the most representative organizations of the performing arts sector in Portugal, there were no significant divergences in their answers to the 5 questions.

In the first question, all professionals agree that there is a difference in developing and implementing a communication plan between a cultural organization and a conventional company that produces products. However they consider that sensitivity for the development of their communication plans must take into account the specific content of programming and that in some cases professionals recognized in other sectors of economic activity have great difficulties in adapting and understanding the language of the culture sector. Only two nuances, because one of the organizations despite being the undisputed reference at national level and with a strong program of international artists, cannot be competing at the same level of other organizations of worldwide prestige. A question that essentially arises in the possibility of making its programming profitable in the external market, through digital distribution channels. The second distinction between the six institutions is that in their communication plan, the challenge is more complex, because one of them has a broader and more diversified cultural offer, and also in certain productions it is only an incubator or rents out its rooms and spaces to other producers.

In the remaining questions, the consensus is pacific among the six interviewees. When asked about strategies to attract new viewers or build loyalty among current ones, all respond that they combine both, without having, due to their size or structure, the capacity to differentiate between the two. In the component reserved for the communication budget dedicated particularly to the digital environment, it has been progressively reinforced from year to year, as expected, with results that those responsible consider positive, but in a perspective of an integrated plan without overcoming the traditional means. During periods of confinement, institutions were forced to adjust their communication plans, because at certain times their rooms were unable to receive the public and therefore the budget dedicated to the digital environment was increased, both in terms of communication and in the availability and transmission of some previously recorded and archived content, or already during the pandemic prepared and designed for its dissemination in streaming.

## Questionnaire

The questionnaire distributed online and administered indirectly, during the month of September obtained 586 responses, which translates comparatively to the universe of performing arts spectators in Portugal of 2166553, a confidence level of 95% and a margin of error of 4%.

About the demographic data, answered 66.43% female and 33.56% male, with the ages comprised and divided into the following age groups: 0.69% less than 18 years old; between 19 and 25 years old, answered 7.69%; between 26 and 35 years old, obtained 5.94%; between 36 and 45, a rate of 24.12%; between 46 and 55 years old, answered 46.50%, the range that has greater representativeness in this sample; between 56 and 67 years old, 12.93% of responses; and finally, above 68 years old only 2.09% of responses. Another three data that was sought in this survey was the schooling, 78.40% have higher education; visitors in the

city of Lisbon or surrounding areas, since it is the capital of the country are 65.03%. A final question was whether or not there is a relationship with the cultural sector in terms of their professional activity, and here 38.11% consider that they are associated with cultural activity, while the remaining 61.88% have no such link.

In the other questions for the study, the following results were obtained.

Question 1: Hours of leisure and dedicated to cultural activities, what are your preferences? In this question it was allowed to choose more than one option, without order of preference. The results were as follows: 16.75% for music; still in this context, but in live concerts a result of 13.57%; in the theater, 12.28%; visits to museums 8.79%; while attending art galleries was 8.87%; the cinemas get 26.77%; reading books 11.44% and watching content on streaming platforms 12.88%.

Question 2: Do you usually go to concert halls (theatre, dance or classical music/opera)? The answers were as follows according to the possibilities presented in the survey: every week, 7.69%; every month, 33.21%; every three months, 38.81%; once in six months, 13.98%; once a year, 2.44%; and less than once a year, 3.84%.

Question 3: Which of the performing arts do you prefer? Of the three most significant areas, without mentioning the subcategories, the following result was obtained: theatre 60.13%; dance, 22.37% and music 17.48%.

Question 4: rate the reasons for attending a show

|                              | Very little | Little | Not too little, not too much | High | Very high |
|------------------------------|-------------|--------|------------------------------|------|-----------|
| The cast                     | 26          | 22     | 80                           | 360  | 100       |
| Actor, dancer or musician    | 16          | 20     | 120                          | 332  | 98        |
| Author, composer or director | 32          | 64     | 106                          | 302  | 82        |
| Content/theme                | 22          | 30     | 40                           | 342  | 152       |
| Cultural Space               | 25          | 55     | 222                          | 180  | 104       |
| Socialization                | 42          | 85     | 157                          | 224  | 78        |

Question 5: How do you find out about the shows? A multiple-choice question, with the following results: general press, 10.41%; press specialized in culture, 6.91%; television programs, whether news services or others, 8.97%; radio programs, whether interviews or news services, 10.91%; outdoors, 14.59%; consultation on web pages, 13.01%; through social media, 17.41%; through receipt of a newsletter, 7.98%; through family, friends or colleagues, 14.72%.



Question 6: through digital media (social network, newsletter, YouTube channel or other) have you gone to see a show for the first time?

Of the responses obtained, 86.36% of people responded positively, while only 13.64% negatively.

Question 7: before buying tickets or watching a show, do you try to get more detailed information through the digital environment (internet)?

The responses reached split between 67.13% on yes, and 32.87% on no.

Question 8: the information made available about shows provided by cultural agents, in the opinion are: very insufficient, 3.14%; insufficient, 19.58%; neither insufficient, nor sufficient, 20.27%; sufficient, 54.89%; very sufficient, 2.09%.

Question 9: When you enjoy a show, do you make recommendations to family, friends or co-workers?

Majority, i.e. 97.90% of the people answered yes, and 2.10% no.

Question 10: if so, how does it proceed?

In the answers it was found that 56.29% of people make recommendations through casual conversations, while the others, i.e. 43.71% share photos or videos on their social networks

Question 11: Are the contents shared on your social networks?

Created by themselves corresponds to a value of 61.29% and the other responses are divided between 4.83% in text only; 17.93% from cultural organizations, and the remaining 15.93% through articles created by media.

## Conclusion

Throughout this research we have made a deep analysis of all the changes that the communication system has undergone in recent years, in part induced by technological transformations and evolution. All the involvement that the Internet provides, constitutes a wide space, where the communication process is amplified and its components and structure, giving origin to a new model, very supported in the social networks, with strong consequences also for the social structure.

Regarding the hypotheses under study, our conclusions are very positive in both. In the interviews carried out with the professionals responsible for communication in cultural organizations, dedicated to the performing arts sector, it can be seen that the most diverse types of digital tools are already being used and with results that provide a return on investment. Although not all the available means are being applied, or with a more interactive approach or more robust strategy in terms of content marketing or influencer marketing.

On the other hand, in the context of the audience, our research, through the survey we were able to ascertain that the plans and communication in the digital environment of cultural organizations are already having an impact on the audiences, although it is difficult to distinguish between the part that captures new audiences and the loyalty of the current public. In the numbers obtained in questions Q1 to Q4 we did not find substantial divergences with the official statistics and they are within expectations, as in the questions more focused on the performing arts, it also corresponds, i.e., in the performing arts it is still the theatre that is the most expressive segment.

When we delved deeper into the part of communication in digital environment, we found that all people already follow the protagonists of these arts through social networks, receive newsletters, and independently

of the media where information is given on the activities of cultural organizations, the digital environment already represents 38.1%.

The last two questions may be the most relevant and the contribution of the study for cultural organizations, because what was being listened to or aimed at was finding the level of audience engagement. In Q10, to know if they liked the show, how they share that feeling with family, friends and colleagues, and a considerable part of them do it through social media and in Q12, that is 61.29% of the audience revealed that they do it with their own contents, a value that reflects the importance of communication in the digital environment.

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## **Annex 1**

Célia Caeiro – Teatro Aberto

João Pedro Amaral - Director of Communication and Marketing,

Teatro Nacional D. Maria II

Madalena Reis - Director of Communication Centro Cultural de Belém

Nuno Prego – Fundação Gulbenkian

Pedro Mascarenhas – Companhia Nacional de Bailado

Sandra Faria - CEO Força de Produções

# **COV'culture. Impact of the health crisis on the field of culture and art – A Study of emerging forms of innovation**

A research project based in Nouvelle Aquitaine, France

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## **Introduction**

Financed by the Nouvelle Aquitaine regional authorities for a duration of 3 years (2021-2024) and focused on the public cultural sector, our research project aims to observe and analyse the impact of the pandemic and its consequences on cultural and artistic activities, for those who work in this field, those who are involved in it on a voluntary basis, and those who appropriate its contents. The objective is to make visible and analyse the way in which the different categories of actors have worked and proceeded in order to allow cultural and artistic activities to be maintained, whether from the point of view of creation, dissemination or reception, through the different relational spaces in which they have taken place : physical space, digital space, institutional space. The attention given to their actions, their testimonies and their processes will

make it possible to stimulate reflection on contemporary cultural issues and to study their potentially innovative character for the evolution of the sector. The productions that have emerged also constitute prisms through which it is possible to analyse our social ties and the role of art as an indicator of our relationship to the world (G. Simmel ; P. Baudry).

Our main thesis is that the health crisis and its repercussions reveal and/or accelerate changes in the field of culture : taking account of people's cultural rights and participation, competition from massculture, the impact of digital technology, new forms of cultural practices on and offline, environmental issues... (Ph. Henry Ph. ; Négrier ; J. Rieffel ; O. Donnat ; D. Cardon). Through its approach and methods involving the actors concerned in the research process, this study should provide answers to this premise and help to propose courses of action.

In terms of methodology, the research team, composed of specialists in social geography, information and communication sciences, sociology, and arts, will deploy qualitative social science methods : semi-structured interviews (individual and groups), participatory and non participatory observations, artistic productions analysis. In addition to these classic methods, the originality of the project is to propose a research process based on participatory science. Participatory research consists in associating non scientific actors, citizens and or professionals, to the observation of data and knowledge production. In order to anchor this research in the reality of the field and to operate in close partnership with actors, we will define and develop on site a research protocol with several stakeholders : a theatre, a family-aimed community organization, a cultural mediation association, a media library, a festival organiser, and artists' collectives. The implementation of this protocol will be progressive and will take into account the temporalities and wishes of the actors.

The first stage of this research consists in gathering testimonies in order to keep track of singular histories and experiences induced by the disruption of the pandemic before they vanish or give way to more practical considerations. Collecting this shared experience in the time frame following the crisis when memories are still vivid, is of particular importance to the research as it should point out the changes in progress and/or the elements potentially leading to them.

In order to start gathering this information, the first focus groups have been organised in partnership with the Nouvelle Aquitaine cultural Agency and UBIC, Bordeaux Montaigne University's valorisation unit, during the last french lock-up period (may 3rd – june 30th 2021). They have targeted a broad range of artists from different fields (theatre, visual arts, danse, music, cinema).

Six group interview sessions, involving 57 artists, took place, via videoconference, between april and may 2021. The participants have been questioned on how they felt about the crisis, responded to the challenges and adapted to the constraints in their creative work.

## **First observations**

The COVID pandemic has caused an upheaval in practices both in terms of space and time. Closed places, interrupted activity, investment in the digital space, emergence of a new available time : changes in cultural and artistic practices were evident during the health crisis. In so doing, the pandemic can be seen as a revelation and an accelerator of the transformations taking place in terms of the relationship to time and space in the artistic and cultural field.

## **The relationship to time: between constraint and opportunity**

Most of the artists of this survey have placed the question of creative time at the heart of their comments and questionings. Regarding this issue, the crisis has brought to light two temporal categories: a constrained time and a new available time.

### ***A constrained time***

The first reason for the artists' feeling of a time under pressure lies in the disruption caused by the crisis. The disorganisation of the sector has led to a feeling of loss of control over time. Schedules and projects have been rushed : postponements and cancellations had to be managed, funding had to be sought in a hurry... Creation time is now constrained and framed by the crisis.

The second reason for it lies in multi-activity, which, in the face of income uncertainty, has imposed itself and has often become essential. Forced to carry out several activities in order to make a living, artists are then "caught up in time" and no longer have enough time to create. Even before the crisis, artistic activity was "competing" with dissemination and mediation functions that greatly reduced creative time. To these must now be added the presence on the Internet, which implies a very substantial investment. In these conditions, creative time becomes a small part of the total, in a crisis context marked by increasing precariousness and lack of means.

### ***A new available time***

For some, this year of crisis, while complicated in many ways, has brought about a 'different time': one of possible reflection on their projects (past and future), of the completion of projects that had previously been put on hold, or of the emergence of new ideas and their implementation.

The crisis has provoked a sense of urgency that has led artists to question the profound meaning of their artistic process in regard to the transformation of society. "What do I have to say" when time seems to be running out and existential priorities are emerging. The question of transmission is also linked to the time issue : « why create if one's work cannot be transmitted? »

Thus, a tension is noticeable between the feeling of having experienced this "return to oneself" as an opportunity to confront one's desires and draw new energy from them, and the feeling of not being able to move forward, of being blocked.

## **The relationship to cultural venues and digital space: rethinking spaces and supporting actors**

Artists testified to the difficulty they experienced in creating in the absence of suitable spaces: interiors that were too small and unsuitable for their artistic practices were a major constraint. It should be noted that rural spaces have made it easier to maintain creative activity because they offer artists exhibition facilities that are better suited to the pandemic situation (larger spaces).

The reflection has also focused on the need to reconsider creation and dissemination venues. To facilitate artist's mobility, to have several venues available, to think of networking city and countryside, to reinvent exhibition-type formats outside dedicated venues or in mixed venues...were some of the proposals made by the artists. Faced with the closure of creation and dissemination venues, artists have invested in social networks or, more globally, in digital technology, in order to create and disseminate their work. For many artists, digital technology is perceived as an imposed constraint. Sometimes it is even felt as a betrayal of one's own values, as it has been necessary to "sell oneself for free to continue to exist".

Concerning relations with audiences, artists, particularly actors, insist that this medium cannot replace the relationship ("I do not exist without an audience"). Because creation is perceived as fundamentally linked to the other in a physical and sensitive relationship, the virtual space and the substitute for the relationship it offers give rise to a strong sense of rejection.

Others reported on their attempts to deal with different spaces physical, virtual or hybrid ones. Some visual artists or audiovisual directors in particular explained how digital technology has enabled them to maintain their activity and stay in touch with other professionals. For young visual artists, digital technology also represents an essential means of making themselves known. Here the gap seems generational and disciplinary.

Beyond the variables linked to discipline, age or greater or lesser mastery of the tools, the disparity in the relationship to digital technology raises objective technical questions.

Firstly, it is a question of skills. Creating on a digital medium implies mastering specific modes of production and distribution, their techniques, purposes and effects. The fact that one does not learn to use these tools or that one does not have the necessary skills generates a feeling of powerlessness, of being forced to use them, and fuels reactions of rejection.

Secondly, this highlights legal and remuneration issues. These are familiar issues, but the pandemic has given them a particular prominence and made them unavoidable. Artists express frustration and even anger when they talk about the use and the outcome of their productions on the Internet. The fear that video distribution will escape them and that it will not be remunerated is coupled with the fact that it could generate income for the broadcasting channels without benefiting them.

## **Structuring and reorganising the sector: putting the artist back at the heart of the system**

The desire to better promote their work was commonly shared by the artists : to transmit in a more visible way what they do, how they do it, what skills and abilities are mobilised in their artistic practices, and what they bring to society... A major effort to promote artistic practice to a wide audience seems to them to be fundamental and a priority in the months and years to come.

Many artists define themselves as the « forgotten ones of the crisis ». They feel that they have been "forgotten" in terms of support systems: where cultural structures, venues and operators have benefited from employment subsidies and/or have seen their subsidies maintained without having to expand their activities, artists feel they have suffered from even greater precariousness.

For many of the participants, the pandemic revealed a crisis of confidence in the role of artists, with the underlying question of what kind of society we want for the future. To fight this crisis of confidence, they call for a real process of co-construction of cultural action or policy by taking their needs and realities more and better into account. They ask for new collective structures and decision-making modes.

## **Conclusions**

These first observations alert us to the situation of creators, their fears and their needs both in terms of technical support and of recognition and valuation of their work. Beyond this, what is pointed out is the need to collectively reflect on the place of creation in society and the role we wish to give to artists in the transformation of society.

For our research project, these testimonies open up avenues for further reflection on :

- the question of time and how it affects artistic work
- the relationship in tension between the different spaces of creation: physical and digital
- the role of creative artists in the transformation of the sector



# Understanding Value and Impact of Digital Cultural Heritage. An extended policy perspective

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## ABSTRACT

A shift has been observed in how people perceive the role of culture, and in particular the role of the cultural heritage (CH) sector. Cultural heritage institutions (CHIs) increasingly define their role and mission broadly, understanding that — having great social trust — they can have an impact in many areas of society. The aim of the inDICEs project<sup>1</sup>, is to understand the effects of the digital revolution on modes of cultural and creative production and on their economic and social impact. The article presents results of research conducted within the inDICEs project that led to creating a framework for analysing digital cultural heritage value chains. The framework offers a more complex approach to value & impact in the CH sector and basis for a new understanding of value and impact of cultural heritage and can serve as the basis for a new, extended cultural policy perspective.

## Keywords:

Heritage institutions, digital heritage, impact

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<sup>1</sup> <https://indices-culture.eu/>

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

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## **1. Policy analysis: Value Chains for Culture Heritage Institutions in the Digital Single Market**

### **1.1 Cultural Heritage Institutions in the Digital Single Market**

One of the goals of the European Union's Horizon 2020 inDICEs project is to understand how value is being created through the reuse of digital heritage resources. The project partners advocate for policies that support the development of new services, initiatives and products that create added cultural, social and economic value. As part of this, they are developing policy recommendations, guidelines, how-to's and other tools to support systemic changes that strengthen the potential of cultural heritage institutions.

The underlying assumption of this paper is that the Cultural Heritage (CH) Sector, a largely not-for-profit sub-sector of the Cultural and Creative Industries (CCI) might be seen as a key enabler of the advancement of the CCI in Europe. The inDICEs project aims to understand the effects of the digital revolution on modes of cultural and creative production and on their economic and social impact. The project believes that non-industrial or sectors such as the visual and performing arts, and particularly the museums, libraries, and (audio-visual) archives, although less market-oriented and essentially relying on public subsidies for their economic viability, play a key role in the conservation and transmission of knowledge and skills and in the exploration and creation of new, path-breaking ideas. The impact of the Digital Single Market (DSM) on the CH sector (and vice versa) is a particularly interesting and challenging topic. In the CH sector, digital reproducibility of content is not part of the core business model but is a tool to facilitate circulation and use, often outside the market context. While a DSM perspective focuses on economic and market impact, from the viewpoint of the CH sector, content use has cultural and social effects as well as an indirect spillover effect that is essential for the economy.

### **1.2 Culture 3.0**

More recently, a shift can be observed in the perception of the role of Culture - and the Culture Heritage sector in particular. There is a parallel, shifting relationship between cultural activity and the generation of economic and social value added. This shift is captured by Pier Luigi Sacco who describes the move from the Culture 1.0 model, which is based on a patronage system, through the Culture 2.0 model, with mass produc-

tion of cultural products that is controlled by entrance barriers of access to technologies and resources, to Culture 3.0 model, that blurs the boundaries between producers and users (Sacco, 2011). This shift should be accompanied by a new policy perspective and structural funds programming that considers the Culture 3.0 framework. This shift should be accompanied by a new policy perspective and structural funds programming that takes into account the Culture 3.0 framework. According to Sacco, one should give up a notion of the cultural and creative industries as a specific macro-sector of the economy, and a notion of the demand side as a market-mediated audience (Sacco, 2011, 9). One should rather focus on the structural interdependencies between the cultural and creative sectors on one hand, and other sectors, and one has to reason in terms of the demand side as a partially market-mediated pool of practitioners increasingly interested in active cultural participation and access (Sacco 2011, 9).

### 1.3 The new role of CHIs

This shift is also reflected in the new developments in the CH sector itself. With the growing institutional interest in audience development (Bollo et al., 2017) participatory models (Simon, 2010), and community engagement, CH sector is looking for ways of engaging audiences as users and creators as well as ways of measuring their impact. The Europeana Impact Framework<sup>2</sup>, developed by the Europeana Foundation, is an attempt to support institutions in this regard. Especially, that a shift is visible in how institutions define their role in society which can be exemplified with a recent debate among museum professionals on the new museum definition proposed by ICOM (International Council for Museums). The first sentence of the proposed new definition states: “Museums are democratising, inclusive and polyphonic spaces for critical dialogue about the pasts and the futures” (ICOM, 2019). It focuses on the inclusiveness of institutions and their practices, their role as actors in society and the importance of equal access to cultural heritage. Last but not least, it emphasises cooperation and co-creation with the involvement of various communities as well as calls for the active involvement of institutions in many dimensions of social life and its contemporary challenges. The emergence of museum activism (Janes & Sandell, 2020) is also worth noting, as both authors of the book on the subject treat it as a sign of change: “Only a decade ago, the notion that museums, galleries and heritage organisations might engage in activist practice - marshalling and directing their unique resources with explicit intent to act upon inequalities, injustices and environmental crises - was met with widespread scepticism and often derision. Seeking to purposefully bring about social change beyond the walls of the institution (...) was viewed by many museum workers, sector leaders and external commentators alike as inappropriately political and partisan. (...) Today, the idea remains controversial but there are signs of what we hope will be an irreversible shift in the way we think about the role and responsibility of museums as knowledge based, social institutions” (Janes & Sandell, 2020, xxvii). Although there are major differences between institutions of the whole CH, one can observe the general tendency towards more open, inclusive and transparent ways of operating, more access to knowledge and resources gathered by the institutions, more readiness to cooperate with various actors from different sectors and more focus on social relevance (Simon, 2016) and impact.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://pro.europeana.eu/page/impact>

## 1.4 Digital Cultural Heritage

The process of digitisation of cultural heritage has opened up new ways in which digital heritage resources might circulate and be relevant for different communities and actors across the sectors. For over a decade initiatives such as OpenGLAM (GLAM: galleries, libraries, archives, museums) have been advocating for more equal and unrestricted access to digital cultural heritage available for free reuse. The Open GLAM Survey (initiated by dr Andrea Wallace and Douglas McCarthy) aimed at uncovering the global picture of Open GLAM was inspired by the shared need for a single resource providing an up-to-date picture of open access policy and practice (McCarthy, 2019). As one of the authors admits, “as well as an information gap, there seemed to be implicit bias in Open GLAM towards major European and North American institutions: the Rijksmuseum, National Gallery of Art, the British Library etc. Even if unfair, this perception risked open access being seen as something ‘just for the big Western museums’ and less relevant or accessible to smaller institutions” (McCarthy, 2019). Open GLAM Survey covers both objects and data that GLAMs make available on their own websites and on external platforms (like Wikimedia Commons, Europeana, the German Digital Library and Github). So far the list includes more than 850 institutions from around the world. Thanks to the survey, being a living source of knowledge, we now have a better overview of open access policy and practice. Among the advocates for free unrestricted access to digital cultural heritage were also other global communities and networks such as Creative Commons Global Network and Wikimedia. The GLAM-Wiki initiative is aimed at helping cultural institutions share their resources with the world through high-impact collaboration alongside experienced Wikipedia editors, underlining the fact that this presents an unparalleled opportunity for the custodians of our cultural heritage to present their collections to new audiences. From within the cultural heritage sector, Europeana has played a significant role in opening up collections and bringing them closer to their audiences as well as inspiring digital projects based on heritage resources.

## 1.5 Understanding Value and Impact of Digital Cultural Heritage

The value of digital collections became a subject of interest among experts, who in the early XXI century started looking more closely at the benefits institutions reap from charging fees for access to digitised materials from their collections. Rights policies and reproduction charging models in American museums were a subject of scrutiny of the Mellon Foundation study (Tanner, 2004). As the author, Simon Tanner, concludes, “it is clear from the results of this study that the level of revenue raised by museums through imaging and rights is small relative to the overall revenue earning capacity of the museum from retail, ticket sales, membership and fundraising” (Tanner, 2004, 40). It is not the profitability of these activities that is a driving force for these services, but the need to promote collections and address the users’ expectations. At first, common concerns among representatives of the heritage sector included the fear that by making collections available online, the number of visitors would decline, and worries about content published online being used in a way that’s not in line with the museum’s mission or downright offensive or harmful (Kapsalis, 2016), which can be referred to as a need for intellectual control. Smaller institutions, which do not have large budgets, were also worried that openness is a big, well-financed institution’s game, often providing the Dutch Rijksmuseum as

an example. Such big institutions do not need to worry about their brand when their collections are made available online and somewhat lose the connection to the particular institution, which was another concern for smaller-scale institutions with less recognizability.

In the subsequent report prepared for the Mellon Foundation by Kristin Kelly, the focus was the experience of open access in 11 museums. While summing up the key conclusions of her report, the author of the study states that revenue matters less than many institutions think it does, and providing open access is a mission-driven decision, not a calculated one. She references earlier reports and analyses of American institutions, noticing that institutions generally do not analyse actual costs and that they cite gross rather than net revenue, and investment in technology, although costly, supports mission-driven activities, such as collaboration across the museum, better collections care, and a higher level of educational outreach when images are available online (Allen, 2009). An earlier report for the Mellon Foundation examining the sale of digital and analogue formats of images of works in 51 institutions in the United Kingdom and Europe concludes that none of the analysed institutions had fully recovered the associated costs of imaging (i.e., the costs of creation, management, storage, and providing service) solely from the sale of digital images (Tanner, Deegan 2002). Institutions using the possibility for making a profit from selling access to digital images often set up a prize basing their estimation on how much a particular piece of art is worth in the context of other institutions' charging policies (Tanner, Deegan, 2003). Thus the actual cost of producing that digital image was not necessarily the result of the institution's costs of providing access to its digital copy which is not always precisely estimated. Simon Tanner and Marilyn Deegan found out in their research that for users a cost difference between printed and digital copy sold by an institution is only around 10,5%. At that time it was much more profitable to sell digital images because it was much cheaper for institutions to produce them. On the basis of the analysis of case studies, Kapsalis concludes that while many of the advantages of open access are confirmed, most of the fears that are often mentioned by museum professionals (e.g. loss of intellectual control of institution's resources, reductions in the number of in-person visits) are largely unfounded (Kapsalis, 2016, 12). In the meantime, the pressure on museums to abolish image fees has been growing (Grosvenor, 2018).

New insights about the economic potential of cultural and creative sectors in Europe came with the KEA Report (KEA, 2006). As Sacco notes, referring to the CSES study (CSES, 2010), these figures are likely to be underestimated. According to Sacco, reasoning on the basis of the Culture 2.0-3.0 transition, it becomes easier to explain why and how culture matters for the general economy. The key of the argument lies in moving the focus from the economic outcomes of cultural activity to the behaviours that cause them: In order to understand the effects of culture outside of the cultural realm, we have to consider how cultural access changes the behaviour of individuals and groups. One of the most evident effects has to do with the cornerstone of the Culture 3.0 phase: Active cultural participation. By active cultural participation, we mean a situation in which individuals do not limit themselves to passively absorb the cultural stimuli, but are motivated to put their skills at work: Thus, not simply hearing music, but playing; not simply reading texts, but writing, and so on". (Sacco 2011, 9).

Looking more closely into what is the value of digital cultural heritage and how it is created, we were inspired by the Culture 3.0 framework proposed by Sacco as well as the notion of various areas of impact that cultural heritage has on society and economy, following the new understanding of the role of CH institutions.

## 1.6 The COVID-19 pandemic

As research has shown, the global pandemic of COVID-19 has had a huge effect on the CH sector. According to a study carried out by ICOM (2020) 82.6% of respondents predicted that due to the pandemic, museum programmes will have to be limited, with 29.8% expected the number of employees to have to be reduced. 12.8% of participants were concerned that their museum may be closed. Data collected by NEMO (Network of European Museum Organisations), focused on Europe, provides a picture only slightly more positive, also noting the effect that a 50-70% decrease in tourism will have on the CH sector. European institutions have been losing a significant part of their revenues from ticket sales or museum shops. On the other hand, many institutions have taken a crash course on digital transformation (or some aspects of it), and often implemented changes successfully. According to ICOM data, 15% of museums reported an increase in activities related to digital communication, and 50% - in activities on social media.

A recent study conducted by LIBER (Ligue des Bibliothèques Européennes de Recherche – Association of European Research Libraries) discusses the impact of COVID-19 on academic libraries. Physical and mental health as well as safety of staff is among the top concerns regarding working within the physical realm of libraries (LIBER, 2020, 19). According to the study, “there is a definite focus towards increased online training. Creating and maintaining engagement in the form of more online training and events. Contact with library users is greatly missed by many participants” (LIBER, 2020, 20). However, there is also a concern among professionals about digitisation potentially reducing the value of libraries by alienating audiences and creating unequal access: “Digitisation is on everyone’s minds and agendas. There is a digital divide now, and we need to be careful not to alienate those who are behind in digitalisation, said one participant. Some libraries have fully digitised, and some have always been digital, but many are still in the process, and at different stages or phases of transformation. What is certain, is that libraries need support in a transition to full or almost-full digitisation. This comes in many shapes and forms, such as financial support, online services/activities, tools and training” (LIBER, 2020, 20).

CCS, as largely venue-based sectors, are the hardest hit by social distancing measures and the effects of the pandemic are expected to be long-lasting (Travkina et al., 2020). As Travkina and Sacco underline, the sector has innovated rapidly, notably with accelerated digitalisation (Travkina et al. 2020, 3). While some of the institutions’ efforts were focused on looking for quick and instant solutions to the sudden separation with the audiences, the crisis is also perceived as an opportunity to reflect and look for new solutions. The importance of the slowdown for the possible change of perspective appears in debates about the cultural sector. It seems that the pandemic has proved the importance of culture in times of crisis as recalled by cultural professionals’ communities and networks, highlighting the role of culture as one of the essential elements of post-pandemic programmes (eg. Europe Day Manifesto. Cultural Heritage: a powerful catalyst for the future

of Europe, The 2020 Rome Charter). The lockdowns resulting from the pandemic have clearly shown the importance of culture and creativity for society: “The arts and creative activities play a crucial role in the well-being and cohesion of the community, shaping values; they represent the key to assure freedom of expression and innovation” (KEA, 2020, 2). CH professionals learn and reflect on the effect that the global pandemic has and will have on the sector, imagining different scenarios and debating the role of culture in Europe’s recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic and the future of Europe. Lots of commentators emphasise that the availability of cultural content and the very fact that many institutions provide free and unrestricted access to their collections online contributed to the preservation of mental health and well-being of societies in 2020. According to the study published by KEA, “The crisis is the opportunity to acknowledge the economic and social importance of CCS in nurturing social cohesion, in making places and territories attractive to locals and tourists and in providing jobs. CCS plays a crucial role in the wellbeing of communities and social cohesion. They are leading collective sense-making. They are part of an essential ecosystem which values freedom of expression, innovation, the sharing of collective experiences and emotions. Artists express our collective consciousness” (KEA, 2020, 12). The experience of the global pandemic seems to be proving that we should be thinking in terms of the impact that the CCS have on societies and try to capture the role of digital cultural heritage, having in mind that the path towards rapid digital transformation taken by many CH institutions in response to the pandemic will be enhancing the variety of interactions with heritage content online (strengthening Culture 3.0). Considering the impact of culture on different macroeconomic areas, we need to remember about the importance of media literacy, digital competences and access in this context. As Travkina and Sacco note: “massive digitalisation coupled with emerging technologies, such as virtual and augmented realities, can create new forms of cultural experience, dissemination and new business models with market potential. With the lockdown, many public and private providers moved content online for free to keep audiences engaged and satisfy the sharply increased demand for cultural content. While the provision of free and digitally mediated cultural content is not sustainable over time, it has opened the door to many future innovations. To capitalise on them, there is a need to address the digital skills shortages within the sector and improve digital access beyond large metropolitan areas, with the additional consideration that digital access does not replace a live cultural experience or all the jobs that go with it” (Travkina et al., 2020, 3). A post-covid reflection should take into consideration individual needs, new poverty and the need to guarantee access to cultural contents as inclusive as possible.

## 1.7 The context of European policies

While working on the proposed framework for understanding value and impact of digital cultural heritage we have taken a close look on policies, spanning the last twenty years, is focused on European Union policies, enacted through Communications, Recommendations of the European Commission, Directives adopted by the European Parliament and other documents adopted by the Council of the European Union or other entities. Our aim was to demonstrate how European policymakers understand the value of digital heritage and whether specific measures have been adopted to support reuse and value creation on the basis of digital heritage. We reviewed three categories of policies: 1) cultural policies, which define culture as a fundamental pillar of the European project, ensuring its identity and diversity; 2) Copyright and intellectual property poli-

cies, within which specific regulations affecting the reuse of digital cultural heritage have been developed - fitting mainly within the scope of copyright law framework; 3) Public sector information reuse policies, which - after being extended to museums, libraries and archives in 2013 - offer the strongest vision of value creation supported by necessary policy measures to implement it, albeit a vision developed largely for resources other than cultural heritage.

On the basis of the review conducted, we propose that the debate on digital cultural policies needs to connect with an ongoing debate about European vision and regulation of the online ecosystem, the internet as such. In this debate, some of the tiers of impact proposed by Sacco (2011) are defined as key goals of this European vision: sustainability, social welfare, social cohesion or sovereignty. And just as a decade ago he argued that "cultural and creative industries need a more solid rooting within the broader economic and social context", today we need to connect cultural policies and digital heritage frameworks with visions for the European internet. This means looking beyond the traditional policy loci, such as the copyright debate. An argument can therefore be made for debates on digital culture and its European regulation to also include the policies with the broadest scope, those dealing with the shape of the internet and the online ecosystem built on its generative infrastructure. An opposite argument can also be raised - that these broader visions should pay attention to projects, activities and processes that emerge around digital cultural heritage. Because heritage in this form is a generative resource. Processes of value creation on its basis - like the Getty Museum Challenge - are not just innovative cultural projects, but also templates for other, socially beneficial flows of content and activity in the online ecosystem. And the active, productive user that is characteristic of the Culture 3.0 model embodies the positive characteristics that we expect from users of digital technologies in a broader sense. Therefore, to paraphrase Sacco, we need to develop new, system-wide representation of the structural interdependencies between the online cultural sector and other sectors of the online ecosystem.

## **2. Understanding Value and Impact of Digital Cultural Heritage**

### **2.1 Case studies analysis**

To meet the goals of this paper (outlined in the previous – introductory – section) we used case studies of specific instances in which digital cultural resources are applied and used to create and disseminate a specific product, service, and/or initiative. We identified 82 cases of initiatives realised by specific actors that met the following criteria:

1. The actor is in possession of digital cultural resources, or in possession of rights/licenses to use given resources (its availability may be also established on the basis of open licenses).
2. The actor uses such resources to create and deliver a cultural product to the public, one that builds upon, reuses and adds value to the original resource.
3. The actor interacts with a specific group of people and entities (which can be understood as audiences, communities, users, customers) in order to promote and disseminate what was created or encourage them to use the product.



4. The reuse of the resource and the use of the product has effects that can be assessed as (at least potentially) socially beneficial.

The identification of such cases was done by involving 10 experts (including the authors) in the field of digital culture who used their most up-to-date knowledge and, also, performed Desk Research and community outreach to identify most relevant examples of digital cultural resources' applications. The cases were analysed in a more profound manner using the expert survey approach where each of the experts was asked to provide answers to a previously crafted questionnaire. The answers were closely analysed by the authors of this paper in order to increase the understanding of all possible details at play when one can speak of digital cultural resources' application in product, services and/or initiatives. The last step in the process of gathering data was the planning, organisation and execution of the Focus Group Interviews (FGIs) that were done online with the participation of c.a. 40 experts and practitioners from Cultural Heritage Institutions (CHI) field that joined the public Consultation Workshops run by inDICEs project. The main value-added of the FGIs was gathering qualitative data as to the barriers and obstacles the creators of products, services and/or initiatives may face when trying to develop a solution using/re-using digital cultural resources. It is also important to stress that all data gathered was of a qualitative character. This data was analysed by the authors of this report and presented in a fairly (as the authors believe) concise and synthetic form.

## **2.2 Value chain & creative value chain**

Taking into consideration the changing perception of the role and responsibilities of cultural heritage institutions, as well as the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, in DICEs team of researchers decided to look at the Culture Heritage sector in the context of the structural inter-dependencies and the impact it has on other sectors and the societies and to discuss the issue of the value of digital cultural heritage.

The project investigated the existing approaches to understanding value and value chains - introduced as an analytical tool by Michael Porter (1985). The concept provides a very strong metaphor for understanding circulations of goods and services in the economy, underlying that "a narrow scope (focus) can create competitive advantage through tailoring the value chain, and (...) broader scope can enhance competitive advantage through the exploitation of interrelationships among the value chains that serve different segments, industries or geographic areas" (Porter 1985). At the same time, the approach has been criticised for providing a simplistic, linear understanding of the process of production and value creation, originating from the analysis of industrial manufacturing. For this reason, the sector-specific concept of the "creative value chain" has been developed. This concept has been operationalised for the purpose of cultural statistics by UNESCO and Eurostat.

The "creative value chain" is a basic analytical tool for understanding cultural production. In 2009, UNESCO developed a similar concept of the culture cycle in its "Framework for Cultural Statistics". The concept describes "the production of culture as a result of a series of interlinked processes or stages that together form the culture cycle, value chain or supply chain" (UNESCO, 2009). The conceptual tool has been designed to provide means for a more in-depth analysis of the production and distribution of culture. The culture cycle

consists of five stages: creation, production, dissemination, exhibition/reception/ transmission, consumption/participation. The traditional value chain model is usually conceptualised as a hierarchical, or vertical set of linked entities, along which the product or services moves, and gains value. Thus the importance of the relative position of each entity, which can have an "upstream" or "downstream" position with regard to other companies. The culture cycle, in turn, proposes a cyclical metaphor, in order to *reinforce the idea that the relationships can be complex and occur more as a network* (UNESCO, 2009).

### **2.3 The framework for understanding value and impact of the digital cultural heritage**

inDICEs proposes a value creation framework developed on the basis of existing approaches to understanding cultural value chains and impact of cultural heritage, combined with insight from specific cases of re-using digital cultural resources that we analysed. The aim is to understand whether there is anything specific about value creation when one only looks at the re-use of cultural digital resources. The inDICEs model is mainly based on the UNESCO cultural cycle model (also explained in the previous sections). The project builds on this model to present a more detailed one, adequate for explaining in greater detail the social and economic impact of cultural heritage. The UNESCO model offers the basic assumption that value creation in the field of culture (and, as we believe, in many modern businesses which fall into the category of "knowledge economy") is rarely linear in the way it happens. Instead, value creation happens in networks that are complex and include varied, heterogeneous actors. These networks often span different sectors of the society and include both commercial, public and civic or grassroots entities. Importantly, the activities need not be institutionalised, and they do not need to be governed or overseen by state institutions. The UNESCO model uses the term "domain" to define a broadly understood cultural sector that covers both economic (market-related) and social (non-market related) activities. This perspective leads to a value creation model that is much more complex in comparison with traditional models that assume linear creation of added value through the metaphorical "chain" of connected actors and productive processes. Introducing this kind of complexity is of crucial importance to present a theory of how social, as well as economic, value and impact is constructed within the process of re-using digital cultural resources.

The inDICEs model is based on the scheme of five basic stages of what the UNESCO model defines as the cultural cycle. Again, the five-stage cycle proposed by UNESCO – which is seen by the organisation as a broadly understood production cycle – has the aim of highlighting the complexity and variety of activities that contribute value to broadly understood cultural resources. These five stages include:

1. Creation – the origination and authoring of ideas and content;
2. Production – the making of cultural works, whether as one-off productions (e.g. crafts, paintings, sculptures) or as mass reproducible cultural forms (e.g. books, movies, TV programmes), as well as the manufacture of goods required for the production of cultural works;
3. Dissemination – the distribution of cultural products to consumer and exhibitors;

4. Exhibition – provisions of live and/or unmediated experiences to audiences through granting or selling restricted access to consume/participate in often time-based cultural activities (e.g. play, concerts, museum and gallery exhibitions, festivals);
5. Consumption – the activities of audiences and participants in consuming cultural products and taking part in cultural activities and experiences.

These activities are all important – according to the authors of this model – in the process of what they call “cultural production”. However, the model is not hierarchical and should be understood rather as a network. Within this network, all kinds of connections and directions may happen when producing cultural goods. There is also an assumption that the process can be cyclical, returning to previous stages over the cultural cycle. Yet in practical terms, reuse of digital cultural heritage usually follows a path from creation to consumption. Cyclical nature of the production process, as described in this model, also means that actors can have roles at different stages of the cycle. Most importantly, users are not limited to the role of consumers and can be engaged in earlier phases, especially if the process is cyclical and assumes several cyclical rounds of reuse.

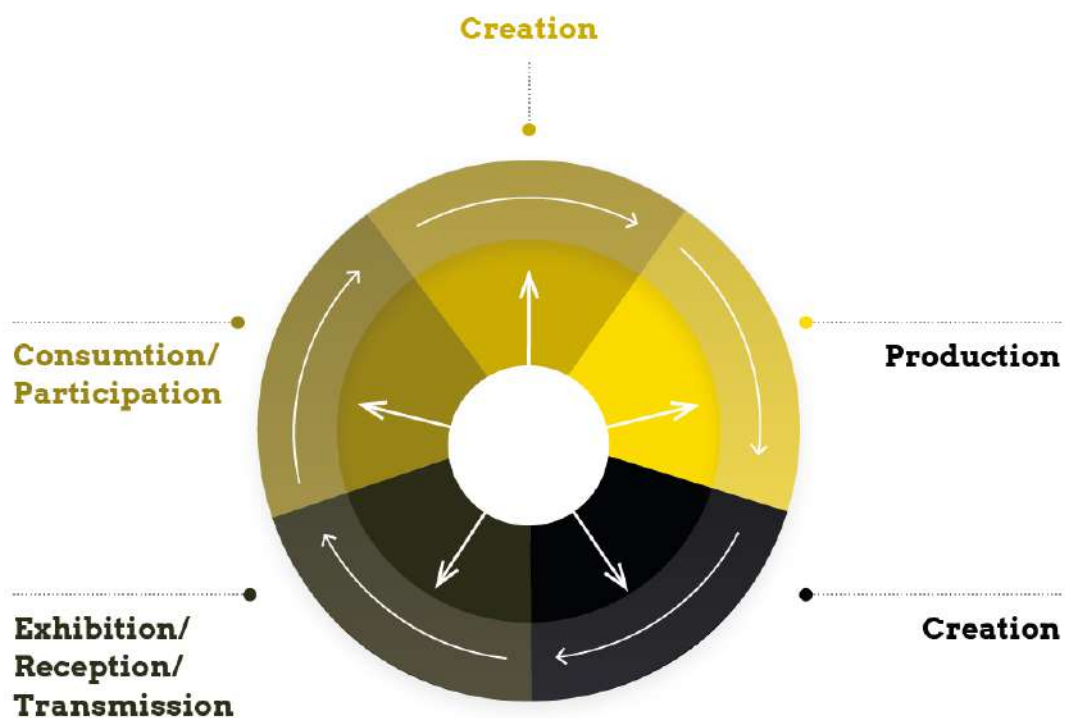


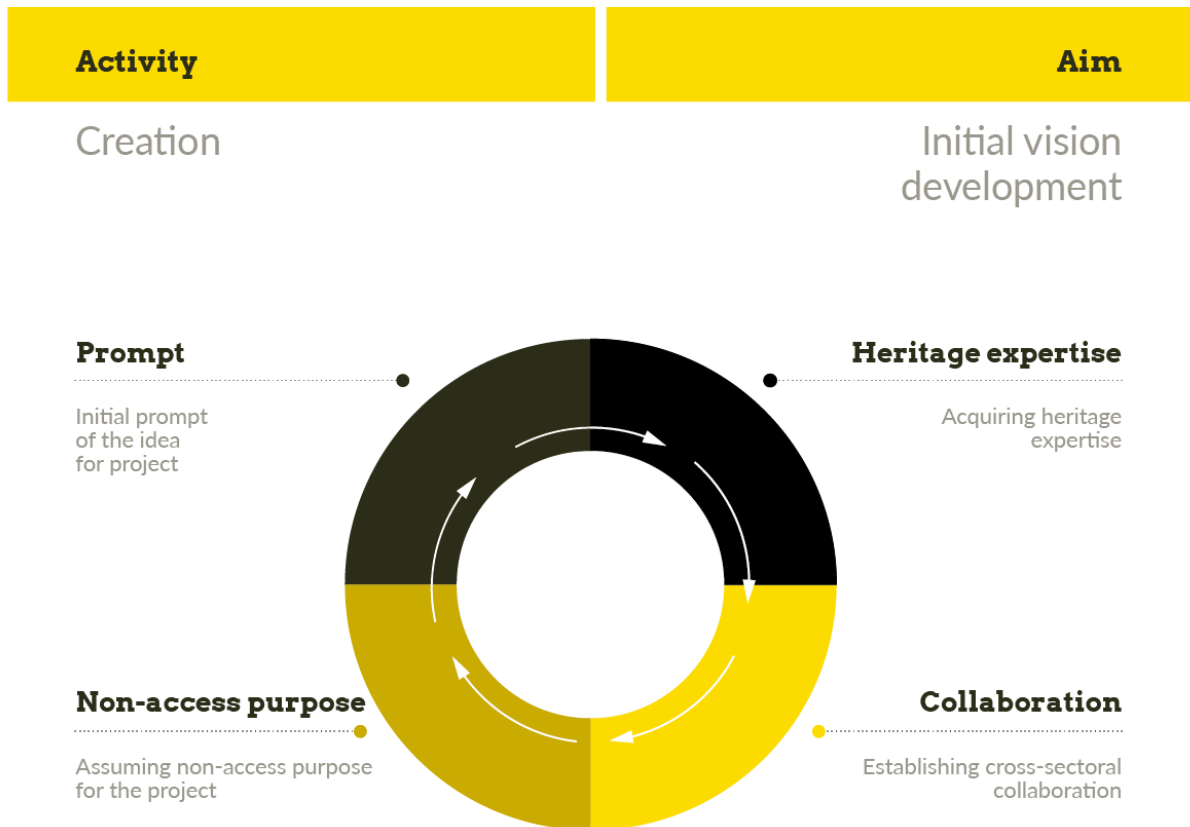
FIGURE 1. CULTURAL CYCLE  
Source: UNESCO 2009.

Research proved that this viewpoint helps understand the cases identified and analysed under the scope of inDICES. Furthermore, it observed cyclical - instead of linear - processes within the first, initial phase of the project: Creation. In this phase - based on case studies analysis - several steps were identified that are significant and play a key role in the process of idea origination (as it is a process and not a one-time moment). Specific milestones have to be achieved to arrive at the moment in which one has a sufficient, broadly understood vision for a project and its societal impact. These milestones can happen - as the authors of the UNESCO model envisioned - in a cyclical fashion (see visual representation below). The four key types of milestones are:

1. Having an initial prompt - it is more of a generic prerequisite as one starts working on a project when one has at least some initial intuition about what this project may look like.
2. Acquiring heritage expertise – it is about knowing the resource, its potential value, its importance, but also both historical and up-to-date ways of interaction with the resource(s) at hand.
3. Establishing cross-sectoral collaborations – it is about involving actors that come from different sectors pretty early in the process. Research proved that by achieving this milestone the interest of an end-user is safeguarded already in the vision creation process and the usage of connection and interaction mechanisms is more likely. This “safeguarding” comes from intersectoral discussions about its needs, preferences, practices, norm, challenges, etc.
4. Assuming non-access purpose – only a little above 20% of access-oriented projects make use of some sort of market linkages. It is to believe that if non-access orientation is already injected at the vision development phase of the project it substantially increases the chances that the direct market impact will occur.

Concerning the next, “production” phase of the cycle, research found out during discussions with actors involved in re-use projects that IT expertise is a uniquely important capacity. In fact, IT engineers were named “gatekeepers” to the digital world. So, whenever digital production is involved, safeguarding IT expertise is a required element of a successful, and thus valuable and impactful, project. Also, there surely will be some reciprocity between the creation and production activity (as presented in the UNESCO model). In turn, much can be said (based on our study) about the dissemination, exhibition and consumption activities proposed by UNESCO in the value chain model. Once the “product” (understood generically) is being made, the focus is directed into two general aims – one is about establishing a connection with the audiences and another is establishing linkages with markets. What is done within these two “areas” of value creation determines whether the project will achieve positive outcomes. At this phase, crucial activities concern developing and implementing correct instruments, which we described in the previous sections of this report. The chain or cycle of value creation in the field of re-use of digital cultural resources can be brought down into four building blocks: Vision Development, Production, Connection with Audiences, Market Linkages. The names for those blocks are, also, instructional, and present what we believe to be important milestones (or elements of the checklist if one wills) of delivering the impact with digital cultural resources. Also, reciprocity is observed

at all times throughout the model. This means the activities carried out within building blocks identified here may (and most probably will) influence each other.

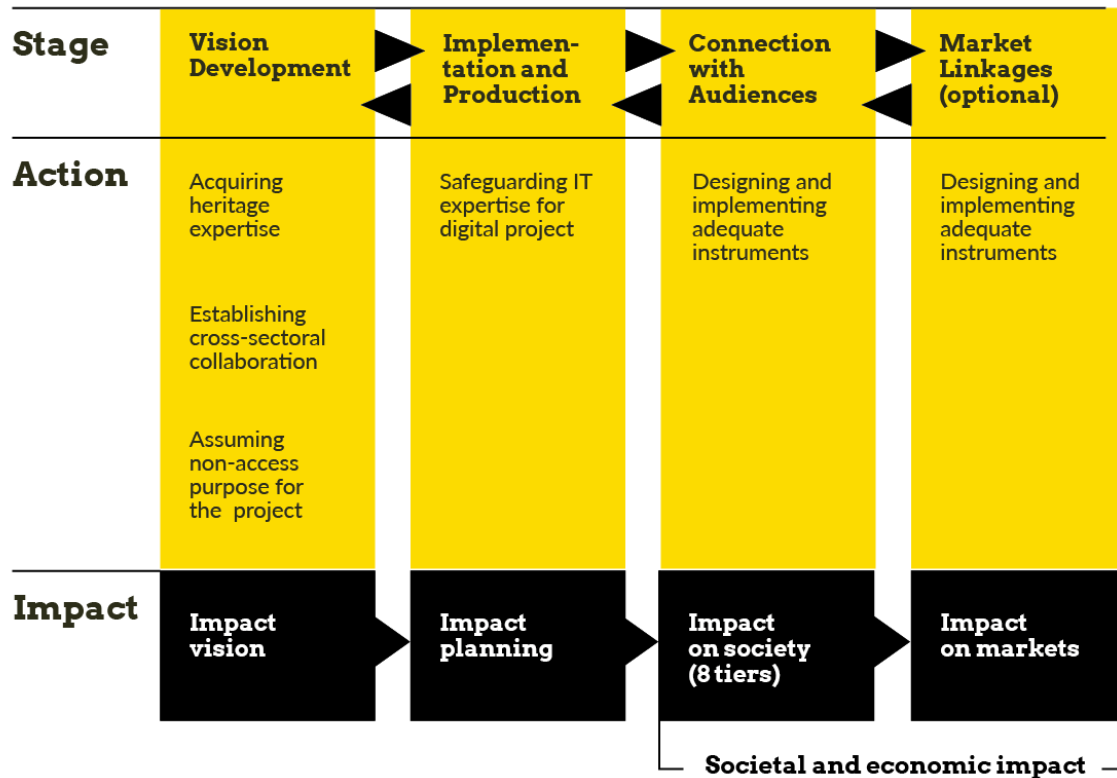


**FIGURE 2. MILESTONES OF DELIVERING IMPACT WITH DIGITAL CULTURAL RESOURCES**

Source: Policy analysis of value chains for Culture Heritage Institutions in the Digital Single Market

inDICEs proposes a framework, in which broadly understood impact emerges on the basis of two broad types of activities, conducted in the Creation stage of the cultural cycle: connecting with audiences and market linkages. We want to underline the fact that impact – in other words, the added value created through value chains or cycles – is not just economic in character. In the studies that were analysed, it is social and not economic impact that is prevalent and that can be identified in each of the cases that we studied. This applies to the initial stages of vision development and implementation, in which many projects do not define any market-related goals or economic impact. Also in later stages of the cycle, connection with audiences occurs in many cases, but the market linkage is an optional element of the value creation process, taking place only in some instances.

## Digital Cultural Heritage Value Creation Cycle



**FIGURE 3. DIGITAL CULTURAL HERITAGE VALUE CREATION CYCLE**

Source: Policy analysis of value chains for Culture Heritage Institutions in the Digital Single Market

On the other hand, economic impact generated through cultural value chains and cycles is easy to conceptualise and measure, as it concerns mainly financial gains and easy to measure factors such as income. It is a broadly understood social impact that, according to performed analysis, is much more varied and complex. While measuring impact was not the aim of inDICEscape study analysis, the project employed cultural impact models in order to specify the kinds of social, non-economic value created on the basis of digital cultural heritage. These impact models provide valuable tools that help design projects that aim to employ digital cultural heritage for social impact, but also can be used to analyse such cases and to build policies that focus on specific types of social impact. To showcase how it may work inDICEs presents (as an example) an eight-tier model proposed by Sacco (2011, developed further in Sacco, Tavano Blessi and Ferilli, 2018). The authors argue that in the Culture 3.0 model, cultural participation is the key driver for value creation. They propose, in order to provide an initial typology of the impact of such cultural participation, to analyse it in terms of eight different tiers that define eight varied areas of “indirect developmental effects of culture”. The tiers can be understood as specific areas or modes of such indirect effects, but also can be seen as conceptual

lenses, similar to those defined in the Europeana impact framework (also discussed in the previous sections of this report). Furthermore, for each tier, there are dedicated policies that according to Sacco should take into consideration cultural projects as important policy tools.

inDICEs extends this conceptual model to include impact not just of cultural participation, but the whole cycle of value creation, independent of the varied forms that it can take and of the intensity of cultural participation in a given case. It also acknowledges that societal impact can occur in market-based projects, where economic incentives and economic value creation are key aspects of the value creation process. This is a point highlighted by Sacco, Tavano Blessi and Ferilli – who write that “there is a strong complementarity between the direct economic channel and the indirect ones, in that they concur to increase individual participation and access to cultural opportunities and stimulate further culturally-related capability building”. Social and economic impact should be treated as complementary. Even when we focus on non-economic factors to ensure impact – as Sacco does – we should note that the two types of impact “concur to increase individual participation and access to cultural opportunities and stimulate further culturally-related capability building” (Sacco, Tavano Blessi and Ferilli 2018).

The table below presents the eight tiers of impact proposed in the Culture 3.0 model, followed by examples of such impact, taken from inDICEs case studies. It has to be stressed that in this model the eight tiers should be seen as general directions of impact that can be both defined at the level of vision definition and implementation and then can occur in the later phases of the cycle. This is not to say that other types of impact cannot be determined – for each case, an assumption was made that impact occurs across multiple tiers.

| <b>Tier of cultural effects</b>  | <b>Specific activities and effects related to digital cultural heritage</b>   |
|--|---|
| Innovation. Effects on attitudes towards and on the capacity for creating innovative meanings and practices. | Digital social innovation projects with the use of digital cultural heritage.<br>Example: ArtLensAI   |
| Welfare. Effects on life expectation and psychological well-being.   | Use of digital heritage resources in “remote-first” cultural activities during the pandemic.<br>Example: Getty Museum Challenge.                                |
| Sustainability. Effects on awareness of environmental issues.  | Projects that decrease the environmental impact of cultural participation through online, remote access to the collection.<br>Example: MetMuseum - Art at Home. |
| Social cohesion. Effects on crime prevention, conflict resolution, the wellbeing of at-risk groups.          | Best practices for cohesion and good conduct of online communities developed through cultural projects.<br>Example: Palestine Open Maps.                        |
| New entrepreneurship models. Effects on innovative and creative forms of leadership and                      | Crowdfunding and new models for sustaining cultural projects and products.  |

|  |   |
|--|---|
| entrepreneurship, often culture-related.   | Example: Sketchfab platform.  |
| Lifelong learning. Effects on capacities allowing adaptation to, selection and shaping of environmental context. | Reuse of digital cultural heritage in educational apps and resources.<br>Example: DailyArt app.   |
| Soft power. Effects on visibility, reputation and influence of countries and regions.                            | Reuse of cultural heritage resources as part of broader institutional identity, with spillover effects for regions and countries.<br>Example: Rijksstudio at the Rijksmuseum. |
| Local identity. Effects on social and cultural foundations of places and on their development.                   | Building online networks and communities around CHI and other entities.<br>Example: Wikipedia and Wikimedia Commons.  |

**TABLE 1. TIERS OF CULTURAL EFFECTS**

**Source: Policy analysis of value chains for Culture Heritage Institutions in the Digital Single Market**

In the eight-tier of cultural effects model, Pier Luigi Sacco focuses his attention to ways in which cultural participation projects have effects on societal issues that are traditionally seen as lying beyond the cultural sphere, especially social cohesion, welfare or environmental awareness. The examples that he provides are often connected to “offline” activities, such as that of the correlation between cultural participation and waste segregation (Sacco, 2009). Sacco, therefore, makes an important argument that cultural projects should be seen as significant also from the perspective of social policies, especially at the local level. For example, social cohesion and welfare strategies should employ activities that stimulate cultural participation.

This model of impact should be adjusted to account for the specificity of activities that are more often online or have a stronger technological, digital component - activities that are mediated by digital technologies, for example social networks. These have spillover effects into the offline reality, and therefore have - broadly speaking - same effects as those expected by Sacco’s impact model. For the purpose of the inDICES project, the next step is to explore policy recommendations that focus on the online, digital dimension of social life, which falls within the scope of the European policy frame of the Digital Single Market.

The article refers to and is based on a [Policy analysis of value chains for Culture Heritage Institutions in the Digital Single Market](#)<sup>3</sup> created within the scope of the inDICES project.

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# The state of education in cultural management - artists' perspective

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## ABSTRACT

Educators in arts and culture management come from different fields and with different background, however their task is to standardize the training of future managers in the creative industry and their goal is to support arts and culture in finding and broadening its audience in today's competitive environment where they are slowly losing the race.

This paper aims to research the formal and informal education in cultural management among artists and other cultural workers in Croatia as well as to find out their opinion on the quality of education and opportunities for long life learning in this area. For this reason a research was undertaken among members of national associations in spring 2021. The results confirm that most respondents are not satisfied with the knowledge about cultural management acquired during their secondary as well as higher education. The vast majority acquired this knowledge and skills through practice.

## Keywords:

Arts and culture management, education, national associations, Croatia.

## Introduction

In the introduction, we will point out the importance of cultural/creative industry in the European region in numbers. The facts are taken from a recently published report *Rebuilding Europe: The cultural and creative economy before and after COVID-19 crisis* (2021), based on relevant data and a research undertaken by EY consulting and supported by The European Grouping of Societies of Authors and Composers (GESAC) which commissioned EY teams to produce a report on the state of the cultural and creative industries (CCIs) in Europe, and a number of partners (associations and organisations from the creative industries). Some of the most important facts are:

- *With a turnover of €643 billion and a total added value of €253 billion in 2019, the core activities of the cultural and creative industries (CCIs) represented 4.4% of EU GDP in terms of total turnover. Therefore, the economic contribution of CCIs is greater than that of telecommunications, high technology, pharmaceuticals or the automotive industry.*
- *In 2019, the five largest EU-28 countries (France, Germany, Italy, Spain and the UK) accounted for 69% of CCI total revenue in the EU, but the strongest growth came from Central and Eastern Europe.*
- *Over 90% of CCI companies are small- and medium-sized enterprises, and 33% of the workforce are self-employed –more than twice as many as in the European economy as a whole (14%)“ (Rebuilding Europe, 2021: 4).*
- *In the last six years, the turnover generated by online cultural content, services and works grew by 11.5% per year.*
- *Cultural enterprises have historically been one of the first to experiment and adopt digital technologies (digital photos, digital carriers such as DVD and Blu-ray, CDs, shooting digitally, streaming, virtual reality and online platforms). Cultural content have fueled the growth and the development of the internet from the very beginning, and still represent a high share of broadband consumption“ (Rebuilding Europe, 2021: 6).*
- *In 2020, the cultural and creative economy lost approximately 31% of its revenues. With a loss of 31% of its turnover, the cultural and creative economy is one of the most affected in Europe, slightly less than air transport but more than the tourism and automotive industries (-27% and -25% respectively).*
- *The shockwaves of COVID-19 are felt in all CCIs: performing arts (-90% between 2019 and 2020) and music (-76%) are the most impacted; visual arts, architecture, advertising, books, press and AV activities fell by 20% to 40% compared with 2019. The video games industry seems to be the only one to hold up (+9%).*

- *All sectors are affected: even those that seemed to be protected by home consumption faced a sharp drop in income, given the central role of physical experiences and sales in their business models, as well as uncontrollable production and distribution costs.*
- *The seriousness of the crisis is illustrated, for example, by the fall of around 35% in royalties collected by collective management organisations (CMOs) for authors and performers, whose revenues will be sharply reduced in 2021 and 2022.*“ (Rebuilding Europe, 2021: 6-7)

These facts at the same time point to the importance and vulnerability of the cultural sector.

## Definition of terms

„*Cultural management initiatives* give access to knowledge and resources that strengthen the management and operations of cultural organizations. The idea of cultural management may sound elitist to some people, but in the contemporary developmental paradigm, it is a *sine qua non*. Cultural management is about driving, coordinating, and implementing strategies that affect the cultural sector“ (Ebewo & Sirayi, 2009: 285)

How should we define management in arts and culture? By studying literature, we can notice that some scholars use the term *arts management*, while the others prefer *cultural management*. DeVereaux (2019) who is the author of several chapters in the *Routledge Research in Creative and Cultural Industries Management*, points out this diversity of terms in her introduction about the field. Some, like her, use both terms in an effort to be inclusive. Some emphasize arts or cultural policy as an essential aspect of the management term. Others do not. “*It may be fitting to think about cultural management as a ‚tendency‘ too, especially given that over its history, it has attracted an eclectic mix of researchers and practitioners trained, variously, as sociologists, political scientists, educators, artists, philosophers, curators, theatre managers, and others interested in the same general area of practice and inquiry.*“ (DeVreux, 2019: 5) In her opinion, the history of cultural management has not yet been properly explored and more research of the field and its past is needed.

The other research field of interest and arguments among scholars is education, programs offered as well as educators themselves. Educators in Arts and Culture Management have different backgrounds, either more theoretical or more professional. It is hard to choose which one is better, because both, theory and practical knowledge is needed. It is an interesting point of view of the teaching curricula in the field of cultural management as seen by Brkić (2010): „*Distinction is made between programs that copy directly from business management; programs that focus on the technological process of producing an artwork (usually run by practitioners); those that interlink cultural management and cultural policy (highlighting the role of public governance as a higher principle); and programs that focus on an entrepreneurial approach to arts management, connecting it to issues of creativity and innovation*“ (Brkić, 2010:6). He highlights continuous tensions among the many actors in the field. While professionals usually lack practical knowledge, academics on the other hand call for a stronger scientific approach, “*raw managers*” from the world of



business treat cultural management as just one specific area derived from general management, and administrators „insist on procedure over substance“ (Brkić, 2010: 6), which for him is the social contextualization, the role of art in society.

The synergy of culture and education at the European level is, according to Žuvela (2016), multi-layered and encompasses several approaches and methodologies in different contexts. The final report of the Working Group on the Development of Synergies with Education, in particular with the Art Education of the European Agenda for Culture (2010), adopted three complementary and interdependent approaches to the interpretation of education in culture and the arts, including: *“direct relationship with the work of art / content, be they contemporary or heritage; analytical, cognitive approach to works of art / content and introduction of artistic practices in an adequate context. Establishing synergies between culture and education depends on strengthening the status of arts and cultural education in formal, non-formal and informal education and recognizing the right to lifelong artistic and cultural education“* (European Agenda for Culture, 2010). In this regard, recommendations are given which, among other, promote partnerships between cultural institutions, cultural organizations and schools. *„This partnerships should serve as the basis for training of cultural workers and the development of pedagogical approaches and methods“* (Žuvela, 2016: 28; translation from Croatian).

According to Evrard and Colbert (2000, 11) we can identify *“three levels of training in arts management: seminars for managers, undergraduate programs and graduate programs. Some institutions offer development seminars intended for managers of cultural enterprises. These short-term seminars allow managers to acquire specific skills and do not usually lead to a diploma. Most of the existing programs, however, do have degree-granting status; many are programs at the graduate level, but a number of programs are also offered for the undergraduate degree.”* They point out the fact that arts management is not only taught in traditional management schools or faculties, but a number of programs have been created within arts faculties, particularly in theatre and art history programs. While theatre and museology programs sometimes offer only one course on arts management, other faculties have a comprehensive program.

Arts management faculties, for Rosewall (2015) *„need to be proactive in making sure that the unique aspects of mission-based arts management theory are applied at multiple points in the education process, not only in arts management-specific courses but also through opportunities to ‚translate‘ coursework in business, marketing and other subjects to the arts environment“* (Rosewall E. W., 2015: 9).

Heidelberg and Cuyler (2015: 7) consider *„diversity and inclusion as a priority in the training of future Arts Managers.“* This will ensure that future generations of Arts Managers are global citizens capable of successfully serving and working with everyone. For Swartz (2009) field teaching in the form of visiting arts venues is also a common occurrence in Arts Management programs. It is a chance for students to see the organization and its staff in their working context. On one hand, this approach brings students closer to the real situations, but on the other hand it requires from educators to carefully plan and select events in order

for students to gain insight into the diversity of art manager tasks. The same rule applies to guest speakers brought into classes. „It is important for educators to bring in successful Arts Managers, but it is also important to consider how the field defines a successful Arts Manager“ (Swartz, 2009).

When analyzing the academic curricula, Brkić (2010) differs administration from interdisciplinary cultural managers. He states that „there should be clear goals to educate administrators (implementers) or managers (independent leaders), either in arts management (sector-oriented culture organizations) or cultural management (interdisciplinary forms of activities). In his opinion, until now, the field has been successful in training administrators, while the training of managers is improving with the current educational reforms on the European level. However, the education of arts and cultural managers needs a much wider approach in the context of contemporary challenges“. Another challenge for Brkić (2010) is „the tendency to offer arts management programs at the graduate level without adequate preparation at the undergraduate level. This undermines the field and will have consequences for the arts sector in future.“ He points out that on the one hand it is necessary to scientifically approach cultural management as an area, but that study programs should also be harmonized with trends and include contemporary art movements, thus enabling an interdisciplinary approach to student teamwork. Brkić also highlights „the positive contribution of professional societies like the International Association of Arts and Cultural Management (AIMAC), the European Network for Cultural Administration Training Centres (ENCATC), and other conferences and networks that are shaping arts management into a more mature scientific discipline both in teaching and in practice“.

## Education in Croatia in the field of entrepreneurship in culture - a comparative analysis of study programs

According to the browser of study programs in the Republic of Croatia available in the MOZVAG<sup>4</sup> database on the website of the Agency for Science and Higher Education (ASHE) in the scientific field of social sciences, a total of 12 higher education institutions have a permit to conduct study programs in the scientific field of interdisciplinary social sciences. But there are only two study programs related to the field of culture; one at the university postgraduate level and the other at the undergraduate professional level (Table 1).

| Institution  | Name of study program | Type of study program                          |
|--|-----------------------|--|
| Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences (Zagreb), University of Zagreb | Croatian culture      | postgraduate university study (doctoral study) |

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4 „MOZVAG is an information system supporting quality assurance procedures implemented by the Agency for Science and Higher Education (ASHE). Within the framework of ongoing evaluations, in particular the institutional re-accreditation, higher education institutions are obliged to submit a considerable amount of data to MOZVAG, in accordance with the relevant regulations. This data relates to different activities and resources of the higher education institution (study programmes, courses, teaching staff, scientific and professional productivity, and other data depending on the requirements of a particular evaluation process). “ <https://www.azvo.hr/hr/visoko-obrazovanje/informacijski-sustav-mozvag> (26. 9. 2021).

|                                       |                                       |                                  |
|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Zagreb School of Business<br>(Zagreb) | Cultural Management and<br>Production | undergraduate professional study |
|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|----------------------------------|

**TABLE 1. OVERVIEW OF CULTURAL STUDY PROGRAMS IN CROATIA: THE INTERDISCIPLINARY FIELD OF SOCIAL SCIENCES.**

**Source:** The data are systematized by authors according to the MOZVAG system.

The categories in Table 1 were created according to the categories available on the ASHE website in the MOZVAG system browser, but also according to the paper *Relevance and reasons for incorporating education for media entrepreneurs into the curricula of media studies* (Biondić, Jurčić, Slijepčević and Zelić Gereč, 2011) which was also the impetus for this chapter of our work (More available at: [https://hrcak.srce.hr/index.php?show=clanak&id\\_clanak\\_jezik=192186](https://hrcak.srce.hr/index.php?show=clanak&id_clanak_jezik=192186), July 15, 2021)

Studying the web pages of the mentioned study programs, it can be noticed that the first study program was conceived in a way that would prepare future doctors of science for independent scientific research work. This is evident from the list of compulsory and elective courses, where the first two years of study are based on a focus on theoretical concepts from Croatian culture and styles, while students at the end of their studies are provided with a large number of elective courses (80) grouped in several modules. interests of students. But there is only one course that deals with entrepreneurship in culture - Culture and Management (cf. Curriculum of the Postgraduate University Study of Croatian Culture 2007, p. 7 – 12). [http://kroat.ffzg.unizg.hr/images/studij/Hrvatska\\_kultura.pdf](http://kroat.ffzg.unizg.hr/images/studij/Hrvatska_kultura.pdf), approached July 21, 2021..

At the same time, the second undergraduate professional study of Management and Production in Culture combines basic theoretical knowledge with professional courses and workshops aimed at basic knowledge of Croatian culture and the context in which it operates, to train and educate future staff to take over management positions in cultural institutions. This is evidenced by several courses aimed at strengthening the entrepreneurial competencies of future employees in culture: *Fundamentals of Management and Entrepreneurship in Culture, Cultural Heritage Management, Production and Management of Performing Arts, Management of Museum and Gallery Activities, Financing of Culture and Creative Industries* <https://pvzg.hr/studijski-programi-u-zagrebu/>, 03.08.20212.

| Institution  | Name of study program                                  | Type of study program             | Scientific field |
|--|--|-----------------------------------|------------------|
| Faculty of Croatian Study<br>(Zagreb),<br>University of Zagreb | <i>Croatology (two subjects)</i>                       | undergraduate<br>university study | Croatology       |
| Faculty of Croatian Study<br>(Zagreb),<br>University of Zagreb | <i>Croatology (single subject)</i>                     | undergraduate<br>university study | Croatology       |
| Faculty of Croatian Study<br>(Zagreb),                         | <i>Croatology (two subjects):<br/>teacher's course</i> | graduate university study         | Croatology       |

|   |  |  |   |
|---|--|--|---|
| <b>University of Zagreb</b>   |  |  |   |
| <b>Faculty of Croatian Study (Zagreb), University of Zagreb</b>                                     | <i>Croatology</i>  | postgraduate university study (doctoral study) | Croatology                                |
| <b>Juraj Dobrila University in Pula (Pula)</b>  | <i>Culture and tourism</i>   | undergraduate university study                 | Other interdisciplinary fields of science |
| <b>University in Zadar (Zadar)</b>  | <i>Culture and tourism</i>   | undergraduate university study                 | Other interdisciplinary fields of science |
| <b>Juraj Dobrila University in Pula (Pula)</b>  | <i>Culture and Tourism and Italian Language and Culture (two subjects)</i>   | undergraduate university study                 | Other interdisciplinary fields of science |
| <b>The Academy of Arts and Culture of the Josip Juraj Strossmayer University of Osijek (Osijek)</b> | <i>Culture, Media and Management</i>   | undergraduate university study                 | Other interdisciplinary fields of science |
| <b>Juraj Dobrila University in Pula (Pula)</b>  | <i>Culture and tourism</i>   | graduate university study                      | Other interdisciplinary fields of science |
| <b>The Academy of Arts and Culture of the Josip Juraj Strossmayer University of Osijek (Osijek)</b> | <i>Management in culture and creative industries (two subjects)</i>  | graduate university study                      | Other interdisciplinary fields of science |
| <b>The Academy of Arts and Culture of the Josip Juraj Strossmayer University of Osijek (Osijek)</b> | <i>Management in culture and creative industries (two subjects)</i>  | graduate university study                      | Other interdisciplinary fields of science |
| <b>Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences (Zagreb), University of Zagreb</b>                     | <i>Migration and intercultural relations</i>   | graduate university study                      | Other interdisciplinary fields of science |
| <b>Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences (Zagreb), University of Zagreb</b>                     | <i>Croatian Culture</i>  | postgraduate university study (doctoral study) | Other interdisciplinary fields of science |
| <b>University of Josip Juraj Strossmayer in Osijek (Osijek)</b>                                     | <i>Culturology; specializations: Culture, Art and Literature in the European Context, Information and Communication in Culture, module: Media Culture-Media Research and Management in Culture, Arts and Education</i> | postgraduate university study (doctoral study) | Other interdisciplinary fields of science |

TABLE 2. OVERVIEW OF STUDY PROGRAMS OF CULTURE IN THE INTERDISCIPLINARY FIELD OF SCIENCE.

Source: The data are systematized by authors according to study programs in the MOZVAG system.

In the field of science *Interdisciplinary fields of science* (Table 2), there are a total of 14 study programs in the interdisciplinary fields of science, which contain the term culture in their name. In the scientific field of *Croatology*, programs of the Faculty of Croatian Studies at the University of Zagreb have a permit to conduct a study program at all levels of the education vertical (undergraduate, graduate and postgraduate university study programs). It is an interdisciplinary cultural study dedicated to the "study of Croatian cultural and

national identity." (<https://www.hrstud.unizg.hr/preddiplomski/kroatologija>, approached August 3, 2021). The concept of studies and review of courses in the curriculum show a broad orientation of the study program, which includes areas, culture, identity, history of literature, standard language, dialects, but also "basic knowledge of Croatian archaeological heritage, art and music culture, theater, Exact sciences and history of the standard language." (<https://www.hrstud.unizg.hr/preddiplomski/kroatologija>, approached August 3, 2021). A similarly conceived study is at the doctoral level, which prepares students for independent research careers, as well as scientific work in leading Croatian cultural institutions.

At the same time, the remaining 10 study programs are located in the field of *Other interdisciplinary fields* of science, which, in addition to the capital Zagreb, are conducted in other major university centers in the Republic of Croatia: Osijek, Pula, Zadar at all levels of education. In Pula and Zadar, study programs with identical names (Culture and Tourism) are conducted, but a review of the implementation plan of the study program in Pula shows that culture is represented in only one course (*Creative Industries*). We emphasize that the University website is very opaque and does not allow direct analysis of categories at the University of Juraj Dobrila in Pula, but redirects the searcher to the Faculty of Economics and Tourism " Dr. Mijo Mirkovic " (cf.[https://fet.unipu.hr/fet/studijski\\_programi/preddiplomski](https://fet.unipu.hr/fet/studijski_programi/preddiplomski) approached August 7, 2021).

At the same time, the study program of the same name in Zadar is designed to provide students with basic knowledge of culture, cultural history and tourism with several courses that strengthen entrepreneurial competencies (undergraduate level: *Principles of Economics, Tourism Economics, Cultural Management, Promotional activities, graduate level: Entrepreneurship in culture, Marketing in culture and tourism, Electronic business in culture and tourism*). Furthermore, the Academy of Arts and Culture in Osijek at the Department of Culture, Media and Management conducts an interdisciplinary undergraduate university study "Culture, Media and Management" at the undergraduate level, which aims to acquire basic knowledge in the field of culture, but also offers two courses with entrepreneurial sign (*Economics of Culture and Creative Industries, Urban Management and Culture*), while at the university graduate study "Management in Culture and Creative Industries" the situation is even worse - only one course with a managerial overtone (Development of organizations in culture and creative industries). However, at the undergraduate university study "Cultural Studies", according to data from publicly available curricula (cf. <http://www.uaos.unios.hr/izvedbeni-plan-nastave/> , approached August 7, 2021), the situation is somewhat better with courses aimed at strengthening the entrepreneurial competencies of cultural workers (*Project Management, Strategic Management, Research of Culture, Media and Creative Industries* 5). Also, we should emphasize the positive practice of the concept of study divided according to the directions and thematic preferences of the participants, of which we emphasize the direction of *Management in Culture*.

Table 2 shows that there are no professional study programs represented in this scientific field, and the fact that vocational students make up a significant part of the student population in the Republic of Croatia should be taken into account. According to the data of the Council of Polytechnics and Higher Education Institutions of the Republic of Croatia, vocational students (more than 50,000 of them) make up about a third of the total student population. (Cf. <https://vivos.hr/strucni-studiji/>, August 3, 2021). Let us also mention that in the last few years there has been a debate in Croatia about placing diplomas of vocational students at the same

qualification level as university students, due to lawsuits by several Croatian faculties who believe that the qualifications acquired cannot be at the same level. In March 2020, the Constitutional Court repealed the provisions of Article 65 of the Qualifications Framework Act by placing diplomas of both study programs at the same qualification level, and the provision on the same came into force in early 2021. Nevertheless, the issue of vocational students' qualifications still seems to be on hold. (cf. Kovacevic, Duje; "What will happen to the diplomas of 55,000 students?" The Ministry still does not have a concrete answer "<https://www.srednja.hr/faks/sto-ce-bit-i-s-diplomama-55-000-studenata-ministarstvo-jos-uvijek-nema-konkretan-odgovor/>") Education of cultural workers is important, regardless of the study program, and especially since cultural institutions are managed by individuals who often do not have a formal education in the field of management (Antolović, 2009), economics, entrepreneurship and law, and there is a great need for skills in the field of communications (Jugo, Aunedi Medek & Mihanović, 2015; Zelenika, Grmuša & Jurišić, 2018), marketing (Pavičić, Alfirević & Aleksić, 2006; Dragičević Šešić & Stojković, 2013) and PR and human resources (Antolović, 2010. Karajic, 2018).

|   |   |  |                              |
|---|---|--|------------------------------|
| University Juraj Dobrila in Pula (Pula)                                   | <i>Linguistic and intercultural mediation</i>   | undergraduate university study                 | interdisciplinary humanities |
| Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in Rijeka, University in Rijeka | <i>Culturology</i>                              | undergraduate university study                 | interdisciplinary humanities |
| University in Zadar (Zadar)   | <i>Cultural and Natural Heritage in Tourism</i> | graduate university                            | interdisciplinary humanities |
| Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in Rijeka, University in Rijeka | <i>Culturology</i>                              | graduate university                            | interdisciplinary humanities |
| University in Zadar (Zadar)   | <i>Croatian Culture</i>                         | postgraduate university study (doctoral study) | interdisciplinary humanities |

**TABLE 3. OVERVIEW OF STUDY PROGRAMS OF CULTURE IN THE FIELD OF HUMANITIES.**

**Source:** own elaboration. The data are systematized according to study programs in the MOZVAG system.

Table 3 provides an overview of cultural study programs in the scientific field of humanities, the scientific field of *Interdisciplinary Humanities*. University study programs dominate in the leading university cities (Zagreb, Pula, Rijeka, Zadar), while there are no professional study programs. It is worth noting that most of these study programs are also represented in the previous tables, in the interdisciplinary scientific field.

## Research methodology and results

The aim of this paper is to research the formal and informal education in cultural management among artists and other cultural workers in Croatia, as well as to find out their opinion about the quality of education and opportunities for long life learning in this area. For this reason, research was undertaken during March and April of 2021. A link to an online survey was sent to members of Croatian National Associations in Arts and Culture, informing them about the aim of the research. The final sample consisted of 285 respondents. Most of them come from the field of visual arts, theatre and design, however artists from film, TV and video production, as well as music and dance have also been included in the survey.

### Goals and Research Questions

The main goal of this research was to define how well cultural management as a program as well as a field of study is available and how well it is represented through formal education possibilities from high school level to long-life learning, with the aim of bringing more professional knowledge and expertise to existing artists and people working in cultural and creative industry in Croatia. For this purpose, a survey that consisted of 20 questions was sent to respondents. Such research among members of national associations has not yet been conducted in Croatia. The most important research questions from the survey, regarding the research topic, are the following:

*1<sup>st</sup> category question:* respondents' opinion about the necessity of cultural management skills:

- 'Artists nowadays need to have basic knowledge about managing a cultural product (work of art)'

*2<sup>nd</sup> category questions:* knowledge in cultural management among respondents

- 'I have acquired basic knowledge about management and production in culture and arts during my formal education'

- 'I have acquired basic knowledge about management and production in culture and arts during practice'

*3<sup>rd</sup> category questions:* existing formal education institutions' focus on teaching about cultural management skills

- 'Art high schools in Croatia have implemented subjects regarding managerial and production activities in arts and culture into their curriculums'

- 'Faculties and art academies educate future artists for self-management and production activities'

*4<sup>th</sup> category questions:* supply of cultural management education programs in Croatia

- 'There are number of faculty-level education studies that offer knowledge regarding management in arts and culture in Croatia'

- 'In Croatia, there are viable options for professional development in management and production of a cultural product/work of art (like courses and workshops)'

*5<sup>th</sup> category question:* respondents' opinion about necessity of having more cultural managers in the cultural industry in Croatia

- 'Having more cultural managers in arts and culture would benefit better treatment of artists, cultural workers and cultural products in Croatia'

## ***Hypothesis***

Based on the research, two hypotheses were developed:

H1 *Main hypothesis*: the level of knowledge in cultural management acquired during secondary as well as higher education is not satisfactory in Croatia

H2 Having more cultural managers could secure arts and culture a better market position in Croatia.

## ***Methods of Research***

An online survey was sent during March and April of 2021 to members of Croatian National Association in Arts and Culture, informing them about the aim of the research. Mentioned association is the most representative NGO for this type of research in Croatia, whose members work in cultural and creative sector, meaning the results would be representative for the Croatian cultural market. The final sample consisted of 285 respondents. Most of them come from the field of visual arts, theatre and design, however artists from film, TV and video production, as well as music and dance have also been included in the survey. Two main hypotheses were formed prior to analyzing the results. The questionnaire was randomly sent to members of the mentioned association and all the data was anonymously received. Likert scales were used to define the level of consent with claims in survey questions.

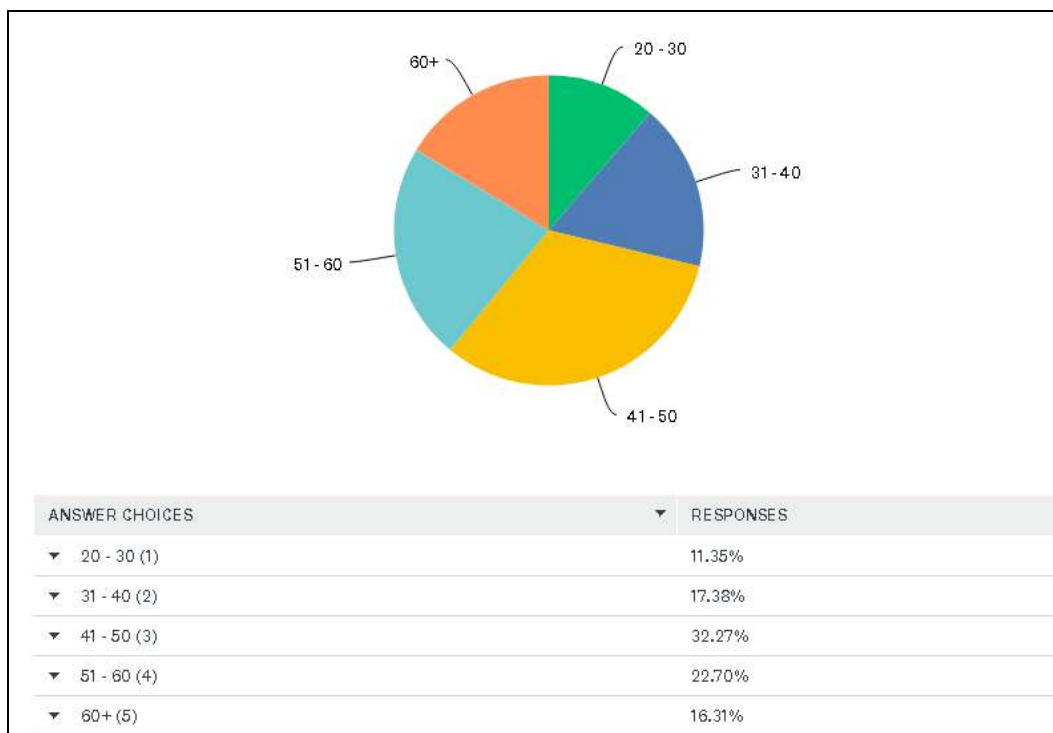
## ***Research Results***

Most importantly, the results show that most respondents are not satisfied with the knowledge about cultural management acquired during their secondary as well as higher education. The vast majority acquired this knowledge and skills through practice. Secondly, respondents are not familiar with the possibilities of further education in cultural management. Finally, most of respondents believe that better cultural management could secure arts and culture a better position in Croatia.

Research demographics and sociographies:

Sex: 61.7% Female; 38.3% Male

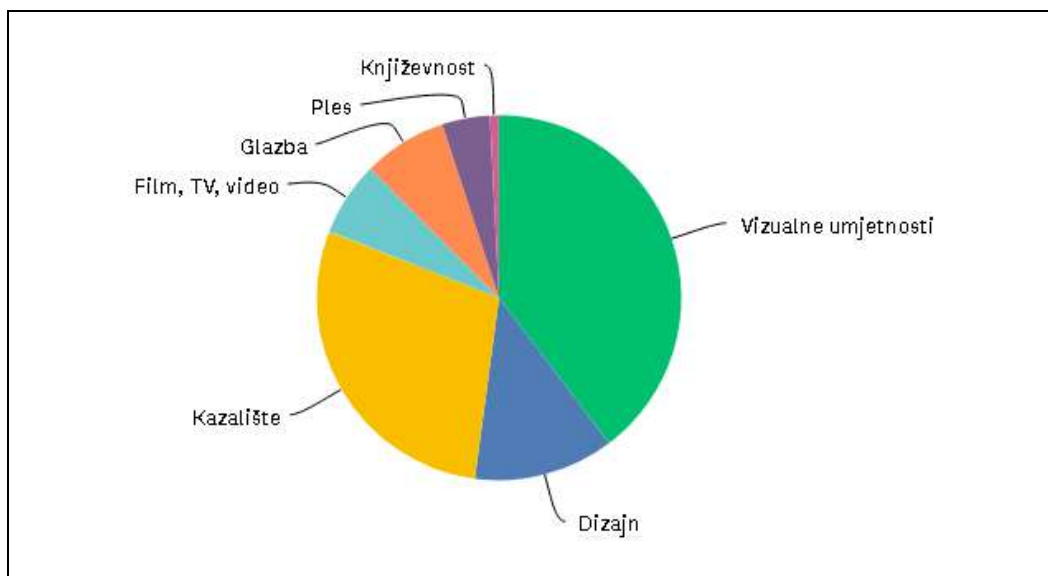




**FIGURE 1. AGE OF RESPONDENTS**

*Source: Authors' primary research results.*

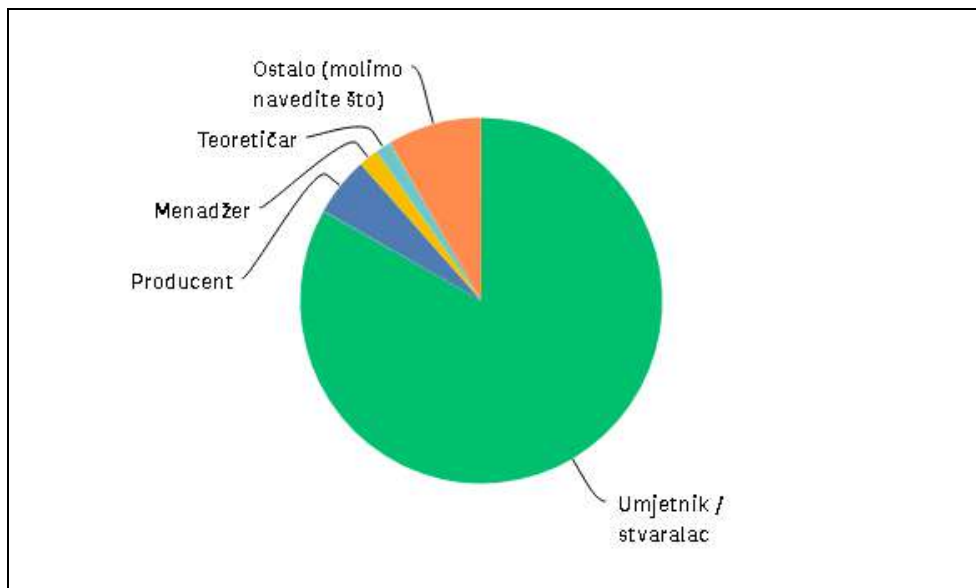
By analyzing the data, we can see that from 285 respondents there were most members at age 41-50, followed by the group between 51-60 years old and a bit less from 31-40. There were more female respondents (61.7%), however the representation of all demographic groups is satisfactory.



**FIGURE 2. FIELD OF WORK AMONG RESPONDENTS. VISUAL ARTS: 39.69%; DESIGN: 12.45%; THEATER: 28.79%; FILM, TV, VIDEO: 6.61%; MUSIC: 7.39%; DANCE: 4.28%; LITERATURE: 0.78%**

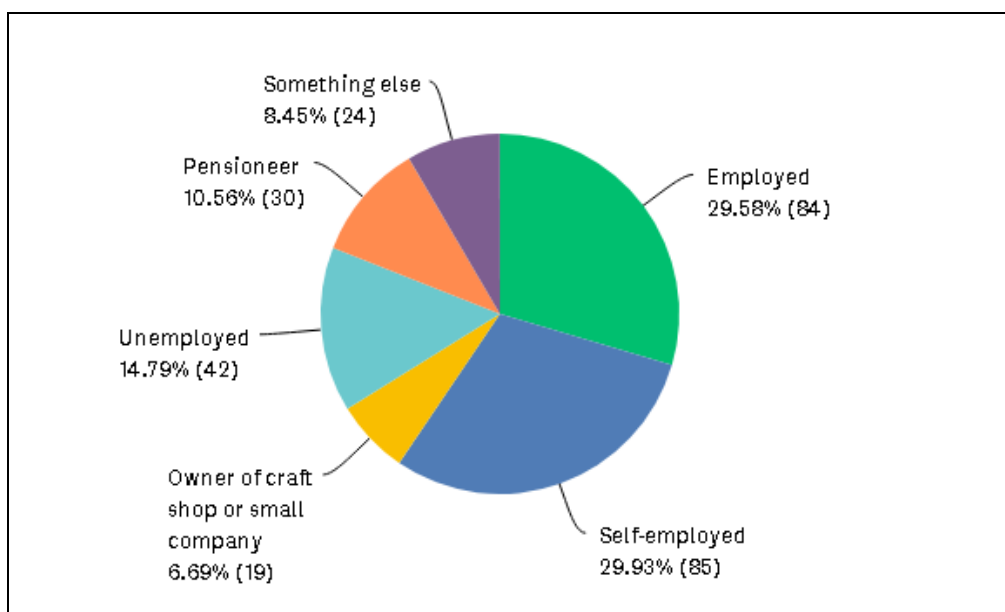
*Source: Authors' primary research results.*

From the data we can conclude that there were most visual artists among the respondents, followed by designers, cultural workers in theatre, while other associations were not so cooperative in gathering the answers. (film, TV and video, music, dance, literature).



**FIGURE 3. PRIMARY JOB OF RESPONDENTS. ARTISTS: 83.16%; PRODUCERS: 5.26%; MANAGERS: 1.75%; THEORIST: 1.40%; ALL THE REST: 8.42%**

Source: Authors' primary research results.



**FIGURE 4: WORK STATUS OF RESPONDENTS**

Source: Authors' primary research results.

Based on the research questions, every category of questions was funneled into base analysis for hypotheses: 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> category of questions formed the base for decision on the hypothesis H1. On the other hand, 1<sup>st</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> category of questions formed the base for decision on the hypothesis H2.

H1: Main hypothesis: the level of knowledge in cultural management acquired during secondary as well as higher education is not satisfactory in Croatia *has been confirmed*.

Results show that there are relatively strong arguments for confirmation of H1:

Respondents have *NOT* acquired basic knowledge about management and production in culture and arts during their formal education: 73% of them in total mostly or strongly disagree.

| RESPONDENTS' RESPONSE:     | PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS (%) |
|----------------------------|-------------------------------|
| <i>Do not agree at all</i> | 49,0                          |
| <i>Mostly do not agree</i> | 24,0                          |
| <i>Indifferent</i>         | 13,0                          |
| <i>Mostly agree</i>        | 6,0                           |
| <i>Completely agree</i>    | 8,0                           |
| <b>Total:</b>              | <b>100,0</b>                  |

**Table 4. 'I HAVE ACQUIRED BASIC KNOWLEDGE ABOUT MANAGEMENT AND PRODUCTION IN CULTURE AND ARTS DURING MY FORMAL EDUCATION'**  
 Source: authors' primary research results

According to the result, respondents have acquired knowledge about management and production in culture and arts mostly during practice (on their own): 61% of them in total mostly or strongly agree.

| RESPONDENTS' RESPONSE:     | PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS (%) |
|----------------------------|-------------------------------|
| <i>Do not agree at all</i> | 11,0                          |
| <i>Mostly do not agree</i> | 9,0                           |
| <i>Indifferent</i>         | 18,0                          |
| <i>Mostly agree</i>        | 17,0                          |
| <i>Completely agree</i>    | 44,0                          |
| <b>Total:</b>              | <b>100,0</b>                  |

**TABLE 5. 'I HAVE ACQUIRED BASIC KNOWLEDGE ABOUT MANAGEMENT AND PRODUCTION IN CULTURE AND ARTS DURING PRACTICE'**  
 Source: Authors' primary research results

'Arts high schools in Croatia have implemented subjects regarding managerial and production activities in arts and culture into their curriculums': in total 50% of respondents mostly or strongly disagree, while 29% of respondents mostly or strongly agree

| RESPONDENTS' RESPONSE:     | PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS (%) |
|----------------------------|-------------------------------|
| <i>Do not agree at all</i> | 35,0                          |
| <i>Mostly do not agree</i> | 15,0                          |
| <i>Indifferent</i>         | 20,0                          |
| <i>Mostly agree</i>        | 7,0                           |
| <i>Completely agree</i>    | 22,0                          |

|               |              |
|---------------|--------------|
| <b>Total:</b> | <b>100,0</b> |
|---------------|--------------|

**TABLE 6. 'ARTS HIGH SCHOOLS IN CROATIA HAVE IMPLEMENTED SUBJECTS REGARDING MANAGERIAL AND PRODUCTION ACTIVITIES IN ARTS AND CULTURE INTO THEIR CURRICULUMS'**

Source: Authors' primary research results

'Arts faculties and academies educate future artists for self-management and production activities': in total 75% of respondents mostly or strongly disagree.

| RESPONDENTS' RESPONSE:     | PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS (%) |
|----------------------------|-------------------------------|
| <i>Do not agree at all</i> | 50,0                          |
| <i>Mostly do not agree</i> | 25,0                          |
| <i>Indifferent</i>         | 16,0                          |
| <i>Mostly agree</i>        | 5,0                           |
| <i>Completely agree</i>    | 5,0                           |
| <b>Total:</b>              | <b>100,0</b>                  |

**TABLE 7. 'FACULTIES AND ART ACADEMIES EDUCATE FUTURE ARTISTS FOR SELF-MANAGEMENT AND PRODUCTION ACTIVITIES'**

Source: Authors' primary research results

'There are number of faculty-level education studies that offer knowledge regarding management in arts and culture in Croatia': in total 69% of respondents mostly or completely disagree.

| RESPONDENTS' RESPONSE:     | PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS (%) |
|----------------------------|-------------------------------|
| <i>Do not agree at all</i> | 39,0                          |
| <i>Mostly do not agree</i> | 30,0                          |
| <i>Indifferent</i>         | 19,0                          |
| <i>Mostly agree</i>        | 5,0                           |
| <i>Completely agree</i>    | 6,0                           |
| <b>Total:</b>              | <b>100,0</b>                  |

**TABLE 8. 'THERE ARE NUMBER OF FACULTY-LEVEL EDUCATION STUDIES THAT OFFER KNOWLEDGE REGARDING MANAGEMENT IN ARTS AND CULTURE IN CROATIA'**

Source: authors' primary research results

'In Croatia, there are viable options for professional development in management and production of a cultural product/work of art (like courses and workshops)': in total 59% of respondents mostly or completely disagree.

| RESPONDENTS' RESPONSE:     | PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS (%) |
|----------------------------|-------------------------------|
| <i>Do not agree at all</i> | 26,0                          |
| <i>Mostly do not agree</i> | 33,0                          |
| <i>Indifferent</i>         | 28,0                          |
| <i>Mostly agree</i>        | 9,0                           |
| <i>Completely agree</i>    | 4,0                           |
| <b>Total:</b>              | <b>100,0</b>                  |

**Table 9. 'IN CROATIA, THERE ARE VIABLE OPTIONS FOR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN MANAGEMENT AND PRODUCTION OF A CULTURAL PRODUCT/WORK OF ART (LIKE COURSES AND WORKSHOPS)'**

Source: Authors' primary research results

Hypothesis H2: Having more cultural managers could secure arts and culture a better market position in Croatia. *H2 has been confirmed.*

Results show that there are relatively strong arguments for confirmation of H2: Respondents *strongly agree*, 74% of them in total, that having more cultural managers in arts and culture would benefit better treatment of artists, cultural workers and cultural products in Croatia.

| RESPONDENTS' RESPONSE:     | PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS (%) |
|----------------------------|-------------------------------|
| <i>Do not agree at all</i> | 4,0                           |
| <i>Mostly do not agree</i> | 6,0                           |
| <i>Indifferent</i>         | 16,0                          |
| <i>Mostly agree</i>        | 25,0                          |
| <i>Completely agree</i>    | 49,0                          |
| <b>Total:</b>              | <b>100,0</b>                  |

**TABLE 10. 'HAVING MORE CULTURAL MANAGERS IN ARTS AND CULTURE WOULD BENEFIT BETTER TREATMENT OF ARTISTS, CULTURAL WORKERS AND CULTURAL PRODUCTS IN CROATIA'**

Source: Authors' primary research results

*Supporting claim:* 'Artists nowadays need to have basic knowledge about managing a cultural product (work of art)': 81% of respondents in total recognize the importance of having management knowledge regarding in managing a cultural product.

| RESPONDENTS' RESPONSE:     | PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS (%) |
|----------------------------|-------------------------------|
| <i>Do not agree at all</i> | 4,0                           |
| <i>Mostly do not agree</i> | 3,0                           |
| <i>Indifferent</i>         | 11,0                          |
| <i>Mostly agree</i>        | 18,0                          |
| <i>Completely agree</i>    | 63,0                          |
| <b>Total:</b>              | <b>100,0</b>                  |

**TABLE 11. 'ARTISTS NOWADAYS NEED TO HAVE BASIC KNOWLEDGE ABOUT MANAGING A CULTURAL PRODUCT (WORK OF ART)'**

Source: Authors' primary research results

## Conclusion

A research has been taken in spring 2021 among members of Croatian national associations in the field of arts and culture in order to find out their opinion about the knowledge as well as importance of cultural management in their professions. The main goal was also to gather data about their formal and informal education and the state of education programs concerning cultural management available in Croatia today. Such a research among members of national associations has not yet been conducted in Croatia. A comparative analysis of educational programs in higher education in the field of cultural entrepreneurship also shows deficiencies and inconsistency. The results clearly show that there is much space for improvement in education at different levels, from high school programs in arts and culture to faculties and universities as well as long-life learning.

There are some limitations of the research: unrepresentative sample (members of art associations are not represented in equal percentages given their total number), the implementation (it was not possible to ensure control over the conditions and availability of questionnaire completion) and possible subjective perception of some offered claims in the Likert scale for some respondents.

Future research should be expanded to include administrative staff of cultural and arts organizations and associations as well as employees of public cultural institutions; to examine the need of cultural workers for lifelong learning and programs that would fit into it (what skills and knowledge do they need) on a nationally representative sample (include all cultural institutions in the Republic of Croatia). It would also be useful to conduct in-depth interviews with educational policy makers in the field of cultural education / deans of higher education institutions and examine their perception of the education of employees in the cultural and creative industries. Such national research can be useful to various stakeholders and especially to cultural policy makers in the Republic of Croatia.

The research on these topics should further be expanded to other countries in the region in order to compare the results with the aim of stronger connections at the regional level and the creation of new formal or non-formal educational programs.

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# The Art of Moving On: Artists and Arts Workers Who Leave the Arts & Culture Sector

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## ABSTRACT

The US arts workforce has higher-than-average rates of part-time work<sup>5</sup>. Research shows an arts education has value for employability outside of the arts<sup>6</sup> and that most arts alumni work outside of the arts<sup>7</sup>. Why then, is working outside of the arts considered a failure? This study challenges this narrative with a comparative analysis of data collected by the US-based Strategic National Arts Alumni Project (SNAAP), which reveals alumni who left the arts and alumni who work in the arts have similar employment patterns and skills.

## Keywords:

Arts, education, employment, success, career-path

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<sup>5</sup> “Artists and Other Cultural Workers a Statistical Portrait” (National Endowment for the Arts, April 2019), [https://www.arts.gov/sites/default/files/Artists\\_and\\_Other\\_Cultural\\_Workers.pdf](https://www.arts.gov/sites/default/files/Artists_and_Other_Cultural_Workers.pdf).

<sup>6</sup> Jennifer L. Novak-Leonard et al., “The Role of the Arts and Creative Expression in Employability and Economic Opportunity” (NORC at the University of Chicago, November 2018), <https://www.norc.org/PDFs/ARC/The%20Role%20of%20the%20Arts%20and%20Creative%20Expression%20in%20Employability%20and%20Economic%20Opportunity.pdf>.

<sup>7</sup> Alexandre Frenette et al., “Careers in the Arts: Who Stays and Who Leaves?” (Strategic National Arts Alumni Project, 2020), [http://snaap.indiana.edu/pdf/SNAAP\\_Special%20Report\\_Spring2020.pdf](http://snaap.indiana.edu/pdf/SNAAP_Special%20Report_Spring2020.pdf).



## Introduction

An arts education is demonstrably related to many positive outcomes for students<sup>8</sup>. One considerable approach for measuring the success of any education is its contribution to employment and a stable career path. Indeed, according to recent research, the U.S. creative economy creates substantial employment in both creative and non-creative occupations<sup>9</sup>. That being said, the arts workforce is characterized by higher-than-average rates of self-employment and part-time work than the overall workforce<sup>10</sup>. Since the grave economic implications of the COVID-19 pandemic, increasing attention has been directed towards these employment patterns, and whether arts graduates can find viable and sustainable career paths in the arts.

Moreover, the value of artistic expression, honed through arts education, for employability outside of the arts has also been explored in recent research<sup>11</sup>. Indeed, non-arts related studies have found creativity and critical thinking as one of the most missing skills in the job market<sup>12</sup>.

Why then, is the future of working outside of the arts considered a failure among aspiring artists and arts workers? The gap between what many consider to be a successful result of an arts education and the employment reality within the arts and creative economy renders this common narrative of “success” as unrealistic, effectively projecting many arts graduates for “failure”. Existing data shows most arts alumni work outside of the arts, whether they combine this work with an arts-related occupation or a professional artistic practice<sup>13</sup>. And while arts advocates will often make the point that skills acquired through an arts education have value for both arts-related and non-arts-related career paths, there is still a lingering narrative prescribing success only to those arts graduates who achieve employment in the arts or have an active artistic practice.

This study analyzes data collected between 2015-2017 by the US-based Strategic National Arts Alumni Project (SNAAP) in order to compare arts graduates who no longer work in the arts with arts graduates who hold an arts-related occupation or have an active artistic practice. This comparison interrogates the narrative of success associated with artistic profession, and demonstrates that these two groups of alumni are, in fact,

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<sup>8</sup> Emily Workman, “Beyond the Core: Advancing Student Success through the Arts” (Education Commission of the States, September 2017), [https://www.ecs.org/wp-content/uploads/Beyond\\_the\\_Core\\_Advancing\\_student\\_success\\_through\\_the\\_arts.pdf](https://www.ecs.org/wp-content/uploads/Beyond_the_Core_Advancing_student_success_through_the_arts.pdf).

<sup>9</sup> “The Creative Industries in the United States” (Americans for the Arts, 2017), [https://www.americansforthearts.org/sites/default/files/pdf/2017/by\\_program/reports\\_and\\_data/creative/2017\\_UnitedStates\\_NationalOnePager\\_Color.pdf](https://www.americansforthearts.org/sites/default/files/pdf/2017/by_program/reports_and_data/creative/2017_UnitedStates_NationalOnePager_Color.pdf).

<sup>10</sup> Sunil Iyengar et al., “Artists and Other Cultural Workers a Statistical Portrait,” April 2019, [https://www.arts.gov/sites/default/files/Artists\\_and\\_Other\\_Cultural\\_Workers.pdf](https://www.arts.gov/sites/default/files/Artists_and_Other_Cultural_Workers.pdf).

<sup>11</sup> Jennifer L. Novak-Leonard et al., “The Role of the Arts and Creative Expression in Employability and Economic Opportunity” (NORC at the University of Chicago, November 2018), <https://www.norc.org/PDFs/ARC/The%20Role%20of%20the%20Arts%20and%20Creative%20Expression%20in%20Employability%20and%20Economic%20Opportunity.pdf>.

<sup>12</sup> Trent Burner et al., “The Global Skills Shortage: Bridging the Talent Gap with Education, Training and Sourcing” (The Society for Human Resource Management, February 2019), <https://www.shrm.org/hr-today/trends-and-forecasting/research-and-surveys/Pages/Skills-Gap-2019.aspx>.

<sup>13</sup> Alexandre Frenette et al., “Careers in the Arts: Who Stays and Who Leaves?” (Strategic National Arts Alumni Project, 2020), [http://snaap.indiana.edu/pdf/SNAAP\\_Special%20Report\\_Spring2020.pdf](http://snaap.indiana.edu/pdf/SNAAP_Special%20Report_Spring2020.pdf).

undistinguishable in terms of their employment patterns and acquisition and use of skills gained during their arts education.

## Methods

To challenge the narrative of success previously described, this study utilizes the 2015, 2016, and 2017 SNAAP survey data. The SNAAP dataset is comprised of over 80,000 respondents from 108 under-graduate schools, 85 programs, and 9 arts high schools. The dataset includes a wide range of variables related to discipline of study, student experiences, and post-graduation work.<sup>14</sup>

Specifically, this study aims to respond to the following research questions: Is working outside of the arts a common experience of all arts alumni? And if so, how different are arts alumni who “leave the arts” from arts alumni who “remain in the arts” in terms of their professional aptitudes? Considering the comparative nature of the research question, the SNAAP dataset was first divided into two by adding a new variable – ‘left the arts.’ This variable was created based on the following criteria:

- Arts graduates who are NOT currently identify as a professional artist
- AND
- Arts graduates who are NOT currently working in an arts-related occupation

Arts graduates who met these criteria was labelled Left the Arts = 1. The Left the Arts subset comprised 31% of total respondents. The remaining 69%, alumni who Remain in the Arts (left the arts = 0) were confirmed to meet the following criteria:

- Arts graduates who identify as a professional artist
- OR
- Arts graduates who are currently working in at least one arts-related occupation

## Part 1: A comparison of arts graduates’ current employment

Comparing the two groups of arts graduates, we examine the most common non-arts-related occupations, as well as the rates in which alumni work within each field. Following are the **five** most common non-arts-related occupations for these two groups according to the SNAAP survey (Table 1):

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<sup>14</sup> “Mission and History,” Strategic National Arts Alumni Project (Strategic National Arts Alumni Project), accessed September 28, 2021, <https://snaaparts.org/about/mission-and-history>.

| Left the Arts   | Respective share | Remain in the Arts  | Respective share |
|---|------------------|---|------------------|
| <i>Education, training, and Library</i>   | 16%              | <i>Communications (e.g., journalism, marketing, public relations, advertising, fundraising)</i> | 14%              |
| <i>Communications (e.g., journalism, marketing, public relations, advertising, fundraising)</i> | 9%               | <i>Education, training, and Library</i>   | 13%              |
| <i>Management (e.g., executives and managers)</i>   | 9%               | Other   | 10%              |
| <i>Office and administrative support</i>  | 7%               | <i>Management (e.g., executives and managers)</i>   | 9%               |
| <i>Sales (e.g., real estate, retail sales)</i>  | 7%               | <i>Office and administrative support</i>  | 8%               |

**TABLE 1. COMPARISON OF THE FIVE MOST COMMON NON-ARTS-RELATED OCCUPATIONS<sup>15</sup> AMONG ARTS GRADUATES WHO LEFT THE ARTS AND WHO REMAIN IN THE ARTS**

According to the SNAAP dataset, arts graduates who Left the Arts and who Remain in the Arts share four of the five most common non-arts-related occupations. Evidently, these two groups of graduates display similar employment patterns, finding themselves in similar non-arts-related occupations and at similar rates. Survey respondents were able to select more than one current occupational field, indicating that having an arts-related occupation does not necessarily reduce the likelihood of having a non-arts-related occupation. Arts graduates who Remain in the Arts have similar career paths to their counterparts who Left the Arts.

Further examination of the **ten** most common non-arts-related occupations reveals similar consistency, with only two non-arts-related occupations being unique to each group of arts graduates (Table 2).

<sup>15</sup> Based on responses to survey question 33 “Please indicate those occupations in which you *currently* work. Check all that apply” (curjob). Based on curjob\_sum, a variable recoded from question 33 to sum the number of selected occupations, 31% of total respondents had 1 job, 19% had 2 jobs, 12% had 3 jobs, and 15% had 4 or more jobs. These rates were consistent between both groups of respondents, with the exception of respondents with 1 job: among this who Left the Arts this rate was 47%, nearly double the 24% among respondents who Remain in the Arts.

| Left the Arts                                | Respective share | Remain in the Arts                                     | Respective share |
|--|------------------|--|------------------|
| <i>Healthcare</i>                            | 6%               | <i>Construction</i>                                    | 4%               |
| <i>Financial and other business services</i> | 5%               | <i>Building, maintenance, installation, and repair</i> | 4%               |

**TABLE 2. UNIQUE NON-ARTS-RELATED OCCUPATIONS AMONG ARTS GRADUATES WHO LEFT THE ARTS AND WHO REMAIN IN THE ARTS**

Graduates who Left the Arts worked in Healthcare and Financial and other business services, while graduates who Remain in the Arts worked in Construction and Building, maintenance, installation, and repair. While the consistency shown in Table 1 suggests that the four overlapping most common non-arts-related occupations may not have any characteristics that make them better suited for combining with an active artistic practice or an arts-related occupation, the data in Table 2 may point towards the non-arts-related occupations that are better for such a combination (Construction and Building, maintenance, installation, and repair), or less desirable for it (Healthcare and Financial and other business services).

## **Part 2: A comparison of the skills arts graduates acquired during their training and required to succeed in their current jobs**

To further investigate the research questions, we examine how relevant did arts graduates think their education was to their current work? According to the from the 2015, 2016, and 2017 survey, as illustrated in Figure 1, a substantially lower rate of arts graduates who Left the Arts found their arts training *relevant* to their current work (51%) than graduates who Remain In the Arts (78%). This is further affirmed when examining the distribution of responses on a scale of 1 (not at all relevant) to 4 (very relevant), as illustrated in Figure 2.

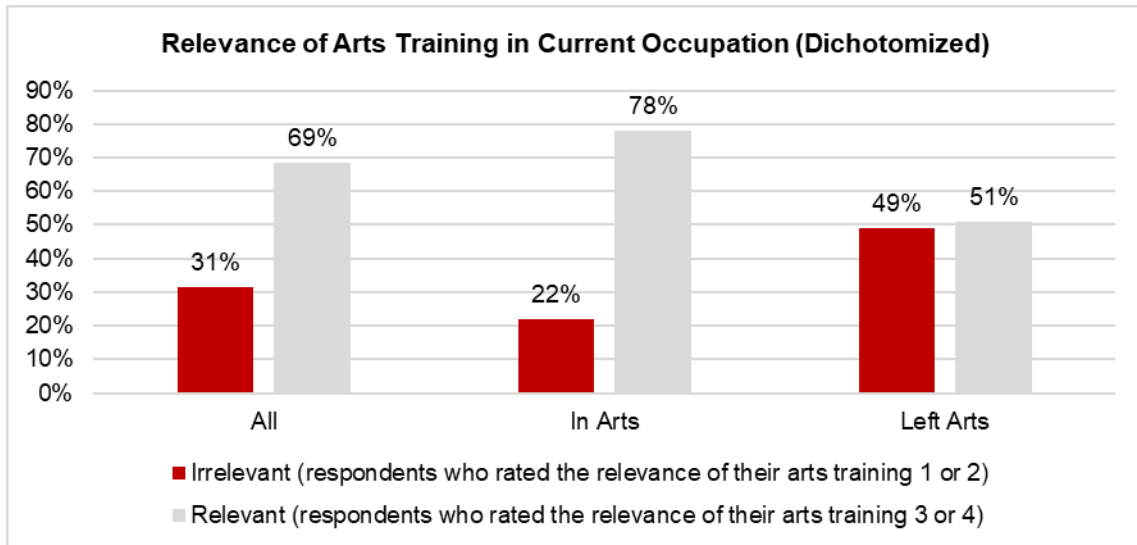


FIGURE 1. RELEVANCE OF ARTS TRAINING TO CURRENT WORK, COMPARING ALL ARTS GRADUATES, GRADUATES WHO REMAIN IN THE ARTS, AND GRADUATES WHO LEFT THE ARTS

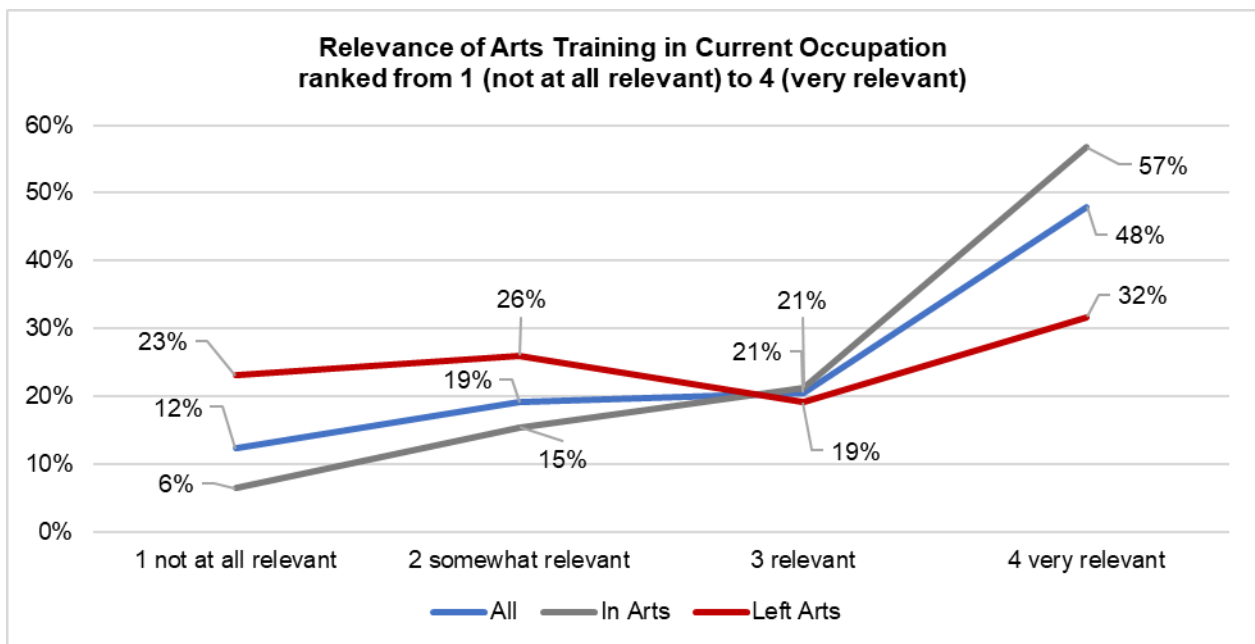


FIGURE 2. RELEVANCE OF ARTS TRAINING TO CURRENT WORK, COMPARING ALL ARTS GRADUATES, GRADUATES WHO REMAIN IN THE ARTS, AND GRADUATES WHO LEFT THE ARTS, ON A SCALE OF 1 (NOT AT ALL RELEVANT) TO 4 (VERY RELEVANT)

A deeper dive into the SNAAP dataset provides an additional lens through which we can assess the relevance of arts education in both arts-related and non-arts-related occupations. As part of the survey, respondents were asked to rank a closed list of sixteen skills (created by SNAAP based on the National Survey of Student Engagement and Association of American Colleges & Universities' Degree Qualifications Profile), once for how well they were acquired during their arts education, and a second rank for how relevant the skills were for them to succeed in their current job.

A comparative analysis of skill rankings by arts graduates who Left the Arts and who Remain in the Arts provides a far less dichotomized outlook on the relevance of arts education. Overall, rankings of acquired and required skills were consistent between both groups of arts graduates. Furthermore, three of the five most acquired skills were also the most required skills, according to a similar share of respondents in both alumni groups (Table 3).

| Acquired Skill  | Left the Arts | Remain in the Arts | Required Skill  | Left the Arts | Remain in the Arts |
|---|---------------|--------------------|---|---------------|--------------------|
| Creative thinking and problem solving                       | 60%           | 61%                | Creative thinking and problem solving                       | 88%           | 91%                |
| Artistic technique  | 58%           | 62%                | Interpersonal relations and working collaboratively         | 82%           | 82%                |
| Improved work based on feedback from others                 | 55%           | 58%                | Critical thinking and analysis of arguments and information | 80%           | 76%                |
| Critical thinking and analysis of arguments and information | 51%           | 51%                | Project management skills                                   | 76%           | 77%                |
| Broad knowledge and education                               | 49%           | 50%                | Broad knowledge and education                               | 71%           | 73%                |

**TABLE 3. COMPARISON OF MOST COMMON SKILLS ACQUIRED DURING ARTS TRAINING AND SKILLS REQUIRED FOR SUCCESS IN CURRENT WORK AMONG ARTS GRADUATES WHO LEFT THE ARTS AND WHO REMAIN IN THE ARTS<sup>16</sup>**

The data in Table 3 suggests that regardless of career outcomes, arts graduates felt they acquired similar skills during their training and required similar skills to be successful in their current work. Also, succeeding in non-arts-related occupations requires skills not only similar to those required in arts-related occupations, but also that these required skills can be acquired through an arts training.

## Summary of Findings

Based on our current occupation analysis we find that *all* arts graduates, both those who Left the Arts and those who Remain in the Arts have very similar employment patterns in their *non-arts-related* occupations. Graduates in both groups not only work in the same non-arts-related occupations, but they also work in them in similar rates.

<sup>16</sup> According to survey respondents who rated how much their arts training helped acquire each skill as Very Much (question 15, ranking 4) and rated how important these developed skills are to perform effectively in their profession or work life as Very Important (question 31, ranking 4)

The groups do differ in their number of jobs. According to the SNAAP survey, the rate of respondents who Left the Arts with one job (47%) was nearly double the same rate among respondents who Remain in the Arts (24%), while the latter group made two thirds of all respondents. This is consistent with existing research that finds that artists and arts workers are more likely to work more than one job than the overall workforce.

Our analysis of acquired and required skills revealed further similarities between the two groups of graduates. Both graduate groups ranked their acquired and required skills similarly. Furthermore, most top acquired skills were also the top required skills for both graduate groups, suggesting that similar skills are needed both within and outside of the arts, and these skills can be acquired through and attributed to an arts education.

These findings strengthen the argument that defining success by achieving employment in the arts cannot be substantiated by a unique suite of skills one must rely on within this career path, nor by a superior ability to develop certain skills during the training period.

## Recommendations

Based on this study's findings we offer the following recommendations. First and foremost, the data supports a new definition of the successful outcome of an arts education. The so-called "unsuccessful" outcome of working outside of the arts, seems to be as common among graduates who would be deemed successful because they maintain an arts practice or hold an arts-related occupation. This reveals how loosely this narrative is tied to the employment reality arts graduates face, a reality which they have very little power to change regardless of their professional aptitude.

As such, we recommend considering new ways to acknowledge this reality within our definitions of what successful arts graduates are. If arts graduates are creating positive impact due to skills cultivated during their arts education, why should we condition their successful status on the impact being exclusively within the arts? Arts graduates who achieve success outside of the arts can act as advocates for the importance of arts education and cross-disciplinary education.

Under this new narrative of success, we recommend these findings encourage changes within education organizations, as well as within the creative economy and arts workforce. Specifically, arts education can take a more integrated approach with the job market, informing curricula by the employment reality arts graduates face. This means preparing arts graduates for the extremely likely future of having to sustain their professional activities within the arts alongside working outside of the arts. Arts educators can play a key role in ending the dichotomized approach between being *in* or *out* of the arts and highlighting the reality of combining and complementing these two states. This also highlights the importance of multi- and cross-disciplinary education for the arts, as a necessary paradigm for preparing arts students to deliver value in more ways than one after they graduate and enter the job market.

Finally, these findings make the case for examining how the creative economy and arts workforce can support the livelihoods of arts graduates. It is evident that while the creative economy has experienced rapid growth up until the COVID-19 pandemic, it is not yet able to accommodate all the arts graduates who are looking to work solely in the arts and make a living based on their work. Could this be the reason arts graduates struggle to sustain a professional stake in the arts? Are they forced to make a difficult decision and to prioritize their need for financial stability over their passion for the arts? While the entities that shape the arts workforce have the power to enact much needed change, arts education organizations must be active partner in this discussion and advocate for their graduates' futures.

With respect to the many differences between different arts disciplines, arts education programs, and sectors within the arts and creative economy, and noting this data was collected prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, this data illuminates the fundamental relationship between education and employment and leaves much to be discovered about redefining success in the arts (and outside of them) after completing an arts education.

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# Cultural managers or artistic producers? Contrasting expectations and realities in professional training

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## ABSTRACT

This paper focuses on the relationship between expectations of Cultural management students and the knowledge and skills effectively provided by their formative institutions in the Argentinian context. In the region, Cultural management appeared as a professional narrative inherent to neoliberal discursivity. By the end of the last century, international organisations started specific training in this field throughout the region. In Argentina this has translated into an extended institutional network of training in Cultural management, but lately, a set of criticisms concerning the training programmes emerged. First, regarding the absence of authors and theory specific to the region; plus, a defective approach to the complexity of the roles within the labour field. The aim of this study is to observe how Cultural management students assess their training. To this end, a series of surveys were carried out to analyse the possible correlation between initial expectations and concrete experiences in relation to content, competences and skills. Based on the initial findings, a redesign of the training framework for Cultural management in Argentina is suggested.

## Keywords:

Arts, culture, Cultural management, artistic producers, training.

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## 1. Introduction

Cultural management is a professional identity that encompasses various functions - both professional and vocational - within the field of culture. Given the polysemy of the term "culture" (Kroeber and Kluckhohn, 1952), Cultural management can be defined and determined, both terminologically and methodologically, according to the basic discipline from which it is approached (Gray, 2010). This diversity of interpretations regarding culture and its phenomenology results in a multiplicity of approaches to address its problems in the training of cultural managers in the region (Schargorodsky, 2002). In Latin America, in particular, it was introduced as a professional narrative in the 1990s, as part of the neoliberal conceptual device: efficient management of resources, as well as their development by artists and cultural collectives, appeared indispensable in the face of the withdrawal of the state, which appeared justified in this new approach (Castineira de Dios, 2009). With its introduction in the South American context, as a result of intense influence from Spanish international cooperation, Cultural management eclipsed other traditions, such as socio-cultural animation (linked to social psychology approaches)<sup>17</sup> or cultural promotion (centred on cultural sovereignty and popular heritage).<sup>18</sup> Beyond this, over the last decades, professionals in the region have reconfigured the discourses that structure Cultural management, as well as its field of action and methodological framework, recovering a long tradition linked to the culture/power dialectic.

From a perspective related to the decolonising perspective, culture is understood as the symbolic fabric that sustains social, political and economic relations in their contemporary form, and Cultural management as the profession of questioning and engaging it in order to dynamize its transformation on the part of communities and societies. For this reason, at least four identities have been identified as coexisting in that of the South American cultural manager: that of ethnographer, curator, activist and administrator. The reason for this is that the manager must have a profound knowledge of the community on which he or she seeks to intervene, as well as of the contents and proposals that he or she can bring into play. In doing so, he or she will encounter adverse objective and subjective conditions, the absence of cultural policies that empower him or her, so he or she will have to be tempered as an activist, and develop administrative skills to cope with a certain degree of sustainability in the face of a systemic absence of resources (Vich, 2018, 51). The Argentinean case stands out within the region due to a robust cultural ecosystem, stronger than the average for the region. Outstanding in this record is a long tradition of cultural consumption and a robust historical presence in the Ibero-American market (especially concerning the film, books and music industries); as well as an early protection of creator's rights, by means of an Intellectual Property Law sanctioned in 1933, several decades before the analogous norms in the rest of the region (Escribal, 2021a). This paper aims to understand the way in which the training of cultural managers in contemporary Argentina accounts for the current challenges of its social and historical context, assuming them to be geographically determined (Kusch, 1976).

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<sup>17</sup> See Ander-Egg (2002).

<sup>18</sup> See Colombres (2009).

The training of cultural managers in the region started with a strong influence from the Spanish Universities of Girona and Barcelona,<sup>19</sup> together with international cooperation agencies such as the Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation (AECID), the *Alliance Française* and the British Council. In Argentina, from the beginning of this century, the public university system began to generate a series of undergraduate training programmes, with the participation of foundations and trade unions. (Elia, 2006). Today, there are more than twenty programmes, including a number of postgraduate courses, as well as a number of higher technical institutions that have also focused on this theme. While most programmes are characterised by a generalist approach, many others have been oriented towards heritage management, performing arts or cultural industries. Moreover, some offers have undergone major metamorphoses, changing their title, their content, their teaching teams, their frameworks and even their institutional context. In curricular terms, the modules dedicated to the history, theories and policies of culture, arts and communication, economics, cultural rights and legislation, cultural financing and marketing, planning, administration and development of projects and institutions, management and production of cultural activities, among others, are recurrent. A recurrent criticism of the training proposals is that universities claim to "train ministers of culture" (Bayardo, 2019). This could suggest a curricular imbalance between the technical dimension of these trainings, aimed at providing the tools for artistic production, and a more conceptual one, considering the discipline as part of the Governance Sciences, understanding cultural policies as its object (Fuentes Firmani, Quesada and Vovchuk, 2017). This paper aims to explore these tensions, identifying the correlations and divergences between the expectations of those who seek to train in Cultural management at university level, and the way they experience their training processes.

For this purpose, a series of interviews were conducted with Cultural management students. A group of mid-career students and a group of advanced students were selected. It was considered that the number of graduates at the time of the interviews was insufficient, and the possibility that their perception of the training experience had mutated according to their degree of insertion, or not, in the labour market was considered. The questions to the interviewees sought to analyse their motivations for enrolling in training as cultural managers, the specific skills and knowledge they were looking for, as well as the degree of satisfaction they identified in relation to their decision to study Cultural management. The hypothesis adopted identified a certain lack of understanding of the real professional profile of the cultural manager on the part of the new applicants, based on a homologation of their practice exclusively to the sphere of artistic production. This being the case, it remained to be understood what processes could lead to the development of a more comprehensive approach to the discipline, incorporating - together with notions of anthropology and sociology - tools for socio-community diagnosis and sustained intervention over time in the field of cultural policies.

The results of this work may lead to a restructuring of the training matrix for cultural managers in Argentina. The evidence of a mismatch between expectations and actual training may point to the absence of a collaborative mapping of the professional field of arts and Cultural management. The elaboration of such a study

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<sup>19</sup> The principles of this particular approach to Cultural management have been characterised as the Barcelona model. Its uncritical irradiation, often questioned for its little or no regard for the socio-historical conditions of each territory, is increasingly challenged in the region (Ponte *et al.*, 2021) and has come to be characterised as abusive (Rius and Sánchez-Belando, 2015). (Rius and Sánchez-Belando, 2015).

could lead to a reform of training programmes in order to link them more assertively to the concrete and current challenges of cultural policy in the region.

## 2. Measuring the perceptions of trainee cultural managers in Argentina

In order to better understand the expectations and motivations of Cultural management students, we selected a group composed equally of recent entrants and students who were in the middle of their training programmes. Coming from four different institutions, with particular characteristics that we will describe initially, they show a diversity of trajectories and projections that demonstrate the difficulties of synthesising an ideal type of Cultural management student in Argentina. In this way, we will seek to initiate a debate on the innovations required by educational policy in relation to Cultural management in Argentina.

For the purpose of this paper, the basic characteristics of the Argentine higher education system are as follows: the university level is made up of both publicly and privately managed institutions, with coverage throughout the national territory. Their degrees must have a minimum duration of two and a half years and a minimum hourly load of 1,600 clock hours. In general, degree programmes take at least four years of study. On completion of a bachelor's degree, the graduate is considered an expert in a given field. On the other hand, Technical Vocational Education (ETP), encompasses, articulates and integrates the different types of institutions and programmes of Education for Labour. According to Law N° 26.058, it is composed of three levels: Secondary Technical, Higher Technical (non-university) and Vocational Training. Higher technical institutions, also known as Tertiary institutions, provide post-High School training linked to the labour market. In these institutions it is possible to initiate, as well as to continue, vocationally-oriented pathways. On the other hand, Vocational education and training (VET) offers short-term on-the-job training, as well as specialisation and updating of knowledge and skills. One of the comparative advantages of VET is that the programmes are designed in sectoral committees with the participation of the private sector, trade unions in the specific sector and educational institutions.

As previously mentioned, Cultural management has gained public recognition in Argentina in recent decades, to the extent that it has even been considered “a boom” (Wortman, 2009). In recent years, first job searches focused on the specific profile of Cultural management have been reported (Fuentes Firmani, 2019), and even the Ministry of Culture itself has launched, in 2021, a first call for funding specifically aimed at cultural managers<sup>20</sup>. The aforementioned increase in the number of training courses on offer is evidence of a growing interest in the subject. A first analysis in relation to students' motivations for enrolment reveals that there is no clarity in perceptions about the specific (or sub-sectoral) orientation of each programme. Although the curricula of each programme are always available, understanding the characteristics of the proposal requires the skills of an active cultural manager, who already recognises the debates and trends in the professional field, while it is extremely difficult for an entrant. The generalist or specific character (whether in

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<sup>20</sup> “*Gestionar Futuro*”, available at <https://acortar.link/mMRIHB>

the promotion of cultural industries, oriented towards economic development through culture, in the production of performing arts, focused on socio-cultural promotion, etc.) does not seem to be made explicit. Moreover, a comprehensive analysis of the entire spectrum of programmes shows that there are overlaps, superimpositions and absences. At the same time, there has been some debate in recent years about the convenience of an eventual unification of the curricula, which appears to be a long way off (Vovchuk, 2018).

To confirm this assumption, a series of closed interviews were conducted among a dozen students of Cultural management at the National Universities of *Tres de Febrero* and *Avellaneda*, the Metropolitan University for Education and Labour, and the Technical Training Institute No. 28 of the City of Buenos Aires. A brief characterisation of the chosen institutions. Three belong to the higher education system, and one to the higher technical level. Three are part of the public system, which means that they provide their undergraduate education free of charge, while the fourth is owned by a consortium of trade unions, and thus belongs to the private university system. This implies that it is state regulated, but is allowed to charge fees, which, in this case, are very low. In terms of geographical location, all four share the Buenos Aires metropolitan area (AMBA), which accounts for 37% of the country's total population. In terms of orientation, two of them offer generalist training, while the other two have specialised curricula. The academic workload is very similar, with 2,920 hours for the longer degree, and 2,454 hours for the Higher Technical one. This factor becomes relevant, as there is a certain common sense in Argentina that homologates educational quality with educational level (considering university education, whatever it may be, to be superior to that of other levels). This social perception will be relevant for the purposes of the analysis we intend to carry out.

For a better understanding, the details are presented in a table:

| Institution  | Orientation  | Degree  | Location  | Year of creation of the degree |      |
|--|--|---|---|--------------------------------|------|
| National University of Tres de Febrero (UNTREF)                          | Aimed at the management of private spaces linked to the visual arts.   | Bachelor in Arts and Culture Management                                 | Caseros, Tres de Febrero, Buenos Aires province | 1998                           | 2920 |
| National University of Avellaneda (UNDAV)                                | Aimed at the management of socio-community organisations and projects. | Bachelor in Cultural management   | Avellaneda, Avellaneda, Buenos Aires province   | 2010                           | 2640 |
| Metropolitan University for Education and Labour (UMET)                  | Generalist   | Bachelor in Cultural management   | Buenos Aires City                               | 2014                           | 2760 |
| Technical Training Institute No. 28 of the City of Buenos Aires (IFTS28) | Generalist   | Higher Technician in Administration and Management of Cultural Policies | Buenos Aires City                               | 2014                           | 2454 |

**TABLE 1. CHARACTERISTICS OF EACH TRAINING PROPOSAL CONSIDERED**

Source: Own elaboration.

While the differences in the denominations of each degree indicates a need to problematise the field from a singular approach, each institution has developed its own professional profile approach. The graduate profile drawn up by the National University of *Tres de Febrero* states that "The degree course trains professionals capable of promoting and managing artistic and cultural activities, with in-depth knowledge of the different artistic languages and their specific codes, which provides our graduates with the knowledge to generate proposals aimed at improving the operational efficiency of these activities".

In the Degree in Cultural management at the National University of Avellaneda "The aim is to train professionals capable of conceiving, designing, implementing, managing and executing cultural policies, research projects of the different artistic manifestations and socio-cultural spaces; producing and developing cultural goods and services companies; to provide cultural advisory services and protection of tangible and intangible heritage, warning of the deterioration and outrage of urban and rural cultural heritage; to promote the different cultural traditions and ethnic and local identities, assuming an ethical commitment to society", while one of the ten nodal points of the professional profile is that students should be able to generate socio-cultural diagnoses "with special emphasis on the region and Latin America".

On the side of the Metropolitan University for Education and Labour (UMET), the training is thought to be "oriented towards professional practice" offering "dual, generalist and specific teachings in the cultural sectors, including digital culture" with contents that "combine theory and practice, and serve a profile of students who aspire at the same time to master the work of analysis and planning, the development of their creativity and the appropriation of tools that allow for a successful professional insertion". analysis and planning, the development of their creativity and the appropriation of tools that allow for a successful professional insertion".

As for the Higher Technical Training Institute N°28, it should be pointed out that the curriculum for its degree programme was developed centrally by the Ministry of Education of the City of Buenos Aires, without the participation of the institution or its teaching staff. At the same time, it is a unified programme for any institution in the jurisdiction seeking to train cultural managers (there are currently two, including the aforementioned institution). The profile of the graduate aims to enable him/her to "participate in the design, management and evaluation of cultural policies, programmes, projects and actions, both in the public and private spheres and in civil society; promote, communicate and disseminate cultural undertakings, plans, programmes, projects and actions linked to the safeguarding of heritage and the development of the cultural sector; lead work teams for Cultural management; lead work teams for Cultural management; lead work teams for Cultural management, both in the public and private spheres and in civil society; to lead work teams for Cultural management; to participate in all stages of research applied to socio-cultural action with the community in general and with public and private entities; and to participate in the programming and realisation of socio-cultural animation and/or promotion". The primary sphere of performance envisaged for these professionals is in public sector Cultural management bodies.

The questions were aimed at determining perceptions regarding the delimitation of the professional field and the social function of the cultural manager; the skills desired within the framework of training; and their ex-

expectations in relation to employment, considering what types of work the students envisage as possible. At the same time, we sought to understand the extent of recognition of the particularities of the chosen degree in relation to the tensions and internal debates in the field of Cultural management, in order to identify the main motivations that led to enrolment.

In order to form a better view of the characteristics of those who choose to study Cultural management in Argentina, some references of the selected group of students are included, whose sample was designed to account for the heterogeneity of the group of students entering Cultural management courses in contemporary Argentina. The average age of the students interviewed was 30.6 years, 91% of whom were female.<sup>21</sup> The following are the main findings from the analysis of their perceptions.

### 3. Results and analysis

We will group the results into four areas: the drivers motivating enrolment; the assessment of the programme, its contents and proposed skills development; the characterisations of the cultural ecosystem acting as the environment in which they seek to develop professionally; and, lastly, the rationalised expectations, i.e. any specific motivations that act as a driving force in the process towards graduation.

An evaluation of the academic proposal in relation to the internal debates of the discipline in the quest for its social function is not one of the main motivations of the students consulted when it comes to choosing their programmes. The geographical dimension is the determining factor in this sense, considering that, even within the Metropolitan Area of Buenos Aires, where most of the academic offer is concentrated, the distances between campuses can be as much as three hours' travel time. The second decisive factor is based on the prestige status of the educative institution. Again, in the Argentine context, university education is intrinsically considered to be of higher quality, so universities hold an advantage when compared to technical training institutions, at least in terms of its appeal, regardless of the actual quality of each one. Moreover, with the authorisation in the 1990s for universities to award intermediate degrees, the time load between higher technical education and university education has been equalised, further weakening the choice for technical education.

The imaginaries surrounding Cultural management, as well as the preferences around the multiple identities of the cultural manager, only came in the third place in determining the choice of enrolment in Cultural management training programmes in Argentina. Approaches linking Cultural management to social transformation and politics emerge in two thirds of the interviews, including the youngest interviewee (21 years old) and the oldest one (42). In this sense, an idea of "culture not restricted to the artistic" is expressed in the search for "empowering people to find the fundamental answers to their lives" (Malena, 21 years old, student

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<sup>21</sup> With the launching of the first degree courses in the early 2000's, the first empirical findings indicated a high rate of adults (ages 34 to 44) who opted for Cultural management as a second degree course. Although it was thought that this was due to the novelty of the training, and that over the years the trend would be towards a significantly younger entrant, this was only partially the case. As for the feminisation of cultural work - both in the labour and vocational register - this is related to that which occurred in the educational service, linked to an essentialist belief that women have better biological conditions for care and upbringing. We have analysed this in Escribal (2021b).

at UMET). Within this group, two interviewees placed the guarantee of cultural rights at the centre of the attention for Cultural management as a profession, and a third observed the need to "genuinely transform territories in terms of social justice" from the disciplinary practice. In two other instances (16%), Cultural management was linked to the mediation approach, i.e. to a bridging function between populations/audiences and heritages/artistic languages.<sup>22</sup> It is noteworthy that half of the interviewees who valued a specific approach to Cultural management oriented towards social transformation were enrolled in generalist programmes, and not in specific alternatives linked to this perspective.

Meanwhile, regarding the conceptualisation of the discipline and its relationship with academic training, a contradiction emerges: on the one hand, the criterion of suitability is recognised, which indicates that most of the profession's referents have not been trained in academic terms, but in their own practice. But, on the other hand, situations are repeated of recognised cultural managers in employment, who attend the university to systematise their theoretical reflections and at the same time certify their knowledge.

Concerning the assessment of the courses, although in general terms it is positive, it must be taken into account that the universe consulted corresponds to entrants who sustained their formative processes in contexts marked by high drop-out rates. Although the tendency towards desertion is considered high in the Argentinean university system, partly due to the fact of it being tuition-free (Plotno, 2009), in Cultural management degree courses it is significantly higher than the average ('17% in the period 2002-2012' according to the Secretariat of University Policies). Only one study has been carried regarding this phenomenon in particular, that of the 2009 cohort of the University Degree in Cultural management at the National University of Mar del Plata (Polo Friz and Romero, 2016), and certainly a more systematic and in-depth analysis is required in the future.

The most frequent criticism concerning the current curricula involves the primarily conceptual approach to culture and its phenomenology, arguing that the concrete tools for intervention in this field provided by the courses are scarce. Specifically, the absence of practical skills and experiences linked to artistic production is questioned. In the words of one student, "I have found more theoretical tools that help me to understand the background of projects, initiatives or cultural policies in general than aspects linked to their practical implementation or execution" (Mariano, 28 years old, student at UNTREF).

Another growing criticism concerns what Mudimbe called the colonial library (1988): an unbalanced presence of theory and literature generated in the North Atlantic context, largely translations from English or French. Beyond the undeniable need for epistemological developments coming from other traditions, there is a growing awareness among students and the academic community at large of the inconvenience of an institutionalised absence of own voices, as well as of the invisibility of epistemological developments generated in other postcolonial territories. The incidence of African and Asian authors in the bibliographical design of Cultural

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<sup>22</sup> In 2020, the National University for the Arts launched a Diploma in Cultural Mediation, seeking to occupy a latent space on the landscape of training linked to Cultural management in Argentina. More information can be found at <https://acortar.link/frmDf>



management training programmes in the country is nil. Nevertheless, the incidence of national authors is absolutely marginal, and the presence of Latin American authors is practically non-existent.

Finally, some degree of resignation in the face of shifts in the focus of the degree courses themselves, driven by changes in authorities, and the search by the new ones to introduce an own orientation based on their anchoring in the field to the training proposals, can be observed. For instance, the degree offered by the UNDAV, which started out focusing on socio-cultural policies oriented towards territorial transformation with a focus on communities, adopted a radically different orientation in 2016, concentrated on the economics of culture and - more specifically - on the promotion of cultural industries. The students who were enrolled in the Bachelor's Degree were left traversed by this framework shift, regardless of whether this change was beneficial or detrimental in relation to their expectations and pursuits.

Regarding the characterisation of the local cultural ecosystem, all interviewees highlighted the structuring role of the State and its cultural policies.<sup>23</sup> The labour field is perceived as a particularly dynamic one, in constant mutation. This makes job placement expectations blurred, as determining what one wants to work in can be somewhat elusive. Beyond this, there is an omnipresent concern about the structural precariousness of employment conditions and the systemic absence of labour rights for a majority of the economic circuits linked to the cultural sector.<sup>24</sup> The interviews showed that the level of concern about this issue is lower among students with previous work experience in the sector.

Finally, in the field of rationalised expectations, or concrete objectives that triggered the training experience, two thirds of the interviewees expressed their desire to work in the public sector once they had graduated, in line with the value assigned to State intervention. This included two individuals already working in the public sector, for example one of them who, working in a local government, hoped that her graduation would enable her to move from her current area of work to the Department of Culture.

The remaining interviewees, meanwhile, expressed their expectation of getting a job in the event production circuit, with a majority tendency leaning towards the music industry. This includes respondents undertaking generalist courses, as well as specific ones oriented towards a different type of sub-sectoral approach.

## 4. Conclusions

The analysis conducted in this paper sought to develop a series of guidelines for reorganising the training system for cultural managers in Argentina. Still from the conviction that analyses at this level need to be deepened, extended at the federal scale and systematised, some preliminary conclusions can help both in

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<sup>23</sup> It should be pointed out that the South American context, in general, shows practically non-existent private participation in the funding of cultural activities, a scenario radically different from that of the North Atlantic tradition.

<sup>24</sup> For a more detailed account of the peculiar characteristics of the precariousness of the cultural sector in Argentina, see Mauro (2020)

these further efforts as well as in initiating a prospective exercise in order to identify how professionals in the discipline should be trained in the future.

Initially, in agreement with the ideas expressed by Vovchuk (2018) when he suggests that Cultural management should adopt cultural policies as its main object of study and intervention, based on this axiom the re-ordering of the curriculum can be relatively straightforwardly achieved. Complementarily, and based on some aspects expressed in the interviews analysed, we understand that the rights-based approach to culture makes it possible to understand societies as a whole as potential subject of such policies, overcoming the restrictions historically imposed by the illuminist perspective that saw culture as the exclusive domain of certain elites. In this sense, we assume that the cultural governance transition, from a paradigm based on the production and circulation of content to one oriented towards one focused on the comprehensive guarantee of cultural rights requires new generations of professionals. At least in Latin America, it seems to be clear that these practitioners need to assume the condition of belonging to a post-colonial context, and thus that this determines the regional cultural policies, whose primary task should be to promote decolonisation (Paquette, 2012).

It becomes evident that there are two dimensions of primary attention in this strategy: on the one hand, developing more efficient retention and graduation rate policies, and on the other hand, focusing on the distinction between artistic production and Cultural management, in order to generate specialisation processes regarding both roles. The two searches feedback on each other, evidently.

From the students' motivations that were analysed, and using a competences-based approach, it seems clear that artistic production is made up of a palette of technical knowledge applied to the execution of events, involving a certain combination of symbolic production practices structured on the basis of different historical accumulations in a language-based rationale. Although increasing digitalisation makes the borders between these languages permeable, and given that the new generations of creators tend to move fluidly between different creative dimensions, it is necessary for the producer to know not only the history of art, but specifically the contemporary codes that regulate and dynamize these creative contexts, as well as a series of specific skills ranging from the handling of the relationship with artists in all its dimensions (creative, legal, economic, communicational, etc.), as well as expertise in the technical realisation for events, an efficient handling of multi-platform communication, etc.

In terms of Cultural management, at least from the South American perspective, in addition to at least a basic knowledge of the issues described above, this should include certain tools oriented towards socio-community diagnosis, targeted intervention, plus the capability of an evaluation of these interventions in order to provide feedback for further planning. These phases, which comprise the elaboration, implementation and sustainability of a cultural policy (be it community-based, public or private sector), make up the specificity of the cultural manager's role, combining its multiple identities.

Following the guidelines of the Argentinean educational system, it is clear that the first figure corresponds, due to its scope, to a Higher Technical qualification, while the second is undoubtedly rooted in the University level. An integral overhaul of the training system for cultural managers based on this premise could even make the most of the VET level, currently not yet developed in relation to occupations related to the cultural sector. Concretely, we propose that an officially certified Sound Operator can articulate his or her VET training by following it up at the Higher Technician level to become an Artistic Producer, enabling him or her - in turn - to find continuity, as long as he or she is interested, at the university level to become a Cultural manager.

With such a perspective, the training of cultural managers in Argentina could disrupt the series of misunderstandings in which those interested in developing in the sector get involved in training instances that are not completely aligned with their interests and vocations, resulting both in a deficient public investment and in frustrations in the field of individual professional careers. We believe that initiating this process of comprehensive review of the training offer could prove to be a relevant step to strengthen the disciplinary field of Cultural management in the country in order to start addressing the contemporary challenges that the discipline is facing.

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# Work and Consumption Changes of Artistic in Mexico City: precariousness and professional adjustments

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## ABSTRACT

The 2020 COVID pandemic has been a major challenge for Mexican artists, who are characterized by working in structural conditions already precarious since before the world crisis. This paper explores a group of 15 artists on the ways they have adapted their participation in the labor market and the changes reflected on their consumer practices. Through qualitative analysis, we refer to the damages caused on their financial and social mobility experiences through a cultural perspective on their consumption practices. We identified a series of adjustments and professional decisions they made in the context of social distancing that allow us to approach an explanation on the possibility of adapting to the crisis successfully. This paper arises from an ongoing international comparative research project, which seeks to understand the former urban poor groups through their material well-being, and symbolic elements of consumer cultures.

## Keywords:

Consumer cultures, artists, cultural studies

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## Introduction

This paper analyzes the living and working conditions a sample of the artistic community have had along the COVID-19 pandemic in the metropolitan area of Mexico City, a time in which living arts activities were prohibited following the confinement measures imposed by the government in order to control the expansion of the pandemic that left the artists to uncertainty. These subjects had to adjust their working activities, their living habits, and how they foresee the coming future in these still uncertain times.

The structure of this paper comprises four sections. In the first one, we lay out the background of this research, the same that includes the territory in which they live, an overview to the previous working conditions, which as we will see were already precarious and the current working conditions of the sector in the metropolitan area. In the second we review the general elements from which this paper nourishes from, which are taken from the general research project *No longer poor, not yet middle class, new consumer cultures in the global south*. This is a qualitative and comparative research project and presents the methodology used for the general research and the particular elements taken for this paper.

The third section deals with data obtained in the fieldwork. To answer our main questions, we established the general characteristics of our interviewees, along with the professional activities they used to do before the social distancing mandate; as well as the current activities they develop, how they have reached their current financial/working situation and what sort of strategies and resources they have used to keep working/living under the current circumstances.

To finalize, we discuss the findings in the light of the general project hypothesis, our participants pre-existing precarious living conditions, their working limitations due to the pandemic, along with the strategies they have developed to navigate the current complex situation.

### ***The social context***

The metropolitan area of the valley of Mexico is the main economic, financial, political, and cultural capital of the country. It is estimated that the total area includes 7,866 km<sup>2</sup> (which represents almost 5 times the size of Greater London). Within Latin America this metropolitan area is among the 4 most populated urban developments along with Buenos Aires, Rio de Janeiro, and Sao Paulo. There are 16 boroughs and 59 conurbation municipalities of the states of Estado de México and Hidalgo. That gives an approximate total population of 23,500 million, equivalent to 17% of the national population" (OCDE, 2015, p.5 e INEGI).

In terms of GDP, it is considered that the metropolitan area produces almost a fourth to the national total, becoming the most important pole of attraction of capital and population given the opportunities this implies. (OCDE, 2015, p.5). On average, the city has a medium wage of 7253 pesos, which is related to the IV range of income marked by the nation institute of Statistics. Geography and informatics. However, the CONEVAL acknowledges that to be part of the middle class, a person should receive around 32,000 pesos per month, so all the monthly expenses could be covered comfortably. Therefore, this leaves out the estimates of a middle class to 90% of the total population (Ríos, 2020).

| Range | Mexican Pesos   | American Dollars <sup>25</sup> |
|-------|-----------------|--------------------------------|
| I     | 0 - 3,037       | 0 to 147.74                    |
| II    | 3,038 - 5,366   | 147.9 to 261.3                 |
| III   | 5,367 - 7,142   | 261.41 to 347.86               |
| IV    | 7,143 - 8,898   | 347.9 to 433.39                |
| V     | 8,899 - 10,772  | 433.08 to 524.23               |
| VI    | 10,773 - 12,985 | 524.71 to 632.45               |
| VII   | 12,986 - 15,755 | 632.5 to 767.36                |
| VIII  | 15,756 - 19,618 | 767.4 to 955.5                 |
| IX    | 19,619 - 26,197 | 955.17 to 1,275.43             |
| X     | 26,198 - 55,000 | 1,276 to 2,678.83              |

**TABLE 1. TABLE 1. MONTHLY INCOME PER FAMILY**

Source: INEGI, 2020, Encuesta Nacional de Ingresos y Gastos de los Hogares:

<https://www.inegi.org.mx/temas/ingresoshog/>

As the main urban center concentrates a lot of the cultural infrastructure of the country, this being museums, theaters, cultural centers, cultural industries and professional art schools. This certainly is a pole of attraction to art practitioners as to audiences. Piedras claims that in 2010 the cultural activities in Mexico City represented 4.7% of the GDP, against the 5.3% that implied in the larger metropolitan area. (Piedras Fiera, 2010, p. 54) these numbers are important as only other sector as oil, tourism and remittances imply a larger number of income than the artistic sector, or that used to be the panorama before the emergence of Sars-Cov-2 at the turn of the year 2020.

On the 20th of March the World Health Organization declared the world pandemic due to the presence of COVID-19. Since the personal contact between persons who are close by is the major source of contagion, a mandate in social distancing and crowd avoiding measures adopted rapidly throughout the world.

One of the most damaged sectors due to these measures were the living arts, with more than 722 theaters, 10407 museums, and above 2060 cultural centers (SIC, 2021). The artistic and cultural sectors were highly hit from the very beginning of the lockdown and they have not recovered fully even today. That implied that the working conditions of most of the sector that were already precarious became even more irregular despite the attempts to innovate and make a presence through different strategies.

When the hiatus of the artistic activity came by april 2020 it was thought would not last long, not further than some weeks, therefore it was not considered that logistic adaptations were necessary to adjust the artistic

<sup>25</sup> Currency exchange rate from Mexican pesos to American dollars on October, 4th 2021.

activities. However as the time went by, and the isolation conditions remained present, it was clear that a different form of being present among the public was necessary, also important and urgent to generate an income as the artistic activity would not resume soon.

With certain delay the universities and cultural institutions of all levels of government generated certain strategies to make presence in the community and also to somehow imply or respect the already established contracts with the performers. Most of the strategies referred to digital productions that could be seen through social media or specific platforms. However, the technological capacity was certainly a challenge as there was hardly the necessary equipment, connection and most of all, ability to use the devices to produce something attractive and with good quality. Therefore, the results in this respect have been uneven at best and usually poor.

***The main project: “Not longer poor, not yet middle class. New consumer cultures in the global South***

This paper comes out of an ongoing comparative research project led by a group of female researchers. The research looks into people’s everyday consumption practices, economic histories and plans in four urban areas of the Global South: Philippines, China, Brazil and Mexico to provide elements to understanding of how globalized economic growth is transforming lives among low-income urban communities today. The project’s central proposition is that in emerging economies, sectors of the urban poor are undergoing an economic transition that has consequences not only for material wellbeing, but also for social status, identity formation and belonging. The world’s emerging economies appear to be producing new kinds of urban low-income cultures, which fit neither of the older social categories of ‘urban poor’ nor ‘middle class’. Economic emergence is producing cultural changes: new economic opportunities, longer periods of residence in cities, more secure forms of housing, increased access to credit, and a deeper integration into mass consumer practices have become characteristics of some communities, which no longer fit comfortably into standard models of urban poverty developed by social scientists and policymakers in previous decades. However, existing research has not established whether people engaging in these new urban lifestyles are actually escaping from poverty, or whether urban poverty is taking on new cultural forms. To avoid pre-determining this project’s findings, rather than imposing a new social category we provisionally describe these subjects as the former urban poor: apparently emerging classes of urban low-income consumers, whose new practices and potentially new cultural formations have to date been largely unexamined.

To date, investigation of these changes has rested largely upon the work of market researchers, economists and policy-oriented sociologists whose quantitative data tells that national economic transition, family and labor migration and access to new forms of credit are enabling such households to become increasingly consumer-rich. Many members of the former urban poor increasingly live in ways that until recently were locally read as ‘middle class’. Yet, our preliminary research suggests that local and national cultural contexts still seem to differentiate such former poor households from the smaller and longer established middle classes. Understanding this kind of social differentiation requires further analysis with a more culturally oriented approach.



### **Methodology and general data**

The fieldwork where this data was gathered took place between March and August 2021. The total sample included 33 interviews with the general group identified as no longer poor; among those individuals, 15 of them considered part of the artistic sector given their main occupation. Among, the general sample and the specific to the artistic one, the age does not vary largely as the average for the general one is of 33 years and for the specific one is of 35 years old. On average, both groups find themselves in the VI range of income which represents a range between 524.1 and 632 USD dollars per month. So, in general terms, the artistic sample corresponds largely to the interviewed group considered former urban poor. We will center the analysis of the data on the 15 artistic cases, yet we use some general data to compare the situation of the artistic group in comparison with the fellows that share the economic living conditions they have now. The cultural cluster includes 6 females and 9 males, meanwhile the general sample breaks evenly with 16 individuals who identified with each gender.

The table below details the subjects of the sample and their artistic activities. 5 of them do activities within the visual arts, 5 more work in performing arts and 2 of them do musical arts, plus 2 of them dedicate to cultural management and 1 to literary arts. As we move on to the data, we analyze their activities before the pandemic and how they managed to adapt to the circumstances created due to the pandemic.

| <b>Alias - Gender - Age</b> | <b>Occupation</b>                 | <b>Educational Attainment</b>                                       | <b>Monthly Family Income Range<sup>26</sup></b> |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------------|---|---|
| Antonio - M<br>23 years     | Journalist                        | Bachelor of arts (Literature)                                       | VI  |
| Adriana - F<br>27 years     | Cultural Manager                  | Bachelor of Dance<br>Master's in production<br>P.h.D. on production | X   |
| Carolina - F<br>29 years    | Graphic communication (freelance) | Bachelor of Visual<br>Graphic communication                         | IX  |
| Fernando - M<br>30 years    | Dancer                            | Bachelor of Dance   | III   |
| Edith - F<br>30 years       | Photographer                      | Bachelor of Communication Science<br>Master on Arts and Design      | X   |
| Gustavo - M<br>31 years     | Graphic designer (employee)       | Bachelor of Graphic Design  | V   |
| Omar - M<br>31 years        | Dance student                     | Bachelor of Dance   | VI  |

|                          |                        |   |     |
|--------------------------|------------------------|---|-----|
| Alberto - M<br>35 years  | Musician               | Bachelor of Business Administration   | III |
| Santiago - M<br>36 years | Cultural Manager       | Bachelor of Cultural Management<br>Master of Communication and Politics<br>Postgraduate student<br>PhD. in Humanities | IX  |
| Ramón - M<br>37 years    | Graphic designer       | Master studies in Design and visual communication   | VII |
| Ramón - M<br>37 years    | Graphic designer       | Master studies in Design and visual communication   | VII |
| Carmen - F<br>37 years   | Children's Entertainer | Junior college  | IV  |
| Ernesto - M<br>38 years  | Musician               | Bachelor on Musical Instrument  | I   |
| Norma - F<br>39 years    | Graphic designer       | Postgraduate student in Master of Design and visual communication   | VI  |
| Federico - M<br>45 years | "Street artist"        | Bachelor of communication   | V   |
| Mariana - F<br>53 years  | Theatre actress        | Bachelor of Theatre Arts  | VI  |

**TABLE 2. INTERVIEWEES PROFILE**

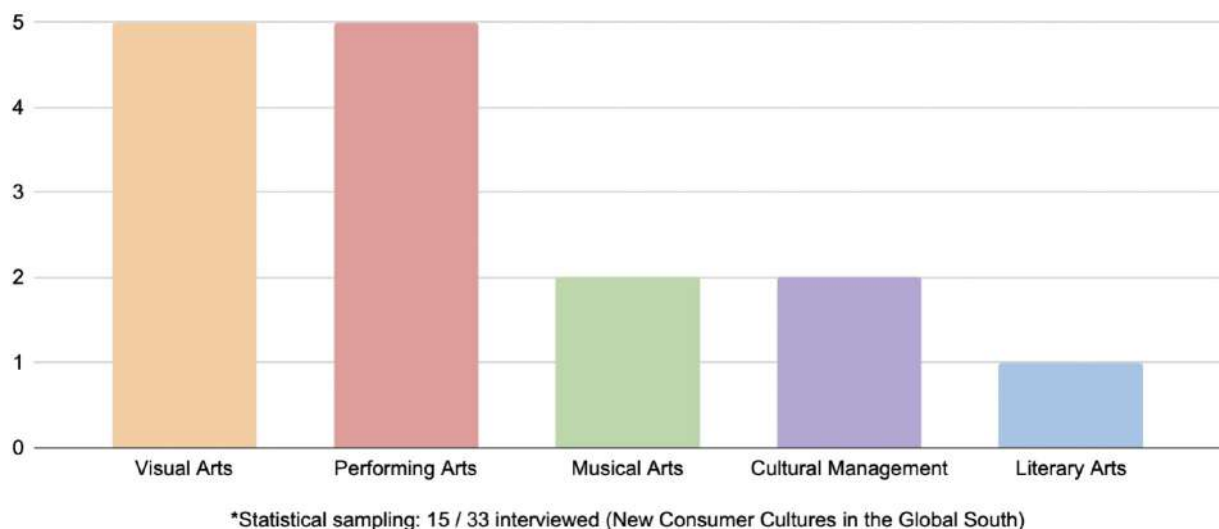
Source: Own elaboration with data from project's Interviews.

### ***Before the social distancing times***

There were 15 subjects interviewed of whom nine were men and six were women, they participate in very different artistic activities, from clowns on the streets to graphic designers, writers, dancers, and musicians. It is important to notice that 14 of them have professional degrees with which they participate in the sector and four of them have pursued postgraduate studies. All of them have developed artistic activities and have attempted to make artistic practice their main income source; however often enough have resourced to teaching at all levels to make ends meet in five of the cases. In some conditions they have resourced to other economic activities outside the artistic sector to complete their earnings, so other five had commercial activities as the complement to their income, that would include food, services, and some random products. Plus, the other three of them would use their artistic/technical skills professionally in other fields, one as a reporter for a political party and the second as a consultant of cognitive company communication. There is also the case of a third guy who has training as a business administrator, yet he plays music professionally and has combined this endeavor with jobs as cultural manager. Also, before the pandemic two of the youngest mem-

bers of the sample were students who were at the end of their programs in Literature and in Dance, it was basically during the pandemic that they had to begin working in the artistic or collateral field.

As Castañeda & Garduño (2016) state, this is a common trend going on even before the pandemic began, “[...] the workers develop in very unstable working conditions that do not offer what is considered as acceptable working conditions in previous decades. Benefits such as pensions, social security and stability are characteristics that hardly appear in creative industries jobs and are less frequently considered as real options for the students in these professions” (Castañeda & Garduño, 2016: 121).



**FIGURE 1. ARTISTIC ACTIVITIES**

**Source: Own elaboration with data from project’s interviews.**

Only two of the cases had the possibility to fulfill their necessities with their income coming from their artistic activities, one on a full-time scholarship getting a PhD, and another working as a graphic designer for a large marketing company. This is information valid prior to the pandemic. With the arrival of COVID-19 they have had to resort to other activities to survive.

“I have a CONACYT scholarship, so (the pandemic) did not cause much conflict, because prior to this I was getting my masters. Then well, this is a steady income, in contrast with people who lost their jobs or changed in that sense. Well, to me, truly it was not much of a blow, because I also had savings. So, this has not really got me into conflict (Santiago, April 2021).

In this first case, becoming a full-time student of a highly recognized postgraduate program has given him financial stability in the past few years. Therefore, to him, in these circumstances, the pandemic has not affected him directly. In a second case, Ramon talks about how he has improved his working conditions by learning how to navigate the field and getting recognition that has put him in a better place, than before, when he did not know the ropes of the trade.

“Now I have the luck to have found good jobs that have allowed me to improve my quality of life, more steadily. Besides, they gave me the chance to keep studying all the time.” (Ramón, April 2021).

The given income of the sample before the pandemic oscillated between the range III until the range X having many of them a closer income to the VII range. This has certainly been modified negatively during the pandemic as many of the incomes have diminished considerably and some even have disappeared almost totally.

"Before the pandemic, I was in a X (referring to the income range scale), and now, we're very low, very below that, between a IV and a V. But, before the pandemic I was comfortably in X. (Federico, August 2021).

Often enough they complement their income teaching their trade in formal or informal terms. Many times, this is a reliable steady source of income, which tends to complement their artistic endeavors, largely: "I'm a professional dancer and a teacher" (Fernando, March 2021).

On her behalf, Norma claims: "When I was not teaching, I was working as a freelance, as an illustrator" (April 2021). Some other had experienced precarious conditions before the pandemic and they refer to that as well:

"I've been lucky. I'm a freelance designer, I've worked for agencies and have had the advantage that I've constantly have had money. Three years ago, it was very complicated for me, and now with the pandemic, I started to get better projects. That makes me more conscious of my expenses, now that I don't have issues buying specific things. I think I've been lucky, but 3 years ago, I would say it was very complicated. It depends a lot on the job I have." (Ramón, April 2021).

In the following case, there have been important previous hardships:

"The pandemic didn't change anything for me. Nothing at all, my hardest year, financially, was 2019, when I had health problems." (Carolina, March 2021).

### ***When the pandemic arrived***

An important indicator is that the number of self-employed individuals increased during the pandemic with 10 out of 15, some of them were laid out due to the existent conditions, many of them had to combine the artistic activities with teaching (even more) or many of them almost had to almost abandon the artistic activities from then on. As was already mentioned the convivial conditions on real life were severely restricted, among the activities that were affected profoundly by this change were the live arts, leaving without much possibility of being present and carrying out their artistic activities as before. As Carmen mentions here:

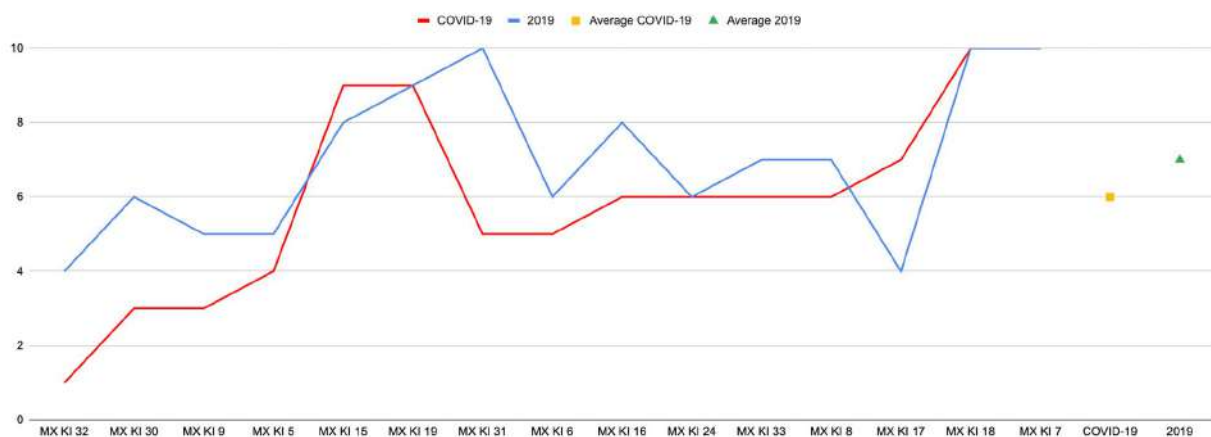
"My husband was employed in a restaurant. He is a clown and was working as a clown, magician, and balloon twisting. He had a salary, besides his tips. When all the restaurants closed, he became unemployed". (Carmen, March 2021).

Within weeks, many of them found that the work they had planned for 2020 had disappeared almost entirely, especially when it had to do with live presentations in festivals, stage seasons, and other live shows.

“Now all of us are looking where we can get some income, now we are not able to put an income together. We’re somehow frustrated, because now our ‘gigs’ are stuck, and there is no support at all, no one, absolutely no one, is supporting us, they don’t even have any considerations for us. (Ernesto, August 2021).

“As the schools closed, I didn’t have classes left to teach. The same happened with the performances, as the theaters closed, I didn’t have any more performances. Not even in the (dancing) companies I collaborate, it all stopped.” (Fernando, March 2021).

As the following graph shows, the income has been impacted given the social distancing circumstances.



**FIGURE 2. THE ECONOMY IN SOCIAL DISTANCING CIRCUMSTANCES**

Source: Own elaborations with data from research’s interviewees.

As it is possible to observe in the graphic the income lowered and those who initially had considered themselves as middle class or at least able to cover their expenses with ease went into uncertainty month by month while the hope of reopening the elements of real life kept being held. However, that opportunity kept failing as time passed by and not a completely new normality has restated yet even today.

### ***Some strategies on their income to navigate the pandemic***

Among the challenges that COVID-19 threw at people were the generation of income in spite of having the main sources closed or fully reduced by mandate. There are three strategies on which they seem to rely frequently. The first one, to adapt their artistic activity online; the second one to divert their time and energy into a different economic activity seldom related to the arts or completely distant from it. The third common resource is to have familial support; there is a fourth way to earn the income, which is by applying for grants and participating on artistic prizes. In the following section, we review these strategies are and how they operate.

Initially back in March 2020, when the pandemic was supposed to last days weeks at best, the initial strategies were to convert the usual activities to online formats, this had mixed up results. The visual artists more used to working in front of the computer had relatively little problems to adapt as many of them already worked online or were freelance and the remote system was familiar to them.

A visual narrator describes:

“At the beginning of the pandemic I did home office, now I have to go to the film studios to work. I’ve done both. On the one hand I just have the internet, and my cell phone. My bill is only for the internet connection charge, I don’t use a phone landline”. (Ramón, April 2021).

About doing a home office for a creative company, a graphic designer claims: “Now (while working on home office) I start working earlier and finish later. Then all the time I’m on the cell phone and on the computer because of the pandemic. (Gustavo, March 2021). For members of other artistic sectors, the transition has not been as smooth. Many of them were not used to deal daily with technology, at least not for their artistic activity, especially those in live arts, as they refer here.

For members of other artistic activities, the transition has not been as smooth. Many of them were not used to deal daily with technology, at least not for their artistic activity, especially those in live arts, as they refer here.

“I left aside the contact with technology for a very long time because I took a chance and opted to be in face-to-face contact with people. The virtual world swept me off my feet during the pandemic”. (Federico, August 2021).

“I think next year, when all this situation of the pandemic would have already finished, or at least improved, I might invest a little in this technological matter, maybe getting a better the computer, or a laptop. Whatever I used to use, and my technology parameters, have changed greatly now, and now I’ve become a little more demanding”. (Omar, March 2021)

As a consequence of this change of circumstances that all of them experimented they had to modify their activities and adapt to the new circumstances. That was done: by going online, which many of them attempted with moderated success as they had little knowledge of the technological tools and more than that, they had few elements to be online, the access and use of technology was reduced among this group.

“Last year, I bought some speakers, because I had a grant from FONCA. I need them to work, because now all is online, then as I knew I needed the equipment to be able to work online, well, then I used that money for it. But meanwhile, there is nothing, because it is hard, there’s nothing, there’re no concerts, no gigs, the few that were there, maybe a couple, I got COVID, so the whole month of July I was in lockdown”. (Ernesto, August 2021).

Others had to look out for other economic activities to survive, as the lockdown showed the non-existent conditions to generate live arts the artists found other sources of income that came from familial activities or

emergent ones, with which they could put up to uncertainty to pay rent and other necessary expenses. Many of them turned to merchandises that were vital for the pandemic, groceries from local sources, homemade food, sanitizers, surgical pajamas, and COVID-19 protecting masks.

“It took us a good while to stabilize ourselves because of the pandemic, we sold a lot of things, we sold a car, my brother’s house in Veracruz was put on rent, all we could sell was sold. Before watching for ourselves, we were watching for the people who were working with us, it was very complicated”. (Adriana, March 2021)

Others started to sell products that are linked to the needs of the pandemic situation.

“And now since the pandemic began, I’m starting to sell some products of a brand called LIFE PLUS, that also has a toothpaste without flour. Then, with the earnings from these sales I’m starting to buy more products, LIFE PLUS, because now I sell them, and I have access to them.” (Ernesto, August 2021).

“I used to have a (financial) cushion. At the beginning of the pandemic, I had enough to live for a few months comfortably. When I sold protection masks it gave me another year to live. It is only now that I’m seeing myself with shortages” (Federico, August 2021).

There is another case that resorted to renting out the parking space of his house, along with generating income as a game streamer.

“I began to do streaming, that is where I play, and sometimes there are donations that I had not done ever before. I began because of all the extra time I have. We have a space where a car fits perfectly. On the other side, there is another one, not as large, but if we expanded it a little, we could fit another car, a smaller one, that fitted perfectly, so we rent it out to a second car”. (Alberto, July 2021)

Another very important source of support that comes in different shapes and forms is the one provided by parents, siblings, and partners and ex partners as a constant source of income. In 13 of the 15 cases, we identified constant help from their communities to sort out their financial situation. The recurrent ways to help them out are through housing, paying medical bills or providing some cash to cover extraordinary expenses and sometimes even regular ones, sometimes they are the ones who support the artistic projects. Some of these aspects observed in the following quotations.

“I began buying this apartment; it was a very good opportunity that is why I could do it. Now honestly, I am getting my family support to pay the installments, at the beginning I used to say: ‘I won’t be able, I won’t be able’, that is how I was, then for a while I managed to pay. When I enrolled in the master’s program, I got my family support”. (Norma, April 2021).

“Before I used to rent with roommates, but the pandemic made me go back home.” (Gustavo, March 2021).

“I get private medical insurance through my mother. She told me: ‘Look, I’m paying for your father’s insurance and mine, and I can include yours too’. Our logic was that I’m freelance designer, and I don’t have social security”. (Ramón, April 2021).

“Because of the pandemic I’ve had to go to private doctors. My father is a physician, we’re lucky his friends could help us with free appointments”. (Carolina, March 2021).

“The apartment is my mum’s, but obviously she doesn’t charge me rent, specially not now. She told me: this like you’re living inheritance, why should I wait until I die, if we already can profit from it?” (Ernesto, August 2021).

“I work on the show business, speaking company wise, my dad is my partner. He is the investor” (Adriana, March 2021).

“We have ten years as a couple, not living together, and with the pandemic I have the luck, unlike many colleagues, that he helps me out. He never lost his job, he never stopped working and he is helping me out with a monthly stipend. I have zero earnings; I’m not receiving anything at all from acting.” (Mariana September 2021)

Before, but especially during the pandemic, we identified that another source of income and prestige within the artistic circuit is applying and eventually winning, deserving grants and prizes in their different trades. Among the 15 cases along the past three years, five of them have been nominated to earn a prize or grant. For example as an interpreter in dance; one of them was granted a community project in his area of residence by the City council, one more was awarded as an illustrator on an international children literature festival outside the country, along with some mentions in other festivals, plus a small grant during the pandemic to produce music from the national secretary of culture and the award of a thesis for promoting the eradication of violence and discrimination in the city.

Although all these prizes and grants come with money, the amounts are largely significant, some of them have an impact in their daily endeavors, yet they hardly get to generate better working conditions in the long run, other than creating some prestige and legitimacy within the sector that is always welcomed because of further possible contracts, projects or teaching opportunities that might arise from these. On that respect Roman García claims: “a revision of the Mexican cultural policies shows that there is a void and disdain for the artist, that generates many of the cultural goods that the nation desires to protect. If well, from the creation of the FONCA in 1994, the artists have a lifeline through the grants, scholarships and aids for production, creativity development, formation, research, and promotion are actions of short impact” (Román García, 2013: 220).

The sources of income for this sector have certainly become more complex than they already were. This group has been resourceful in order to bring food to the table and cover other main expenses. However, what we have laid on so far, is only half of the strategy, as the second part relies on how their obtained sources are spent nowadays.



## ***Strategies Over Expenses***

As a consequence of the significant decrease to their incomes, their spending capacity has been affected in many ways. We identify three main areas on their usual expenses that they frequently refer to about their strategies to live on a tighter budget. The first one refers to reducing expenses on leisure, or those “treats” which they name “small luxuries” they used to indulge themselves such as eating out, having drinks, going to the movies or small getaways outside but close to the city. It’s interesting that this helps us understand what they consider to be basic expenses and how they build the idea of luxury around some specific objects and situations they don’t need but were part of their budgets and lifestyles at least before the pandemic, and afterwards they were willing to sacrifice them.

“Those small getaways that I mentioned were pretty frequent, because I used to have more income sources, so it was easier for me to get some things. The same as going out on a trip, maybe not far away, but I would do a weekend or so. Not anymore. Not now, because of COVID and because I can’t afford it” (Fernando, March 2021).

Some of them talked about not only cutting out their treats, but also adjusting their feeding habits, and although the way to explain this adjustments follow a narrative of “becoming healthier” or “being on a diet” the reality is that one of the main reasons to cut out food is to save money “to make it to the end of the month” or “to be able to pay rent”. In contrast, we found some cases where a vegetarian diet was already part of their lifestyles before COVID, and they’re finding it difficult to keep their diets because the largest monthly expense goes to organic foods or plant-based diets.

The second one is the way they modify their consumer patterns. Mexico’s City households have a clear pattern of going to two main places to shop for groceries: local market (mercado de barrio) or fresh market (tianguis) where they get fresh food such as fruits, vegetables and sometimes meat and poultry, and the supermarket where they shop for pantry products, cleaning supplies and personal hygiene products. Since the pandemic hit the city, interviewees have talked about starting to buy from local corner stores and local producers as a way to support local economy and build a stronger community, but also to avoid going further to get to the supermarket because they were afraid to go out and face crowds, so they chose to adjust their habits to consume what they discovered closer to their homes.

A third one is their capacity to live a frugal life which is a way of life most of them were practicing even before COVID times. Because of the nature of their occupations either working freelance, self-employed, government employed or living out of grants or public funds, a stable income is not frequent, which means they know how to manage their earnings to make them last through the year.

“I usually work and save enough to live the first months of the year when I usually don’t get paid, so that I can live off my savings. Sometimes I get a work project, but I also have my bookbinding business as a backup for when I don’t have a formal source of income” (Carolina, March 2021).

The last couple of years have endured this practice as they have been forced to live frugal, not only because their income would come “sometime” but because this time income was not coming at all since much of their activities, especially for those whose main occupations is related to live arts, and they had to draw upon their savings, or family support.

“Right now, these last few months have been extreme, especially this year. Last year I still had some savings, or I would still get some work projects, but this year has been surviving mode. I’ve realized I can live with less” (Ernesto, August 2021).

Nevertheless, large expenses haven’t ceased to exist, even during lockdown. Especially expenses regarding medical issues are a concern when asked about which have been the most important things they have spent considerable amounts of money on. Many of the medical expenses have been linked to issues caused by their professional activities, but also regarding mental health. About this, although some of them have or have had access to public health services, the vast majority have chosen to go to private doctors for appointments and even to private hospitals for more complicated situations such as surgeries. The main reasons for this are to avoid crowds during the hardest time of the pandemic, but also to press forward on the waiting times public health services usually take.

“Last year I went to my Ob/Gyn appointment, and they found a fibroid that required surgery. I tried, I really tried to go to ISSSTE (public health services), I did everything, and it was such a long process! And it was worse because of COVID they told me ‘We don’t know when you will get your appointments’. So literally they won’t give you an estimated date, they don’t know when and they almost tell you ‘Go look somewhere else to get the medical attention you need’. I literally had to go somewhere else, and I ended up having surgery in a private hospital” (Edith, April 2021).

Another category of expenses we noticed it was present in their narratives is related to the adjustments they had to make to their houses when they transitioned to a home-office situation. Some of them had to invest in acquiring technological equipment which otherwise would be provided by a company as part of the equipment on a regular office, but since individual houses have become their main headquarters, technology purchases have become a major category on their budgets.

“My walls are super thin and I’m going crazy with the neighbors. During the lockdown new neighbors moved to the apartment downstairs. They are loud! They party all the time. So yes, I bought myself some professional noise cancelling earphones” (Norma, April 2021).

“I had to change my computer. The one I had collapsed all the time and I couldn’t get any job done. It has sped up my working process. I had to save money for a while to get to assemble my own brand-new computer” (Alberto, July 2021)

## **Conclusions**

As it is possible to observe, the pandemic had a real negative impact in the life of these artists as their income decreased importantly. The previous situation is dramatic, as many of them report to already having a precarious way of life, even before the pandemic arrived in Mexico. Therefore, the implementation of different schemes of income is highly important to see how they navigate the COVID-19 storm. Although most of them already existed before the pandemic the situation has enhanced their presence in the community and their lives. The current conditions have created even more avert living conditions and disparity than before. The important increase of the self-employed ones points out to further precarity, which also enhances the already existing inequality bridges, and announce them worse for the years to come.

This situation had an impact in their chances to participate in artistic activities during the period and in some cases almost entirely deviated them from their artistic pursuits, making more emphatic the fact that they participate in the pluriemployment permanently and now, that has become even more evident and necessary to them.

Something that is evident is that they have employed more hours of work to achieve the same amount of work or even less given their lack of technological abilities or lacking good enough equipment and connections to make their artistic activities more viable on technological terms. As such, they do not seem to be catching with the technological divide, if anything this seems to be creating greater disparities with those who can afford the most recent technological advances to strength their production.

The uncertainty of how the times will come on how and when the sanitarian conditions will improve locally also have an impact in their work, because they cannot really plan in advance and generate conditions to foresee new artistic projects in due course, which not only has an impact on their pocket but in their frame of mind in relation to the arts and their presence in the field. It seems highly likely that many of them will not be able to go back to the artistic field, at least not on the same terms, being these of time and or chosen activity within the field.

Although this is only a small qualitative sample, this research shows how the artistic expressions have become limited for a number of reasons, that if well are financial, also are related to the current living circumstances of the city and the country.

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# Developing a new cultural policy agenda for Pistoia: The current and projected role of artists and creative workers in the territory

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## ABSTRACT

This paper proposes to understand what cultural and creative industries in general, and valorisation of the Pistoia's cultural life in particular, mean to the main stakeholders and how they establish the collaboration during this process of negotiation, fundraising and prioritising the cultural production/experience/consumption in a strategic manner. What are the needs, priorities and concerns of the artists and creative workers regarding the strategic plan? To what extent the policy makers' aims and the ideas of the artists and creative workers are parallel and divergent? Explorative process tracing aiming at semi-structured in-depth interviews are conducted with the stakeholders in Pistoia to observe the planning and to determine the past and current obstacles. Furthermore, the researchers involved in the project are engaged in participant observation as they follow the developments on how the decision-making takes place regarding cultural policies in the city.

## Introduction: Setting the frame for Cultural Policies

Cultural policy is a public policy and involves many different actors with different interests. The government has a say in how cultural industry is shaped, how culture is represented, what kind of cultural messages want to be transmitted. As in most of the public policies, the experts and academics make a part of the decision making. Hence there are many questions involves in cultural policy making: who, what, how and why? In this paper, our aim is to examine the cultural policy of Pistoia from bottom-up and top-down to compare, contrast and analyse the cultural heritage valorisation process in this specific city.

Policy is divided into five parts in a life cycle by Cairney (2012): agenda setting, policy formulation, legitimation, implementation, evaluation, and policy maintenance, succession or termination. This division shows definitely that politics is closely related to the making of cultural policies as any other public policy is. Cultural policy can be attached to other public policies, which is called “policy attachment” by Gray (2004). In line with these remarks, Graham (2002, 1008) underlines that “heritage is simultaneously knowledge, a cultural product and a political resource”. Therefore, it is important to view different political dimensions of cultural policies such as the overlapping and diverging elements between the regional policy making, and the local needs and public opinion regarding cultural valorisation, in the case of Pistoia, which are both equally valid in determining the cultural valorisation strategies.

Another dimension of the cultural policy would be cities and the role attributed to them regarding culture. The cities are competing globally with other cities as both economic pioneers and culture promoters (Bell and Oakley 2014). However, the economic interest and the cultural priorities might not be overlapping which can create contestations between different actors regarding the cultural policy (ibid.). Hence, when understanding and analysing the cultural valorisation priorities of a city (whoever defines these priorities) the process of decision making shall be considered as well. Apart from the diversification of interests amongst different actors, there might be other factors that cause ambiguity regarding how a cultural policy is made and implemented. For instance, Gray (2012) emphasizes that “ambiguity is better than certainty in cultural policy so that the cultural policies are based on debate rather than consensus.”

In this paper, our aim is to understand the overlapping and diverging elements between the regional cultural policy making in the case of Pistoia and the local participation into the decision making by its public. Pistoia was chosen as “capitale Italiana della Cultura” (Italian capital of culture) in 2017. Following this event, one of the most important attempts has been to bring stakeholders (l’Associazione Teatrale Pistoiese, the municipality and the province of Pistoia, Regional Government of Tuscany, the Foundation of Cassa di Risparmio di Pistoia and Pescia, Dioecesi and CCIAA of Pistoia) together to enable the valorisation of cultural heritage in Pistoia using diverse strategies like a strategic plan, the regional public competition for funds (for restoration of cultural goods depicted and enlisted by the Provincia, Teatro Manzoni and IMT Lucca) and enhancing collaboration via leadership and fundraising to forge the feeling of ownership for all actors involved.

There are hindering and fostering factors to the success for an implementation of an efficient cultural policy and sustainability of the strategic plans involving the cities' cultural resources. One of the main hindering factors can be related to insufficient inclusion of the needs, thoughts and preferences of the city residents. Therefore, we adopt a methodology in which we triangulate the aims of the policy makers and implementers for the cultural plan with the vision and desires of the artists in regards to the cultural heritage of the city. Are there any discrepancies and if there are, how can they be resolved?

This paper proposes to understand what cultural heritage in general, and valorisation of the Pistoia's cultural heritage in particular, mean to the stakeholders (indicated above) and how they establish the collaboration during this process of negotiation, fundraising and prioritising the cultural heritage in a strategic manner. The rationale for undertaking this research is that it presents a unique case study where *stakeholder theory* is used in order to explore the process of cultural heritage valorisation in Pistoia. In line with this objective, the research questions are: What is the local governments' and other stakeholders' rationale for heritage conservation? What are the residents' needs, priorities and concerns regarding the strategic plan and how do they perceive issues related to heritage? What are the foci of the multifaceted paradox? To what extent the artists' and policy-makers' ideas are parallel and differing?

The paper is as follows: first, we have a brief literature review on "*community engagement*" in valorisation of cultural heritage and provide a brief overview of the gaps in the literature regarding scientific articles written on Pistoia, the case study. Third, we briefly describe the methodology. Fourth, we describe the context. Fifth, we analyse the interview results. Sixth, we discuss the results in line with the stakeholder theory in the concluding remarks, whilst providing an agenda for future research.

## Setting the Context for Stakeholder Theory

The case of Pistoia is intriguing as different actors emphasize different "capital"s (social, cultural and economic) regarding the city. Therefore, this section of the paper which aims to provide a brief overview of the literature regarding entangled interests of different actors and community involvement in cultural valorisation and preservation. As a theoretical approach the stakeholder theory has a central place within the general theoretical background. Hence, we focus on the stakeholder theory primarily. First, we introduce different forms of capital; second, we explain stakeholder theory and its importance; third, we provide a brief introduction to the academic works on Pistoia, demonstrating that there is a research gap considering these three categories in the context of the cultural heritage valorisation processes in Pistoia.

"Heritage is also a capital asset" (Throsby 2001). Furthermore, "built heritage management must be understood within specific economic and cultural-political contexts, shaped by local, national, and global political agendas." (Nyseth and Sognaes 2013, 70). Emerick (2014) focusses on "community engagement" in valorisation of cultural heritage whilst Nitzky (2013) underlines the importance of "shared authority" in decision making. Furthermore, Nyseth and Sognaes (2013, 75) claim that "we need to pay attention to local actors and actions in order to complement our knowledge of cultural economy and its role in heritage preservation."

Therefore, cultural heritage is closely connected with the cultural economy as well as the element of “past” that creates a sense of community (Graham 2002).

To create a sense of community is one of the roles of cultural heritage preservation despite the fact that the concept of “community” might be elusive (Abercrombie, Hill and Turner 1988). In our paper, we define community as the residents and citizens of the city (in this case, in Pistoia). In this context, Elsorady (2012, 387) states: “although generic heritage conservation plans and policies provide a foundation for community improvement, historic areas may require a level of attention that addresses the community’s needs and the physical, economic and social character of the area in question.” In other words, if we look at the international context of cultural heritage preservation we notice that there is a significant focus on community engagement since there are many foundations in “culture” that creates, reintroduces and changes the “community” (Fiske 2008, Waterton and Watson 2013; Ripp and Rodwell 2018; Kim, Newman and Jiang 2020). Amongst the stakeholders that influence, restore and provide guidance on valorisation of the cultural heritage, it is highly important to recognise that the community at large as a part of the decision-making in cultural policies and cultural heritage valorisation.

The stakeholders’ involvement in the valorisation of cultural heritage is the starting point to understand the evolution and evaluation of the cultural capital of a city. Why is it important to understand the stakeholders? Adie and Amore (2020, 1) underline in their work that “there is a plethora of stakeholders, a variety of legal regulations, and conflicting governing styles which can be found within and across national contexts” and they suggest that “the stakeholders shall be studied and considered with their interests, aims and imagined future plans for cultural valorisation”. However, one issue is that it is hard to calculate the total number of stakeholders (tom Dieck and Jung 2017) and to identify them (Reed 1997). Within this process of decision making and determination of the main interests in cultural heritage valorisation it is important not to forget that stakeholder groups interact with each other to carry out certain tasks (Li 2007, p.378).

Despite the fact that the research based on how different stakeholders interact with each other is not the main central theme of this paper, the interaction between the elite stakeholders and the public actors is an important aspect to explore. Wang and Aoki (2019, 166) found that there might be a clash of interests at the locality level, between the government-developer coalition and residents’ function-based place-attachment and residents’ heritage consciousness and immediate living needs. Therefore, different interests, tensions, wishes and perspectives on cultural heritage valorisation need to be considered in order to explore the mechanism behind the making of the cultural policy decisions.

Previous researchers identified that stakeholder collaboration is of utmost importance when it comes to not only cultural heritage valorisation but also touristic attraction and cultural consumption. Aas, Ladkin and Fletcher (2005, p. 29) suggest that “if a common ground between the different interested parties can be found, then heritage tourism can be developed in a way that preserves the resources of the local community and is beneficial to all.” The collaborative approach between the stakeholders though, might not always be straightforward (Ladkin and Bertramini 2002).



First of all, it is central to define the “stakeholder theory” and later, underline its importance for the theoretical premises of the paper. Stakeholder is defined as “who can affect or are affected by the achievement of an organization’s purpose” (Freeman, 1984, p.49). The stakeholder approach notes that “a company’s stakeholders can be classified as internal (employees, managers, owners) and external (suppliers, society, government, creditors, shareholders, customers)” (Freeman 1984 in Claudia tom Dieck and Hungsoo Jung 2017). Being one of the main tenets of cultural heritage ownership and valorisation, the local community has a great role to play in planning and implementation of cultural projects (Russo, Boniface and Shoal 2001; Peng et al., 2014; Ferrari and Gilli 2018).

Furthermore, Arnaboldi and Spiller (2011, 643) draw attention to the incidental matters concerning collaboration of stakeholders, and issues that might arise within major cultural projects (see Table 1):

**Table 1. Potential issues in large cultural projects (Arnaboldi and Spiller, 2011, p. 643)**

| Area  | Issues  |
|---|---|
| <b>Identification and involvement of key stakeholders</b>     | Involvement in the collaboration<br>Representation: legitimacy and power<br>Capacity to participate   |
| <b>Maintaining the collaboration</b>                          | Power distribution among the convened stakeholders<br>Need for consensus-based decision making<br>Information sharing and dissemination<br>Heterogeneity in governance structures and value systems<br>Evolution of the roles of actors |
| <b>Long term implementation of the collaborative outcomes</b> | Long term outcomes and structuring of the collaboration process<br>Unrealistic expectations   |

Beck and Storopoli (2021, 1) underline that most of the time stakeholders were thought as companies and business firms, whilst the literature regarding stakeholder theory in the context of urban management is scarce. Besides, they also identify three mainstream research themes after doing a systematic literature review: *sustainable urban strategy, urban marketing and power of networks* (ibid.). In line with their work, it can be noted that in the case of Pistoia neither power of networks nor the urban cultural heritage strategy have been examined thoroughly till now by the scholars. Furthermore, how the stakeholder theory can be applied to the case of Pistoia has not been sufficiently discussed in the previous research projects.

The literature on Pistoia shows that the research regarding cultural policy and its connection with the local population is scarce. The literature regarding the cultural heritage in Pistoia mostly focusses on the technical aspects of cultural heritage where *the preservation methods via renovation, restoration and restructuration* are at the center of the main research themes. For instance, vulnerability assessment of the masonry churches by user reported data and modern internet of things (IoT) (Uva, Sangiorgio, Ruggieri and Fatiguso 2018), importance of assessing the rate of decay as a tool for planning conservation actions in the case of

*Servi Muti* (by Roberto Barni) examined by Bracci et al. (2015), the special case for the preservation of the Baptistery of San Giovanni in Corte in Pistoia via water repellent treatments for stone by Martelli et al. (2020). Veluzzi (2019) in his work concentrates on the historical formation of the city and building of the first religious monuments finding a geometric genesis and pattern in which there was a very specific reasoning behind the urban planning. As it is observed the literature on Pistoia focusses a great deal on the technical aspects of cultural heritage preservation and historical importance of cultural heritage in the city, but not the cultural policy decision-making processes by the stakeholders including the community participation.

As shown in literature review above, and after an examination of relevant scholarly articles regarding the cultural heritage in Pistoia, it is observed that there are gaps in the literature regarding national and regional cultural policies and their effects on the valorisation process for this specific city. Since the strategic cultural plan is very recent it is observed that most of the studies till now were concerned with the cultural heritage in technical and architectural terms rather than exploring stakeholder collaboration based on legitimacy and power (Arnaboldi and Spiller 2011). The research, therefore, requires an in-depth understanding of the role of each stakeholder and power imbalances between them whilst triangulating the cultural policies' purposes with the cultural needs and visions of the city residents. Finally, the examination of the literature regarding the community engagement and the case of Pistoia needs more attention from scholars and this paper aims to fill in these gaps. In other words, this study takes these reflections underlined in the literature review and further investigates the case of Pistoia through the concept of stakeholder theory.

## **Strategic Cultural Plan for Pistoia**

Pistoia has become one of the most important cultural centers in Tuscany as in 2017 it was chosen as the cultural capital of Pistoia. The city has also been known to be child friendly with its open spaces (Wilks 2010). The municipality of Pistoia has adopted diverse methodologies in the recent years to include more stakeholders from practitioners to associations in their organisational cultural meetings.

One of the most important initiatives that have been taken by the Provincia of Pistoia was to establish the Tavolo Permanente della Cultura della Provincia di Pistoia (Permanent Round Table for Culture of the Pistoia Province) to improve the valorisation of cultural heritage. Accordingly, a list of all the culturally important edifices were prepared by experts. In the *Tavolo Permanente della Cultura della Provincia di Pistoia*, there are different stakeholders who represent diverse cultural enrichment such as museum and library directors. These meetings update all the public bodies working on cultural initiatives to determine the priorities of restoration of monuments of cultural heritage, including landscape. *Tavolo Permanente della Cultura della Provincia di Pistoia* has the adjective "permanent" as the collaboration between different institutions is supposed to continue even if the governors of the projects and the subjects change throughout time.

When we examine the documentation regarding the meetings of the Permanent Round Table for Culture in the Province of Pistoia, it is seen that there is a great effort to detect every monumental heritage in each district of Pistoia and to give priority to the restoration and revival process. The documents that are examined

chronologically show the improvements in the Strategic Plan for Culture in Pistoia. These documents mostly focus on the necessary collaboration between different municipalities of Pistoia and their focus is on the city centres, towns and villages in the province. What is important here is to note that in these documents a link between tourism and culture has been also promoted. Therefore, valorisation of the cultural heritage is seen also as contributing to the touristic attraction of the city. The local governments' approach to cultural valorisation has granted greater importance to the archives, libraries, historical walls, theatres, and churches. Apart from their restoration and maintenance, problems regarding the lack of human resources in the libraries and archives have become the main themes that the Permanent Roundtable for Culture has discussed till now. Furthermore, Teatro Manzoni and Association of Pistoia Theatres have been paid central attention as the theatre needs to be restored and Covid-19 has affected the numbers of audience negatively. Not only fundraising activities have been planned but also Artbonus, which is a way to collect private funds for the theatres all over Italy is promoted and arranged within the Strategic Plan for Culture, with the aim to help Manzoni Theater especially.

## Methodology

This paper aims to understand the policy making in cultural valorisation and democratisation of cultural heritage. Therefore, the first step was to identify the stakeholders in order to conduct interviews with them. Explorative process tracing aiming at 7 semi-structured in-depth interviews are conducted with the stakeholders in Pistoia to observe the planning and to determine the past and current obstacles (the project started in 2020 and is to end in 2022). Besides, these interviews will aim to understand different stakeholders' perceptions and experiences of the initiative. Semi-structured interviews which are the most commonly used interview types (Kitchin and Tate 2000; Owens 2006) are of great importance when it comes to leaving some independence to the interviewee (Bryman 2008).

**Table 2. Profiles of the Stakeholders Interviewed**

|                    | Institution                      | Role               | Gender | Mode of interview                | Date         |
|--------------------|----------------------------------|--------------------|--------|----------------------------------|--------------|
| <b>Interview 1</b> | Pistoia Province                 | Coordinator        | Female | Online semi-structured interview | October 2021 |
| <b>Interview 2</b> | Independent                      | Painter            | Male   | Online semi-structured interview | October 2021 |
| <b>Interview 3</b> | Gli Umini                        | Actor and producer | Male   | Online semi-structured interview | October 2021 |
| <b>Interview 4</b> | Independent                      | Art critic         | Male   | Online semi-structured interview | October 2021 |
| <b>Interview 5</b> | Vanucci                          | Gallery owner      | Male   | Online semi-structured interview | October 2021 |
| <b>Interview 6</b> | Independent                      | Painter            | Male   | Online semi-structured interview | October 2021 |
| <b>Interview 7</b> | A centre for creative expression | Director           | Male   | Online semi-structured interview | October 2021 |

**Source:** Prepared by the authors

These interviews will be triangulated with document analysis. Hence, we will surmise the policy documents, strategic cultural plan(s), stakeholder meetings' policy briefs and regulations since 2017 related to the case study of Pistoia. Furthermore, the researchers involved in the project are engaged in participant observation as they follow the developments on how the decision-making takes place regarding cultural policies at the regional and local level.

How are the questions prepared? Interview and focus group questions were designed using a theoretical interest approach (Corbin and Strauss 2015). Theoretical interests in this case emanates from the stakeholder theory, how they interact, decide on cultural policy and how they prioritise the cultural, economic and social capital embedded in the cultural heritage of Pistoia. The questions for the artists are as such:

1. Have you been involved in the strategic plan of culture in Pistoia? Or have you been involved in the cultural events when Pistoia was chosen as the cultural capital collaborating with the public actors such as the provincial, municipality etc.?
2. How do you think that the art can be made more accessible in the museums and galleries in Pistoia? What can be done better in Pistoia to make artists count more?
3. Do you take part in any activities to influence the cultural policies of the city? And if so, could you describe them, please?
4. Do you think that the policy makers listen to the artists or at least collaborate and communicate with them on a regular basis?
5. How did the pandemic affect your work and what are your future plans regarding your work and creative spaces in the city?
6. To what extent the policy makers' aims and the ideas of the artists and creative workers are parallel and divergent?

Regarding the methodological aspect, Elsorady (2012, 383) makes a similar research in which she interviews with different stakeholders "increasing the comparison of responses": "interview questions considered topics such as heritage conservation (i.e., its importance, its role within the community and the latter's contribution), physical/economic/social revitalization (i.e., how heritage conservation affects local business), new development (i.e., how it can be integrated with heritage areas, what works, what does not), the decision-making process (i.e., methods that might facilitate or improve the process), and the role of public participation (i.e., in planning and decision-making processes)." These themes are extremely important and inspiring for the methodology used in this paper.

The rest of the paper explores the analysis of the interviews, findings, possible links with the previous literature and future agenda for research that links cultural heritage in cities and stakeholder theory.

## Analysis of Interviews: Artists' Perspective

The interviews show that the artists are not sufficiently included in the process of cultural valorisation within the context of the Strategic Plan for Culture in the city of Pistoia. The reasons for that vary. However, it is possible to categorise diverse reasons and diverse views between the artists since not all are necessarily concerned of being included. They also see the advantages of being independent and doing their own productions. In the analytical section, we will focus on different aspects, possibilities and impossibilities in collaboration as well as its causes according to the local artists.

It is seen that some artists without collaborating with the local governments in the city of Pistoia can still be internationally recognised, so much so that their international recognition comes before their local recognition. The choice of the first painter I interviewed with, has been more on the side of not working with galleries and museums but being independent, doing more artwork on the streets. He has been commissioned by Rome for his works with the theme of the Olympics and he has also recently been commissioned for a work in the district of Pistoia to do a portrait of Angela Marcesini whose name was given to the local library of the district of Agliana. In regard to his expectations regarding collaboration he says:

My involvement with the art in Pistoia is not very direct as I travelled a lot. I grew up here, then I left for the USA just after my teenage years and then went to Australia for two years, then to Los Angeles and Nicaragua. Having been involved in so much... except in the last couple of years I have been asked to join a group of artists, this was I think it was 2017, a group of artists for the street art ... not painting on the wall. It was street artists that were supposed to do a live painting over time span of an afternoon when Pistoia was the capital of culture, and basically the funds of the auction, where these paintings were going to be sold, was going to go to the art school in Pistoia. I was one of the six artists that were called in and recently, after I completed a mural for the Olympic Committee that honours Federica Pellegrini. I did it in Rome and it was inaugurated in June. And since then I was commissioned here a piece in Agliana for the city hall. Basically, now I guess that might mean the word is circulating and they are seeing me. I have to say that I have not done really anything for my name to be seen in Pistoia or Agliana, and this is because I approach my art in a different way than some.

He added that he has not been affected by the pandemic negatively because he was in the USA and also in Nicaragua and he mostly did open air work such as mural arts and the types of art that are more open to public, in open spaces. Therefore, he mostly worked outdoors. For him, the pandemic was not restraining.

The theatre producers and actors in fact, that have collaborated with the public institutions in the year of the Capitale Culturale Italiana according to a theatre actor and producer from Pistoia:

We think that everything we do for the cultural policy of the city we do independently and privately and because we want to develop and create something valid here. But even from this point of view, there is nobody who knows what dialogue, where and with whom... There have been certain periods in the past, even when Pistoia was the cultural capital of Italy, and some meetings and reunions were held by the Scientific and Cultural Committee, and we also took part in these meetings to develop projects. But when that experience ended, so did that kind of meeting.

However, in the recent years, they have started to prefer private activity and independence after a couple of collaborations. In line with this proposition, they suggest that they feel freer to engage with the content as they are a private entity. When working with the local institutions, however supportive they might be to the

artists, the actor I interviewed with noted that there had been limitations in terms of creative content for the plays, as the state mostly considers numbers of plays:

than If there were a constant dialogue, the projects and objectives could in some cases coincide rather diverge, because otherwise certain choices are made exclusively by managers or by those who manage the offices and funding, and artists almost exclusively have to adapt to the frameworks or projects that are dropped from above: if you like them, OK, if not, nothing. On the other hand, if there were a possibility of constant communication, I would see nothing strange in in that the politician is an elected citizen, but still a citizen, so I have the right to talk to him(her) and he has the right to listen to me, as if he were another citizen. And what would be needed would be a bit of curiosity thinking through choices that have to do with arousing curiosity with the citizens, trying to involve them, trying to make them participate, stimulate them in this sense too, not to bring the same event again and again on the table. Also, because, the event comes and goes. A project stays, works, grows, evolves, and impacts the city and those who live in it. Even often artistic productions are transferred in the form of numbers, and then they must be produced by the ministries, for calls, for projects, for funding; whilst the content, what happens with the content, is not of interest.

In other words, more than quality, the quantity counts. Currently, with their own company that operate in the industrial part of Pistoia they observed that the citizens also pay attention to their work, which means that their initiative was successful.

The art critic from Pistoia suggested that the artists and politicians can work together but their views do not have to be convergent at all as they are at different levels. The art critic believes in the objective of making art as being critical, as an added value by the artist, who is able to observe the contemporary problems and situations, which is thought as a crucial part of the process of creating and understanding art. He also collaborates with the local authorities. And yet, he underlined the absence of a 'rete' (network) that constantly meets and collaborates including all stakeholders. His collaboration was much less during the pandemic times as he was traveling the world, and he was not influenced by the pandemic times negatively. In fact, he had a chance to compare international examples with the case of Italy and he suggested that the local artists from Pistoia need to be educated also internationally, which is a missing element in Pistoia.

Regarding the absence of a "network" and collaboration, another painter from Pistoia, underlined three important issues to why collaboration with public institutions was not quite easy-going and eligible. These reasons according to him are directly related to the fact that the artists do not collaborate amongst each other; most of the cultural and artistic events take place if there are personal relations of the artists with the public institutions; and thirdly, he said that the art takes a long time to realise, and the vision of the artist and the public institutions do not always overlap. One reason for that is that the artist is actually thinking more long term, has a critical perspective of the moment that also emanates from a historical perspective, with a look into the future. Politics, on the other hand, has to see just five minutes ahead rather than preparing something long term for the future. Hence, their natures are different. The same artist, similar to the theatre actor above, underlined the fact that the networks and collaborations are weak both amongst the artists, and between the artists and the public institutions:

There is no debate among artists, they do not come together to discuss the general needs of our society, because, art must talk about our society, you can not only talk about exclusively personal concepts that one resolves at home, you have to dialogue with others, this is one of the great faults of the artists. Also, institutions do not dialogue with artists ever, I do not know what the motivation behind non-communication is, whether superficiality, whether lack of the general culture, or lack of time...

He added that, it is not very reasonable to expect from the artist to be his manager and self-promoter as well, that this is against the nature of art. The art needs a sedentary life to produce better and take time to contemplate on the artwork, according to him. Currently, the artist becomes one's own manager and promoter, which is an idea that he found insane. He said that he was doing the same thing but he did not like the fact that one has to self-publicise and self-network. He suggested that the art critics would not have existed without art and artists. According to him, the art critics together with the assessors of culture, who are public officials, should be the ones to reach out artists and discover the new talents, new art works rather than one person reaching an institution sporadically, which creates little and unsustainable collaboration between the stakeholders.

Besides the criticism of some of the policies that do not directly help the local artists being discovered, he also made self-critical remarks saying that there is not a developed network and continuous dialogue between the different artists in general that would enable collaboration, 'we are not capable of collaboration, either' he suggested. In the past, he collaborated with Palazzo Fabroni (Museo del Novecento e del Contemporaneo di Palazzo Fabroni) which is one of the most important cultural hubs of the city and which is one of the most important museums in Pistoia.

It would not be wrong to state that the public institutions' links with the artists, since they depend on the relations and personal contacts, are short-lived and as the local governments and people change these contacts are not discontinued as they are not institutionalised in a concrete manner.

In addition to the people working actively as artists, critics, the owner of the galleries was amongst our interviewees. One of the most important art galleries in Pistoia is Vanucci, it is a contemporary art gallery which promotes the contemporary artists in the territory. He underlined that one has to think also internationally how the art shall be shaped, and Pistoia is not that international at the moment, as it should open its doors nationally and internationally to the art and artists from all over the world. He also added that the local government needs to be more proactive to keep the dialogue with the stakeholders including artists and galleries, that they should coordinate not only at the personal level but in a systematic manner the cultural activities, and that there is a need for a networking that has more sustainable qualities for long-term projects and a better vision of the cultural sphere.

It should be noted that the Province of Pistoia has an intermediary role between the local municipalities of the districts of Pistoia and the Tuscan Regional Government. Therefore, their role is crucial in coordination and communication activities of the strategic plan for culture in Pistoia. However, it is seen that despite the fact that culture is given great priority in terms of calls for projects and funding, the human resources might not be sufficient to meet the needs of this demanding job.

## Concluding Remarks

The research shows that there is still room for further involvement of the artists in the process of making and implementation of the cultural policies. The findings illustrate that there is a need for building a stronger dialogue and network between the policy makers and the artists to balance different visions and ideas (between and within these groups) in the cultural policy making process of the territory. The current cultural policy agenda focusses more on the city's monuments, restoration and cultural valorisation in terms of libraries, archives, churches, museums and theatres, while the general tendency of the interviewed artists underline the importance to include the exhibitions, galleries and artist support programs more in the policy agenda. Furthermore, the interviewees mostly focus on the idea that the cultural policies at the local, regional and even national level (whilst aiming at an international audience) need to have a vision that captures not only the past and the present but also the future.

All the artists interviewed as well as art critic and gallery owner are highly interested in cooperating with the public institutions. However, while being open to collaborations with public authorities in shaping the city's cultural policy agenda, in certain cases, establishing a private cultural organization to feel freer to manipulate the content or having a transnational life as an artist are also choices that they seem to enjoy and justify. Thus, the fieldwork shows that there is a big potential to strengthen the collaboration with the artists in the territory for policy making (Nyseth and Sognaes 2013, Nitzky 2013). On the other hand, the stakeholders who are involved in the Piano Strategico Della Cultura do not necessarily include the artists or artist networks. However, this decision is also related to the fact that the project mainly aims to detect, discover and valorise the important monuments of the city. As previously noted, the project concentrates on conservation and restoration of the most important monuments.

As noted previously, there have been some collaborations in the past between the artists and public institutions (especially those involved in the theatre), particularly during the times when Pistoia was the cultural capital of Italy in 2017. There have also been spontaneous and sporadic engagement with the artists based on personal connections and relations. However, the interviewees explained that these collaborations have not been long lasting and they feel to remain out of the decision-making process. In this regard, the findings suggest that public institutions engaged in the cultural valorisation projects may project the cultural policy agenda and related activities between heritage conservation and arts and culture activities with the involvement of the artists in a more balanced way.

Overall, findings show that there are different visions and interests of the stakeholders. This case study raises a number of issues relevant to cultural heritage management through stakeholder collaboration. Based on these results, it could be suggested that a mid-way approach that considers both preservation, restoration and valorisation of monuments in line with the creative ideas from artists in order to build connections with the citizens could be a further future approach to these local and regional cultural policies. Artists can help the public institutions communicate with the citizens better, they underline the "human" element often, and they are creating their own independent views, which can bring a fresh outlook and style to even how the



monuments can be valorised more by the public. Particularly, the young local artists would benefit from this outreach as well as the galleries.

This paper contributes to the knowledge gap in the stakeholder theory regarding the case of cultural heritage valorisation process in the cities, through the case study of Pistoia. Nevertheless, there are several limitations: during the first phase, the study, mostly focused on the roles and visions of the local artists and, consequently, the fieldwork was conducted only with the artists among the stakeholders, which would provide only a limited perspective for the results. Thus, the authors aim to expand the fieldwork with the involvement of other stakeholder groups in the future research to be able to triangulate the results and provide a wider perspective.

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# At the Pivot point of Cultural Education Management, Teaching, and Artistic Practice

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## ABSTRACT

During the Pandemic artists were faced with having to find virtual solutions to their artistic and teaching practices in order to sustain them. Managers for cultural and academic institutions had to swiftly convert programmatic activity to remote experiences in order to continue. This pivoting caused a paradigmatic shift in the way participants experienced art, culture, and learning with pros and cons. (Dodson, J. 2021). What is the role for educational and cultural managers and artists during this next phase of recovery? This paper will identify the key factors that occurred during the pandemic that lead to a paradigmatic shift in educational, cultural, and artistic practices. That will be followed by a description of the post-pandemic new normal that we have arrived at and the role of educational and cultural managers and artists. Finally, in looking towards the future the paper will project how these roles will continue to change during recovery (Leonard, N. 2020).

## Keywords:

Pandemic recovery, workforce development, artistic practice, art education, STEAM

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## **At the Pivot point of Cultural Education Management, Teaching, and Artistic Practice**

During the Pandemic artists were faced with having to find virtual solutions to their artistic and teaching practices in order to sustain them. Managers for cultural and academic institutions had to swiftly convert programmatic activity to remote experiences in order to continue. This pivoting caused a paradigmatic shift in the way participants experienced art, culture, and learning with pros and cons. Through this crisis much innovation has occurred and a new normal has arrived (Dodson, 2021). What is the role for educational and cultural managers and artists during this next phase of recovery?

This paper will identify the key factors that occurred during the pandemic that lead to a paradigmatic shift in educational, cultural, and artistic practices. That will be followed by a description of the post-pandemic new normal that we have arrived at and its sustainability and the role of educational and cultural managers and artists. Finally, in looking towards the future the paper will project how these roles will continue to change during recovery as technology evolves and safe guards remain in place (Leonard, 2020).

In my role as a Center Director of a Center for the Digital Arts, Peekskill Extension of Westchester Community College our team had to virtualize our classes immediately upon lock down. Teaching classes remotely was not a technical issue as the college already had a CMS (course management system) in place and we adapted to Zoom for synchronous learning soon after (Kraehe, 2020). Our issue was that the center teaches high tech arts technology courses such as 3D animation, game design, etc. that required the latest industry software and hardware and some of our students were not privileged enough to have this equipment at home. The college then allowed us to make many software licenses available remotely for others we tried using free trials or freeware. However, hardware issues remained. The digital divide remains a real equity issue.

Our community is very diverse and even though we lent out many laptops the equipment we had to loan did not equal what we had to offer on site. The center did loan out production equipment such as cameras (both video and DSLR, light kits, etc.). Equipment is something we would like to work on for the future to ensure that students of need can participate equally in their classes.

These are some of the pivot points that occurred during the pandemic that will be of discussion in this paper. These are the type of changes that impacted programming for educational managers that also impacted cultural events and teaching artists (Ardalan & Iozzo Adler, 2021). A more in depth discussion will follow.

The transition to remote teaching upon lock down was a steep learning curve and faculty were re-writing their syllabi. Most faculty were using course management systems to some degree but for many teaching via distance learning was a new experience. Classes requiring physical materials, like mine, that used materials, such as paper circuits, replaced projects because the students did not have supplies at home. Fine arts courses had challenges to work remotely in terms of students losing facility access, supplies, and conducting

studio critique at a distance. However, I was actually feeling very positive about the opportunity to adapt my *Technology in Art Education* course to remote learning. For our class using technology was already expected, there was a base skill level, and working remotely enabled students to develop skills they could rapidly adopt and use in their internships.

### ***Technology in Art Education***

My students, graduate students in a Master's of Art Education program, at the School of Visual Arts presented their STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, Mathematics) curriculum plans and taught application (App) lessons. These projects required them to design a unit lesson plan that combines any two or three components of STEAM and teach an applications based project with a lesson plan and demonstration that would take place on a smart phone or tablet. I demonstrated Scratch with Makey Makey. Scratch is a web-based interactive animation and game building program that teaches children how to program with block code. Makey Makey is an external interface that attaches to the computer via USB and connects to everyday objects with alligator clips to turn objects into a keyboard. You can turn a drawing into a piano, etc. Scratch now codes for Makey Makey. It has Makey Makey code blocks that allow you to interact with the Makey Makey board and send commands to it so you can create sounds and play virtual drums, for example.

The ability to both demonstrates software and physical interfaces over Zoom was challenging and fun. One of the advantages of doing this remotely was the screen-sharing feature, which not only allowed students to see my Makey Makey demo up close but also enabled peer-to-peer screen sharing of their Scratch presentations so we could learn from one another. The remote learning format suited the class content and also gave my students the pre-service training to support them as they started to teach online. One student stated that the course was the most useful of the courses they had taken and I think that was probably because of the situation that COVID-19 had put them in. It intensified the reliance on technology.

### ***Anxiety***

My students were anxious about the pandemic and disappointed that they did not have access to their academic facilities. They were concerned about their final exhibition and their graduation. They did not bargain for a remote learning experience. These were just some of the issues they were dealing with aside from their own well-being and concern for their family and friends.

As an administrator, there has been a lot of uncertainty. We have gone through decision-making incrementally. The Center for the Digital Arts, where I am an administrator, was closed for eighteen months. The facility had capacity limitations imposed based on classroom square footage, facility capacity, and social distancing. The current goal is to address the digital divide amongst our students and re-open for lab/studio access and equipment check out. It has been difficult to predict the next step, as it is dependent on State University of New York (SUNY), state, and local government. 2020 though Summer 2021 was a very difficult time for

students and their chief concern was knowing when they could return to campus for in person learning. Our recovery plan was iterative and continues to evolve with vaccine mandates and the increase in in person classes.

### ***Life during the Pandemic***

Reality was going to the grocery store at 6:00 am to help my father shop, checking in on my sister who is an ER nurse at a local hospital and managing the Center for the Digital Arts from home at the same time my kids were home schooling. Meeting up with people going in the wrong direction in the food store was a common occurrence. Children interrupting Zoom meetings, dog barking, and other constant disruptions were a part of the workflow. Through video conferencing I've been introduced to colleagues homes, babies, and pets. This has made us more connected. Yet, the chaos of family life swirling around my makeshift work desk overwhelms me. Zoom has eliminated my commute and made some things much easier and faster. I can be there for the bus, extracurricular activities, dinner, and other community meetings back to back. In some ways it has made me more flexible and busier than before. My counterbalance in taking advantage of Zoom is to do Zoom yoga. It is safe, mindful, and a way to handle the new challenges COVID has presented.

### ***Innovation***

This very fluid situation has also brought innovation across higher education and within my team. We transformed our art courses to remote experiences in a short time, which spoke to the dedication and passion the team has for education and the arts.

The center moved quickly to using Zoom and teaching remotely to foster live synchronous interaction between faculty and students. The painting faculty assigned students to work on location in plein air independently and then met up on Zoom to share their work for peer feedback. Professor Shute, instructor of painting, "when students are willing to use Google DRIVE, this is the optimum way for the studio art of the students to be shared! A studio community really is encouraging, when they share comments, pasting comments onto other students' artworks (L. Shute, personal communication, September 21, 2020)." Shute was earnest in adapting her fine arts students to remote learning. One other way she did this was by giving them a break. She would conduct a demonstration and then give students an allotted time to do an assignment and then come back together. One draw back was using the figure; it was not possible to get models in an online environment.

The staff had to address many technical issues including access to software. It was decided to convert the curriculum to freeware (Krita, (krita.org), Blender, (blender.org), Maya, (autodesk.com), Unity, (unity3d.com), TinkerCAD, (tinkercad.com), etc.) that could accomplish the same learning outcomes to avoid burdening students with extra costs. This particular software is all downloadable from the Internet. Some are web based and some require you to have a configuration that can support these free trials/subscriptions. Krita,

digital imaging, and TinkerCAD, 3D forms/circuits/etc., are completely free as is Scratch (scratch.mit.edu), animation/gaming. You can download a student or personal Unity, 2D/3D gaming platform, account for free.

This innovation including new ways to deliver remote technical support continued post-pandemic, online synchronous courses using Zoom has continued as an option to students. The center is planning to install new technology to support a hybrid model that will enable a teacher to teach live to both students in-person and remote simultaneously. Students will have more learning options and scheduling flexibility and this change in education will, not only expand the market, change the way people learn.

Leonard (2019) proposes that non-humans and machines are co-creators in a post-human curriculum that facilitates learning with arts technology. He asserts that AI is capable of creating art and that art educators need to evolve with this new trend. Digital imaging tools can now create new content without human intervention. Arts technology education is changing rapidly in the classroom and this coupled with distance learning only further supports Leonard's (2019) point of the need to factor in the non-human and the computer into curricula design.

### ***Art Education at the Fulcrum of the Future***

Higher Education is embarking on what Forbes (2018) says is a fourth industrial technology revolution. This is a time when the transformation of work by automation is being accelerated by this pandemic. New jobs, as indicated by The 100 Jobs of the Future report (Ford Australia, Deakin University, & Griffith University, 2019), such as Virtual Assistant Personality Designer, Innovation Manager, Virtual and Augmented Reality Experience Creator, Drone Experience Designer, Human Habitat Designer, and AI Educator, etc. will emerge and our students will need to be prepared for them. I believe art education is at the fulcrum of this design revolution. In order to prepare for any of these new professions you will need the critical thinking skills that only art education can supply.

### ***Cultural Educational Management during a pandemic and beyond***

My role as the Center Director of the Center for the Digital Arts, Peekskill Extension requires me to wear many hats as an academic administrator who also plays a role as a cultural educational manager due to the specialty focus of the center. The city of Peekskill is located in the Hudson Valley in the county of Westchester, New York. It is a beautiful part of the state with a lot of natural resources as well as being metropolitan and in proximity of New York City. Peekskill is a small, diverse, underserved city that has a significant lower socio-economic population that struggles with a digital divide and a lack of transportation and employment opportunity.

As a cultural educational manager the gallery turned to virtual lecturers of artists and regional celebrity chefs to serve our community. This was something we never did before. It enabled us to widen our audience and work with people we hadn't worked with before. This came out of wondering how to fill the void of losing our



gallery and lecture program due to the facility closing. The Center for the Digital Arts does not only serve the college but is very much in service to the City of Peekskill in which its located. It is a community resource.

In the role of an administrator/cultural educational manager/community representative we are very much a part of what is happening in the city. During the Summer 2020 there was a *Unity March* for social justice in Peekskill that commemorated the life of George Floyd and other victims of police violence. The protests that went across the country touched us all and the Peekskill community also expressed itself. The role of the artist in these times is to reflect the contemporary in their work. The role of the administrator/manager is to make it possible. What we tried to do is to make it possible for artists to continue to practice during the time of the pandemic and create programming for our community.

The behind the scenes administrative work was quite complicated and what we liked to refer to as “fluid” during the pandemic. Our systems, policies, and procedures have been changing at a rapid pace since the pandemic began. I have been awaiting the onset of my promised virtual life by futurists from the 1990’s and now it’s finally here with remote classes, telework, telehealth, and self-care via Youtube and Zoom. There is very little you need to be in person for. Students have also caught onto this and now they’ve gotten used to it, post-pandemic they are not so sure they want to be back in person. They are hesitant to return and are demanding more educational options. Now with vaccine mandates there is an increased load on facilities and access management. The college will continue to monitor vaccination status and Covid-19 testing to ensure the safety of our campus. Mask mandates and social distancing are also a part of our new phase. This is what the new normal in a post-pandemic reality looks like.

Cultural educational managers have an opportunity to look at the national landscape and shape the national discourse to fit their own community. How can social justice activism make transformational change in this community? How did the pandemic impact your particular location? These are specific questions. In our areas local restaurants were very hard hit but some more than others. For instance, pizza places and delis did wonderfully during the lockdown but fancier restaurants and health food did poorly. Overall, small businesses suffered. Our center lost some of our non-credit adult classes, a large portion of our youth classes, and then post-pandemic saw a re-entry dip. This is how the pandemic is interacting with our market. We are in a highly diverse population. How could we look at ourselves to answer the questions above and chart a new way to practice?

The next phase of cultural educational management will not be based on technology it will be based on a change of mindset. If we are going to have a real 21<sup>st</sup> Century paradigmatic shift, and we need one, then we need to change our practices. Before we can change our practice we must change the way we think. Diversity, equity, and inclusion must be in focus as guiding principles for moving forward from this point in charting our future and as we do so we need to be thinking how these essential values work with the in demand skills for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

During the pandemic, managers had to develop new ways to communicate with staff and conduct daily operations. My team started to meet weekly via Zoom to keep connected and keep on top of projects and deadlines. This maintained our communication channels and made sure we didn't get bogged down in emails. We lost our water cooler conversations and turned instead to Trillian, a SMS solution, this provided the quick chat feature that answered questions immediately. The team also relied on texting and cell phone appointments to get one another's attention and touch base throughout the week.

Upon re-entry this fall, we kept some remote workdays for each staff member. It greatly reduced sick time and provided not only the worker but also the institution with flexibility that we had not had previously. It allowed for quicker spontaneous meetings and eliminated travel time. There were many benefits for allowing some remote working in staff schedules. Most of the solutions above have been continued post-pandemic because they have enhanced our operations and enabled staff to work smarter.

ArtsWestchester, a regional arts administration and artist organization, brought leaders from various cultural groups from across Westchester County together to share solutions on re-opening our facilities. The discussion spent a lot of time on air quality. How to control the heating and cooling systems and what air filters to get to reduce the transmission of the virus. We discussed with a professional in the heating and cooling field whether it was best to leave the windows open or shut for circulation. I had written several times to the organization asking about how to handle art openings and cultural events including how to handle refreshments. Certain museum and gallery directors who had been the first to open and host events shared on their tactics for hosting visitors in their space. It was very helpful.

The Center for the Digital Arts Gallery in Peekskill was finally challenged with having it's first opening in the summer of July 2021. The center was still closed. The Peekskill Arts Alliance, a local arts council, turned to us to have their first in person show since the Covid pandemic. They were eager to bring their members together after such a long hiatus. We were limited to having eight visitors at a time for five-minute showings. There was a line in front of the building on the sidewalk to enter and no refreshments. However, the Peekskill Arts Alliance was very grateful for the opportunity. Artist throughout the pandemic had been restricted from showing their art and only had online opportunities.

We are now hosting more exhibitions and still have the mask mandates and enforcing social distancing but have relaxed the number of visitors and viewing time. All visitors are logged in for the purposes of contact tracing. Looking towards future programming, we are seeking ways to combine our experience in creating virtual events with celebrating our return to in person experiences. Our students are now both remote and in person. We do not want to exclude anyone from our programming in fact we would like to continue to expand our audience. If we could strategize ways to both host in person and virtual events simultaneously, I think it would be a splendid way to serve more students and the community. We are also expanding our notion of arts from just visual arts.

The center is known for its visual arts programming and arts technology lectures that have an industry focus. For the first time during the pandemic, we offered programming that showcased culinary arts with local celebrity chefs. I think that we can expand cultural programming to include architecture, mixed reality, film screenings, and more. As our educational and workforce training expands our cultural programming should reflect that development.

From our children's program that works with students seven to seventeen through our adult workforce development training certificates we develop curricula with a view towards the future skill sets needed by the 21<sup>st</sup> Century worker. In the Youth Arts Technology program students take robotics, game design, programming, 3D animation, etc. and take away a portfolio piece with the hope that they gain a sense of what the field is about and whether they like the experience. Hopefully, from a STEAM curriculum they are inspired to have more STEAM experiences. Literature suggests that STEAM yields pathways to STEM careers and opens the door for girls and minority students (Jones, 2020).

On the workforce development front for adults we are constantly canvassing the job market and developing short-term certificates such as Social Media Specialist, User Experience Design (UX), Mixed Reality (VR and AR), 3D Animation, Digital Photography, Historic Preservation, etc. With a view to the future, we are looking to expand in other emerging and in demand fields beyond arts technology such as culinary arts, data engineering, artificial intelligence, and robotics. The center has recently brought together officials from partnering high schools and local industry to gain feedback in regards to future development and is also looking at healthcare, hospitality, and IT, etc. It is crucial for us to develop programming with our community partners and keep in conversation with them continually. One of the biggest things a cultural educational manager does is develop relationships with the community, which for me has included other arts centers and artists, high schools, local industry, chambers of commerce and government. It has been the conversations and meetings with these stakeholders that have led to vital partnerships, program development, and other opportunities.

### ***At the Fulcrum Artistic Practice***

During the pandemic many artists including myself were exhibiting online, for instance, *Stay at Home, Make Art*, Dorsky Museum, New Paltz, NY on Instagram, visit <https://www.instagram.com/stayhome.makeart/?hl=en> . Artists are survivors and extremely resourceful. They will adapt to any and all situations. The pandemic was no exception. I am a practicing artist, primarily a painter (sherrymayo.com). I have a history of integrating technology with traditional media but of late have been just painting and drawing. Certainly, technology based artists were taking advantage of this period of time as the Internet is their exhibition space, e.g. Rhizome.org. There are new Virtual Reality (VR)/Augmented Reality (AR) artists emerging and showing on applications that are moving to the forefront and able to garner more attention in this type of scenario, see Activatar (<http://www.activatar.org/>). But, traditional artists that depend on the physical, the visceral, the viewer in person, suffered a loss. The connection of the viewer and the work and the transcendence that happens in

that moment really needs actual presence. That was suspended by the pandemic. You don't get that experience in an online show.

However, online exhibitions were an interesting innovation. It brought people together. It got people talking and collaborating. Artists were very isolated during the pandemic, working alone. The online shows were a welcome point of contact. On one hand there was more time to work and less distractions. There weren't so many events to go to taking away from studio work. There was a lot more studio time. I, personally, got a whole show completed. However, the show I exhibited was right when the space just opened post-pandemic and there couldn't be an opening reception and I don't think very many people saw the exhibition. Covid constraints early on really impacted viewership and the compromises were a challenge.

Artistic practice is a site for research (Sullivan, 2005). All of these changes and challenges and responses could be a research paper by itself. Artists made a lot of work in response to the pandemic, to the murder of George Floyd, to the protests sweeping the nation in response to his death and the need for social justice, it was a time of great churn and it is still unresolved. How artists play a vital role in communicating the times we are living through and reflecting the personal consciousness of an individual makes an impact on our society locally and globally. There have been multiple exhibitions now of artist's work that was made during the pandemic and that work is an opportunity for research. It was an extraordinary time of lockdowns, economic impact, personal loss of loved ones, and national and worldwide crisis. All of this is recorded in the work of artists.

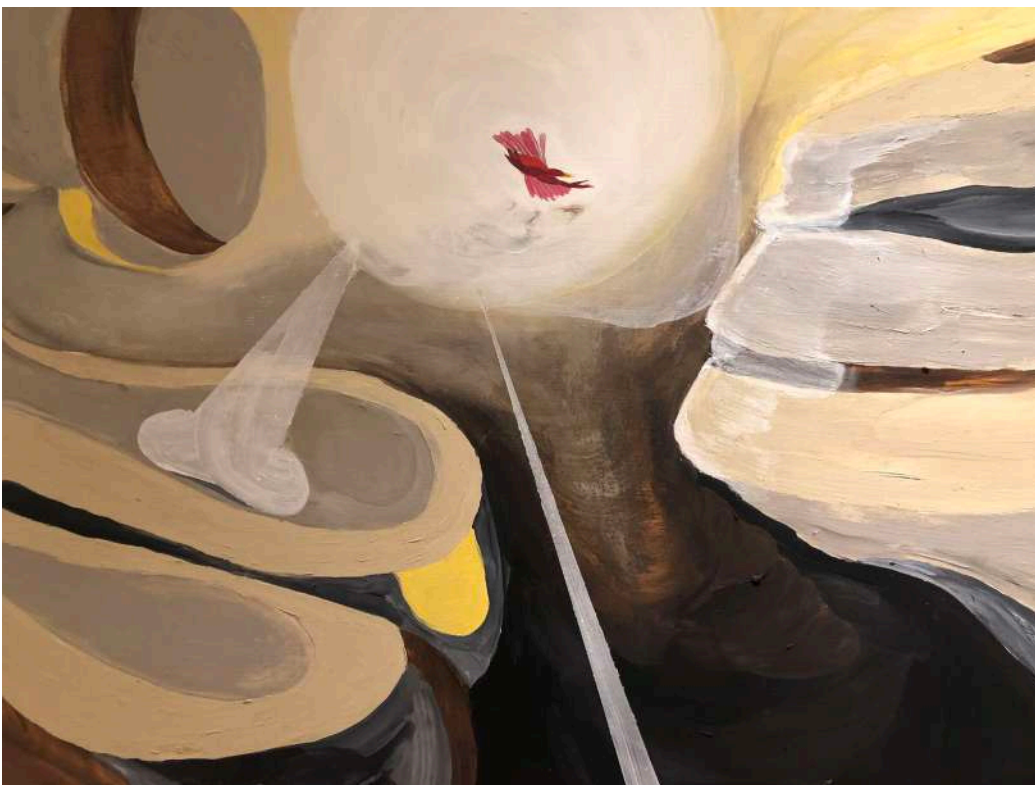


Figure 1. *Chasm*, 2020, 3x2 feet, oil on wood, Sherry Mayo

This time of intense isolation impacted artists. It wasn't just that they were working alone it was that they were separated from their communities. There were no art openings or events to attend; no studio visits with other artists, and no coffees with friends. It is very important to maintain an artistic discourse around the work in order to keep making. The painting above (Figure 1) explores a division and the void in between. It came out of isolation and division that I felt immersed in and was reflective of our collective experience during the lockdown.

There was social media to the rescue during the pandemic crisis, which increased significantly during that period. Users increased their time during the pandemic to 65 minutes a day from 54 minutes per day, see Statista.com<sup>27</sup>. Tiktok had the largest jump up in use at 38%. However, all platforms increased in usage especially video conferencing as people turned to this medium to fill the void in visiting with family and friends. This was something that I resisted. I spend so much time screen time for work that I try to live unplugged as much as possible in my personal life. That is partly why I have moved to painting and drawing in the studio. I very lightly use social media even during the pandemic. I relied on old-fashioned phone calls and texting until I felt comfortable enough to see people outside and go hiking. I even received post card art from another artist. There are still alternate ways to connect other than Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and Tiktok. It is important to remember this. Andy Warhol's *Factory* didn't happen on Facebook.

Rhizome.org announced the Internet in ruins in 2020 (Bolton) that the open, fun, democratic web of the 1990s was dead. Instead the future gave us a dismal future with an Internet dominated by big tech. These platforms erode our flexibility and privacy. This is a dispossession and is also leading to an erosion of the digital media environment. Artists are responding to this dispossession and new media works are looking quite different than the hopeful enthusiastic works of the 1990s such as Paper Rad, Olia Lianina, etc.

Post-pandemic we are co-hosting a juried exhibition entitled, *Grass + Roots: Peekskill to Poughkeepsie*, this regional exhibition is in person in two locations but also online. Artists want this; it gives them wider exposure. It also enabled us to include more artists than we could accommodate physically in the galleries. In addition, the show will have a digital online flip-book in lieu of a printed catalog. This has greater appeal to the artists because they can quickly distribute the link and show it to collectors and gallerists to promote their work at no cost.

Artists like David O'Reilly, (davidoreilly.com), and Wong Ping, humorous artist from Hong Kong (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kcD0KWdFCpI>), investigate their environment through animation and distribute their work in numerous ways. David O'Reilly is one of the most collected digital artists right now. While art spaces struggle with the conservation of digital pieces, collectors are going mobile with their art. They can take the work anywhere. The work may be shown everywhere in flexible ways adapting to a variety of mobile and Internet solutions as well as physical space. Artists are no longer limited to a single exhibition space today and the new normal in the post-pandemic world. Frederic Duquette has just sold "Broken Beauty

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<sup>27</sup> Statista.com <https://www.statista.com/topics/7863/social-media-use-during-coronavirus-covid-19-worldwide/>

(2020)” on Instagram for \$12,000 within 24 hours of being posted. And while many of these developments are wildly exciting, there are other concerns such as digital and media artists being predominantly male. This is and will continue to expand as it has with all previous mediums but as with all STEM and STEAM fields the medium needs diversity, equity, and inclusion.

The maker movement, the first Maker Faire was in 2006 in the U.S., began to bring artists and technologists together in one forum. It attracted educators from K-12 and higher education as well. It launched a cascade of maker space construction in schools across America. What is still needed are artists at the center of those spaces. In order for a maker space to really work you need professional artists and technicians to be working side by side. They might be one person depending on the skill sets required. This person or persons are not typically the teacher. Maker spaces provide space to house industrial level specialized equipment to realize projects outside the classroom. These spaces have materials such as wood, specialty papers, large color printers, sewing materials, conductive tape, electronics, 3D printing, etc. It is a space where material learning can take place (Justice, 2017). In order to run a maker space studio you need an artist. You may not be making an artwork with students but you are certainly designing something and solving a creative problem with materials.

The role of the artist in a post-pandemic society is multi-faceted. Daniel Pink (2006) envisioned an artist in every boardroom. I would go further and say there is a role for an artist in every room. Tomorrow is about solving design problems. In applying the design thinking process to any project a team is required to have at least one creative artist/designer. The Stanford d.School’s process of design thinking, see Figure 2 below, includes the following stages: empathize, define, ideate, prototype, and test. This process requires creative thinking and art and design skills. The process may also involve engineering and programming skills depending on what the project entails. The output of the process is a prototype, which must be tested. Design thinking is an iterative research based process. Art and design skills are in demand and these are an extension of art education. Artists by virtue of their studio practice are adept at solving these problems. We are in an age of exponentially increasing technology, an age of globalism, datism, and interconnectedness. The virus taught us that anything that happens in one corner of the earth will effect the rest of us. These design teams of the future need to design and create with sustainability in mind.

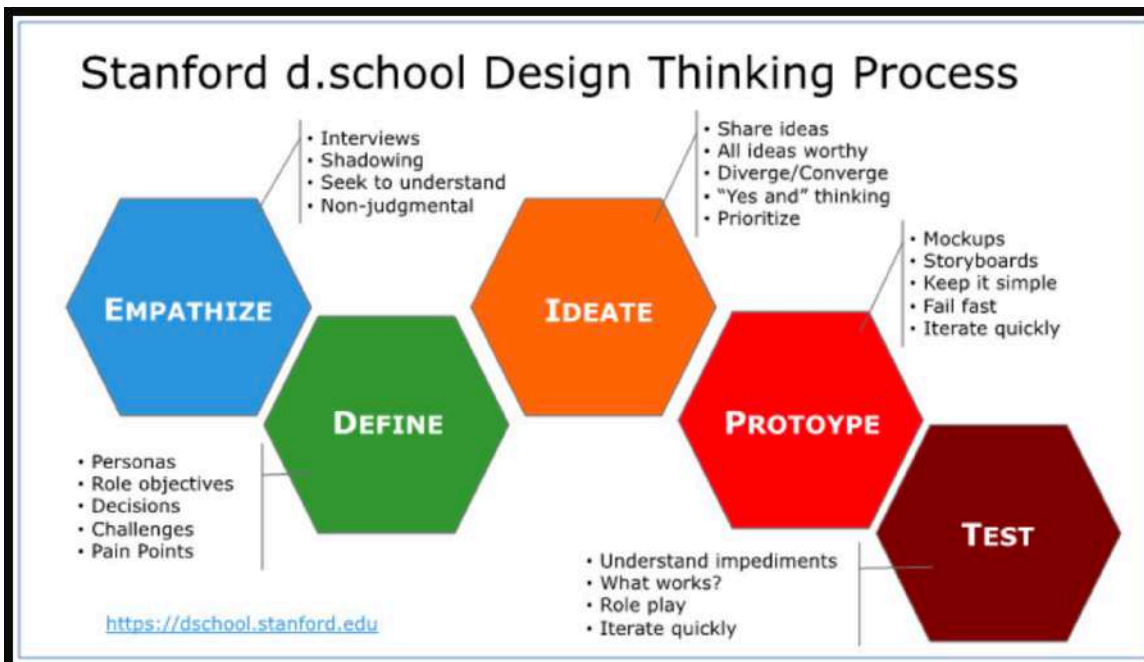


Figure 2. Design Thinking Process, Stanford d.School, dschool.stanford.edu

Artists all over New York State and specifically in the City of Peekskill have followed Richard Florida's model in his book, *The Rise of the Creative Class* (2002). In this model artists and creatives move to underserved lower socio-economic areas and invest in them. They settle in these areas and participate in the community and rejuvenate them. They get active civically and contribute artistically in community projects, activism, and arts exhibitions, performances, and events. This then attracts other businesses to invest in the area and further real estate development and what soon follows afterwards are restaurants and shops and then more residents move in. This is a pattern of gentrification that follows artists wherever they go. They are early adopters of neighborhoods that need love. The ability to work remotely provides creative workers with more options. The reduction of travel time provides artists with the opportunity to have flexibility and better access to studio space and time. It helps them live in more affordable housing. It gives them the ability to work out of their studio and expands the options of whom they can work for and widens their client base. The projection is that there will be less full-time labor and more freelance labor in the near future. This could be a boon for artists. Part of what I do with my many hats as manager, educator, and artist is to help ensure that artists get to remain in creative jobs and apply their artistic skills. I have always been very passionate about making opportunities for artists from developing programming and curriculum for artists, to exhibition opportunities, and job placement.

The artist will need more design and technology skills during the next phase and will need to get ready for a world that is immersed in AI. The quicker and more agile artists can be in upskilling for the workforce the better prepared they will be for what is coming. Artists will be in demand but they will also need skills to support them in being work ready. As an artist, I work very locally and I have a very small radius in which I work and serve. It is important to zoom out and get a larger national and international perspective on cultural production, arts education, and world events. How are we connected with how the pandemic is playing out in other

countries and what can we learn? How can we find out more about what innovations others are implementing in their studios and centers? These are questions that I am searching to answer by listening to others at this conference and from other colleagues and artists.

I think that artistic practice is a sacred individual idiosyncratic pursuit to know thyself in the world. Some say that the future will be post-human (Leonard, 2020) due to the takeover of AI and robots. I do not think cyborgs will replace artists and scientists even though there will be many jobs eliminated between 2020-2030 and others created (Kelly, 2021). The new Leonardo's of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century combining art, science, and technology will envision and invent this future. It is looking like a mixed reality future whereby every surface is embedded with a computer. At the same time, I would predict that things made by hand will be valued at a premium as they become increasingly rare.

In 1999, Mark Osborne screened an animated short entitled, *More*, with a cover track by *New Order* (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cCeeTfsm8bk>). It was about drained beings with magic stuff in their bellies that they put inside their goggles when they worked all day in the factory. All day long they looked through their goggles and saw a beautiful rainbow vista but when they took the goggles off everything was bleak and dismal and eventually they ran out of the magic stuff in their bellies. That's the future without artists. We are at risk. Art education is underfunded and under valued in the United States. Without artists, the dispossession of the Internet which reflects the impact of climate change and our issues with diversity, equity, and inclusion could lead to our merely having rainbow colored goggles. We are at a pivot point and artists are at the fulcrum just as they transform struggling neighborhoods into hipster destination locals on a small scale. The creative class generates creative capital, which on a collective scale is a powerful force. Other countries e.g. U.K. have articulated their performance and investment in this sector (Beech, 2021). The United States has not prioritized creative capital in the same way. However, there has been a congressional caucus on STEAM created. The first session finally met in 2019. This bipartisan caucus is focused on integrating STEM pathways with arts education. Hopefully, this is a first step in generating a national dialog on arts education, the value of artistic practice, and creative capital in the United States.

## **Conclusion**

In terms of cultural educational managers, teachers, and artists pivoting at this point in the post-pandemic period, I think we need to accept that many of the precautions that we have taken and the new requirements that have been mandated will continue. What we need to radically accept is that the new normal will make these changes in our social norms lasting and that many of our jobs will not be coming back but will be replaced by emergent technology positions that our workers are not ready for.

That said, I am hopeful that based on how much we've learned that we will turn into a safer, healthier, more empathetic world that understands better how to share and vet information. If we come together in these roles to work for environmental, climate, socio-economic, and data network sustainability, there is a brighter future possible for generations to come. Seeking equity in the digital divide is crucial in this quest. The digital



divide is not just about hardware, software, and WiFi, although this still remains a significant issue; it is about digital literacy and the skills to become a high-end user. Pew Research determined that a small minority of Americans fell into the high-end digitally literate category. Pew (Standberry, Anderson & Rainie, 2019) forecasts that in the next 50 years life will improve due to digital technology but only for the elite. Lev Manovich (2017) did a study of Manhattan and social media use and found that usage was very uneven. Even in a city like Manhattan with ample WiFi access there were some neighborhoods where access to social media platforms was very low. I would assert that the digital divide is a priority that it drives the pathway to employment, a living wage, housing, food, and education in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century and should be a top priority. It is a local issue for us but is a significant worldwide issue. If there is one item that we could begin with moving forward as managers, teachers, and artists, I would suggest selecting this one.

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# Beyond the Audience: Creating Effective Engagement Strategies for Students on the Spectrum in the Theatre Classroom

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## ABSTRACT

Historically, theatre and dance have had challenging relationships with disability to say the least. This challenge stems from ableist perspectives that fail to consider specific needs and experiences of persons with disabilities. At all levels, from youth education to training, to professional performance, opportunities are limited. Often, performing arts engagement is limited to audience seats for individuals with disabilities, more frequently this focus is on relaxed performances geared toward those identified as autistic. As the prevalence of autism diagnoses have increased, theatre and dance courses must rethink engagement practices. An observational study using symptom domains for autism was developed to measure theatre and dance engagement through learning objectives of behavior, communication, and social interaction. theatre, dance, education, autism, engagement

## Keywords:

Theatre  
Dance  
Education  
Autism  
Engagement

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## INTRODUCTION

A 2016 autism prevalence report by the Autism and Developmental Disabilities Monitoring Network, issued by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention concluded that autism prevalence has more than doubled from the network's first estimate in 2000 of one in 150 to one in 54 (Maenner et al, 2020: 2). The Autism Society interprets this dramatic increase as a "spotlight shining on autism," one that has "opened opportunities for the nation to consider how to serve families facing a lifetime of supports for the individual with autism" (2020). Over the past decade, theatre makers have primarily focused on audience as the access point for students on the spectrum to engage with arts. My own experience in schools and theatres, creating autism-friendly performances – namely those with deliberate adjustments for sensory sensitivities – has led me to consider how we, as theatre practitioners, might be more effective at engagement beyond audience seats. To support an increasing number of students diagnosed with autism, I seek to identify approaches to theatre and dance curricula design that address effective engagement strategies.

In my professional practice, I regularly encountered a youth-centred approach employed by community engagement leaders from arts, education, and government agencies. Additionally, in research, first conducted in 1982 and then on a quinquennial basis, the National Endowment for the Arts conducts a Survey for Public Participation in the Arts which consistently shows that supporting arts engagement early directly informs participation as an adult (2019). Also in 1982, Paul DiMaggio publishes a positive correlation between arts engagement and grades, in so much as suggesting that "the impact of cultural capital will be greater on the grades of less advantaged youth, for whom the acquisition and display of prestigious cultural resources may be a vital part of upward mobility" (195). In a more recent 2019 report, Bowen and Kisida, confirm through empirical analysis that arts are shown to positively impact student's learning and reducing arts activities by embracing subject-only assessment-focused measures "pose significant costs" (17). This focus on youth stems from an informed and arts-engaged public's reaction to repeated programming cuts made to schools' arts programs. As this early engagement predicts life-long participation and has been proven as an effective tool for educational outcomes, it is then paramount to consider whether special populations are being engaged in arts practice. For these benefits to take place it must be clear that students on the spectrum are being engaged.

Through an emerging partnership between the Burkhart Center for Autism Education and Research (Burkhart Center), the School of Theatre and Dance (SoT&D) at Texas Tech University (Texas Tech) and motivated by a lack of pedagogical resources, curriculum planning and evaluation tools, I created a pilot study with Dr. Wesley Dotson, then Director of the Burkhart Center, to explore using autism engagement measures and curriculum design for theatre and dance classes. Curriculum design in this case refers to the planned sequence of instruction for theatre and dance classes held at the Burkhart Center.

The pilot study tested an observational method commonly used in autism research to develop a new technique for evaluating theatre and dance curricula. Following this pilot study, I developed the observational study in this article with consultation from Dr. Dotson. In this case, we decided that the evaluation of theatre

and dance curricula could be more effectively pursued by identifying effective engagement strategies and measures suited for students on the spectrum. The measurement rubric also allows for autonomous disciplinary course planning within a curriculum evaluation method designed to measure student engagement.

The focus in this study was on theatre and dance instruction and not intervention. Intervention is defined as a one-on-one therapeutic method used to reduce and/or manage the physical and psychological symptoms of autism. An intervention might include special training to improve attention span or help manage anxiety in stressful social environments. Nevertheless, curriculum design in this case still requires a basic understanding of autism diagnosis. The American Psychiatric Association (APA) publishes a manual to identify and define conditions and disorders. The current edition, *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual-Fifth Edition (DSM-5)*, specifically outlines “persistent deficits in social communication and social interaction across multiple contexts” as one of the possible diagnosis criteria used by clinical psychologists and trained physicians (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). Within this criterion, deficits noted may affect “social-emotional reciprocity,” “nonverbal communication,” and managing interpersonal relationships (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). Deficits can manifest in a spectrum of severity, some unnoticeable and relatively mild (such as a sensitivity to particular smells) to more extreme and severe (such as self-flagellation triggered by a strong smell). Trained experts can diagnose individuals as having autism; however, diagnoses do very little to clearly outline the specific symptoms individuals on the spectrum may expect to experience. While diagnoses are tricky, some possible and common symptoms include difficulty making eye contact; compulsive repetitive physical or vocal ticks; sensitivity to sensory stimulus; lack of awareness of social conventions; and limited cognizance of emotional expression.

Symptom domains, groupings of autism symptoms, identified by Fein et al. in “The Nature of Autism,” provide insight into intervention strategies and from these we can suggest evaluation criteria for curriculum design in theatre and dance: 1) social interaction impairments: “poor eye-contact, poor nonverbal communication, lack of mutual attention behaviours, poor awareness of others’ emotions, and poor peer relationships”; 2) communication and play impairments: “poorly developed language, lack of conversational skill, language that is stereotyped, and play that is similarly stereotyped or lacks the quality of make-believe”; 3) repetitive and restrictive behaviours: “narrow interests, inflexible adherence to routines or rituals, repetitive motor movements, or preoccupations with parts of objects” (1996: 23-35). Using these symptom domains, learning objectives of behaviour, communication, and social interaction were developed. These combined consider symptoms while focusing on learning outcomes easily connected to theatre and dance; behaviour is directly connected to physical expression, communication to spoken text or dance forms, and social interaction easily lends itself to dialog and the interaction of actors in scenes or partner choreography. In theatre and dance, behaviour is readily identified in activities, such as students performing a dance move or technique or students miming an action, like walking on a tight rope. As for communication, theatre is often more readily identified through speech. However, non-verbal communication is essential in theatre activities and is readily understood in dance as a form or through a style. Social interaction is readily understood in both disciplines, theatre through production work and dance through group or partner choreography. Beyond this, scaling activity engagement also follows a pattern often taken in acting or dance classes, wherein students learn

monologues or technique, individual, scenes or choreography, individuals taking turns in a group, and finally a production (or what we termed group), a mix of social interactions or choreography that must be completed together for a performance to be complete. This describes increasingly complex engagement, which was also examined in relation to engagement in this study.

Potentially, a positive outcome of student engagement is connected to patterns in activity selection, sequencing, and frequency. Specifically, the way the course curriculum is designed provides valuable insights when plotted against learning objectives, student participation level, and behaviour measures. Activity selection is the task of choosing a particular activity but in this study the selection, given increasingly complex engagement and learning objective, has potential to affect active participation. Further, activity selection is just one piece, as multiple activities are selected across a class session. The frequency and sequencing of activities likely have impact on student participation. The data collected in this study reveals trends in activity selection, sequencing, and frequency that can lead to effective strategies for assessing theatre and dance curricula.

In this article, I advance preliminary answers to a number of questions regarding the development of effective engagement measures and strategies for students on the spectrum in the theatre and dance classroom. These questions include the following:

1. Can borrowing measures of specific praise, disruptive behaviour, engagement, and activity completion from autism studies provide effective evaluation for theatre and dance curricula? What further insights can autism measures provide for activity selection, frequency, and sequencing?
2. How does increasingly complex engagement (individual, individual in group, and group) affect total engagement for students on the spectrum? Is student engagement affected when instructors require group cooperation to complete an activity?
3. Are learning objectives of behaviour (physical expression and/or interaction), communication (use of oral/verbal cues and interaction), and/or social interaction (interaction with others, including the instructor) able to predict levels of engagement? Does the sequencing or pairing of these objectives affect engagement?
4. Does age group affect the outcome for students?

## **BACKGROUND**

A pilot study provided preliminary assessment of evaluation methods used in autism research that were new to processes in theatre and dance classrooms. The pilot study that occurred in the spring of 2016 focused on theatre curriculum rather than intervention and used time-interval assessment.

In *Behavior, Social, and Emotional Assessment of Children and Adolescents*, Sarah Whitcomb and Kenneth W. Merrell define interval recording, or time-interval assessment, as “dividing the observational period into

intervals and recording specified behaviours that occur at any time during the interval” (100). They describe “essential characteristics of interval recording,” which involves: “(1) selecting a time period for the length of the observation; (2) dividing the observational period into a number of equal intervals; and (3) recording whether the specified target behaviors occur during each interval” (2013: 103). They identify interval evaluation as a means to observe behaviour as the key tool for accurate assessment for individuals with autism; “This assessment technique is one of the primary tools of many clinicians and researchers who are involved in the assessment of behavioral, social interaction, and emotional problems of children and adolescents, and it holds a prominent position as being one of the most empirically sound of these assessment techniques” (2013: 95). For accurate behavioural observation using intervals, Rebecca Sharp, Oliver Mudford, and Douglas Elliffe also advise recording a high volume of all interactions for proper sampling (2015: 153). They recommend that sampling for autism behaviour studies should include no less than 10-minute intervals observing at least 30 % of total activity engagement to gain accurate representation data (2015: 153-159). Whitcomb and Merrill propose robust and consistent observations for accurate interval assessment (2013: 100). Sharp, Mudford, and Elliffe further identified key behaviours for individuals on the spectrum, specifically engagement and off-task behaviour that interferes with completing an activity (2015: 156-158). Time-interval observation techniques and behaviour measures for intervention methods used in the pilot study identified effective engagement measures for theatre and dance courses and curricula. However, through the pilot study and effective autism research practices, we determined a five-minute interval (a longer period of observation than used in Burkhart Center research) better measured engagement and off-task behaviour as it relates to disruption and interference with activity completion in the theatre and dance classroom.

The five-minute interval refined from the pilot study still maintains individual representativeness while addressing overall occurrence for desired behaviour. In an initial study, “A Measure of Representativeness of a Sample for Inferential Purposes,” by Savlatore Bertino and supported in a later Sharp, Mudford, and Elliffe study, they determined that observed behaviour and assumptions made about subsequent behaviour should rely on observational methods that “produce data that closely reflect the overall (i.e., true) occurrence of an individual's behavior” (2006: 150; 2015: 153). Sharp, Mudford, and Elliffe tie individual representativeness “in behaviour-analytic settings,” those used in applied behaviour research, to the degree to which “the data obtained from sample observations reflect overall behavior” within a given observation (2015: 153). Whitcomb and Merrell argue that, as long as observation includes “formal behavioral recording in naturalistic settings, or whether it is done informally as part of other measurement strategies” and “naturalistic observation,” then “behavioral observation” is the ideal “most direct and objective assessment” (2013: 95-97). They also further stipulate that to account for accuracy, researchers should “limit behaviors captured” that directly “relate to the overall time a specific behavior may take to accomplish,” a refinement also discovered in the pilot study (2013: 103).

Engagement and activity completion are the primary behaviours tracked in interval observations and serve as behaviour measures to track on-task participation and engagement that leads to completion of an activity. Kent R. Logan, Roger Bakman, and Elizabeth B. Keefe propose that engaged behaviour is “a [comprehensive] proxy for direct measures of learning” and accurately observe engagement “over multiple activities, instructional arrangements, and teach behaviors” (1997: 482). Christina Corsello, Yuirco Kishida and Coral

Kemp identify students on the spectrum as less engaged, exhibiting passive participation (2005: 82; 2006: 106-111). Mark Wolery, Donald B. Bailey and R. A. McWilliam identify positive measures of attentional engagement, behaviourally appropriate and on-task, as a “mediating influence on engagement,” to which McWilliam and Bailey consider active engagement an excellent measure of learning for students on the spectrum (Bailey and Wolery, 1992: 240-241; Bailey and McWilliam, 1995: 123-125). Deb Keen indicates that low levels of engagement further limit the practice of social skills, and that time-interval observations of engagement can assess activity schedules, autonomy, and instructional strategies in a way that can help mitigate issues of measuring engagement (2009: 3-5). Mari Watanabe and Peter Sturme performed a study on engagement that discovered higher participation levels for students who were given autonomy to decide whether to engage and complete an activity (2003). Students have complete autonomy in the theatre and dance classroom at the Burkhart Center, which indicates active participation over timed intervals as a good measure for engagement.

Theatre and dance activities frequently offer the benefit of autonomy and the ability to self-select within context, a common practice in rehearsal and improvisation. In an article detailing the benefits of supporting autonomy for autistic individuals, Julie Emond Pelletier and Mireille Joussemet cite several decades of studies that recognize self-determination as a “crucial element in the provision of adequate services” to populations of autistic individuals (2017: 830). In an experiment to discover autonomy as an engagement motivator, Pelletier and Joussemet designed a problem-solving experiment that measured both cognitive and emotional engagement, while further exploring “intensity of attention, effort, verbal participation, perseverance and positive emotion” (2017: 836). This study, geared toward selection, sequencing and frequency of educational activities, does not generally consider activities with high level of autonomy; however, the results obtained by Pelletier and Joussemet give potential insight into activities that are self-selected and those that offer personal freedom and expression (2017). Activities in theatre or dance, which encourage personal creativity, are likely to positively impact engagement given their chance for autonomy.

Additional concepts included in my observational study that were borrowed from autism studies include those of disruptive behaviour and specific praise. These behaviour measures were identified as suitable to support assessment for engagement; disruptive behaviour potentially distracts from overall engagement, and specific praise potentially measures corrective behaviour to improve student engagement. Positive Behavior Supports and Interventions World define common disruptive behaviours as those tactics that are likely to disrupt a class (2019). Disruptive behaviours include physical distractions (“get out of seat frequently, hands on others and in others’ space and belongings, doing everything but what they should be, out of line, playing around, horse play, etc, throw objects, roll on the floor, crawl under tables”), voiced distractions (“ask a lot of obvious questions, make frequent and unnecessary comments and questions, yell out, make noises”), and social distractions (“annoying and distracting to others, pestering, failing to transition appropriately, talk to others frequently, bother other students”) (PBISWorld, 2019). In the PBS *LearningMedia* video series focused on “Managing and De-escalating Challenging Student Behaviors,” off-task disruptive behaviour is readily addressed by educators through refocusing and re-engaging the student in the activity (2019). This



practice of re-engaging was also seen as effective in the pilot study, which reinforced behavioural measures for disruptive behaviours and introduced specific praise as a meaningful data point to collect.

Evidence-based practices like prompting, the use of physical and verbal cues to help provide clear direction for students on the spectrum, are grounded in scientific research that confirms validity for behavioural measures when evaluating engagement for students on the spectrum. Julie Adcock and Anthony Cuvo confirm behaviour interventions to modify the environment decrease disruptive behaviours and improve engagement (2009: 319-328). Connie Wong et al. describes prompting as physical and verbal assistance provided to students as a means to support task completion and re-engagement, with the only negative consequence being the potential reliance and repetition of prompts (2014: 21). Kara Reagon promotes the development of a prompt fading strategy, the gradual decrease of physical and verbal cues supporting learning for students on the spectrum, to decrease reliance and encourage activity completion without prompting (2013: 35). The consideration for prompting and prompt fading can potentially be assessed in the observational study as instances of disruptive behaviour and specific praise are compared against engagement.

## THE PROJECT

From spring 2017 to spring 2019, the observational study to assess student engagement and curriculum design took place at the Burkhart Center where theatre and dance courses are held. Graduate Students enrolled in Theatre and Dance in the Community, with enrolled undergraduate mentees, taught weekly courses observed by a trained observer and/or me. The curriculum was not designed to be therapeutic, nor were the activities undertaken specifically designated as an intervention method. Nevertheless, course evaluation was specifically aimed to benefit a diverse mix of students on the spectrum.

### **1. Research Design**

The observational study was designed to measure engagement for students on the spectrum in theatre and dance courses. The study was meant to be unobtrusive, which also limited bias since we did not directly interact with students; we recorded data behind a two-way mirror in two observation spaces and off to the side in the third space with no interaction with participants. Data collected and collection processes allowed for participants to remain anonymous, which was important considering the vulnerability of the target population.

To evaluate the effectiveness of theatre and dance curricula at engaging students, the observational study included independent variables of activity selection, frequency, and sequencing with dependent variables of activity completion, engagement, disruptive behaviour, and specific praise. These variables allow for discovering relationships between student engagement and theatre and dance activities.

Following variable recording through observation, activities were coded into increasingly complex engagement and learning objectives to uncover effective strategies in curriculum planning. The statistical relationship between engagement and activity features potentially lead to a method for curriculum planning of theatre and dance classes with students on the spectrum. By measuring engagement through observation meth-

ods proven effective for individuals with autism, we can better evaluate theatre and dance curricula and potentially plan more effective engagement strategies for students on the spectrum.

For this study, we collected data each semester, from spring 2017 to spring 2019, for nine Burkhart Center courses. We required a minimum of 80% of days observed, with 100% of intervals observed on those days. Each course ran for seven weeks in spring semesters or eight weeks in fall semesters, six occurring twice a week (one fall, five spring) with 12 five-minute intervals and three occurring once a week (one fall, two spring) with 18 five-minute intervals, providing a total possible 1.428 intervals for measurement. The high volume of intervals increase reliability for behaviour measures and improve reliability in coded levels of engagement and learning objectives. The volume and consistency of measures helps to ensure validity of the observational study.

## **2. Participants and Setting**

The Burkhart Center advertised and enrolled students into theatre and dance courses by two age groups: youth and teen. The dance course offered during the observational study was exclusively for youth. The youth courses were for elementary-age students, ranging from ages 5-10. The Burkhart Center advertised teen courses to participants of high-school-age and allowed participation for ages 13-18. Investigators did not test for autism or evaluate autism diagnoses nor collect personal or demographic information about students. Autism symptoms/deficits are not barriers to enrolment in any theatre and dance courses. In fact, students may be non-verbal or have physical impairments and still enrol in theatre and dance courses.

Courses were offered in the afternoon twice a week for one hour, or on Saturday for 90 minutes. Class sessions did not meet when Texas Tech observed holiday or academic breaks. SoT&D graduate and undergraduate students were required to attend each session as part of a Theatre and Dance in the Community course requirement, but Burkhart Center students had no attendance requirement. Though attendance was voluntary, numbers remained consistent from class to class. The Burkhart Center limited enrolment at ten for any given course. Instructor-to-student ratio was typically around one to two for classes with low enrolment, and one to three for fully enrolled courses. Space for class was provided at the Burkhart Center and provided adequate space for theatre and dance activities given the group size.

## **3. Measures**

To undertake this study, Dr. Dotson and I created data collection sheets to record behavioural measures for theatre and dance activities taught at the Burkhart Center. These measures included engagement, activity completion, behavioural measures, and space for notation of class (youth or teen), date, time, activities, class size, number of instructors, and length of class.

Engagement, the primary dependent variable across the five-minute interval, measured active participation in theatre and dance activities. The percentage of engagement measured the overall percentage of students engaged in an activity. Active participation required students to follow the rules and expectations delineated by the instructor(s). For instance, an activity may have required students to move with sound in an environ-

ment (e.g. act by moving and making sounds like pig on a farm: student was on all fours, pretended to wallow in mud, and squealed/snorted like a pig). If one of five students sat quietly, even in the given play space, we recorded the total percentage engaged as four in five or 80%.

Activity completion, the secondary dependent variable measure for participation, was only recorded during intervals when an activity concluded. Observers selected a percentage of activity completion based on the ratio of students who finished an activity to the total number of students. This measure supported reliability of the engagement measure since a positive relationship should exist between engagement and activity completion. However, an observer may have marked that a student was engaged in an activity, and not as completing the activity. Observers recorded participants engaged for appropriate intervals and only recorded activity completion when students accomplished all activity tasks given by the instructor.

Behavioural measures for disruptive behaviour and specific praise are dependent variables compared against engagement. Disruptive behaviour included any off-task actions that inhibited activity completion by one or more members of the group including themselves, other students, instructors, or mentees. Specific praise measured the number of instances when an instructor or mentee responded positively to student actions. The presence of these measures increased the validity of engagement and activity completion measures. Recorded disruptive behaviour and specific praise were independently measured per interval, and the count was restarted at the beginning of each interval.

To improve reliability of outcomes and the validity of the assessment instrument, and reinforced through pilot study refinement, observational study interval times were five minutes to include percentages of engagement and activity completion for all participants.

The data collection also noted activity selection. While not a behaviour measure, attention to this activity allowed for the evaluation of engagement, and important measure given increasingly complex engagement and learning objectives based on independent variables of activity selection, sequencing, and frequency. Following observations, activities were coded by increasingly complex engagement into individual, individual in group, and group categories. Activities were also assigned a primary, and sometimes secondary, learning objective related to behaviour, communication, or social interaction.

Following the assignment of learning objectives and increasingly complex engagement, I evaluated activity selection, sequencing, and frequency as it affects dependent measures of student engagement and activity completion (and, subsequently, disruptive behaviour and specific praise).

## RESULTS

Curriculum design was distinctive for each course even though all courses shared a similar disciplinary origin. Only one notable difference arose from the fact that a written guide was completed in December of 2017, and so was only available to instructors in subsequent semesters. The total available classes to ob-

serve was 108 (1.334 intervals).<sup>28</sup> In the study, we observed 89 class sessions and 1,080 intervals for a total of 90 hours of instruction. I evaluated the success of curriculum for each class by using measures of engagement, activity completion, disruptive behaviour, and specific praise. Once these scores were compiled, I examined activities for patterns of increasingly complex engagement and learning objectives to uncover any significance in activity selection, sequence, and frequency.

My first research question asked if borrowing measures of specific praise, disruptive behaviour, engagement, and activity completion from autism study could provide effective evaluation for theatre and dance curricula, and what further insights might autism measures provide for activity selection, frequency, and sequencing. Each observed course followed a specific pattern, but no two courses followed identical patterns, which resulted in different participation outcomes for each class and variation across study measures. The engagement measure was taken across all intervals and measured the active engagement of students. The average percentage of engagement across all intervals in the study was 91%, with the average for each individual semester falling within two percentage points of the overall engagement average. This percentage was significantly higher than that recorded for the pilot study (68%) but is justified by consistent results across all classes. This suggests that the new measurement protocols were more effective at measuring engagement for theatre and dance courses and proves consistency in the engagement measure.

Activity completion, the other participation dependent variable, served as a secondary engagement measure. We observed activity completion in 55% of the 1.080 intervals, or 597. Of these intervals, students completed activities 89% of the time. Comparing the two participation measures against each other shows an expected positive relationship between engagement and activity completion. The two lowest rated were the lowest rated in activity completion. This trend was also true for highest participation percentages. We identified greater variation when no pattern emerged for increasingly complex engagement level or learning objective. However, the variation between the participation measures decreased when instructors considered student preference or repeated popular activities with positive engagement.

We recorded disruptive behaviour in 7% of intervals and specific praise in 16%. The concurrence of both was only .65% for all intervals, with a 3% chance of overlap. Despite limited intervals containing both, observers noted improved engagement and activity completion rates, with instances of disruptive behaviour limited or eliminated in intervals following. Observers noted the continuation of disruptive behaviour in subsequent intervals when no instructor gave specific praise. This suggests that specific praise can mitigate disruptive behaviour, but as the concurrence was limited it is impossible to definitively say that specific praise will always mitigate disruptive behaviour. However, we observed specific praise more often in classes with higher engagement and activity completion percentages. Disruptive behaviour alone appears not to be a useful meas-

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<sup>28</sup> Over the course of the study, we discovered that classes often began late or ended early, reducing observational intervals by at least one for each class session, resulting in an average of 11 instead of 12 intervals for youth classes and an average of 17 instead of 18 intervals for teen courses. An average of 53% of the classes had fewer than anticipated intervals to observe, with none exceeding, reducing intervals from 1.428 to 1.334. To meet the 80% minimum observations required, we needed to observe a total of 86 classes (1.067 intervals). Spring term presented low attendance or class cancellations during spring break periods, including during Texas Tech and students' spring breaks on different weeks. Spring break for students only affected youth courses.

ure for evaluation, as the course with highest occurrence was also one of the greatest for participation. When measured against each other, specific praise mitigated disruptive behaviour nearly 100% of the time.

The courses that proved the most successful in engaging students demonstrated consistent activity selection across class sessions and the course. Activity selection included a course-specific and consistent mix of increasingly complex engagement and learning objectives. Classes that performed average for engagement and activity completion also showed consistent selection, but more often relied heavily on a single level of engagement or learning objective and included a significant portion of variable activity selection. The courses with the lowest engagement levels relied predominantly on a single activity type, ones with the same level of engagement and learning objective or a variation with no discernible pattern. The result of unbalanced selection revealed reliably lower engagement across courses without consistent curriculum planning.

Courses with the highest engagement and activity completion levels reliably selected the same activity or the same activity type, frequency, with the same level of engagement and learning objective, from class to class and across the course. Courses performing average and below average for participation measures had too much variation, regular change in activity more frequently than the average 8 minutes, and/or too little variation in activity or activity type, with change occurring after around 20 minutes.

Activity sequencing per class session and across courses revealed engagement patterns again. As noted in the course breakdown, the most successful courses showed a pattern in class sessions of consistent or alternating learning objectives. However, frequent alternating between communication and behaviour activities, showed lower engagement. When a behaviour activity led the session, the alternating mix of communication and behaviour did not have the same effect on engagement; engagement and activity completion levels were greater when behaviour centred activities opened class sessions. Still, when less swapping occurred, there was not such a significant drop in engagement and activity completion. Instead, inconsistent sequencing or broadly varied activity selection over the course and class sessions precipitated changes in engagement levels. However, when a student-selected activity preceded, student engagement and activity completion remained high for the remainder of intervals.

In short, I was able to effectively identify theatre and dance curricula patterns showing reliable results given measures borrowed from autism studies. Courses designed with consistent curriculum, found to have regular learning objective and increasingly complex engagement, had better percentages of engagement and activity completion. Even in instances when selecting activities that might challenge engagement and activity completion, specific praise proved an effective strategy and a necessary measure for the evaluation of curriculum effectiveness. These measures proved effective for evaluating theatre and dance curricula design as patterns emerged that were consistent for courses with higher, average, and lower levels of participation.

The next question addressed by the observational study was how increasingly complex engagement (individual, individual in group, and group) affected total engagement for students on the spectrum, and whether or not student engagement was affected when instructors required group cooperation in the completion of an activity.

I found student engagement and activity completion percentages to be higher for group activities. Given the interval instances for individual level of engagement and participation, 23% of individual activities recorded lower, below 100%, of engagement and/or activity completion. Similarly, individual in group scored 22% lower across intervals, but group activities were only 13% lower. Student engagement appears to be positively affected by group cooperation for theatre and dance activities. Disruptive behaviour occurred more often in individual or individual in group activities. Again, no positive correlation was found in changing level, but rather by instructors offering specific praise. The length of the course and the age group revealed no notable differences in engagement when considering increasingly complex engagement.

The third research question I addressed using data collected was whether learning objectives of behaviour (physical expression and/or interaction), communication (use of oral/verbal cues and interaction), and/or social (interaction with others, including the instructor) are able to predict levels of engagement, and whether the sequencing or pairing of these objectives affect engagement. I coded activities into learning objectives: 50% into communication, 45% in behaviour and nearly 5% in social interaction. Learning objectives alone are not likely to predict participation percentages. Reviewing activity selection, I noticed activities were most often coded with the following levels of engagement and learning objectives: individual/behaviour, individual/communication, individual in group/communication, group/behaviour, and group/communication. Among classes recording lower levels of engagement (23% of observed intervals), individual/behaviour and individual in group/communication made up the overwhelming majority, 60%. Overall, for popular combinations, communication comprised nearly 50% and behaviour 45%. These combinations are common and can be found in well performing courses, which suggests that these types of activities should not be avoided but instead considered within a well-planned curriculum. Within some of these intervals, observers recorded disruptive behaviour; 79% occurred in individual/behaviour (35%) or individual in group/communication (44%) activities. This suggests that instructors could offer more specific praise when incorporating individual/behaviour or individual in group/communication into curriculum planning.

I was unable to distinguish significant differences for my final research question regarding whether age group affected the outcome for students. Teens and youth had similar instances of disruptive behaviour and specific praise, and when considering activity selection, sequencing and frequency patterns against participation rates, there appears to be no variation in results for increasingly complex engagement or learning objectives with respect to student ages.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

We undertook this observational study to further develop strategies to support engagement for students on the spectrum in theatre and dance classes. To assess theatre and dance curricula, we borrowed measures found in autism studies to measure engagement. The measures selected revealed clear indications for curriculum planning for theatre and dance courses for students on the spectrum. Definitively, the measures selected provided significant and relevant measurements of participation, engagement, and activity completion. When combined with measures of disruptive behaviour and specific praise, participation was further interpreted and as noted, positively affected. But these measures alone only provide part of the curriculum plan-

ning picture. From these measures, we were able to reveal the significance in activity selection, frequency, and sequence. Specifically, curriculum planned with activity selection closely linked to sequence and frequency showed higher levels of participation. Courses with consistent activity selection, consideration for sequence in class sessions, and frequency of activity type demonstrated positively impacted participation, as seen in the highest performing courses. The lowest performing courses offered no consistency across activity selection, limited sequencing uniformity, and exhibited nearly no frequency of activity or activity type, with the exception of student influenced selection. Average performing courses adhering to more consistent activity planning revealed common learning objectives, and with variation in level of increasingly complex engagement improved engagement or activity completion for students on the spectrum. Observations also revealed common combinations occurring in activity learning objectives and increasingly complex engagement. Disruptive behaviour was predominantly (95%) found to occur during two of these combinations: individual/behaviour and individual in group/communication. Planning is not likely to eliminate disruptive behaviour, but instructors can be aware of activities that require increased specific praise. By uncovering patterns like these, curriculum preparation can better support activity planning in theatre and dance courses for students on the spectrum.

Using these measures, our observational study was able to reveal strategies to improve engagement for students on the spectrum in theatre and dance courses. Curriculum planning that uses consistent activity selection, sequencing, and frequency leads to better engagement, an assertion confirmed by my analysis of our observations. The results of this study additionally suggest that curriculum planning can be improved by considering learning objectives and increasingly complex engagement as they relate to activity selection, sequencing, and frequency.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

If we were to undertake this study again, I would retain all measure features and activity coding. They provided clear, effective, and consistent results for student participation, engagement and activity completion while being readily recorded by observers. Observation of the courses offered strategies to improve engagement in theatre and dance classrooms with students on the spectrum. The most effective strategy revealed was consistency of curriculum selection. Since the instructors freely designed curriculum for these courses, future observational studies might select features to be individually isolated, in order to measure success for specific learning objectives and increasingly complex engagement combinations as they relate to activity selection, sequencing and frequency.

Based on my experience, autism research, and our observational study, my recommendations for curriculum planning theatre and dance courses with students on the spectrum are as follows:

- Instructors should identify a clear vision and focus for the course. Specifically, instructors should have a clear sense of what they hope to achieve by the end of the course. Consistency proved a key element in the most successful courses.
- Instructors should identify goals and objectives to inform activity selection, sequencing, and frequency.

- Age appropriateness is also an important feature when planning. Though students on the spectrum may have communication barriers, their IQ is not limited by autism. If instructors are insensitive to a student's abilities or needs, they may create an environment where the student is less likely to trust the instructor.
- Instructors need to consider activity selection, sequencing, and frequency.

Each of these elements was shown to have impact on student participation. Selection of an activity type and adherence to that type over a course provides consistency in curriculum planning. This consistency was observed in the top three performing classes in the observational study. Students clearly tolerated some variation in activity selection but sequencing of activities again revealed that consistency was key. Regular patterns of activity selection proved more effective at engaging students, who saw some tolerance for alternating learning objectives. We observed a greater effect for change in increasingly complex engagement on student participation: too much variation and inconsistency in level of engagement sequencing led to lower student participation. Students' preference for, or previous success with, an activity readily predicted its success when repeated. We observed this success rate even if an activity was only repeated twice within a sequencing pattern across all class sessions.

This study was able to reveal positive correlations between measures and coded activities, which can provide a crucial first step in curriculum planning with students on the spectrum in mind. The lack of similar research makes this study crucial to exploring theatre and dance curricula design to improve engagement for students on the spectrum. The courses in this study only provided a short opportunity, with few weekly sessions, to review part-time curriculum. Ideally, a future study would include a full-length course, one fitting into school curriculum. The study could also be adapted to review college and university age courses for theatre and dance.

I will continue to apply this unique approach as I explore ways to further engage students and artists on the spectrum. Though this process is an uncommon way to plan theatre and dance curricula, I suspect continued unsiloing of disciplinary practices can provide a basis for more robust examinations of theatre and dance processes, so that they can become more equitable to persons with disabilities.

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# Towards a theory and practice of cultural communication

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## ABSTRACT

This paper tentatively introduces the concept of *cultural communication*, exploring new theoretical and practical perspectives on culture and the arts. Notably, it presents a theoretical model for cultural communication as a dedicated, common and widespread communication ‘mode’, *thematising ambiguity in the domain of shared meaning* (Part 1). The concept of cultural communication may provide new footholds for the legitimisation of public cultural policy – positioning the arts firmly within the context of cultural communication – and for the practical application of *cultural capability*, in the structured practice of arranging cultural encounters, tried out in the Netherlands (Part 2).

## Keywords:

Cultural communication  
Cultural policy  
Cultural democracy  
Cultural capability  
Systems theory

*Difference is of the essence of humanity*

(John Hume)

*For one to be free there must be at least two*

(Zygmunt Bauman)

## 1. Introduction

### ***Point of departure***

This presentation-paper may, as a point of departure, take a few notions for granted. The first notion is that in the past decades the legitimisation of cultural policy in Europe has diluted. Without going into details, it is clear that sociological deconstruction, diversification, neoliberal strands in government and populist rhetoric are important factors, as well as societal changes such as digitalisation, globalisation, segregation and austerity (e.g. Belfiore 2014, Belfiore & Bennet 2008) Mandel, Hadley, Kelly).

The second 'given' for this paper, is the notion that the dilution of policy legitimisation has spawned wide and urgent calls for a new underpinning of cultural policy (e.g. Dutch and English Arts Councils, European Commission, Warwick Commission), for more encompassing views on the meaning and value of culture (e.g. Gielen, Belfiore, Kelly, Mandel) as well as the translation into policy goals and outcome evaluation tools (e.g. Holden, Bunnik, Schrijvers, Van den Hoogen 2012).

Third, it is clear that a wider dissatisfaction with (or contention of) the deficit model of cultural policy is growing in strength and a new 'democratic' case for the meaning and value of culture, inclusiveness, new audiences, cultural capabilities and the importance of local ecosystems is emerging (e.g. Holden, Wilson & Gross, Gross & Wilson, Hadley & Belfiore).

Fourth, there seem to be two strands in this debate, differing in their sociological, philosophical and political approaches. It is not my intension to oppose either of these stands, but for the sake of positioning my own line of thought (and probably not doing full justice to the nuances in both) allow me to characterise these strands in mutual opposition. The first strand I would like to call the 'cultural capability / ecosystems-line' (e.g. Holden 2006, Wilson & Gross, A.N.D.); the second and the inclusiveness / cultural rights approach (e.g. Kelly, Stevenson, Hadley, Ahmed, Gielen et.al.). The first leans towards a democratic approach of cultural participation, the second leans towards a structural power-approach, seen as a democracy of cultural rights.

### ***Aim***

In this paper I would like to present a 'third way' (though not particularly a 'middle way') is this debate, currently being developed in the Netherlands. It differs from the other strands in that it draws upon a conception of culture-as-process from which a new framework for cultural policy may be derived. Moreover, it offers a

reflective tool that proposes four dimensions of cultural encounter. These in turn may serve as focus for dialogue in the ecosystem and the fostering of cultural capabilities for all citizens (Drion 2018).

### **Scope and limitations**

As it stands, this paper is best considered a tentative exploration of new territory. It covers a lot of ground (probably more than it should, within the given limitations) to conceptually position new concepts, while hooking on to a practical setup at the same time. It is work in progress in two directions, so to speak, from new theory outwards and from new practice inwards. In both directions, to me at least, it looks encouraging and has some momentum, but it has not yet reached its final form.

### **Ideas**

The building of my argument hinges on a novel conception of *cultural communication* – to be distinguished from communication *about* culture or communication *of* culture.<sup>i</sup> This leads us into a rather ‘deep’ track through the waters of process-sociology and systems theory. This “exercise” will however lead to a first proposal: *cultural communication as conjunctive communication*. I will position this notion in relation to systems theory and the notion of culture as *meaning construction*, and conclude that a theory of cultural communication may help explain continuous cultural ambiguity and change in a way the model of culture as meaning-construction does (and maybe can) not. From this I will draw up my assertion that the model of cultural communication may indeed be viable for further policy development. The last part of the paper (Practical Frame) is dedicated to the presentation of the reflective framework of “*Cultureel Vermogen*” that puts cultural communication into practice for (arts-, culture- and social-) professionals, cultural organisations and policy-makers. – as recently tried out in a set-up in the Netherlands, the results of which are due to be presented in January 2022.

## **2. Theoretical frame**

### **Way in**

So how could cultural communication be conceptualised? Allow me to start off with a simple observation, that draws us into the realm of *process*: cultural life (the forming, sharing, spreading, changing and renewal of culture) happens *between* people. *No culture without communication*. This first step could of course be taken differently<sup>ii</sup>, and is therefore open to critique. But please allow my answer for now to be in the spirit of Spencer Brown and Luhmann: you have start somewhere, so *draw a distinction!*

### **Framework**

There are, as far as I know, two *value-free* frameworks at our disposal to scaffold a theory of cultural communication as *process between people*: semiotics (Peirce) and systems theory (Luhmann). There are deep connections between the two frameworks (as shown by e.g. Maturana & Varela, Bateson 2002, Hoffmeyer, Deacon and Bausch).<sup>iii</sup> In another study (upcoming) I will research these similarities in the context of cultural

communication. For now, I propose to step into systems theory at the hand of Niklas Luhmann, who's framework is of profound and still growing influence on sociology, and has some interesting applications in the theorising of cultural policy as well. So, I will leave semiotics aside for now.

### **Luhmann's world**

The first thing that comes to mind when one starts on Luhmann's work is that it is enormously, discouragingly huge. Not only in sheer size (stretching over 30 books and 400 densely written and rather abstract articles – for the most part still only available in German<sup>iv</sup>), but also in scope and ambition: Luhmann aims for no less than a full-scale re-theorizing of society (and with it: sociology), building a completely new and totally original vocabulary on the way. Although he died before the real breakthrough of social media, his approach is still very *modern* as it hooks into the very basis of modern society: the process of communication itself.

I must add that Luhmann's work, to me, is not only ground-breaking but also strangely *moving*: at its core it has great unity, depth and richness, and I feel it is anchored in a deep understanding of the human condition. For all its massiveness, there is optimism and a sort of lightness, as it refers to everyday observations and situations: in all its abstractions and dense terminology a vein of true sensitivity and care is never far off.

On the downside of all this, Luhmann's grand systems theory is also very complex and very compelling. It brings more than a bit of "all or nothing" to the table; *no cherry picking here....* The second thing is that Luhmann's terminology is, in often surprising ways, counter-intuitive. Studying it feels a bit like a step "through the looking glass": it may unbalance your vocabulary and then change it – maybe for ever.<sup>v</sup> The third thing is that Luhmann's work is *process-theory*: it builds a huge and solid *structure of words* to theorize *patterns in time*. In this sense Luhmann's work feels like a scientific excursion, although it is sociological theory-building *pur sang*.

Lastly, although Luhmann's work does establish a rich and consistent theory of society (*and* of art as a social system within society), it does *not* provide any clear definition of culture or cultural communication. It does however (I will argue) provide enough foothold for the development of a theoretical frame for cultural communication, although Luhmann's vocabulary must be extended a little to do so.

### **Core concepts**

Luhmann's work is focused on one thing: the construction of an all-encompassing theory of society *as communication*. Or, to put it more precisely: *society as an amalgam of self-regulating systems with one single operator: communication*.

Loosely paraphrasing from his dense prose, two fundamental notions (as a sort of 'truisms') stand out at the heart of his theory. The first truism is that humans are "thrown" into the world equipped with mental faculties (psychic systems) that *can never connect directly*: we can never know for certain what other psychic systems think or feel: all we can ever do is try to communicate – and try again. The second truism is that every imperfect trial of communication consists of *selections as temporal events*: we say this, not that. Luhmann then

shows how these two simple facts spawn the most intricate and complex set of functionally stratified communication *systems* creating their own boundaries and rules: society.

Luhmann builds his encompassing systems theory by oscillating between the microlevel (of communication between psychic systems) and the macro level of social systems (society). He argues that both psychic systems and social systems *must* make temporal selections when they communicate, or more precisely: that communication is temporal selection.<sup>vi</sup>

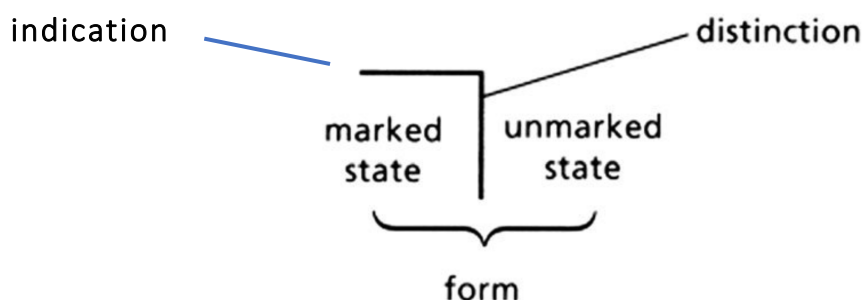
This notion of communication-as-selection pertains that both psychic and social systems organise themselves in functional (selection-driven) ways: patterns of selections form functional social (or cognitive) units. *Social systems* (which are the main focus of sociologist Luhmann, he does not say much on psychic systems, but emphasizes that they are indeed *systems*) are formed by the use of *functional binaries* that drive the formation of subsystems: like the binary “true-untrue” for the science system or the binary “legal-illegal” for the justice system. Society for Luhmann is the grand total of all of these self-regulating binary communication subsystems which he describes meticulously in several separate works.<sup>vii</sup>

### **Selection as distinction**

Going in deeper, Luhmann underpins his key-concept of selection with George Spencer Brown’s *Logic of Form*. Here his work does become very abstract, but we need to go in, as it is a central part of Luhmann’s reasoning to which I will want to annotate at a later stage.

Spencer Brown postulates that at the heart of any (temporal) act of selection lies a *unity of distinction and indication*, that spawns a *form*. For Luhmann this means that any communicative selection is *at the same time both a distinction and an indication*: by saying “this” and not “that”, both a distinction (between this and that) and an indication (this, *not* that) spring to life: are made presently manifest at the same time – as a ‘unity of selection’. Spencer Brown names this unity of selection: *form*.

For Luhmann this is a crucial notion, as it depicts that every selection forms a ‘cut out’ shape that indicates *what is not selected* out of the range of alternatives at hand. In other words, the *form spawned by selection exists as a shape that marks the difference between the selected and the not-selected*.



**FIGURE 2. SELECTION (SPENCER BROWN): MARKER (UNITY OF DISTINCTION AND INDICATION) SELECTS “MARKED STATE”, CREATING FORM**



**FIGURE 3. FORM AS BOUNDERY**

We need not go any deeper, although Luhmann, Spencer Brown and others have much more to say. What is of importance here is the notion that in Luhmann's world, communication is the basic operator of any social system, and selection (in the Spencer Brownian sense of *form*) is the basic element of every communication. This means that any communication (and any system) is a *reduction to form, that allows for the unselected (out)side to be observed and remembered*.

### **Structures**

Observation, expectation and remembering are a key part in Luhmann's social theory. Because communications are *events*, that only exist *in time*, communications *must* be tried again and again. That is why, Luhmann says, grand structures and “media” continuously arise to facilitate effective communication and remembering: to make pre-selections, so to speak, that streamline communication. Luhmann positions these structures and media *in society*.

Of course, Luhmann does not claim that observation, expectation and remembering would not, also, be situated in psychic systems; as a sociologist, his focus is on society: communications, that weave patterns, forming societal processes of a specific kind (social systems) that in turn find ways that help to observe, expect and remember.<sup>viii</sup>

### **Culture and medium**

How do culture and the arts fit into this grand concept of society? As for culture, Luhmann is quite clear that the societal organisation of observation, expectation and remembering cannot be a separate social system in and of itself (as it is not *communication* in Luhmann's definition).<sup>ix</sup> Instead Luhmann introduces the term *medium*, which may for now be taken to refer to set of communication pre-sets or configurations (including language, values, structures) that provide the preconditions for enduring and effective communications within society. A medium is built up over time by the communications within a system, *without being “seen” by the systems that use it*. Although with much (uncharacteristic) hesitancy, Luhmann says this invisible medium is what may be called “culture” (see Burkart & Runkel).

There is much to say about this, but it is clear that Luhmann does not thoroughly theorize culture as such and this leaves room for interpretation and amendments. Baecker (2012, 2013), Laermans (2002) and others have done just that, and commented that culture in Luhmann may be seen as a sort of *reservoir* on which all communications draw to *facilitate the construction of meaning*. Indeed, this is more or less in line with what the common, anthropological definition of culture pertains. We may adopt this definition of culture just for now and move on to Luhmann's theory of Art as a social system, as we may find some clues there for the conception of *cultural communication*.

### **Art as a social system**

In his conception of *Art as a social system* Luhmann works 'outward', starting from the practice of creation. In accordance with his theory, Luhmann argues that every step in the formation of an artwork designates a temporal selection by the artist: "I here and now do this, not that".<sup>x</sup>

Luhmann then states that every selection by the artist refers to the *work* itself. The binary that drives this selection in relation to the work is the distinction 'fitting / not fitting'. The "selection process" (the conception of the work) goes on until the work is "done" – the point when there are no further selections left to improve the work.<sup>xi</sup>

Luhmann then projects the same binary "fitting – not fitting" operating at the functional level of the *social system* of the arts: art as a social system "autopoietically" reproduces itself by *selecting fitting / non fitting works*.<sup>xii</sup>

### **Notes**

It is significant to note that Luhmann does *not* see the artwork itself as a dedicated communication. The work however *does* communicate by referring to itself as a *product of selections* by the artist. Each of these selections yield *form* in the sense that they also indicate the non-selected options in relation to the work.

Luhmann mentions (in passing) that a particular prerequisite must be fulfilled for the artwork to communicate (in the Luhmannian sense of being understood): it must, first of all, be introduced *as artwork* so that it may be interpreted as such (and not e.g. as an "ordinary" soapbox or a pissoir).<sup>xiii xiv</sup> This is important for where I'm going, because it leaves some space within systems theory to think of communication *modes*. I will come back to this in relation to *play*.

The second note is that Luhmann separates the 'communication *of* the artwork' from the communication *about* art, which he designates as the "social system of art". This is important because it leaves some space within systems theory to think of communication modes on the level of *societal* phenomena.

### **Wrap up**

Luhmann's social systems theory may be seen as an ultimate description of the *systemic necessities* of the *process of communication*. As such it may provide a strong and credible framework for a theory of cultural communication. There are however, as we have noted, some major issues to be addressed. The first is that Luhmann's theory does not provide any clear definition of culture-as-process: Luhmann seems strikingly hes-



itant on the subject of culture. The second is that his description of the process of creation of the art work (as communicative artefact) *does* mention “a special kind of communication” in relation to the arts, but this “special kind of communication” is not theoretically developed in relation to culture. Thirdly, Luhmann seems to describe the social system of the arts in terms of communication *about* art - and not primarily in terms of communication *through* (or *with*) art. Finally, although not mentioned above – but mentioned by others, the work of Luhmann leaves some gaps when it comes to embodiment and emotions as locus or driver of (inter)personal and societal processes, actions and experiences (Damasio 2018, Ciompi).

It is my view that these issues may be resolved if the description of culture is more precisely taken apart, in particular in relation to *ambiguous communication*.

### ***New territory: the process of culture, culture as process***

A deep and significant (but often hidden) aspect of the use and definition of the term ‘culture’ is the distinction between the process of culture (i.e. the way “culture” as an entity or force plays a part in the process of communication) and culture as process (i.e. the properties of communication). Put in other words: the difference between the process definition of a *noun* or a *verb*.

The use of culture as a *noun* in a process-definition of culture focusses on what culture *is* through what it does, i.e. the way culture as a set of (e.g.) values, behaviours or artefacts (or as a “reservoirs of symbolic meaning”) mutually interacts with the processes that happen within and between people (or within and between structures or organisations). This use of the term culture is very well developed albeit contested and stratified in different schools of thought.<sup>xv</sup>

The use of culture as a *verb*, a process-definition of culture shifts the focus to what it *pertains to culturally communicate*. This use of the term culture (as process-distinction of communication) has not yet been theorized. It does however resonate with Luhmann’s description of the creation-process of artworks, as well as with the concepts of bio-systems and cybernetics (Bateson 2000, Deacon) and with some stands in sociology (Baecker 2012, Laermans 1997), art-theory (Van Maanen) and play-theory. This is not the place to go into to this in detail, but it is my aim to bring these strands – in a provisional way at least – together within the basic framework of communication theory, extending on Luhmann’s suggestions on a special “kind of communication” that comes with the creation and interpretation of art. I will illustrate this by connecting the everyday practice of ambiguous communication with “double processing” or *disjunction* (as e.g. in play, storytelling, irony and the arts).

### ***Communication mode***

The suggestion I am making then, is that cultural communication may be conceptualised and theorised as a designated *mode* of communication. Let me illustrate this with an example, elaborating of Luhmann’s suggestion that for any artwork to function communicatively as an artwork, it must be introduced and recognized *as such*. The communicative ‘mode’ that designates such a switch from reality to the space of purposeful non-reality is playfully thematised by Matisse in his famous painting *Ceçi n’est pas une pipe*, which points to

the self-evident difference between literal and imaginative interpretation. Ever since the arrival of abstract and conceptual art (like the ready-mades of Duchamp or Warhol's *Brillo Box*) this distinction between the real and the imaginary has been irreversibly established – and consequently been thematised (“re-entered”) into art.



FIGURE 4.

The point I would like to make is that this obvious communicative switch from reality to a purposeful non-reality *mode* is not confined to the arts and is indeed much more widely practiced in everyday communication than we perhaps might realise. To illustrate this, I will turn to the work of Bateson and McConachie on *play* and storytelling – and tie these back to culture and the arts (Huizinga, Eco)

### **Play**

There are two interesting parallels between the “artistic” mode of interpretation (*this is not a pipe, this is not a Brillo box*) with other, quite common communicative settings: social play and storytelling.

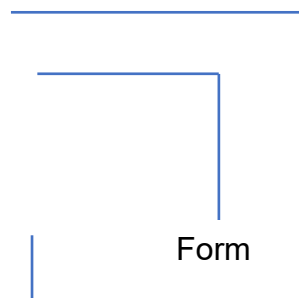
Gregory Bateson famously stated that for any social play (human or animal alike) to take off, a meta-communicative signal “*this is play*” is required (Schechner & Schuman, Mitchell). Only if the signal is picked up, a playful communication *mode* (my term) may be established and playing may progress unimpeded by any misunderstandings that what takes place is actually “for real”. It is obvious that there are many sorts of play and many definitions of play<sup>xvi</sup>, but for me it is significant these all have in common that some form of open-endedness is essential to playing: playing is, in a deep evolutionary sense, always a designated, staged *form of trying*.<sup>xvii</sup>

Bruce McConachie and others have suggested that play and storytelling (or more general: *performance*) are closely relate<sup>xviii</sup> as both presume (and establish) a specific mode of communication: *conjunction*. Conjunction is the communicative transfer of “is” to “were” (or in other words, from reality to the imagined “as if” or “once upon a time”). This transfer opens a specific mode of communication: a playful performance and interpretation of a “reality” that is *not-real*, which of course is the hallmark of all art – but, as I just now put forward, not limited to art.

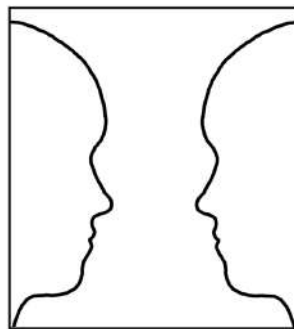
These switches from the real to the not-real are *similar* between play and performative acts, but the question remains whether they may indeed be the *same* in terms of communication?

### **Back to Spencer Brown**

So what happens ‘communication-wise’ when we switch into this conjunctive mode of communication? How could this be reconciled with the concept of *selection* (i.e. reduction to form) as the basic unit of communication? This is not the place to go into abstract details, but I would like to suggest that conjunction and play as a communication mode both *thematise ambiguity*. Or, in the language of Spencer Brown: an ambiguous communication mode pertains to the re-entry of the *form* (i.e. the shape between the indicated and the not-indicated) into the marked state, as a thematised ambiguity.<sup>xix</sup>



**FIGURE 5. RE-ENTRY OF FORM INTO MARKED SIDE OF SELECTION (SEE ALSO FIG. 2)**



**FIGURE 6. FORM AS AMBIGUOUS MEANING**

### **Thesis**

This brings me to the centre of my argument. It is my suggestion that an actual (and widespread) open ended *communication mode* exists in society, *between people* (as seen in ordinary play, storytelling and art) that may be characterised by the selection of *thematised ambiguity*. Annotating to McConachie I would suggest that from the “root” of this common ambiguous communication several different practices “branch off”: play, playful ambiguous communications (such as humour and irony), storytelling, all expressive performances, and art. I propose to call this ambiguous communication mode: *cultural communication*, because it is, per saldo, *thematising the playful “what-if” in the domain of shared meaning*.

### **Roots, evolution**

Again, this is not the place to give a full account of the relation between play, ambiguity, communication and evolution. But I would maintain there can be no doubt that cultural communication (in this sense of the playful thematization of the what-if in the domain of shared meaning) must be an important factor in the evolutionary development of humans and society. *We need ambiguous ways to try meaning*, on both the interpersonal as the societal level. Damasio, Donald, Tomasello, Piaget, Van Heusden and many others have theorised, researched and documented this convincingly in the context of human development, cognition, interaction, cooperation and evolution.

### **Urgency**

So how do these thoughts and suggestions connect to the predicaments of the modern world and cultural policy as a factor in that world? To answer this, I propose to go back to the distinction made earlier between culture as a noun (the process of culture) and culture as a verb (culture-as-process).

It is interesting that Gregory Bateson not only published extensively on systems, cognition, cybernetics and play, but also on the process of culture. He coined the term “schismogenesis” for the mechanism of *cultural opposition*: although culture may remain “invisible” as a medium for anyone ‘inside’ it, it will become urgently aware of itself when confronted with other cultures. Every culture will then tend to define itself in terms of *otherness*. Bateson (in Schechner) sees this as a natural function of human society. However, feelings of fear and resentment lie close to the surface and can easily be manipulated by populists and activists (Cimipi). Needless to say, these mechanisms have since Bateson’s time (he wrote on schismogenesis in 1935) become exponentially more virulent and dangerous with the rise of social media and online tribalism.<sup>xx</sup>

In these polarized times then, it seems of importance that *other ways of cultural awareness* (other than through schismogenesis) are at the disposal of society. It is precisely at this point that cultural communication may play a role.<sup>xxi</sup>

### **Positioning**

In this context the German sociologist Dirk Baecker must be mentioned. Among his many other interpretations of and reflections on Luhmann’s work, Baecker (2012, 2013) develops the notion that the process of culture may be placed in systems theory as a *tertium datur*: a societal ‘third space’ where the “opposition” to the functional *binary* way communication systems operate, resides. For Baecker then, culture produces the “third values” that facilitate a shared vocabulary that the differentiated social systems may share. Although Baecker’s elaborations of Luhmann’s theory suggest a similar *direction* as the one that I am proposing, his reasoning seems “tied” to the *process of culture* (as a noun). Although this obviously deserves much more attention, I will now simply suggest that the concept of cultural communication may provide an explanation of *how* this societal “third space” is linked to the process of communicating.

In the Netherlands, Hans van Maanen (theatre studies) has suggested that artistic *experience* can only come about when the interpretation “schemata” of the subject are sufficiently *challenged* i.e. when the confronta-

tion with an artwork sparks interpretive surprise, wonder or (as Pascal Gielen later put it) *dis-measure*. This notion too, comes close to my propositions on cultural communication, although Van Maanen (2005) seems to speak only in relation to the arts. In addition I would suggest that the *experience of dis-measure* that Van Maanen - I think justifiably so - puts central to artistic experience, may find its pendant in a specific communication *mode* that is of a much wider practice than the arts as such.

This short positioning would not be complete without Johan Huizinga. In his seminal work *Homo Ludens*, Huizinga (1938) famously places *play* at the root of all culture. "Behind any expression of the abstract lies a metaphor and within any metaphor there is a wordplay", Huizinga writes. In this way, humanity "continuously creates a second, imagined world alongside that of nature." (...) "Great activities of cultural life" (including religion, law, economy and science) are rooted in a "soil of playful activity" (sic). Huizinga does not theorize his thesis, but instead illustrates it richly with an abundance of examples from history and anthropology. Annotating, I would suggest a *theory of cultural communication* may, perhaps, help to fill in Huizinga's thesis.

In a more structuralist corner, the work of Bourdieu, Ranciere and Gielen must be mentioned. Although mutually different in many aspects, these authors have in common that they put the reproduction of power-relations through the cultural reproduction of *meaning* (Luhmannian "Sinn") central in their work. This leads them to a specific analysis of society and culture, and consequently to specific (although quite diverse) analysis and (perhaps idealistic) design of cultural policy. These analyses are, no doubt, of great value in the debate on cultural policy (where indeed they find growing influence and support) and I would not want to oppose their inclusive objectives in any way. I would however suggest (1) that a theory of cultural communication may explain the dynamics and evolution of culture on a deeper communicative level, and (2) that a theory of cultural communication may crucially show the fluidity of cultural communication as an intrinsic dimension of society (in the Luhmannian sense), which *interacts* with the structural and power-reproductive mechanisms of society, and must therefore be included in, and be the deeper goal of, any cultural policy.

To round off, I want to emphasize again that there may be deep and inspiring connections between systems theory and *semiosis* (the production and comprehension of *signs*). The concepts of Peirce, Eco and Lotman on sign systems and media are strongly related to the process of culture and the arts. In the Netherlands this relation has been described and developed in the field of cognition and cultural education by Barend van Heusden.

### **Art, artists and culture-as-process**

Where does cultural communication leave the arts and artists? Am I implying that there is no such thing as *artistic communication*?

It has often been said that artists or the arts should not claim exclusivity for the societal enhancement of creativity and imagination (or, for that matter, for cultural participation, or for social "bonding" and "bridging") as there are many other processes in society that may bring about these qualities in people's lives. I think the

concept of cultural communication may help to put the issues concerning the role and surplus of artists and the arts in a wider *and* deeper perspective.

If we see cultural communication as a mode of deliberate ambiguous communication (thematizing the playful conjunctive “what-if” in the domain of shared meaning), the role of arts and artists may come to light as a specific *depth* in this communication mode. Artists and artworks renew and update the expressive vocabulary (“form-languages”<sup>xxii</sup>) in and of society, creating inspiring, provocative or wonderous signposts in the ‘third space’ of cultural communication. To be able to do so, artists must also be the keepers and disseminators of the specialist vocabulary of their discipline and the sets of (passed down *and* continuously developing) integrated skills that may bring that vocabulary to life.

From this vantage point artists can confidently unfold their role and position in society (in the Luhmannian sense of a communication system), and transparently balance the necessity of their artistic skills and autonomy with the necessity of their communicative embeddedness; proudly conscious of the fact that their work will find full significance in the playful context<sup>xxiii</sup> of cultural communication and cultural encounter (see the next part of this paper).

### ***Policy perspectives and implications***

Now cultural policy design may perhaps gain new meaning and perspective. It can be directed at the maintenance and facilitation of cultural communication as a democratic<sup>xxiv</sup> necessity. Two dimensions can then be functionally distinguished: the dimension of the width and the dimension of depth of cultural communication and encounter.

*For the maintenance and facilitation of the width of cultural communication, policy can be directed towards the capability in and of society to arrange cultural encounters past the walls of schismogenesis and power reproduction.*

*For the maintenance and facilitation of the depth of cultural communication, policy can be directed towards the capability in and of society to arrange cultural encounters beyond the vested vocabularies (form-languages).*

This “third way” of policy formation will no doubt have far-reaching implications, yet to be discussed and explored. I will now present some of the findings of a trial set-up in the Netherlands, that may serve as a prelude to such explorations and discussions.

## **3. Practical frame**

### ***Introduction***

In the Netherlands, the debate on cultural policy and cultural democracy hinges (perhaps not unlike in any other European country – e.g. the recent Porto Santo Charter) on unresolved issues concerning identity, rights and inclusiveness. The term “system” in this debate is associated with power-reproducing “structures” that need to be “opened”. This has led to polarisation around the perceived democratic meaning and importance of artistic autonomy and artistic quality, spawning fierce debates between “intrinsic” and “instrumentalist” positions.

In the context of this debate the term cultural capability was adapted in the Netherlands from the seminal work in the UK (Wilson & Gross, Gross & Wilson, Wilson) and consequently developed in the specific direction of *Cultureel Vermogen*<sup>xxv</sup> (Drion, 2018): *the capability in and of society to culturally communicate*. A two-year trial was set up, aiming to find a practical approach for cultural communication, on the level of cultural activities, organisations and policy, *by modelling the arranging of cultural encounters*. The trial was made possible by FCP (the Dutch national fund for cultural participation) and was supervised and hosted by LKCA (the Dutch national centre for expertise on cultural education and participation); six professional organisations were involved in nine separate set-ups. What follows below, is a clipping from the yields of this trial. (Please do not mind provisional translation.)

### **Focus**

*Cultureel Vermogen* proposes a dedicated model for opening cultural encounter to professional, organisational and policy design and evaluation. The model is a tentative proposition, developed over a series of dialogues with specialists in the field of cultural education, participation and policy.<sup>xxvi</sup>

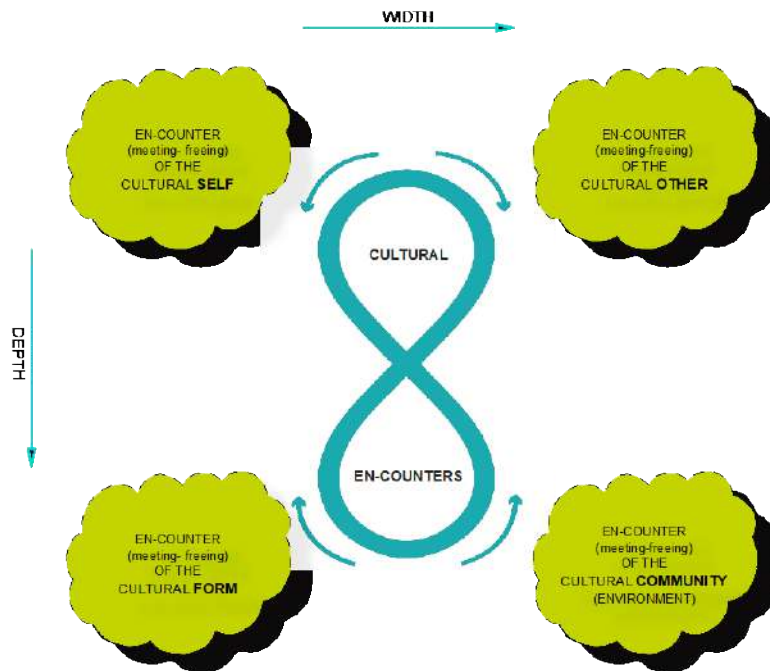
### **Key notion**

- *Cultureel Vermogen* (CV) refers to the capability in and of society to culturally communicate.<sup>xxvii</sup>
- The capability to culturally communicate develops via cultural en-counters.<sup>xxviii</sup>

*CV proposes four dimensions of cultural en-counter (as locus of cultural communication):*

- En-counter of **cultural self**
- En-counter of **cultural other**
- En-counter of **cultural form**
- En-counter of **cultural community**

Working hypothesis of CV: *cultural en-counters may be strengthened by connecting these four dimensions in “strong” practical arrangements - that touch on both the depth and the width of cultural communication.*



**FIGURE 6.** *Cultural encounter as locus of cultural communication*

Three levels of operation can work together to bring these arrangements about.

*CV names three levels of operation:*

- Professionals, arranging **en-counters**
- Organisations, arranging **programs**
- Governments, arranging **coherence**



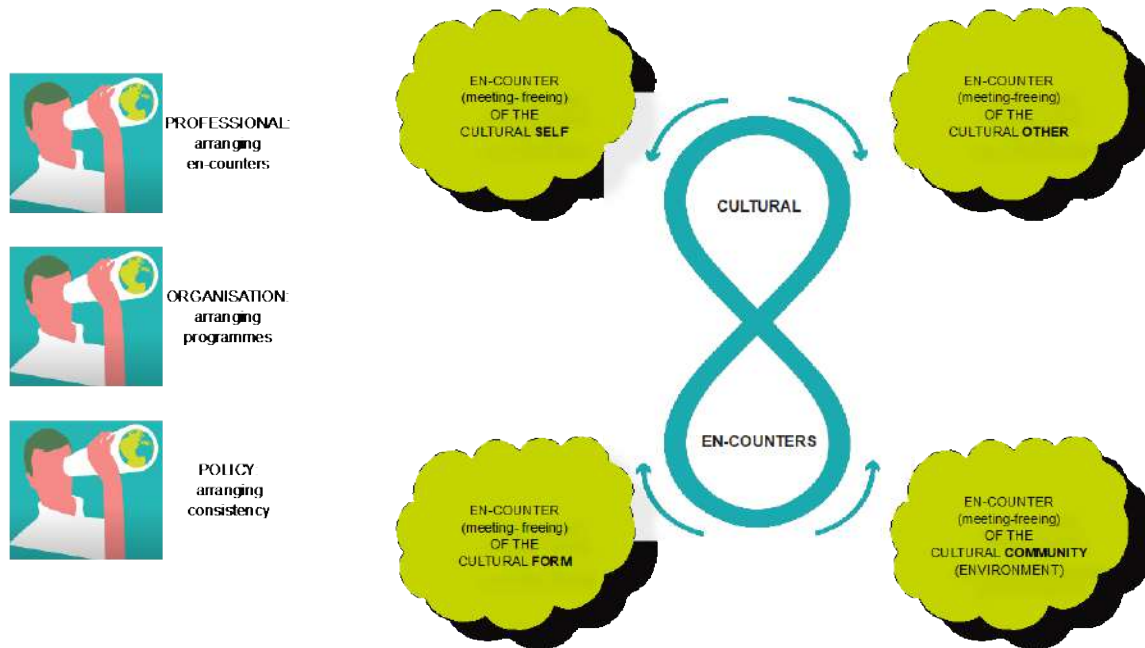


FIGURE 7. *Three levels of operation*

### **Design**

The three levels of operation can now each design (on their own level) arrangements by bringing four structural elements into play:

- Bring **cultural self-awareness** into play
- Bring **cultural difference** into play
- Bring **cultural expression** into play
- Bring **cultural environment** into play

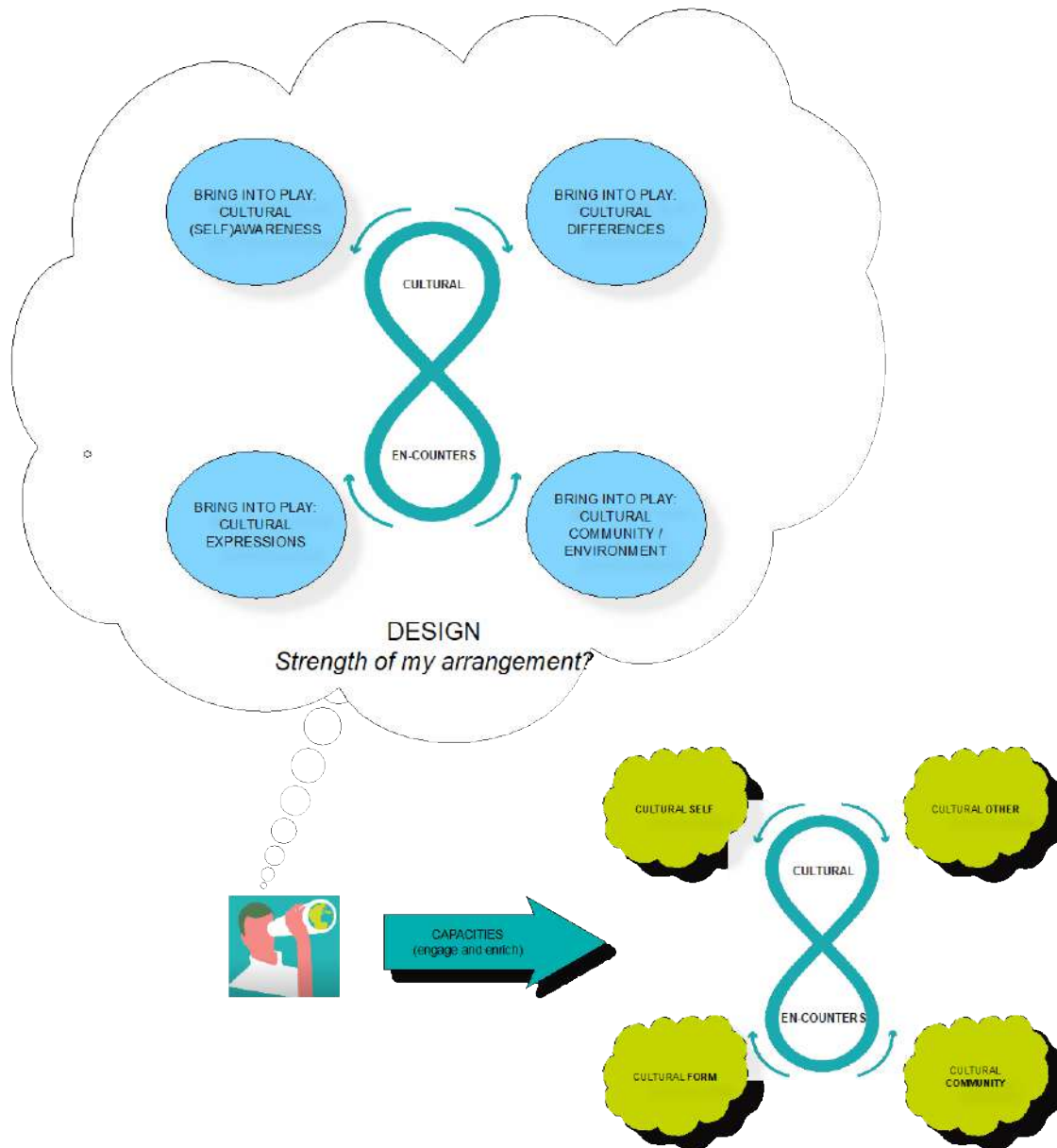


FIGURE 8. *Designing strong arrangements*

### **Self-scan**

The levels of operation can scan their own capacity-profile at arranging cultural en-counters by (each on their own level) by evaluating their capacity in the four different structural elements of a “strong arrangement”:

- (Capacity to) bring cultural self-awareness into play
- (Capacity to) bring cultural difference into play
- (Capacity to) bring cultural expression into play
- (Capacity to) bring cultural environment into play

There are a designated tools to assist in this self-evaluation. Based on their capacity- profile professionals and organizations may arrange their contribution in any specific arrangement based on their relative strengths and weaknesses. Governments may scan the policy field and adjust their policy accordingly.

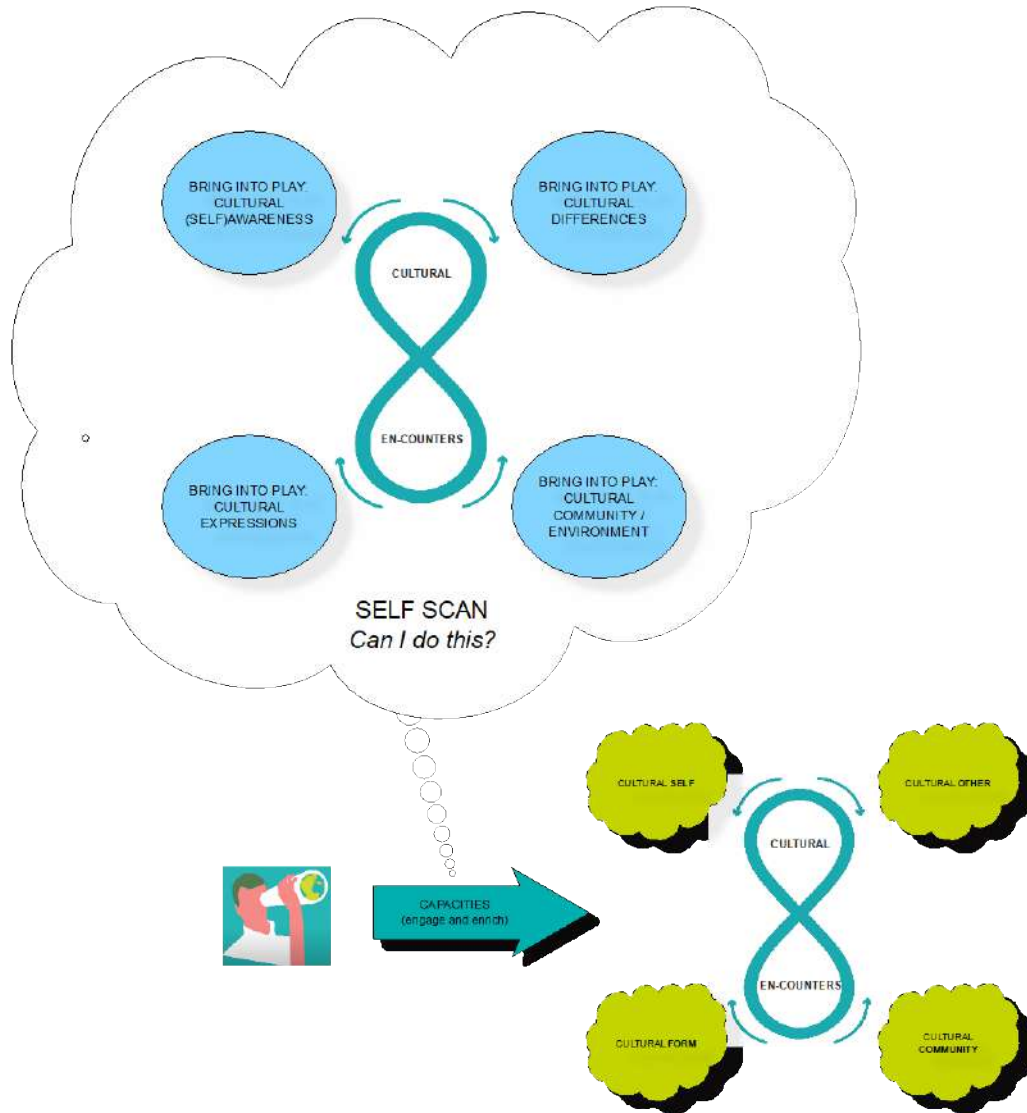


FIGURE 9. Scanning capacities

### Observation

The model of CV also provides process-indicators for observation and evaluation by professionals and organizations, for assessing the “presence” (opening up) of the **cultural person**, the **cultural medium**, the **cultural expression (form)** and the **cultural community (environment)**. For this assessment also, tools are being developed e.g. as checklist for expected behaviors and signs.

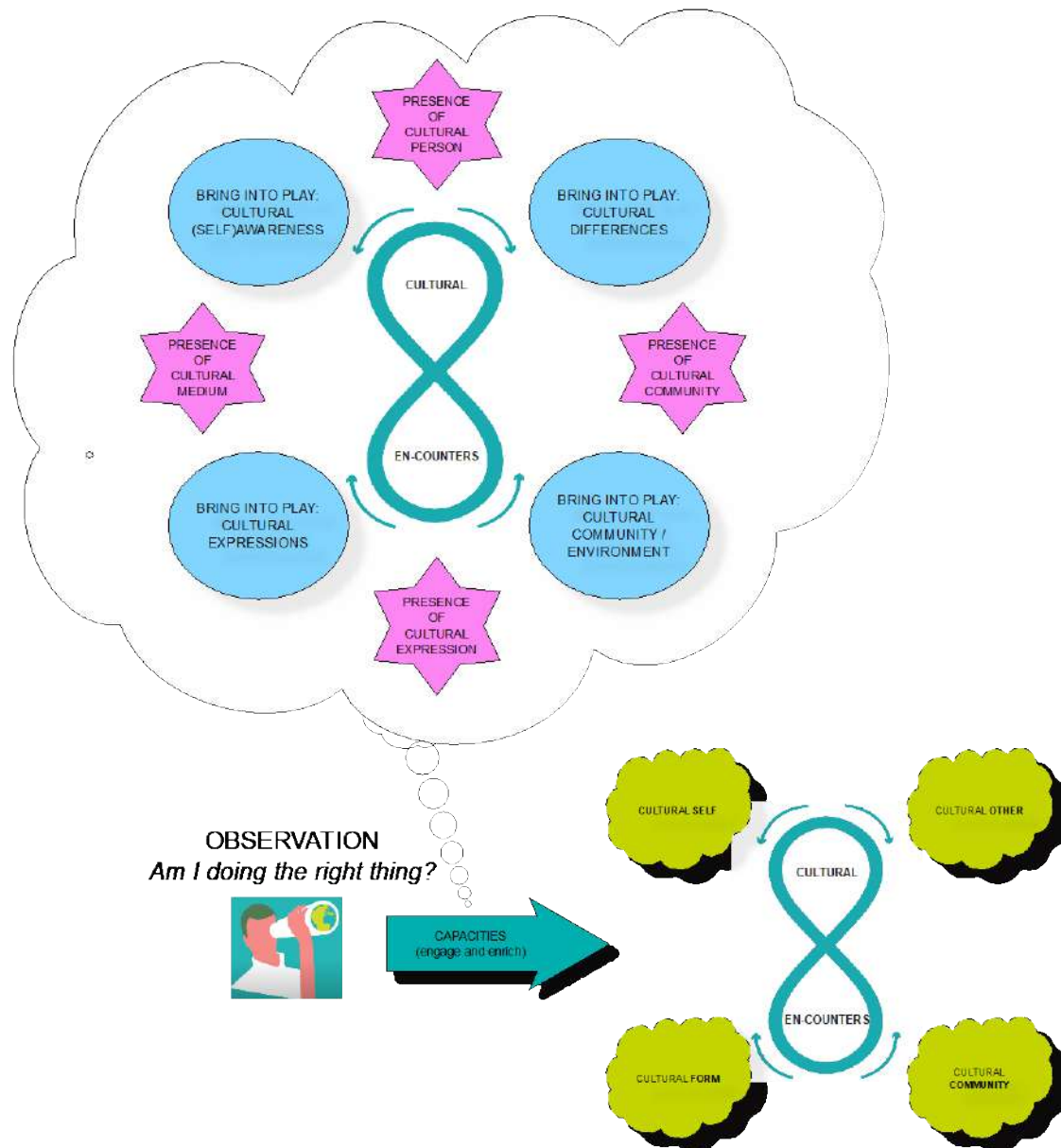


FIGURE 10. *Process- observation*

**Toolset** (under development, to be presented early 2022)

- Design tool (for lessons and projects)
- Observation tool (for lessons and projects)
- Competence tool (adaptation of the T-shape model for cross sectoral collaboration)
- Self-scan tool for cultural practitioners and professionals
- Self-scan tool for cultural organizations
- Scan tool for field-evaluation (for policy makers)
- Design tool for collaboration and collaborative design
- Vision tool organization and policy design

- Interview and dialogue tool for counselling with partners and clients
- Policy design and evaluation tool

### **Remarks on future developments**

The findings of trial setup of *Cultureel Vermogen* will be presented in a conference in January 2022 in the Netherlands. It is expected that some form of network or platform will then be instated for further development.

### **Contact and information**

- About this paper and the concepts: please contact author / developer Geert Drion ([drion@ziggo.nl](mailto:drion@ziggo.nl))
- About the trial set-up of *Cultureel Vermogen* and future networks please contact: Jan van den Eijnden: [JanvandenEijnden@lkca.nl](mailto:JanvandenEijnden@lkca.nl)
- See also (in Dutch – translation under preparation):  
<https://www.lkca.nl/categorie/thema/cultureelvermogen/>

### **Bio**

Geert Drion (1960) is an independent researcher and consultant. He studied Music (BA), and Cultural Policy & Management (MA). He was manager of several cultural institutions and taught as assistant at the Utrecht University and Radboud University Nijmegen. In his work he reflects on new ways to organise the cultural in the public sphere. He is currently working on a PhD (on the process-conception of culture) at the University of Groningen.

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<sup>i</sup> See Carbaugh for a short overview of four ways in which culture may be theorized as communication.

<sup>ii</sup> Ibid

<sup>iii</sup> Notably in the perception that *difference* is a basic condition for information to appear and to be handled between (or within) systems. As Bateson famously put it: "information is a difference that makes a difference". Systems can only perceive differences; systems operate on differences.

<sup>iv</sup> I have no claim at studying this whole oeuvre. For translations in English and introductions, see Luhmann (2013), Baraldi and Moeller.

<sup>v</sup> There are many accounts of the impact of Luhmann's work; Laermans and Blom have testified of this in the Dutch language. See Moeller for an account in English.

<sup>vi</sup> Luhmann famously defines communication as a three-fold selection: selection of *utterance*, selection of *information*, selection of *understanding*.

<sup>vii</sup> In particular, 10 systems can be enumerated: political systems, economy, science, art, religion, legal systems, sport, health systems, education and mass media (Roth and Schütz, 2015). These are autopoietic systems, operationally closed, and each has a specific binary code that includes or excludes an operation. (Appignanesi 288)

<sup>viii</sup> This part of Luhmann's theory obviously has deep philosophical and methodical implications, such as his famous systemic "blind spots" which we must leave aside for now.

<sup>ix</sup> Luhmann opposes Parsons' action theory. See Luhmann 2013.

<sup>x</sup> Of course, these selections are not per se "conscious" or "rational", on the contrary: they will probably mostly be embodied and intuitive. See e.g. McConachie and Johnson.

<sup>xi</sup> There will obviously be different manifestations of this in material and performative artforms.

<sup>xii</sup> This must be taken in a paradoxical sense: what "fits" in the social system of art, fits *because it does not quite fit*: in the social system of the arts innovation "fits" (leads to continuation of the system) and imitation does not fit (is rejected by the system). See e.g. Gielen et.al. and Van Maanen.

<sup>xiii</sup> See Luhmann 1987 (p 105) on "registering form as medium".

<sup>xiv</sup> Here Luhmann seems to introduce some form of meta-communication into the communication of art. I will elaborate on that when I introduce the term *communication mode*.

<sup>xv</sup> See: e.g. Geertz, Bourdieu, Ranciere, Carbaugh.

<sup>xvi</sup> See: e.g. Huizinga, Caillois, Sutton-Smith, Henricks, Gadamer.

<sup>xvii</sup> A significant difference between play and game should be highlighted here: a game will usually have an ending related to rules, play may not; a game needs to be played, but playing does not need a set of a priori rules per se.

<sup>xviii</sup> Indeed, for all of these forms the word "play" is used.

<sup>xix</sup> For an comprehensive introduction to Spencer Brown in relation to Luhmann, see: Baecker 1993, (in German). For a lighter form, see: Baraldy (et.al.)

<sup>xx</sup> See also: Burkart and Baecker (2012) on culture, opposition and middle ground (Tertium Datur)

<sup>xxi</sup> There are of course many other valuable approaches to this problem: the claim art and artists as ‘mirror’ or ‘consciousness’ of society is obviously one; another may be the growing interest in the *education in culture* (see e.g. Van Heusden); a third may be the growing attention to inclusion, cultural rights and participatory practices.

<sup>xxii</sup> Drion, upcoming

<sup>xxiii</sup> See also: Gadamer

<sup>xxiv</sup> I have not elaborated on the relation between culture, the arts and democracy. The term democracy is introduced here only as reference to a *new* approach to the discussion mentioned in the introductory remarks of this paper. See: Gross and Wilson, Gielen, Ranciere, Hadley, Belfiore, Stevenson.

<sup>xxv</sup> “Cultureel Vermogen” is not easily translatable into English (just as “Cultural capability” is not adequately translatable into Dutch). “Vermogen” points to a combination of ability and opportunity, but it also has the connotation “potential power” as in the physics equation  $W = V \times A$  (capability = difference  $\times$  connection). The phrase “cultural vermogen in and of society” indicates that the societal and individual aspects of CV are at the same time distinguishable and intertwined.)

<sup>xxvi</sup> As such, it may provide a way to explore the specific “operational gap” in the capabilities approach. (Gross & Wilson (2020))

<sup>xxvii</sup> Cultural communication: conjunctive communication (in the domain of the imagined).

<sup>xxviii</sup> En-counter refers to the Dutch noun *ontmoeting* (meeting) which has the particular association of ont-moeten (“dis-obligate”), best provisionally translated in the word combination “meeting-freeing”.

ENCATC is the European network on cultural management and policy. It is an independent membership organisation gathering over 100 higher education institutions and cultural organisations in over 40 countries. ENCATC was founded in 1992 to represent, advocate and promote cultural management and cultural policy education, professionalize the cultural sector to make it sustainable, and to create a platform of discussion and exchange at the European and international level.

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