

Managing value in creative and cultural fields

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1. Aim of the research

The research is part of the Horizon 2020-funded UNCHARTED project (Understanding, Capturing and Fostering the Societal Value of Culture)¹.

The rationale of the EU project is that a meaningful understanding of the plurality of the values of culture in Europe is only possible if we consider the multiplicity of agents who participate in valuation processes and the diversity of evaluative practices in which they engage (Alexander, 2018; Moeran and Christensen, 2013; Hutter and Throsby, 2008; Anheier and Isar, 2010). Consequently, the research focuses on the valuation practices (Lamont, 2012; Hutter and Stark, 2014) of the actors involved in cultural life. This project distinguishes three main areas and three types of fundamental actors in the value dynamics of culture: the field of cultural participation, in which citizenship is the protagonist; the field of cultural production and heritage, where the professionals of creation and preservation take the initiative; and the field of cultural administration, where the experts and politicians decide. The project takes these three areas and this basic typology of actors as a starting point to structure the study of the different aspects involved in this evaluative dynamic: the emergence of values, the configuration of a value order and the political impulse of values. The project considers as drivers of change influencing the values of culture: gender and rising diversity, urbanization, spatial and social segregation, globalization and digitization, neo-liberalism, and Covid-19 pandemic.

The main objectives of the Post-doc grant are the following:

1. to identify the plurality of values that emerge in cultural practices (economic value linked to cultural innovation; public values such as creativity, inclusiveness, tolerance and cohesion; or personal values such as well-being or the promotion of identity and belonging). This plurality of values will be studied in the fields of cultural production and heritage management;
2. to understand the tensions relating to how different actors in the cultural field (i.e. citizens, professionals, public administrators) construct, measure, compare and rank the values they attribute to culture. In particular, practices of evaluation in cultural production and heritage management should be identified. Here the focus is on the organizational processes of cultural production or heritage management involving experts and professionals. This requires an exploration of the professional values involved, the potential conflicts between different professional values, and between professional values and the economic discourse of feasibility and sustainability (Eikhof and Haunschild, 2007; Theule and Lupu, 2016; Jeacle and Carter, 2012; Adler and Chen, 2011).

2. Research plan

¹ Work program H2020 TRANSFORMATIONS: The societal value of culture and the impact of cultural policies in Europe. Project coordinator: 1. Universitat de Barcelona. Other partners: ELTE, University of Coimbra, University of Bologna, Telemark Research Institute, CNRS, University of Porto, Goldsmiths University of London, University Paris 8, Promoter

The researcher will be involved in the UNCHARTED project, and the project will be developed in strong interaction with other participants. The research plan is organized according to the two objectives of the research.

Objective 1

The first phase will be focused on the review of empirical research literature and available information (cultural observatories, statistical information) on the production of value in culture, with a focus on the fields of cultural production and heritage management.

Building on phase one, a typology of cultural sectors will be developed, in relation with the different dynamics of value generation that characterizes them (cultural production sectors based on unique works or reproducible works, on pure creation or functional creation; heritage sectors linked to the arts or historical sites, etc.). An intentional sample of cases, which are accessible and representative of the different models, will be selected. The researcher will focus on two cases.

Through exploratory qualitative research (documentary analysis and interviews or focus groups) the researcher will seek to respond to the following questions: What social values of culture are identified in practice by professionals involved in cultural production and heritage management? To what extent and in what way are those values institutionalized? How are they registered? In what framework of tensions do these values appear?

In the last phase the researcher will participate in the creation of a report on the emergence of values in cultural production and heritage.

Objective 2

This second objective calls for a comparative qualitative approach that will be implemented through a set of case studies, which will be strategically selected based on the following criteria. Attention will be paid to including case-studies relating to the issues investigated in previous stages of the research, namely the current drivers of change influencing the values of culture and the tensions in the valuation of culture that were identified in different areas of cultural practice (in cultural participation in live arts and culture; in cultural participation through media; in cultural production and heritage management; and in cultural administration). The selected case studies will be different in terms of the degree of inconsistencies and incompatibilities between systems of valuation and evaluation and will include both situations where conflicts have been solved or are still open.

From a methodological point of view, exploring this research question will require conducting interviews and collecting evidence relating to organizational-level information systems, decision-making devices, systems of formal and informal accountability. At the end of this phase the researcher will participate to the creation of a report on the technologies of evaluation in cultural production and heritage management.

3. Candidate's profile

He/she should have competencies in management and/or organization. The researcher is expected to share a substantive interest for creative fields and/or heritage management as fields of studies.

The researcher is expected to be proficient in with qualitative research methodologies. He/she should also be fluent in Italian and English.

4. Development Opportunities and expected outputs

The researcher will have the opportunity to interact with all the members of the European project and enrich his/her research skills on theoretical frameworks and methods that the research project will call for. The researcher is expected to contribute to the research project through a research activity aimed at producing international publications. In particular, by the end of the research grant the researcher should be able to submit at least two manuscripts for consideration for publication. Indicative outputs: Organization Studies, Academy of Management Journal, Poetics, Critical Perspectives on Accounting, Accounting Organizations and Society, Museum Management and Curatorship, Financial Accountability and Management.

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Cristina Boari : selection of 6 published papers

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