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Culture that matters: Interdisciplinary Approaches for Sustainable Futures

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"Culture that matters: Interdisciplinary Approaches for Sustainable Futures"

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Culture that Matters: Interdisciplinary Approaches for Sustainable Futures

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The 2024 ENCATC Congress "*Culture that Matters: Interdisciplinary Approaches for Sustainable Futures*" aimed to trigger discussion and action in the cultural and creative sector on the topic of sustainability. By attending, participants had the chance to connect and engage with cultural management and policy academics and professionals from across the globe, fostering new relationships and igniting potential future partnerships.

The 2024 *Education and Research Session* of the congress was centered on reshaping the conversation around sustainability by examining its various facets—environmental, economic, cultural, and social – and enabling a muti-disciplinary and inter-disciplinary reflection on sustainability. The E&RS merged theoretical perspectives with practice-based examples, thus emphasizing the complex challenges at hand, and the need to use multiple approaches and viewpoints to develop comprehensive solutions. By leveraging both interdisciplinary knowledge and hands-on experience, the Congress aspired to carve out innovative pathways to address one of the most critical issues of our time.

The papers included in this e-book of proceedings embody the diverse and interdisciplinary reflection promoted by the scientific and professional community gathered during the ENCATC Congress 2024. This e-book brings together contributions covering a wide range of perspectives, approaches, and topics, from cultural sustainability and heritage conservation to the digital transformation of cultural institutions, cultural entrepreneurship and regional development, reporting and impact measurement, as well as social sustainability and inclusivity. While providing an overview of the themes addressed during the E&RS, it showcases the depth and breadth of research in the ENCATC community and beyond.

The 2024 Education and Research Session was dedicated to the memory of Prof. Fabio Donato (1969-2023), who greatly believed in the role of ENCATC in promoting interdisciplinary discussion and reflection to unlock the potential of the cultural and creative sector for change, innovation, and sustainability. This e-book is also intended to be a moment to continue his work, celebrate his legacy, and thank him again for his contribution to the international scientific community and the ENCATC network.

The impact of universities on the production and management systems of local museums

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ABSTRACT

The paper analyzes the relationship between university training/planning tools and small-medium local museums. The economic, managerial, and structural difficulties of peripheral cultural venues prompt the need for new partnership models to enhance their fundraising and management capacities. One effective model is collaboration between museums and research institutes, which can provide tailored training programs. The paper examines a case study of long-term collaboration between Vanvitelli University and local museums, highlighting the interaction modalities, partnerships, and benefits for local museums. A database of over 27,000 pieces of information on Campania's museums has enabled data-driven scientific training courses for museum managers, offering new development opportunities. The research demonstrates that a modern museology approach creates a virtuous circle of mutual benefits and development prospects through these synergies.

Keywords:

Research

Management models

Development

Fundraising strategies

Education

University's role in shaping development strategies for local communities

As institutions of higher education and cultural production laboratories, universities play a crucial role in shaping the production and management systems of local communities as well as local cultural institutions. Just as in any social and productive context, museums and cultural venues face the growing and urgent need to remain relevant; indeed, it's safe to say that "many cultural institutions, especially small historical societies, face increasingly limited budgets and need affordable means to maintain their collections, display objects, and connect with their communities" (Ford, 2016). It's clear, in this regard, that the "identity crisis" (Cameron, 2004) experienced by a large part of museums, both old and modern, is not only due to the lack of a specific strategy and the spasmodic pursuit of passing trends but also to the obvious shortage of economic, financial and social "structures" capable of supporting the activities of large and small local cultural institutions.

It is precisely for this reason that the presence of universities, is understood not only as training centers but also as places for the practical elaboration of new strategies for the sustainable development of the territory (and its cultural sites). Indeed, one of the key ways universities influence local museums and cultural venues is through their research capabilities (Sengupta, Blessinger & Yamin, 2020). University researchers can conduct in-depth studies on best practices in museum management, exhibit design, and collection preservation, providing valuable and actionable insights to museum professionals. This research can help museums optimize their operations, develop innovative and engaging exhibits and better serve the diverse needs of their local communities. Moreover, universities often collaborate closely with nearby museums (Lazzeroni et al, 2014) to facilitate hands-on learning and community engagement opportunities for students. Students in fields such as art history, museum studies and public history can gain invaluable practical experience by interning or volunteering at local museums, while faculty members may offer specialized consulting services or lead joint research and exhibition projects.

These mutually beneficial partnerships not only enhance the learning and professional development of students, but also significantly strengthen the capacity, programming, and community impact of local museums. In addition to academic partnerships, universities can serve as important sources of funding and resources for local museums. Through grants, endowments, and in-kind support, universities can help museums acquire new artifacts, upgrade facilities, and expand their educational offerings. Furthermore, universities may provide access to specialized equipment, conservation laboratories, and digital archives that augment the capabilities of local museums. Places of academic education can also offer professional development programs, workshops, and training sessions for museum staff (definitely the case study of this specific paper), equipping them with the latest techniques and strategies in areas like collections management, visitor engagement, and digital exhibition design. By leveraging their expertise and resources, universities can significantly bolster the operational capacities and long-term sustainability of local museums within their communities (Lazzeroni & Piccaluga, 2015).

Small to medium-sized universities often take a more localized approach, engaging closely with both students and the surrounding community. As such, these smaller academic institutions can serve as important models for economic, productive, and social initiatives that are tailored to the specific needs and interests of local stakeholders. Compared to larger ones, these regional universities tend to have a deeper understanding of the unique challenges and opportunities facing their local communities. They are able to develop innovative programs, collaborative partnerships, and targeted outreach efforts that directly address the priorities of area residents, businesses, and cultural institutions. By leveraging their proximity and responsiveness to local contexts, small to medium-sized universities can play a pivotal role in catalyzing sustainable development, fostering community engagement, and strengthening the connections between higher education and the public good within their immediate geographic regions (Sacco, Ferilli & Blessi, 2015).

In this context, the work of The University of Campania "Luigi Vanvitelli" [1] has recently demonstrated the valuable and multifaceted role universities can play in promoting local sustainability initiatives. These activities include offering specialized training courses and professional development programs for museum staff, providing consulting services and technical expertise to help local and regional cultural institutions such as public and private museums enhance their operations and programming, and supporting the managerial development of these community-based organizations. By leveraging its academic resources and collaborative partnerships, the University of Campania "Luigi Vanvitelli" has demonstrated how universities can serve as vital catalysts for strengthening the capacity, sustainability and community impact of local museums and other cultural heritage sites.

The “Vanvitelli Model” and the Regional Museum Observatory of Campania as reference point

The premise is evident: today, in the museological field, we live a stark economic, scientific, and structural disparity between state-run museums and those belonging to other entities. Although museums have historically been resistant to employing statistics and quantitative analysis (Pomian, 2023) data can be utilized to enhance the comprehension of their societal function and operational effectiveness. In this regard, in Italy, only 15% of national museums are under state jurisdiction, the

[1] The activities carried out by the University of Campania "Luigi Vanvitelli" are coordinated by the Department of Cultural Heritage (Santa Maria Capua Vetere, CE) and, specifically, by the Chair of Museology.

number of museums owned by other public and private organizations is inversely proportional to their available funds and resources, especially when compared to state-owned institutions[2]. It is clear that the state structure can sustain the burdens and costs associated with a significant number of expense items, from personnel to management, from additional services to marketing. Even though state-owned museums have undeniable deficits, they outperform museums belonging to other entities, which often struggle to independently support the weight of these costs through ticket sales and occasional fundraising efforts. This disparity in resources and funding has a significant impact on the ability of non-state-owned museums to attract and engage audiences, as they frequently lack the means to invest in programming, marketing, and community outreach initiatives that are essential for building strong local connections (Arnstein, 1969).

Indeed, one of the most obvious consequences of this disparity is the inability to attract and involve audiences in a capillary manner, also compromising the establishment of a true sense of belonging to the community (Price & Applebaum, 2021). This is a complex issue that affects not only museums, but the entire cultural sector, and is often the result of historical inequities in the distribution of resources and power structures. The idea of the museum as a public gathering place, a town square or a replacement for the cathedral and its plaza, is an attractive proposition that can help communicate the public value of cultural institutions. However, the reality is that many museums, especially those not under state control, struggle to achieve this vision due to the lack of resources and the difficulty in reaching and engaging various audiences and “publics” (Carrier, 2011).

Examining the issue on a regional scale, specifically in the Campania region, the data does not deviate from the national trends. According to the latest information collected and processed by the Regional Museum Observatory [3] from January 2023 to May 2024, only 10% of the museums and

[2] To provide a more comprehensive understanding of the current state of museums, it could be useful take in consideration a specific example. An examination of the reference parameters established by Ministerial Decree 113/2018 on the uniform levels of quality for museums to be included in the National Museum System, as well as the figures published in the annex to Directorial Decree No. 433 of April 28, 2023, reveals a striking disparity. While approximately 40% of the affiliated museums are state-owned, the remaining 60% are concentrated in just 6 regions (primarily grouped within the northern regions of Italy). These statistics clearly illustrate the discrepancy between the quantitative and qualitative significance of state-owned museums, especially in light of the uniform minimum standards set forth in 2018.

[3] The Regional Museum Observatory is a long-standing research initiative established by the Department of Cultural Heritage at the University of Campania "Luigi Vanvitelli". Its primary objective has been to monitor the performance and evolution of cultural institutions across the Campania region and its broader territory. The analysis of service levels provided by cultural sites in Campania represents an initial step, as will be further elaborated upon, towards a collaborative, multi-faceted programming of activities. These activities are aimed at enhancing the development and updating of personnel and services within museums operated by entities other than the State.

cultural sites in Campania are state-owned, out of an estimated total of 444. Considering the reference parameter of accreditation to the National Museum System, the disparity between those belonging to the ministerial network and those that do not is likely even more pronounced, given the complete lack of participation from museums not affiliated with the autonomous and DRM circuits.

It is therefore unnecessary to further emphasize the alarming yet inherent differences between state museums and the diverse group of non-state cultural sites. The practical consequences of these differences are evident in the overall organization, management, and services associated with various museum activities. It is equally apparent that the lack of necessary resources and exclusion from the ministry's funding cycles naturally implies the inability to establish even the minimum base for a remotely sustainable and virtuous development. In this regard, the data from the Regional Museum Observatory once again signifies the condition of extreme need experienced by museums belonging to entities other than the State, while also highlighting the significant scope for external stakeholders, whether primary or secondary, to contribute to the critical activities of cultural sites outside the state's purview.

The lack of funding and programming significantly constrains the ability to minimally manage non-state cultural venues (Barrella, 2001a e Barrella, 2001b). The absence of an established legal framework, such as statutes and regulations, precludes the possibility of formal accreditation even for the basic title of "Museum," with consequential impacts on adherence to the National Museum System. Additionally, there are deficiencies in the capacity to structure budgets or service charters, which are fundamental for defining the rights and obligations between providers and users. [4] Notably, data collected by the Observatory reveals substantial discrepancies in the number of permanent employees/collaborators. State museums employ approximately double the number of permanent staff compared to the 204 museums belonging to entities other than the State. While this disparity may be numerically justified by the potential rotation of professional figures among state entities, the underlying data still signifies a real shortage of labor and expertise required for the characteristic management of cultural venues that are crucial for the territorial and social economy. Furthermore, the finding that around 50% of respondents to the Observatory's survey report zero employees underscores the gravity of an utterly unsustainable condition for those volunteer managers

[4] The research conducted through the Observatory has revealed a clear discrepancy between state-owned and non-state museums. Analysis of the data on regional museums shows that only 61% of non-state museums have a statute and/or regulation, 47% have a budget, and a mere 16% have a Service Charter. These are just some of the available data; the Observatory currently collects over 27,000 data points on regional museums and cultural sites, which are fundamental for research in museology and the planning of targeted actions to promote the organic development of the local cultural context.

responsible for fragile, widespread, and "critical" cultural heritage that is integral to the narration of the local community and territory (Montella, 2009).

This analysis has unequivocally demonstrated the significant disparities in economic and structural resources between state-owned and non-state cultural institutions in the Campania region. Furthermore, it has revealed the general state of neglect affecting a particular type of museum - the local museums - which are crucial for conveying the narratives of the local territory. The available data corroborates the previous observations, and it is precisely from this premise and the pervasive lack of support for local cultural service providers that the role of structured entities like the University becomes paramount. The University, with its expertise and resources, can play a vital role in addressing these disparities by providing research, advocacy, and targeted support to strengthen the local cultural infrastructure and empower these underserved institutions to better serve their communities and preserve the rich cultural heritage of the region, especially considering the now well-documented role of museums, as highlighted in international literature (Pop et al, 2019), as institutions that can drive social and economic development, in a sustainable manner across their various forms and relationships with the local community and other stakeholders.

Development of local museums strategies: the role of University in a data-driven approach

The central issue shared by all stakeholders in the cultural heritage sector is how to enable typically autonomous-lacking cultural institutions to pursue operational independence. This would establish the groundwork for a trajectory that, if not pursued, risks leading to the closure of numerous local cultural venues. The most contemporary theories, sector-wide dialogues, and literature indicate that the most effective strategies for appropriately managing a heterogeneous, branched and "dispersed" territorial heritage involve networking, establishing cultural districts, and proposing collaborative management approaches (Barbetta, Camilli & Della Torre, 2013). However, theory and practice seem to align little, especially considering that a vast and widespread territorial heritage, mostly of small scale, has produced over the years a provincial museum system of dubious effectiveness and efficiency. [5] In this context, the university could play a key role by evaluating the actual structural, economic, and professional inadequacy of most local museums. The targeted and specialized training interventions of those who study the museum sector, in theory and practice, could be the

[5] It’s the so called “Sistema Museale di Terra di Lavoro”.

cornerstone for supporting future museum professionals and ensuring the sustainability of these important cultural institutions.

The theoretical concepts previously discussed have been successfully implemented, ensuring the effective development of targeted training programs and increased awareness of the critical issues previously mentioned. In 2023 (as already done in the past 5 years), the Chair of Museology at the University of Campania "Luigi Vanvitelli," led by Professor Nadia Barrella, organized a free training course for museum managers from entities other than the State, thanks to funding from the Campania Region. This transdisciplinary and multi-level partnership involved a wide range of professional figures from across the Campanian provinces, making it a significant and inclusive example. The collaboration between institutional bodies and museums went beyond traditional classroom training, facilitating in-depth discussions on the needs, objectives, and comprehensive strategies for enhancing the available cultural heritage and addressing the unique challenges faced by each institution. The constant exchange of diverse perspectives among these multidisciplinary social figures created the right conditions for the productive development and application of the theoretical concepts covered in the program. With the aim of democratizing content and knowledge, the commitment was to provide museum managers with a comprehensive set of operational tools and practical guidance to independently address the evolving challenges facing the museum sector in the 21st century, empowering them to drive sustainable growth and innovation within their respective institutions. The training course and the scientific support team for museum managers were guided by an awareness of critical issues and fundamental strategies for the support and operation of museums. Furthermore, a preliminary analysis of the needs and current status, conducted by the Regional Museum Observatory in early 2023, provided an extensive overview of the most pressing operational areas (Urbino, 2024). The benchmarking of the collected data against regional and national standards enabled the development of a training program tailored to the needs of all stakeholders, with the ultimate goal of contributing to the sustainable growth of the cultural institutions involved.

Focus, goals and results of the 2023 training program

The established training program has effectively balanced critical macro-themes to ensure the minimum management of museum operations. Adhering to guidelines for local recognition and uniform quality standards set by the Campania Region, the educational/scientific division has structured a three-module training plan. Each module focuses on specific topics, evenly divided between theoretical instruction and practical application. Specifically, the training workflow comprised:

- Module I: Management models and drafting guidelines for Regulations, Budget, and Social Balance Sheet.
- Module II: Development strategies for the Catalogue.
- Module III: Service Charter drafting guidelines emphasizing Inclusion, Disability, and Stakeholder management.

The 30-hour, two-month activity calendar conceptually addressed the three macro-areas of uniform museum quality standards, prioritizing the development of key themes analyzed previously. Participation from a diverse audience, largely distant from minimum regional and national objectives, provided insightful feedback for a training program that necessarily built upon the foundational principles of modern museology. While this approach may limit the achievement of structural goals due to resource constraints, the dialectic on feasible museum program and strategy implementation with available means has created a laboratory of "concrete ideas" that will be monitored for medium and long-term progress evaluation.

According to a post-training evaluation, the museum personnel involved demonstrated heightened awareness of the addressed topics, laying a foundation for policies to align regional and national quality standards. Specifically, a survey of participants at the end of the training program found that 80% of museums' operators reported acquiring skills directly applicable to museum management and programming. Additionally, the activities achieved a 98% satisfaction rate and an 87% engagement level. [6]

The training program went beyond the ministerial and regional guidelines to address themes and practical ideas that the working group deemed essential for the fundamental resources of a cultural institution. This included defining the institution's mission, future objectives, and core characteristics. Equally crucial was the presence of financial documentation and reporting to provide a clear picture of the starting endowment and spending possibilities for a given period, as well as the possibility of drafting a social balance sheet to communicate with interested parties, both local and non-local. Additionally, in-depth discussions were held on the collection and inventory management, as these are critical aspects of museum operations that many staff have not been properly trained on, despite the technical and procedural challenges they face. Finally, the program addressed fundamental and

[6] As highlighted by the literature (Zan et al, 2015), comparable programs addressing professional development and induction schemes have successfully implemented innovative structural changes to foster an adaptive, forward-thinking museum workforce. By aligning training with documentation guidelines, capacity building and evolving technological competencies, museums and cultural venues can strengthen their role as community hubs by consistently reinforcing its established identity and purpose without any deviation.

topical issues for museum management, such as the Service Charter, inclusion, and stakeholder management, which are often regulated but lack practical application. In this perspective, the training program was based on a logic of gradual awareness and education of the basic and fundamental characteristics for the management of a museum, highlighting the interconnectedness of the various elements that make up the management itself.

Concluding Reflections and Prospective Goals

The preliminary data on the performance of regional museums and the training program implemented to align them with better-structured realities reveal the extensive work required to provide local museums with the operational capacity commensurate with their potential role in the territory. Moreover, the well-documented challenges faced by large areas of southern Italy in fully realizing the untapped potential of their cultural heritage could stimulate new reflections and strategies to make this widespread heritage effective and productive culturally, socially, and economically. In a generally complex scenario where operational and planning isolation represents a pathway to failure, the support of other entities beyond the often distant ministerial figures may be the only response to the insatiable needs of local cultural realities. In this climate of uncertainty, the university, no longer focused solely on the training of the very young but also on life-long-learning, could and should be integrated as an entity capable of providing continuous and perpetual training to keep pace with the transformations of a dynamic and constantly evolving society. If the museum is the mirror of society, its changes, evolutions, power dynamics and historical stratifications, it is necessary to confront the new realities with highly flexible and open-ended approaches, which can only be envisioned by engaging in a dialogue with those who, on a daily basis, are involved in training based on the needs of the contemporary (Schaer, 1996). Providing these tools would guarantee a possibility of survival for those cultural entities often forgotten or voluntarily abandoned for the sole reason of fulfilling their nature as the embodiment of a vision and a local-territorial message. The only currently viable solution in the pursuit of sustainable and ministerial-structure-free competitiveness is training oriented towards the implementation of the most modern museum management theories and compatible with the actually available resources to produce the long-expected impacts in the critical cultural sector.

The training program (as structured in these past few years) may be expanded to additional regions through collaborations with local governmental entities or a nationwide initiative. Additionally, the curriculum could be expanded to incorporate more specialized modules, such as those centered on digital innovation, audience engagement, and cultural tourism approaches. This enhancement aligns with the forthcoming training course currently under approval, scheduled for late 2024, which will target both public and private museums in the Campania region. This expanded training plan aspires to equip museum personnel with the requisite skills and knowledge to effectively navigate the evolving cultural sector landscape and amplify the impact of regional cultural heritage through the incorporation of these critical specialized components.

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Conservative cultural sustainability in Russia; the formation of national identity through classical music

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ABSTRACT

Cultural sustainability has become an invaluable part of sustainable development, as the 4th pillar of sustainability. The concept is firmly connected to the formation of identity, since they both comprise synonymous characteristics, such as transmission of values from one generation to the next. In the Russian cultural field, cultural sustainability and its connection to identity building has not been previously researched. In the article, I argue that cultural sustainability and formation of national identity are practically synonymous entities in the Russian conservative hegemonic cultural atmosphere. The article focuses on explaining this phenomenon, as well as presenting means for its establishment through a case study of a state classical music institution, Saint Petersburg State Philharmonic. There the state-led national identity agenda is verified, as the study proves that classical music is a functioning tool of national identity actualization in Russia.

Keywords:

Cultural Sustainability
Cultural Policy
National Identity
SPb Philharmonic
Season Programming

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Introduction

In 2013 President Putin held an impactful speech about the nation's being, starting a conservative hegemonic shift in the country's cultural policymaking. These changes caused the concept of national identity to undergo massive rearrangements. Correspondingly, the Kremlin-devised cultural policy reports (2014) underline the idea of “Russian people” as a single national identity (Romashko, 2018).

The concept of cultural sustainability serves as an important part in the Russian national identity building process, since they both possess similar attributes, such as the aim to preserve cultural heritage-and values to younger generations (Soini & Birkeland, 2014). Uncovering the interconnectedness of cultural sustainability and national identity formation in the Russian classical music field serves as the centre of the article.

This article is divided into three parts. The 1st part presents the concept of cultural sustainability, and its connection to identity formation. The middle part focuses on the Russian conservative interpretation of sustainable development, through the state cultural policy reports, and the definition of Russian national identity. The final part centres around the Russian national identity building and classical music´s role in the process. It's based on the main findings of my master thesis “The Role of Classical Music as an Instrument of National Identity Actualisation in the Russian Federation; The Case of Concert Programming in the Saint Petersburg State Philharmonic” (Koskinen, 2024). There I uncover the main themes in connection to national identity formation, according to the state cultural policy reports (2014-2023), and present the empirical data from the Saint Petersburg State Philharmonics, season programs (2013-2023), basing on the found themes.

Cultural sustainability and the formation of identity

The theme of sustainable development and its connection to culture has been gaining more interest in the academic community during the last decade. As reported by UNESCO “culture provides the necessary transformative dimension that ensures the sustainability of development processes” (UNESCO, 2019). This notion links culture with sustainable development, presenting us with the term “cultural sustainability”. Järvelä (2023) and Pekkarinen (2022) characterise it as a preservative and continuous entity, which safeguards cultural heritage-and traditions, honouring the sustainability doctrine. The term incorporates the preservation of culturally significant locations and cultural products, along with ensuring the intergenerational transfer of cultural practices, knowledge and beliefs (Järvelä, 2023; Pekkarinen, 2022).

Cultural sustainability is nowadays considered the 4th pillar of sustainable development (Sabatini, 2019; Axelsson et al. 2013; Hawkes, 2001). The traditional division of sustainable development has its roots in the 1980s and consists of three, ecological, economic and social, pillars. The Brundtland Commission presented the concept of sustainable development in the 1987 report “Our Common Future”. There the principles and development strategies emphasise consideration of the needs of future generations in decision making (WCED, 1987: 43). This refers to the transgenerational process of distributing, e.g. resources in an equitable manner. Hawkes (2001) instigated cultural sustainability as the 4th pillar of sustainability, placing it parallel alongside the already existing dimensions of sustainability. The new dimension was developed based on the idea of “cultural capital”, which contains versatile resources for advancing sustainability (Throsby, 2005; 1999). This idea was further developed by COST Action IS1007 Investigating Cultural Sustainability-network, which produced the three-role approach to cultural sustainability; culture “for, in and as” sustainable development (Dessein et al, 2015). The culture “for” sustainable development, functions as a link between different societal fields, thus connecting the four sustainability pillars together (ibid, 2015). The culture “in” sustainable development, sees culture as an independent entity of sustainable development. It comprises themes, such as “multiculturality, cultural rights, local culture and cultural identity” (Laine, 2016: 53). The culture “as” development, visions culture as an environment, a foundation for all being, generating sustainability. According to Tonkova and Nosova (2017: 41) this approach forms personal and communal existence through “preservation, and outreach of knowledge, norms, and values” by education, enlightenment and spiritualisation processes, together with creating personal and communal identity.

The perception of culture as an environment connects cultural sustainability with identity formation, functioning as a basis for it. Soini and Birkelands (2014) storylines theory aids in uncovering the links between cultural sustainability and identity building. The scientific discourse on cultural sustainability is based on seven storylines, and as stated by the authors, cultural heritage and cultural vitality storylines form the 4th pillar of sustainable development. They both revolve around the preservation and continuity of cultural heritage-and capital, in addition to the societal aspects of identity and cohesion. The cultural heritage storyline is based on the idea of it “as a stock of cultural capital that has been inherited from previous generations and can be handed onto future generations” (Throsby, 2008 in Soini & Birkeland, 2014: 216). It consists of tangible heritage, such as physical art works, and intangible heritage, such as traditions and languages, which are oftentimes interlinked. Additionally, cultural heritage is closely associated with identity formation, through creating motivation for heritage preservation and transgenerational mediation of cultural values (Soini & Birkeland, 2014). The cultural vitality storyline focuses on finding sustainable ways to connect cultural heritage with the changing demands of the cultural recipient, and making cultural heritage accessible (Laine, 2016). In relation to identity, it aims to protect the continuity of cultural capital and identity in changing times. In this Hawkes (2001) emphasises the storyline's great role in common interpretation and recognition of identity (Soini & Birkeland, 2014: 216). The two storylines accentuate the need to preserve cultural capital for future generations and harness cultural means for formation of identity and inclusion (ibid). The protection of cultural heritage, through which cultural values and meanings are transferred, is thus regarded as the main objective of the storylines. According to Laine (2016) these two combined represent the conservative political aspects of cultural sustainability. The conservative political context, containing cultural heritage-and vitality, is perceived as a crucial part of identity formation.

Russian conservative cultural policy and interpretation of national identity

Russian cultural policy is closely connected to conservative sustainable development, as it comprises synonymous objectives with Soini and Birkelands (2014) storylines theory. The essence of the cultural heritage-storyline is evident in the Putin-administered "Basics of the State Cultural Policy" (2014). The document defines the objectives, concepts and assignments of Russian cultural policy. Based on Kurennoy (2021: 170) "Basics" works as a revival of Soviet and post-Soviet ideological cornerstones, as it validates state organisations activities in connection to cultural policy. Practically synonymous with the heritage-storyline, the main goals of cultural policy are defined as "...preservation of historical-and cultural heritage and its use for upbringing and education; transmission from generation to generation of values, norms, traditions…traditional for the Russian civilisation…" (Basics, 2014: 7).

The cultural vitality-storyline, which aims to find sustainable measures for safeguarding the continuity of cultural heritage, is actualised in "Strategy of the State Cultural Policy" (2016). The document serves as an action plan for the implementation of goals and objectives of the "Basics" (2014). The priority areas, in relation to cultural vitality of heritage, are "preservation of cultural heritage and creation of conditions for the development of culture", which are realised through supporting educational projects and popularising Russian cultural heritage (Strategy, 2016: 27; 33). The measures for ensuring cultural vitality of domestic values are state initiated promotion of cultural activities, following "traditional to Russian society moral values, traditions and customs", along with "raising the social status of the family as a public institution", which raises the younger generation, according to Russian traditional values and norms (ibid: 29; 27).

The conservative approach, which underlines the preservational and transmissive aspect of cultural policy, matches the Russian understanding and translation of sustainable development. According to Oldfield and Shaw (2002: 394) the term *ustoichivoe razvitie* means "steady development", which in the Russian context can be understood as static sustainable development. "Steady development" focuses on preservation and continuity of the historical-and spiritual cultural capital, and thus disregards the ecological aspect of sustainability.

The two storylines, cultural heritage and cultural vitality, are crucial to the formation of Russian national identity. The term “national identity” was developed by historical sociologist A. Smith. In the book “National identity” (1991) he underlines that national identity is a multi-dimensional entity, which involves five fundamental attributes: historic territory; common myths and historical memories; common, mass public culture; common legal rights and duties for all members, and common economy with territorial mobility for members (Smith, 1991: 14). Out of these attributes, common historical myths-and memories, and common, mass public culture, align with the storyline's conservative agenda. Consequently, they create a foundation for cultural sustainability as the 4th pillar of sustainable development, and as an integral part of national identity. Two types of national identity have been developed by Smith (1991); civic-and ethnic national identity. As reported by Markova (2020: 1), civic national identity portrays the Western conception, emphasising a “sense of political community” with which “citizens identify with and feel they belong to”. The ethnic national identity, as an opposing form, represents the non-Western ideals, underlining the shared, inherited roots of the citizens (Greenfeld, 1992: 11; Smith 1991: 9-10). The latter type presents the Russian vision of national identity, with the belief of common ancestry as a unifying link between the citizens. The concept of national identity is never static, which has been noted by national authorities. Utilising and changing common historical narratives can, thus, be used to further a specific nationalist agenda (Miller, 2016: 448; Linan, 2010: 167). This type of regime-initiated and ends-meeting national identity moulding has been present in Russia since the re-election of President Putin in 2012.

The establishment of a suitable nationalist narrative for Russian national identity took Putin nearly two decades (Girvin, 2022: 40). These results were presented in 2012, when Putin released a programmatic article, envisioning Russia as a single civic multi-ethnic nation and the country as a national state (Blackburn, 2020: 4; Yahshiyan, 2020: 2). In the article, Putin states that the modern national state is based on Russian cultural and historical code, with emphasis on Russian language-and high culture, historical memory and statehood (ibid). Since his re-election in May 2012, the Kremlin began to fulfil Putin's vision of a unitarian, state-civilization identity, which is, according to Girvin (2022: 40) based on common history and national assimilation to dominant Russian culture. The goal of the state-civilization identity is to bring all Eurasian peoples together under Russian sovereignty, which is predicted on the preservation of the dominant Russian culture-and traditional ideologies of patriotism, values and Orthodox morality (Yahshiyan, 2020: 2, 4; Romashko, 2019: 49).

Next, I present the main findings of my master thesis “The Role of Classical Music as an Instrument of National Identity Actualisation in the Russian Federation; The Case of Concert Programming in the Saint Petersburg State Philharmonic”. It is a qualitative single case study, which is based on a social constructivist study approach. The main sources consist of Russian cultural policy documents (2014-

23), and documented data of Saint Petersburg State Philharmonic season programs and Charter (2013-23).

The documented data has been thematically analysed in two parts. The 1st part focuses on finding themes in connection to national identity building in the cultural policy reports. The 2nd part is deductive thematic analysis, searching for the found themes, in the Philharmonics season programs. The reason for choosing this research design was that it fits the need of the thesis, which was to verify if the Philharmonic partakes in the state national identity agenda. (Koskinen, 2024).

Themes of national identity formation in Russian cultural policy and classical music

The Russian cultural policy document “Basics of State Cultural Policy” (2014), the action plan “Strategy of the State Cultural Policy” (2016) and “Amendments to the Basics of the State Cultural Policy” (2023) present the socio-cultural landscape after Putin's return to power in 2012. The documents were chosen for the research, as they show the Kremlin's conservative hegemonic ideology and present tools for its fulfilment through culture.

The connection between State and Saint Petersburg State Philharmonic is visible in the institution's Charter (2023; 2011), which defines all its areas of activities and social responsibilities. The Philharmonic functions according to the Russian Constitution, federal laws, and the Charter. The Ministry of Culture defines and approves the state task and decides about the funding. Since the Philharmonic is a governmental organisation, receiving subsidies from the federal budget, it has no right to refuse the state task. The Russian legislation thus gives the framework for artistic activities inside the Philharmonic. The Ministry of Culture also appoints and may dismiss the artistic director. Consequently, the artistic director has the responsibility to obey the orders received from the Cultural Ministry. As can be deduced, the state controls the activities of the Philharmonic through the Ministry of Culture and uses it for spreading the dominant ideology. (Charter, 2023; 2011).

The state cultural policy documents offer solid evidence of national identity formation based ideology, and five themes were discovered in the thematic analysis:

Proud History and Patriotism	Russian Language & Literature	Upbringing	Enlightenment	Religion & Spirituality

TABLE 1. THEMES IN CONNECTION TO NATIONAL IDENTITY FORMATION

(Koskinen, 2024: 50).

In the next section, I present each theme, according to the findings from the state cultural policy reports and the Philharmonics season programs.

The 1st theme "Proud History and Patriotism" is strongly connected to the formation of national identity, and it functions as a major factor in the conservative-authoritarian system. The idea of shared history and reawakening patriotism towards the fatherland has been increasingly inserted by the Kremlin into cultural policy documents to this day. Accordingly, shared historical path-and consciousness, emphasising the need to protect the "historical memory and truth" from Western intervention is present. In order to unify the multiethnic nation of Russia under an all-Russian civic identity, the government has rewritten and reinterpreted historical events, including the actions of the Great Patriotic War. Cultural events and patriotic education play a significant role as a soft power that subtly influences residents' thoughts. Planning historical events, which glorify and popularise the Soviet Union, the Tsar and the Russian military, have a profound psychological impact. The people most affected are the citizenry, isolated from the outside world, who begin to internalise the government's message. They, thus, incorporate these elements into their self-concept, thereby fulfilling the state's objective of "creating" citizens who are obedient, historically cohesive, and patriotic. (Koskinen, 2024: 51-53).

The 1st theme is the largest thematic category of the Philharmonics concert programs, and it commits to the state goal of sustaining cultural visitors' historical memory and harnessing their sense of patriotism. The programs can be divided into two subcategories; patriot-historical-and anniversary. These include subscription cycles, celebrating the resident orchestras and their directors; anniversaries of great composers, history of the Philharmonic, and Russian patriot-historical events, such as the Liberation of Leningrad. Concerts, outside of the cycles, consist of annual patriotic programs, namely celebration of Victory in the Great Patriotic War and honouring the veterans. Anniversary events include honorary concerts for domestic musical-and literary figures. Finally, International and All-Russian competitions-and festivals present world classical music talents. (Koskinen, 2024: 65-67).

Seasons	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
Concerts	192	203	225	200	229	197	152	187	232	262
% of Concerts	39	44	46	42	43	45	44	45	51	51

TABLE 2. THEME 1. "PROUD HISTORY AND PATRIOTISM"

(Koskinen, 2024: 65).

The 2nd theme “Russian Language and Literature” is essential to the development of national identity, as it connects any national language with the target nation. The standing of Russian language has changed from a humanistic role, as a unifying-and shared national language that should be conserved, to a tool for propagating state-approved beliefs. While drastically downplaying the importance of the nation's indigenous languages- and literature, the state has opted for a purist approach to portraying Russian language-and literature as the cornerstones of all-Russian civic identity. The Kremlin ideology is consistently reinforced in cultural events, where Russian, state-approved literary works dominate. Hence, the public is solely exposed to programs by Russian authors, depicting conservative hegemonic ideology. By maintaining this one-sided linguistic presence, the state ensures that Russians status is uncontested and, consequently, continues to serve as a uniting factor in the construction of national identity. (Koskinen, 2024: 53-56).

The 2nd theme is the 2nd largest thematic category of the Philharmonics concert programs, and it commits to the state goal of protecting and developing the domestic language-and literature scene. The programs include subscription cycles, which focus mainly on vocal music in Russian. Concerts, outside of the cycles, consist of Russian historical poetry-and literature spectacles, based on works by Tsvetayeva, Ahmatova, Pasternak etc. besides Evenings of Vocal music. Evenings of Creativity and Poetry present domestic *intelligentsiya* portraying Russian literary works, with the aim of increasing accessibility to domestic language-and literature. Lastly, International and All-Russian Competitions promote Russian vocal music. (Koskinen, 2024: 67-70).

Seasons	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
Concerts	62	38	38	50	62	35	33	53	49	52
% of Concerts	13	8	8	10	12	8	9	13	11	10

TABLE 3. THEME 2. “RUSSIAN LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE”

(Koskinen, 2024: 68).

The 3rd theme “Upbringing” has over time become a key part of national identity formation, as it constructs patriotic education, targeted for the Russian younger generation. Teaching children and youth the Russian “moral, ethical and aesthetic values”, lifestyle, and inspiring them to follow in the footsteps of their forefathers, are the core tenets of the cultural policy documents. As a result, upbringing has become more conservative, and “corruptive” Western ideals have been removed from cultural institutes´ educational programs. The effectiveness of these programs is already visible as increasing numbers of children and youth adopt the Z-ideology and join the *Yunarmiya*, demonstrating to the rest of the world the potential outcomes of meticulously formed upbringing programs. This highlights Putin's 2013 prediction that in 15 years a new generation of “true” Russians emerges. (Koskinen, 2024: 56-58).

The 3rd theme is the 3rd largest thematic category of the Philharmonics concert programs, and it commits to the state goal of familiarising the younger generation with domestic cultural heritage and adopting Russian values. The programs include subscription cycles, which function as an introduction to musical eras-, traditions-, instruments-and theory, along with world-and Russian composers. The cycles, focusing on domestic music, are a part of the state patriotic educational programs. Concerts, outside of the cycles, consist of interactive fairytale concerts for younger audiences. (Koskinen, 2024: 70-73).

Seasons	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
Concerts	40	55	56	56	58	60	44	24	26	38
% of Concerts	12	16	16	16	15	19	18	8	8	8

TABLE 4. THEME 3. “UPBRINGING”

(Koskinen, 2024: 70).

The 4th theme “Enlightenment” or audience education aims to preserve and, if required, recreate Russian national value orientation among the adult population. The cultural policy documents recognise the increasing need to reintegrate adults, who have embraced Western thought-and value systems, into the politically motivated conservative value system. Consequently, the enlightenment programs, run by cultural institutions, primarily draw from domestic cultural items, which serve the ideological goal of reviving national unity, having a latent impact on the audience. The unifying Russian culture-and proud history are, thus, used as the foundation for national identity formation. (Koskinen, 2024: 58-59).

The 4th theme is the 2nd smallest thematic category of the Philharmonics concert programs, and it commits to the state goal of diminishing the individualistic tendencies of the adult citizens by reverting them back to the Russian conservative hegemonic value system. The programs include subscription cycles, which function as an introduction to classical music-and arts for newer and existing audiences, along with creating connections between audiences and performers. Concerts, outside of the cycles, consist of enlightenment projects, such as the annual “Night of the Museums” concert marathon and connective “Readings with Meaning” literary-music project. (Koskinen, 2024: 73-75).

Seasons	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
Concerts	18	27	25	25	29	20	20	17	22	24
% of Concerts	4	6	5	5	5	5	6	4	5	5

TABLE 5. THEME 4. “ENLIGHTENMENT”

(Koskinen, 2024: 73).

The 5th theme “Religion and Spirituality” portrays the traditional connection of Russians and the Church, in addition to their presumed orthodox spiritual value foundation. The cultural policy documents begin by referring to Eastern-Orthodoxy as the essential element of the collective national identity, but they progressively shift to the phrase “interreligious harmony” to be more inclusive to all peoples of Russia. The state's recognition of the need for interethnic cohesion is demonstrated by this, as it cannot afford to reject significant segments of the Russian population due to their faith. Consequently, the All-Russian spiritual-and moral values - which may change to suit the demands of the state - are selected as the uniting factor. Despite the documents´ attempts to be inclusive, the Orthodox Church, which is led by Putin´s associate Father Kirill, retains a dominant position as the country's spiritual head. This is also evident in Russia's cultural offerings, which mostly feature orthodox music-and themes. By making the Church visible in society, these programs influence the spirito-moral orientations of the populace. (Koskinen, 2024: 58-61).

The 5th theme is the smallest thematic category of the Philharmonics concert programs and it commits to the state goal of shaping the citizens value system and, thus, the state-citizen hierarchy. The programs include subscription cycles, which focus on domestic spiritual choral music. Concerts, outside of cycles, comprise anniversaries of important Churches and orthodox figures; children's charity concerts; holiday concerts; and spiritual instrumental-and choir music concerts. Additionally, International competitions are organised during Easter time, and International-and All-Russian festivals present traditional orthodox music. (Koskinen, 2024: 76-78).

Seasons	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
Concerts	28	9	11	7	5	6	3	4	7	10
% of Concerts	6	2	2	2	1	1	1	1	1	2

TABLE 6. THEME 5. "RELIGION AND SPIRITUALITY"

(Koskinen, 2024: 76).

Conclusion

This article examined how cultural sustainability and national identity formation are connected, what themes national identity consists of, according to state cultural policy reports, and how programming in a governmental classical music institution is harnessed in its actualization in Russia.

The 1st section argued that cultural sustainability can be understood to form an environment. In this context it refers to preservational and transmissive processes, which share, e.g. norms and values through generations, thus functioning as a basis for identity formation. Soini and Birkeland (2014) formed two conservative storylines: cultural heritage-and vitality, which support the formation of national identity. Cultural heritage creates motivation for heritage preservation and transmission of cultural values to younger generations. Cultural vitality protects and enables continuity of cultural capital and identity in changing times. The conservative cultural sustainability possesses the same core ideas as Russian cultural policy reports, thus functioning as a crucial part of Russian national identity formation. Consequently, the current nationalist interpretation of identity sees Russia as a single civic multi-ethnic nation, which is based on domestic cultural-and historical code, patriotism, traditional values and Orthodox faith.

The latter part focused on uncovering the themes in connection to national identity formation in the Russian cultural policy reports (2014-23). They are I) Proud History and Patriotism, II) Russian Language and Literature, III) Upbringing, IV) Enlightenment, and V) Religion and Spirituality. These findings further underline the interconnectedness of the cultural sustainability storyline theory with the Russian idea of national identity. Themes I-II and V are synonymous with cultural heritage storyline, and themes III-IV with cultural vitality.

Finally, I aimed to discover if the chosen governmental institution, Saint Petersburg State Philharmonic, truly functions as a tool for national identity building. While conducting research, I determined that the Philharmonic honoured the tenets of the cultural policy reports and, therefore, produced the majority of its concert programming according to them. During the 10-year period all the themes in connection to national identity formation were found in the seasonal programs. I also uncovered that the theme “Proud History and Patriotism” was the largest thematic category, and the other categories in given numeral order gradually smaller, making “Religion and Spirituality” the smallest thematic category. The amount of thematized, state ideology supporting, concerts rose by six percent during the thesis scope (2013-23), from 69 percent to 75 percent of all concerts. This tendency is characteristic to autocratic countries, such as Russia, and was achieved by the increase of state targeted programs in the Philharmonic. The stronghold of concert production is, thus, held by the state, and the conundrum, if classical music can be used as a tool of national identity formation, is proved.

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Ultra-low latency streaming technology in music education

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ABSTRACT

This article explores collaborative efforts Janáček Academy of Performing Arts' Faculty of Music and the Royal Conservatory of The Hague to connect in their cooperation using ultra-low latency streaming. With focus on blended learning and use of digital technologies in music education. The study analyzing a particular project addresses the use of advanced Modular video transmission platform technology (MVTP) for remote music masterclasses and rehearsals. The study highlights the technical feasibility and educational benefits of MVTP in enhancing international music education through synchronous, high-quality virtual collaborations between distant institutions.

Keywords:

Higher Music Education
Technology
Modular Video Transmission Platform

MVTP

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Name of the project: Innovation in art education through low-latency streaming technology, 2024

Introduction

The development of information technologies has been affecting the field of education since the beginning of the 21st century. There has been talk of hybrid learning or blended learning, which is a combination of in-person teaching with online (Bonk & Graham, 2006). According to studies by Mukhtar and Rovai (Mukhtar & Rovai in Marey et al., 2022), a complete shift to entirely virtual classes is not the right step, due to the loss of personal interaction between students and educators.

Music performance education relies heavily on one-on-one instrumental tuition, which is challenging to replicate online. Blended learning is a viable alternative but is hindered by technological limitations, particularly the quality and speed of audio and video transmission. This study aims to explore use of ultra-low latency technology in music performance education called Modular Video Transmission Platform (MVTP) as effective tool for blended learning in music instrumental tuition at the tertiary level.

MVTP technology can simplify music instrumental tuition on a distance, making music education more accessible and sustainable by reducing travel needs and facilitates international cooperation of tertiary music education in online form.

To determine whether the MVTP technology is suitable for remote music education, a joint project was carried out by the Faculty of Music of the Janáček Academy of Performing Arts (Brno, Czech Republic) in cooperation with the Royal Conservatoire in The Hague, both of which offer a joint study program called the European Master of Early Music (EMEM). EMEM is a two-year master's program focused on historical interpretation. To partially transfer this cooperation to an online environment in the future, an online masterclass and a music rehearsal were conducted using ultra-low latency streaming with MVTP device.

The theoretical and contextual part of the study provides an overview of the history of using information technologies in music education. With focus on the introduction of the MVTP device, data from CESNET studies (2019; 2021) and a qualitative interview with the technology developer Sven Ubik were used as data sources. (Ubik, 2023)

Building on that, the study reports a case study of a joint project between the Janáček Academy of Performing Arts (JAMU) and the Royal Conservatoire in The Hague. It involved a masterclass and music rehearsal using MVTP device. Employing qualitative methods, the study examines expectations and experiences of the participating youth musicians, and their views on the future use of the technology. The methods include qualitative interviews comparing the participants' expectations from before and with their experiences after the project and observations during the project.

Higher music education and technology

Higher music education is characterized as music study within the tertiary education level, primarily focused on the practical and creative development of students and takes place at specialized institutions known as conservatories, music schools, music academies, and music universities (AEC 2010). Online environments partially replace traditional models of music teaching, as technologies influence not only teaching methods but also the students themselves, who are already a generation that grew up with technologies and use them regularly in their lives (Tregear in Blackburn, 2017).

One of the forms of teaching that are not limited by geographical location is blended learning, which combines elements of face-to-face teaching with digital technologies - most commonly video conferencing or other e-learning tools (Bouilheres et al., 2020). The main benefits of blended learning are primarily availability and flexibility in teaching. Another goal of blended learning is cost-effectiveness, as technologies can achieve global reach in a short time (Bonk & Graham, 2006).

Latency, the delay between sound production and reception, was problematic on standard platforms, preventing synchronous teacher-student interactions and degrading sound and image quality (Redman, 2020). Research by Chafe at Stanford University identified an ideal one-way latency of 11.5 milliseconds for musical synchronization, with acceptable thresholds between 25 and 30 milliseconds. These findings were based on laboratory conditions, not accounting for real-world variables like network differences and packet loss (Davies, 2015).

In general, it can be said that online teaching in the field of performing arts lagged behind other fields, as the physical nature of sharing and synchronous collaboration is an important part of working on performing arts projects and in education. Creating dynamics and an intimate environment is almost impossible through digital technologies (Gorman, Syrja, & Kanninen, 2019).

Modular video transmission platform

The MVTP device developed by CESNET, enables synchronous collaboration through ultra-low latency transmission for audio and video. MVTP achieves about a 3-millisecond delay between transmitter and receiver, with an additional 10-20 milliseconds delay from the signal in optical cables and computer networks across Europe, resulting in an end-to-end delay of approximately 20 milliseconds. This latency allows classical music performances between distant locations connected by MVTP device (CESNET, 2023; Ubik, 2023). The technology was motivated by musicians' need for remote collaboration and CESNET's interest in applying programmable gate array technology in various environments. MVTP achieves constant ultra-low latency, unlike software (for example LoLa). It allows 4K video quality and 8-channel analog audio in uncompressed encoding (CESNET, 2023). The device is small, portable, and fanless, making it ideal for musical applications due to its quiet operation. It uses the JPEG XS codec for high-quality image transmission and does not compress audio due to its small data size. Data transmission requires symmetrical volume, typically tens of megabits per second, but higher resolutions for audience viewing can need up to a gigabit per second.

High-quality network conditions are essential to avoid packet loss and delay variations. MVTP devices use protocols designed to minimize delay, unlike TCP, which adds significant delay and is unsuitable for music. Sound can be transmitted in duplicate to replace lost packets, and visual packet dropouts are minimized to affect only one frame (Ubik, 2023).

Context and the aims of the study

The Faculty of Music at Janáček Academy of Performing Arts (HF JAMU) offers programs in instruments, conducting, music production, and jazz. Since the early 1990s, it has included department for historical interpretation. The Royal Conservatory of The Hague's Department of Early Music is globally renowned, with a similar focus on historical instruments. These two institutions, which are over 1000 km apart, developed a shared European Master of Early Music program, a two-year consecutive master’s course taught in English, starting in the 2020/2021 academic year. Leveraging this collaboration, a joint music masterclass and rehearsal project using ultra-low latency MVTP device was implemented. Both academies are connected to high-speed university networks, CESNET for HF JAMU and Surfnet for The Hague, ensuring the technical feasibility of the project.

The aim of implementing this project was to test the MVTP technology for future use in shared masterclasses.

The realization of the project would not have been possible without technical support. The project was dependent on the technical network setup, which was managed by the IT departments of both universities. In Brno, the technical team included a project manager, a sound master, and two technical workers from the collaborating company experienced in similar realizations. In The Hague, the technical team was led by their technical team leader and sound master, who together prepared the audio and video settings in the studio where the project took place.

The project was launched in February 2023 with the first meeting of the departments' leadership of both schools during a regular meeting in Brno. At this meeting, the vision of the project and the technology to be used in the project were presented and was accepted by management of the Conservatory in the Hague.

The first aim of this article is to describe and analyze the pilot testing of the focal point of the project: the final test of the MVTP technology for synchronous music rehearsal and a masterclass which was attended by youth players both in Brno and in The Hague and was conducted on October 30 and October 31, 2023. The second aim is to analyze how the participants of the test, both involved students and teachers, experienced the use and the role the technology in the synchronous master class and how their prior expectations differed from their actual experience.

Participants and methods

The data reporting setting up the technological solution and about testing of the transmission between Brno and The Hague were collected through direct observation in Brno where the author participated in the whole event as project manager. The observation was conducted on October 30 and October 31, 2023.

The qualitative data from the participants of the test were collected using qualitative interviews with involved students and teachers.

Four students – two from Brno and two from The Hague – and two teachers – one from Brno and one from The Hague – participated in qualitative interviews both before and after the project. These interviews were conducted online prior to the project's commencement and were transcribed in an edited format, as were the interviews conducted after the project. Each interview consisted of five defined questions related to their expectations before the project, and after the project's completion, the interviews focused on the impressions of the students and teachers regarding whether their expectations had been met or not.

Findings

The core technology used was the MVTP device. In both Brno and The Hague, two MVTP units were borrowed, to address potential technical problems.

In Brno, both parts of the project were held in the recording studio at the JAMU university theater (Divadlo na Orlí). Thanks to this cooperation, the technical solution was simpler. However, for the successful realization of ultra-low latency streaming, additional equipment supporting low-latency transmissions and not adding further delay to sound or image is required.

LCD monitors used in the project supported low-latency transmissions, and in both Brno and The Hague, two monitors were used, installed in the studios where the transmission took place. An integral part of the technological equipment were low-latency cameras that captured the image in Brno and The Hague.

Musicians in both Brno and The Hague had headphones available for their own use, which they could regulate themselves. This form of connecting the audio directly to the musicians' headphones was used primarily because both studios were not suitable for sound reproduction directly into speakers, and also to ensure the lowest possible sound delay. In The Hague, the musicians had open headphones at their disposal, while in Brno, they used closed headphones that suppressed ambient sound, allowing the musicians to hear only the spoken word or the sound of the instrument from The Hague. In The Hague, a technician mixed the sound into the musicians' headphones, whereas in our case, both students and teachers in Brno had the opportunity to mix the sound in their headphones themselves using their own headphone mix.

For the successful realization of the project, it was necessary to test the technology in advance and determine whether it would even be realistic to connect the two locations. A total of three online calls were held with the implementation teams on both sides, addressing the date, repertoire, schedule, human resources, technical security, and other aspects of the project.

Two technical online calls were also held to test the connection of the MVTP devices in Brno and The Hague and their IP address settings for their communication. During the second call, the problem of the firewall and setting IP addresses was addressed and resolved allowing us to proceed to the live test of connecting not only the devices but also the audio and video, which was necessary for the final realization. This test took place in September 2023, when both studios in Brno and The Hague were successfully connected, including image and sound, and the synchronicity of sound and image was tested. During this test, we addressed the problem of flickering image on one of the monitors in The Hague, however, this problem was solved by connecting an image converter between the monitor and the MVTP device. For the successful realization of the connection is also important that the MVTP devices communicating with each other have the same firmware uploaded. MVTP in both The Hague and Brno were set to the same firmware and did not jeopardize the realization of the final phase of the project.

For successful implementation, the setup of both studios where the project took place was important, due to the correct placement of microphones, displays, and musical instruments themselves.

In Brno, it was necessary to move the harpsichord to the studio, and the entire setup of the room was dependent on its placement. The stand for the singer was placed to the left of the harpsichordist as musicians are usually used to for eye contact. Three microphones were set up around the harpsichord

– for the singer, for capturing the harpsichordist's voice, and above the harpsichord for capturing the sound of the harpsichord. To the right of the harpsichordist was placed a low-latency monitor, which could be watched by both the singer and the harpsichordist. In front of them was a monitor for the audience, who were seated behind the harpsichord and had their headphones and monitors for sound adjustment.

This setup was used for both a masterclass and a music rehearsal, as the microphone for the singer was used for the spoken word of the teacher in Brno during the masterclass.

In The Hague, the setup for the masterclass and music rehearsal was different. For the masterclass, the fortepiano and clavichord were placed next to each other, with the sound of the fortepiano being captured above the instrument, while for the clavichord, a very quiet instrument, the sound was captured by microphones placed both below and above the instrument. The monitor was placed next to the instruments for the masterclass to properly transmit the image from Brno from the perspective of the teacher in The Hague. For the music rehearsal, it was necessary to change the setup of the room, as the instrumental composition completely changed. Musicians – violins, violins, cello – were placed next to each other. A pickup microphone was placed above each instrument, and a low-latency monitor was placed in front of the musicians so they could have a direct view of the image from Brno. In both cases, the musicians and the teacher also had their own headphones, where they could adjust the sound.

After the final successful test, it was clear that the realization of the masterclass and the musical rehearsal would take place, and it was decided which students would be involved in the project. In total, there were four students (two from Brno, two from The Hague) and two teachers (one from Brno, one from The Hague) needed for the realization of the masterclass. For the musical rehearsal, there were two musicians in Brno and three musicians in The Hague. A brief interview was conducted with all the musicians before the project's realization, aiming to determine their knowledge of MVTP technology, their concerns, or expectations from the project itself. The results of these interviews were compared with the statements of the involved individuals in the form of two focus groups after the project's realization.

The knowledge of technology was primarily among the educators, who, for example, had previously used LoLa technology in their pedagogical practice. Broadly, both students and educators agreed that this technology eliminates the need for travel for rehearsals or allows lessons with busy educators who cannot physically be at the academy. On the other hand, they saw the potential loss of immediate interaction, which is not transferable by technology, depersonalization, or the fading of emotions closely associated with the interpretation of music, as a disadvantage. Their expectations were mainly related to technology, with answers such as trying out different technology, collaborating remotely in real-time, and being curious about the quality of sound and image, which is often a problem in these projects' realization.

The project was carried out over two days, with the first day devoted to technical setup and rehearsals for both the masterclass and musical rehearsal. The second day saw the realization of both parts of the project, their documentation, and two focus groups.

At the beginning of the first day, devices and a sound channel were connected, on which the technical team coordinated. This was followed by the placement of microphones around the instruments and monitors and tuning the instruments. The masterclass began with an hour-long rehearsal, where all participants tried remote interaction, students had the chance to play parts of compositions, and together with the educators, they discussed how the masterclass would be conducted. At the start of the masterclass, educators introduced the instruments and presented the technology to the audience, explaining how fine nuances can be heard remotely. Then, one student in Brno and then a student in The Hague played, receiving feedback from both educators, with students also giving each other feedback. This process was followed for all three instruments.

At the end of the second day, there was a rehearsal, requiring a rearrangement of the room setup in The Hague for three musicians, while the setup remained the same in Brno. On the second day's start, instruments were retuned, and rooms were reconfigured back to the masterclass setup. The masterclass lasted 90 minutes, adhering to the schedule set the previous day. After the masterclass, the first focus group with the involved musicians was held, with results discussed in the last part of the article.

Then, the room setup was rearranged for the musical test. Before the musical rehearsal, the harpsichord was retuned, and the entire group of instruments was tuned. The assembled ensemble played both compositions in their entirety, in the order of Händel and then Brentner. Afterward, the second focus group with the involved musicians took place.

Both educators in the masterclass were surprised by the great sound of all instruments, with the educator in The Hague comparing it to sitting in the first row at a concert. They both found remote collaboration simple, trouble-free, flawless, and effortless. Their main concerns were regarding spoken words whether they would need to speak louder or interrupt each other. These concerns were unfounded, and communication was very smooth due to the almost non-existent delay (11 milliseconds corresponding to about 2-3 meters in actual distance). Unlike other transmissions they were accustomed to, there was no interference, typical with other low-latency technologies. According to the educator from HF JAMU, the possibility of using headphones was mentioned, allowing more focus on the sound and music, making everything sound as if all instruments were in one room. This allowed for greater concentration on listening, which was more important than the image, and noticing all the musical ornaments, changes in dynamics, and very subtle nuances in individual tones. However, they agreed that it would be unfeasible without the image. According to the students, it was the same as having a masterclass with everyone in one room, which is great for the needs of a shared study program, having the ability to be in constant contact with both institutions. Playing was straightforward, but they had to get used to headphones and how to managing sound. Discipline brought by the technology was also important – getting used to headphones, cameras, and other technologies, but it only took minutes for all participants to adjust.

The discussion after the musical rehearsal was conducted in the same manner as after the masterclass.
A few audience members, present as spectators, also participated in the evaluation, feeling the musicians' willingness to play together, not noticing any delay in sound or image, and not experiencing any transmission interference. The musicians were again surprised by the high quality of sound and the balanced sound of all instruments in the headphones. It was possible to hear all the characteristics and details of the compositions. From the sound aspect and ensemble play, the musicians did not experience any problems; everything went smoothly.

For musical rehearsals or even a concert realized through technology, it is necessary to plan for more time for rehearsing the program, so musicians can fine-tune parts of the compositions that require the most precise ensemble play or are important for conveying emotions. Musicians had to get used to playing with headphones, which they are not accustomed to, and for these cases, it is advisable to use closed headphones that suppress ambient sound, so the musician is not distracted during their performance.

They agreed that it is an effective tool for both rehearsing and education, but some emotions of the compositions are not transferable in an online space. For future tests, the musicians agreed that it would be beneficial to use more cameras, capturing details of players on the other side, like focusing more on the fingering of pianists or harpsichordists, or enabling direct eye contact with the musician, to test if this element helps better connect musicians on both sides. They also mentioned benefit of using a metronome at both locations to keep tempo consistent.

Discussion and Conclusion

Thanks to this project, the goal of successfully testing MVTP technology for two activities – masterclass and musical rehearsal – was achieved, and, thus, MVTP was proved as an acceptable technological solution for remote masterclasses and music rehearsals.

In the case of the masterclass, the musicians' initial concerns were not confirmed, and they agree that the technology can be used not only for musical rehearsals but also for education in almost a normal mode. However, for future use, it is important to develop a methodology for technical setup regarding microphone and monitor placement and whether to further test the masterclass with sound speakers only. All participants positively evaluated the sound and image quality offered by the technology, making it much easier for them to imagine this form of collaboration for a future use. Unlike a concert, ensemble play and emotions are not as crucial in a masterclass as they are in the interpretation of compositions by a smaller ensemble.

Conversely, in the musical rehearsal for a concert, the musicians were again thrilled by the sound quality provided by the technology. However, online ensemble play does not replace physical playing when musicians are in the same place. Eye contact and the immediate possibility of reacting to each other remained important for the musicians. They agreed that it is an ideal tool for rehearsals, but they would need much more frequency to rehearse individual nuances of the composition and passages that are more complex for ensemble play or expressing emotions. For the future, they would also suggest testing room, and microphone setups and monitors to have a closer and more detailed contact with the player on the other side of the camera.

Based on testing the technology for music but and other artistic activities, it would be appropriate to develop a methodology that would make the whole technical team's work easier and that would precisely define the setup of rooms, of placements of microphones, cameras and displays for various uses according to the size of the ensemble or the type of masterclass or theater project realized through this technology.

Originally, we thought the technology was intended only for musicians to play together and that applications such as regular education or masterclass would suffice with commonly used platforms like Teams or Zoom. Practice showed that these forms also need the most faithful sound reproduction, i.e., without the compression that regular platforms do not use, and even introduce additional unwanted sound processing. For the most faithful sound, it is therefore important to send uncompressed sound, e.g., PCM modulation with faithful reproduction for distinguishing dynamics, sound transparency, including sound (color) nuances.

The completed project met all expectations. Due to its low latency, high-quality sound, and image transmission, MVTP technology proves suitable for executing musical educational projects. The future goal is to explore its application in multi-genre projects, leveraging its capabilities across diverse artistic fields.

Technologies can significantly contribute to sustainability by reducing the need for physical travel and thereby lowering the carbon footprint. However, it is essential to consider the energy consumption associated with operating these technologies. The optimal approach is to use technologies that are energy-efficient and support sustainable energy sources.

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Innovation for change in Italian Theatres. Marketing and sustainability accounting in the post-pandemic

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ABSTRACT

During the pandemic (2020) public grants were allocated to Italian theatres according to an accounting, which included both the issue of employment and the IT (Information Technology) exploitation via websites and social media marketing.

After the pandemic (2022) theatres retained the legacy of digitization, while public grants were delivered for the return to live performances with all reinstated personnels.

Keywords:

Theatre
Public grant
Measurement
Marketing
Sustainability

Considering a significant sample of theatres, a two-stage least squares regression will be implemented to comment how much public grants depended on 2022's accounting data, which included the marketing and IT expense. Results provide evidence of the highest and positive correlation between public grants and both marketing and IT expense and the personnel expense.

The aim of this paper is to give evidence to the change of cultural policies, which include sustainability values in measurement practices, to deliver grants during and after such an external and disruptive event.

Introduction

The pandemic was an external, tragic and disruptive event for theatres and their social and economic sustainability was relevantly affected, as for unfeasibility of relations with multiple stakeholders, the impracticality of seasons due to the lockdown and, as a consequence, missing revenues (Bellini & Raglianti, 2023; Taormina, 2021). Cultural policies of different public administrations had allocated their funds according to criteria which embraced the importance of human capital and the social capital of multiple stakeholders from audiences to sponsors for decades for decades (Hylland et al., 2024; Hylland & Primorac, 2023; Jezinski, 2022). During this extraordinary contingency, public grants were delivered to theatres in order to restore their losses (of program service expenses and gains) and according to accounting data, which had always been relevant indicators of employment and employability with the number of artistic and administrative employees and the personnel expense and, for the first time, which counted the magnitude of the marketing and IT expense during the pandemic, as marketing and fundraising had to be online due to the lockdown (Chene & Montero, 2023; Elstad, Døving, & Jansson, 2022). The marketing and IT expense was meant as a crucial signal of efforts towards social sustainability, in order to maintain relationships and towards the economic sustainability, in order to maintain relationships with fund givers, sponsors, and audiences, who can be reached thanks to the digitization of events, contents and social media management.

The digitization of the Italian culture had not always recorded a determined and committed implementation of policies, as the approach to digital issues was "too often resisting" both on the side of organizations and on the side of private and public stakeholders (Resolution of the National Court of Auditors of 12 October 2022, no. 50/2022/G). The pandemic was an unavoidable *provocation* to accelerate the digital evolution for tangible and intangible heritages, whose managers were prone to multiply audiences and stakeholders (Massi & Turrini, 2020; Besana et al., 2018). Program service revenues could, consequently, derive of streaming and pricing of any digital transformation of shows, performances and the heritage of archives and collections, which were promoted thanks to social media management by trained and devoted personnels (Campolongo & Iannuzzi, 2023; Brooks & Patel, 2022; Caust, 2021).

While the crisis was hitting different industries and economies, the economic (accounting rows for evidence) and social sustainability (inside, of personnels and, outside, of audiences, grant-makers, sponsors, etc.) of theatres was managed by courageous managers and personnels, who strenuously communicated and engaged in the development of websites, platforms and social media, whose start-up levels had consistently got into the maturity of skills, before the stringency erased program service revenues and gains (Dalla Chiesa & Alexopoulou, 2022; Donelli at al,. 2022; Pulido, Ravanas, Courchesne, 2022).

While the social media management was able to restore some communication and relationships, European Union was setting new policies (and standards) and delivering funds, which magnify the potential reply of Italian public administrations, though the rapidity of cash-flows was not always feasible. The National Plan for the Digitization of Cultural Heritage 2022-2023 resulted as the strategic pillar for the achievement of the National Recovery and Resilience Plan, which was plentifully co-funded by the European Union.

Considering a significant sample of theatres, a two-stage least squares regression will be implemented to comment how much public grants depended on 2020 and 2022's accounting data, which listed the marketing and IT expense. Accounting rows can signal different expenses and revenue diversification, so that economic and social sustainability can be given evidence. Such a standard reporting of revenues and expenses can partially measure and detect other kinds of sustainability, too. For example, the expense for raw materials and energy can detect efforts for the environmental sustainability, as well as the use of third-party assets, which are shared among theatres in order not to build new storehouses or locations, whose resources can advantage different and multiple productions with evident scope and scale economies. This can be meant as the circular economy of the cultural sustainability with digitized and not digitized resources, from the tangible to the intangible heritages of theatres.

Regression results provide evidence of the highest and positive correlation between public grants and both marketing and IT expense and the personnel expense. These positive coefficients confirm changing criteria of cultural policies, which embrace the reliable accounting of digitization of contents and processes.

The aim of this paper is to give evidence to the change and evolution of cultural policies, which include economic and social sustainability in measurement practices, to deliver grants during and after such a dramatic event. However, for comprehensiveness, the paper will address all aspects of sustainability impacting theatres.

Marketing, sustainability and social media in theatres

The intersection of theatre marketing, sustainability and social media is a growing area of interest in contemporary research. It has emerged in recent years, and the literature on the topic is lacking.

The discussion of marketing in cultural organizations began with Kotler and Levy in 1969. They broadened the concept of marketing beyond sales to serving and satisfying human needs, emphasizing the exchange process between organizations and their audiences, relevant for cultural entities like theatres, museums, and concert halls (Kotler & Levy, 1969; Besana et al., 2018). Then, starting from the 1980s, scholars like Mokowa, Melillo, Diggles, and Hirschman tailored traditional marketing concepts to fit cultural organizations' needs. Despite resistance in the cultural field, the importance of marketing for cultural sustainability and audience engagement was recognized (Hirschman, 1983; Mokowa, Dawson & Prieve, 1980).

Recent studies emphasize theatre as an experiential product that fosters emotional and symbolic consumption experiences. Theatres require marketing strategies to expand their mission and secure their market niche (Colbert & St-James, 2014; Jobst & Boerner, 2011). This is essential for attracting and retaining new audiences, as well as providing a genuine cultural and emotional experience.

Additionally, marketing facilitates innovative communication and fundraising methods. It is important to note that contemporary philanthropy and individual giving are evolving; donors increasingly constitute an organization’s dedicated audience, making audience development and fundraising interconnected processes. Studies highlight the importance of creating an emotional connection with potential theatregoers (Harlow, 2019) and this is particularly relevant for younger audiences who seek immersive and participatory experiences (Thomson, 2013). Implementing a social media plan enables theatres to explore new fundraising avenues by leveraging their strong offline audience and extending it into the online and social media realms that allow theatres to engage audiences through personalized content, storytelling, and interactive campaigns. This is the reason why traditional theatre marketing is giving the way to digital marketing and social media marketing. Research indicates a shift towards online engagement due to its cost-effectiveness and broader reach (Bennett, 2017).

Considering sustainability in theatre, four dimensions emerge: economic, environmental, social and cultural ones.

This shift from traditional theatre marketing to digital and social media marketing is driven by research indicating a movement towards online engagement due to its cost-effectiveness and broader reach (Bennett, 2017). This transition not only improves marketing efficiency but also aligns with the broader objectives of sustainability in theatre, encompassing economic, environmental, social, and cultural dimensions.

Economic sustainability is a critical dimension for all institutions within the cultural and creative sectors. Traditionally, this aspect ensures the long-term viability of a cultural enterprise, resting on the ability to maintain financial and economic balance over time. It is economic sustainability that allows a cultural enterprise to achieve its purposes and objectives, which include productivity without sacrificing the quality of its artistic offerings and the enhancement of connections to its local area. While it is true that theatres receive, at least in part, public funding and, at the same time, they rely on self-generated revenues from ticket sales, their survival and development hinge on their project capabilities, the intersectoral networks they can establish, and their co-design efforts. These factors are essential for achieving their socio-cultural missions and objectives. This scenario calls for close collaboration with other entities or organizations to share resources, experiment with new project designs, distribute culture innovatively, and attract new audiences within their reference areas. This is particularly significant in the post-pandemic restart phase, where the live performance sector is struggling for cultural and economic survival due to financial constraints in the public sector and increasing competition from other cultural and leisure institutions.

In terms of environmental sustainability, the theatre world is actively engaged in educating the public about green issues. This type of sustainability is increasingly at the center of theatrical production planning and management, with the long-term hope of establishing a network among artists, producers, and venues that embrace a comprehensive sustainability ethos, capable of radically reforming the sector. Furthermore, as theatre productions often have a significant environmental footprint due to set construction, energy consumption, and waste generation, there is a growing movement towards adopting sustainable practices, such as using recyclable materials, energy-efficient lighting, and reducing waste (Newton & Taylor, 2020).

Social sustainability concerns the relationships between theatres, territories, and societies and is closely linked to cultural sustainability. Theatres disseminate values and knowledge, help develop human capacities oriented towards relational skills, create inclusive contexts that facilitate dialogue, exchange of new ideas, and increase the potential for innovation. The theatre enhances well-being in terms of identity values, inclusion, cohesion, and particularly in terms of emotional and cognitive development, especially among younger generations.

Cultural sustainability sparks a virtuous cycle for creating values, attitudes, and behaviors within local communities. It represents a regenerative sustainability that reveals the profound significance of art that can contribute to the spread of a new human regenerative culture. From theatre as a public service rooted in the present to shape and make sense of a new era, to theatre as a vital resource capable of fostering culture, beauty, and economic vitality, even in deteriorated outskirts. The theatre has always mirrored the times and must return to being a place for everyone, shaping the future in the post-pandemic era.

It must be highlighted that the pandemic has redefined the traditional paradigms of the theatrical ecosystem through technological innovation, transforming the sector gradually and continuously, which poses new challenges in both production and consumption of theatre. This redefinition also influences new consumer behaviors and purchasing models as audiences become accustomed to technology use. Social media can significantly impact the sustainability of theatres across various dimensions—economic, social, cultural, and even environmental.

Considering economic sustainability, social media platforms offer theatres a cost-effective way to market their productions to a broad audience. Increased visibility can lead to higher ticket sales and, potentially, more sponsorship opportunities as theatres demonstrate a robust online presence and engagement (Smith & Wallace, 2021). Furthermore, platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and X enable theatres to run fundraising campaigns efficiently, because social media can mobilize community support during financial challenges or for specific projects, helping theatres remain financially viable (Jones, 2018; Perrin, 2020).

Regarding social sustainability, social media fosters a sense of community among theatregoers and practitioners by enabling interaction before, during, and after performances. These platforms facilitate discussions, feedback, and shared experiences, strengthening the bond between the theatre and its audience. Moreover, by sharing content related to their productions, behind-the-scenes processes, and thematic discussions, theatres can reach audiences who might not physically attend performances, including those from different geographical locations or with mobility issues. This inclusivity enhances the social role of theatres (Hudson, 2019).

Cultural sustainability is also affected by social media that allows theatres to promote not just individual shows but the cultural significance of theatre itself. By highlighting the educational and transformative power of their productions, theatres can attract a broader audience base and cultivate a deeper appreciation for the performing arts. In addition, social media allow the preservation of cultural heritage as theatres can use social media to archive and share past performances and cultural events, serving as a digital repository that contributes to cultural preservation.

Finally, social media can spread sustainable practices: theatres can use their social platforms to advocate for sustainability in the arts. This might include initiatives like virtual performances that reduce the need for physical travel, or behind-the-scenes looks at how theatres are implementing green practices like energy-efficient lighting or sustainable set designs. Digital marketing and engagement via social media reduce the need for traditional paper-based marketing materials, decreasing the environmental footprint associated with printing and distributing promotional content (Campbell, 2021).

As by leveraging social media, theatres can enhance their sustainability across multiple dimensions, ensuring their long-term viability and relevance in a rapidly changing digital landscape. The integration of sustainability and social media into theatre marketing offers promising avenues for enhancing audience engagement and operational efficiency. At the same time, adopting innovative marketing strategies and sustainable practices allow theatres to build stronger connections with their audiences while contributing to broader social and environmental goals.

As above mentioned, social media marketing can affect both the social and the economic sustainability of theatres.

The sample and the method

The sample includes 137 Italian theatres whose accounting data were detected in their statements of revenues and expenses and in the repository AIDA, one of the most crowded repositories of financial reports of Italian forprofits and nonprofits. The sample includes more than 95% of prose theatres and main accounting data for 2020 and 2022 concern: public grants as the dependent variable and, as independent ones, program service revenue; contributions, sponsorships and grants; the gain or loss; the number of employees and the wide range of expenses: personnel expense, the marketing and IT expense, expense for raw materials and energy costs and the expense for the use of third-party assets (as locations for rehearsals, warehouses, parking and auxiliary locations). Such a standard reporting of revenues and expenses can partially measure the sustainability of relationships, as the marketing and IT expense concerns social media management, too. Above all, the expense for raw materials and energy can detect efforts of the environmental sustainability, as well as the use of third-party assets, which are shared among theatres in order not to build new storehouses or locations, whose resources can advantage different and multiple productions with evident scope and scale economies. This phenomenon can enhance archives and digital repositories, in order to optimize the cultural sustainability.

Such a standard reporting implies the economic sustainability thanks to revenue diversification and, as long as public grants can compensate for losses of program service revenues during the pandemic, public grants are delivered to theatres, whose management can demonstrate an increasing revenue diversification with revenues of different audiences and contributions, sponsorships and grants of several fund givers. As already discussed, the employment and employability of personnels (the personnel expense and the number of employees as main indicators) is an essential indicator for cultural policies and public grants and the expenses of production (as the match of all costs for materials, energy and assets) and communication, they have both got importance in public criteria for more than three decades.

In Table 1 variables are classified as predictors and instrumental as the two-stage least squares regression will be implemented in order to describe how much public grants can depend on variables, which in turn can be bidirectional as costs can affect revenues and revenues, at the same time, can affect the possibility to spend for any kind of cost. The two-stage least squares regression can select the most fitting performances for dependent and independent variables because it uses two classifications of the independent ones. In the first stage of the analysis, instrumental variables are estimated as uncorrelated with the error terms to compute values of the predictor(s). In the second stage those computed values are used to estimate a linear regression model of the dependent variable. Since the computed values are based on variables that are uncorrelated with the errors, the results of the two-stage model are optimal.

The model description	Predictor	Instrumental
In the second stage, public grants = f(Predictors) (Predictors= program service revenue, personnel expense, marketing and IT expense, gain or loss)	Program service revenue	Contributions, sponsorships, grants
	Personnel expense	Number of employees
	Marketing and IT expense	Use of third-party assets expense
	Gain or loss	Raw materials and energy costs

TABLE 1. THE MODEL DESCRIPTION

Source: own.

Two stage-least regressions were estimated both for 2020 accounting data and 2022 ones. Here the analysis will be focused on summaries of models, ANOVA and coefficients, though outputs could include excluded variables and coefficients correlations (with SPSS Software).

Results and discussion

The analysis will be here concentrated on 2020 and 2022's data.

Two-stage least squares regression on the second stage resulted in the reliable summary of Table 2, with Rs never lower than 0.985 for 2020's data..

Second stage on 2020's data	Rs and St. Error
Multiple R	0,993
R Square	0,985
Adjusted R Square	0,985
Std. Error of the Estimate	303,073

TABLE 2. MODEL SUMMARY ON 2020'S DATA
Source: own elaboration with SPSS Software.

According to ANOVA estimates in Table 3, the analysis is significant.

Analysis of Variance on the second stage	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	823345609,961	3	274448536,654	2987,896	<.000
Residual	12216506,428	133	91853,432		
Total	835562116,390	136			

TABLE 3. ANOVA FOR THE SECOND STAGE OF TWO-STAGE LEAST SQUARES REGRESSION ON 2020'S DATA
Source: own elaboration with SPSS Software.

In Table 4 reliable test t and Sig. are reported for the coefficients analysis. Coefficients are positive and the highest (B Unstandardized Coefficient) one concerns the marketing and IT expense during the pandemic (Table 4).

On the second stage, the public grant as dependent variable on predictors		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
	(Constant)	9,247	26,701		0,346	0,730
	2020 Program service revenue	-0,866	0,024	-1,774	-36,312	0,000
	2020 Marketing and IT expense	1,123	0,025	0,772	45,678	0,000
	2020 Personnel Expense	1,057	0,039	1,500	27,148	0,000

TABLE 4. 2020 COEFFICIENTS: SOME STATISTICS
Source: own elaboration with SPSS Software.

The gain or loss resulted an excluded variable for Beta In 6.186, Partial Correlation 0.156, Minimum Tolerance 9.425E-05, t 1.840 and Sig. 0.048.

Public funds remain highly dependent on the 2020' marketing and IT expense and the second highest (B) coefficient concerns the personnel expense. The negative coefficient for the program service revenue gives evidence that public grants compensate the loss of revenues from sales of the main core business, which was paralysed by the lock-down. Digitization, social media marketing, storytelling and cultural mediation were some of keywords of 2020's efforts of the investigated theatres. These trends were confirmed in 2022 and the empirics are evidence of the legacy of policies and criteria, which consider the marketing and IT expense, the personnel expense and the feasibility of program service revenues, as soon as stringency was alleviated. Table 5 is reliable for Rs always more than 0.96.

Second stage on 2022's data	Rs and St. Error
Multiple R	0,983
R Square	0,967
Adjusted R Square	0,966
Std. Error of the Estimate	511,297

TABLE 5. MODEL SUMMARY ON 2022'S DATA
Source: own elaboration with SPSS Software.

The analysis of variance features reliable F and Sig tests (Table 6).

Analysis of Variance on the second stage	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	1007683840,817	4	251920960,204	963,646	0,000
Residual	34508076,469	132	261424,822		
Total	1042191917,286	136			

TABLE 6. ANOVA for the second stage of two-stage least squares regression on 2022's data
Source: own elaboration with SPSS Software.

The coefficients result positive for all variables, apart from program service revenues, which are compensated by public grants. The gain or loss is here included in the empirics, though the Sig. is 0.686 (Table 7).

On the second stage, the public grant as dependent variable on predictors	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
(Constant)	-82,664	173,645		-0,476	0,635
2022 Program service revenue	-0,687	0,405	-1,306	-1,695	0,092
2022 Marketing and IT expense	0,997	0,071	0,729	14,017	0,000
2022 Personnel Expense	1,010	0,041	1,393	24,761	0,000
2022 Gain or loss	-0,580	1,432	-0,308	-0,405	0,686

TABLE 7. 2022 Coefficients: some statistics
Source: own elaboration with SPSS Software.

The marketing and IT expense coefficient is now the second highest one, as the personnel expense is the highest and positive coefficients (both B and Beta), when personnels are back in their offices, on stage and for a supply, which is returned on-site, while streaming and online supplies are complimentary. For program service revenue and gain or loss the coefficients are negative, as public grants are still a vital need, in order to support theatres out of the very latest pandemic. With reinstated personnels, social media management is a pivotal activity, while all 'maestranze' are back on the stage.

After the pandemic (2022) Italian theatres retained the legacy of digitization, while public grants were not only for the recovery but also for the return to live performances with all managerial and artistic personnels.

The digitization had to be not more considered the prevailing *essence* of performing arts, these ones being in the society with their vital roles on the stage. In the post-pandemic, the digitization was confirmed for the online supply of streaming of special events or an online and partial season, for the social media management, for the valorisation of archives and heritages (from costumes to any evidence of the past and the latest history).

Main economic and social sustainability could be estimated and appreciated for main predictors, though instrumental variables were reliable for the regression validity, and they were supporting a first and reliable metrics of environmental and cultural sustainability.

Conclusion

Measuring performance through accounting can provide valuable insights into sustainability, particularly regarding economic and social dimensions. Additionally, there remains the potential to identify and account for other kinds of sustainability through this method. Detected for the investigated sample, the marketing and IT expense was a new and crucial indicator for public funds to be delivered to Italian performing arts, while the cultural policy was changing. According to a new policy for extraordinary events and recalling the plan of heritage digitization starting from 2022 in Italy, the marketing and IT expense was meant as a crucial signal of efforts towards social sustainability, in order to maintain relationships and towards the economic sustainability, in order to maintain relationships with fund givers, sponsors, and audiences, who can be reached thanks to the digitization of events, contents and social media management.

Main economic and social sustainability could be estimated and confirmed for main predictors and positive coefficients both for the personnel expense and the marketing and IT expense. It remains that instrumental variables were reliable for the validity of the two-stage least squares regression and they were supporting a first accounting of environmental and cultural sustainability.

Theoretical implications close the gap of a literature, which can count on accounting as reliable metrics of first analysis and reporting of different kinds of sustainability. Managerial implications imply that accounting standards should be optimized, to separate and signal different pillars of multiple sustainability. Besides, sustainability reporting should be focused on social media metrics, too. It remains crucial that theatres are available for disclosure of the accounting change and sustainability metrics. This will be granted by cultural policies, which embrace and innovate criteria and call for transparency of revenues, expenses, IT and social media performances.

Further research will investigate how much sustainability will be embraced and accounted again and again in the very next future in Italian cultural and creative industries. Different meanings of sustainability are to be explained, estimated and standardized and the digitization remains a fundamental medium to echo and educate for sustainability.

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*MUS.E. MUS*eums for *E*motions

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ABSTRACT

Autistic children are on the increase and have difficulty in emotional regulation. Most places of culture have not yet developed specific projects for autistic children, even though cultural participation produce undeniable effects on psycho-physical wellbeing, also in terms of emotional regulation. Therefore, there is a mismatch between the "patient" and the potential “treatment”. The MUS.E. project aims at testing and prototyping an innovative tool, composed of hardware and software, that can be used by Museums for proposing games to engage autistic children during their visit. The proposed tool will represent an innovative integrated game-teaching-care model to improve the accessibility to cultural participation and the children’s emotional development.

Keywords:

Cultural Engagement
Accessibility
Museum

Autism

Emotion

Introduction

According to the ICOM (2022) definition, "*a museum is a not-for-profit, permanent institution in the service of society that researches, collects, conserves, interprets and exhibits tangible and intangible heritage. Open to the public, accessible and inclusive, museums foster diversity and sustainability. They operate and communicate ethically, professionally and with the participation of communities, offering varied experiences for education, enjoyment, reflection and knowledge sharing*". Implicit in this definition is the reference to the creation of sustainable value. Value is associated with worth, importance, significance and usefulness. Outcomes of programmes and services that are valued are those which have a beneficial impact for an end-user (Poll & Payne, 2006). Value is "*a complex and broad-based assessment of an object or set of objects characterized by both cognitive and emotive elements, arrived at after some deliberation, and because a value is part of the individual's definition of self, it is not easily changed, and it has the potential to elicit action*" (Bozeman, 2007). This notion of value is closely linked to the cognitive but also the emotional elements of those who produce and those who perceive it (Hodgkinson et al, 2017; Ng & Vargo, 2018). The creation of value is, in fact, intimately linked to personal factors such as self-fulfillment, for having influenced the creation of that value, especially if it is provided for the benefit of the community (Bovaird, 2007; Alonso et al, 2019). Museums, as service providers, have a "value-creation-ability" (Catturi, 2007), interpreted as: "*the ability to create value and to distribute it equally and harmoniously among the various 'stakeholders' or 'interested parties'. This is to satisfy, at least somewhat, the needs they perceive.*" As a matter of fact, providing services transforms cultural value directly into personal growth (Bowman & Ambrosini, 2007). This implies that cultural organizations can provide emotional and cognitive experiences to visitors. Accessibility is an increasingly central topic in museums. Access to heritage and culture can be seen as a fundamental right of all people, regardless of identity or opportunity. The ICOM's new definition recognizes and emphasizes accessibility and inclusion as intrinsic values of these kind of institutions in the service of the whole society. The neologism *Cultural Welfare* indicates a new integrated model of promoting well-being and health of individuals and communities, through practices based on visual and performing arts and cultural heritage. It is based on the recognition, also sanctioned by the World Health Organization in a revolutionary study published at the end of 2019 (WHO, 2019), of the effectiveness of cultural, artistic and creative activities as a factor in promoting health, subjective well-being and life satisfaction, to combat inequalities in health and social cohesion to facilitate access and development of individual and local community social capital. As a matter of fact, the New European Agenda for Culture 2030 (UNESCO 2018; 2019) indicates cultural crossovers as pillars of the next decades, i.e. systemic and systematic relationships with other policy areas, once weakly interconnected, first and foremost that between culture and well-being. Culture is seen as a leading domain in the definition of well-being. Different approaches attempt to measure the level of well-being. All of them are policy-oriented and try to expand the concept of *individual* well-being. The existing well-being frameworks base on serious psychometric methodologies and are empirically validated using a wide range of indicators, many of which are adopted in large population surveys. The OECD approach (OECD 2013; 2020) does not explicitly account for Cultural Heritage. *Art engagement*, which would potentially include access to Cultural Heritage, is not included in the flourishing measures (VanderWeele, 2017), on the grounds that although it might contribute substantially to a person's life across the various flourishing domains, regular participation in the arts is perhaps not as widespread as other forms of community involvement, such as religious institutions. In the PERMA framework (Seligman, 2018), Cultural Heritage, by means of access and participation in various forms including visits, creative practices and volunteering, could contribute to better well-being through the blocks of *engagement* and *meaning*. Only the process of theoretical construction of the measures of equitable and sustainable well-being (Benessere Equo e Sostenibile: BES in Italy) included landscape and cultural heritage among the twelve determinants of well-being. An ISTAT report (ISTAT, 2017) is published every year in which various aspects of well-being in Italy are measured according to 128 indicators. Reference is made to culture on the basis of various indicators: cultural participation as human capital, number of employees in cultural and creative enterprises, measures to support the protection of the landscape and cultural heritage.

Starting from the previous premises, the present research project aims to identify a tool that allows to improve the well-being and integration of a specific category of subjects, identified as autistic children. The proposed model also aims to guarantee methods of involvement, based on the concepts of play and learning, which improve museum accessibility for autistic children. Autism represents a disorder that specifically impacts on the individual's brain before the age of three years, creating many difficulties in communication and social skills, or also influencing the individual's behavior. Individuals with autism have difficulties in non-verbal and verbal communication language and difficulties to socialize and to express emotions. Museum environments could represent a stressful experience for these children, if not appropriately organized using adequate tools and specific visit itineraries. At the same time, however, we know that art and cultural participation can improve health and well-being. Therefore, it is considered necessary to increase the opportunities for visits and involvement.

Autistic children are on the increase (1 in 36, according to data from the 2020 study by the *Centers for Disease Control and Prevention;* Maenner et al, 2020; Shaw et al, 2020) and have difficulty in emotional regulation, sensory activation and interpretation of emotions, their own and others. At the same time, most places of culture (museums, ecomuseums, archeological parks, cultural associations, theaters, etc.) have not yet developed specific projects and activities for autistic children and their families, despite the fact that art and cultural participation produce undeniable effects on psycho-physical well-being, also in terms of sensory activation and emotional regulation (WHO, 2019). Therefore, there is a mismatch between the "patient" (autistic child) and the potential treatment (place of culture, cultural activity).

The research project starts from the analysis of the five factors of the P.E.R.M.A. model by Martin Seligman:

- ***P****ositive emotion:* the ability to remain optimistic and view one's past, present and future from a constructive perspective.
- ***E****ngagement:* it helps remain present, it creates flows and synthesises the activities to find calm, focus and joy.
- ***R****elationships:* Positive connections that promote love, intimacy and a strong emotional and physical interaction with other humans.
- ***M****eaning:* Dedicating time to something greater than oneself (religion, spirituality, work, raising a family, volunteering or expressing creatively).
- ***A****ccomplishments:* Having and reaching goals and ambitions and to push yourself to thrive and flourish.

In order to explore in greater detail the bases that led to the formulation of the model, it is considered appropriate to delve deeper into the relevant scientific literature, divided, in the next paragraph, into four areas of investigation:

- Emotional regulation in subjects with autism
- Museum visit experience and impacts on well-being
- Emotion detection using EEG signals
- Detection of emotions' expression through facial expression

Literature Review

Emotional regulation in subjects with autism

The development of emotional understanding, also called Emotional Theory of Mind (Harris, 2008), (ToM) refers to the recognition in oneself and in the other of internal emotional states that are inferable on the basis of observing verbal (e.g. when an emotion is named) and non-verbal (e.g., when an emotional experience is accompanied by behaviour such as crying, or smiling, or particular facial expressions).

The study of the development of emotion understanding began in the early 1980s with authors who sought to investigate ToM in its emotional-affective aspects. This line of investigation, initiated by Paul Harris' research group, led to the definition of a developmental model that includes three dimensions (understanding of nature, understanding of causes and understanding of the possibility of regulating emotions) and nine components (recognition, external cause, desire, belief, reminder, regulation, hiding, mixed, morality) (Pons et al, 2004). The understanding of these components has been investigated in numerous empirical studies (Harris, 1989) documented in various Italian reviews of studies (see, for example: Grazzani, 2014).

It has been verified that between the ages of 3-4 and 5-6, children understand three of the nine components, with recognition of the facial expression of emotions, understanding of external causes, and awareness of the link between desire and emotion (first level of development). Between about the ages of 5-6 years and 7-8 years, children gain awareness of the role of memories, the role of beliefs, and the fact that emotions can be hidden (second level of development). Finally, between the ages of 7-8 and 10-11 (third level) they understand the remaining three components, namely that emotions can be regulated, that one can simultaneously experience emotions of different valence (mixed emotions) and that moral principles have an impact on the emotions felt.

The need to assess children's understanding of emotions through its developmental progression is linked to several factors. A first aspect concerns the possibility of monitoring developmental stages in the child's social understanding. A second factor concerns the fact that the ability to understand emotions predicts a variety of relevant aspects over the course of development, ranging from psychological well-being to peer popularity to academic success (Denham et al, 2016).

Its assessment, therefore, can be used as an indicator of the need, in some cases, for early intervention that can foster the child's social development and school success. A third aspect, finally, has to do with the fact that the assessment of emotional understanding may be useful in the case of children with an atypical profile. Difficulties in expressing, regulating and understanding emotions are a characteristic aspect of various disabilities.

For example, in the case of autism spectrum disorders, one of the diagnostic criteria concerns the presence of an emotional delay or deficit that is expressed in the lack of emotional reciprocity during interaction with the other (American Psychiatric Association, 2014). Empirical studies (Ashwin et al, 2006; Rump et al, 2009) have shown severe difficulties in the recognition of basic emotions, such as happiness, sadness, anger, and fear, although the meta-analysis (Uljarevic & Hamilton, 2012) showed that the deficit in the recognition of the other's emotions concerns mainly those with negative valence and only marginally the emotion of happiness.

Museum visit experience and impacts on well-being

Emotional well-being and happiness have received little attention in the field of autism. When we focus on well-being, we often do so from a negative perspective, that is, the lack of functioning that is assumed to play a key role in ensuring a good quality of life. Based on the principles of positive psychology, a change in perspective is appropriate. Instead of focusing on the lack of subjective well-being in children and adolescents with autism, strategies should be developed to facilitate their feelings of happiness. Therefore, the focus is on the step to promote happiness in young people with autism, namely, evaluating how well certain activities make these subjects feel. The right philosophy should be to borrow rehabilitation from recreation, in other words coupling leisure and rehabilitation to make our guests feel happy as much as possible.

We are aware that the leisure-rehabilitation programs offered to children and adolescents with autism, like individual and team sports, drama therapy, outdoor visits to common life environments, parks and gardens, museums, music play; dance, Indoor climbing, exercising in the gym and in the swimming pool, convey feelings like emotional, social, cognitive and physical engagement, fun, adventure and sense of novelty. Each activity however has an intrinsic power to influence the emotional pattern in different ways. To define how each type of rehabilitation program can be expected to influence the psychological response di children and adolescent affected by autism a Delphi study was carried out involving twelve expert therapists. The aim was to have criteria to personalize the individual rehabilitation plan choosing a mix of activities with more appropriate emotional influence (Grossi, 2024).

Museum visits are gaining reputation among practices able to impact psychological wellbeing. Museums promote health and well-being in different ways: through positive social experiences that reduce isolation, providing opportunities for learning and personal growth, promoting a sense of relaxation and reducing anxiety, triggering positive emotions, and improving self-esteem and sense of identity. A recent review of studies dealing with museums and wellbeing over the last 15 years highlights a number of physical and mental benefits of museum-going (Šveb Dragija & Jelinčić, 2022) like restoration, reduction of anxiety and stress, wellbeing enhancement.

Villa Santa Maria group carried out a pilot study to highlight the feasibility of an aesthetic experience in Museo Teatrale alla Scala in six subjects with autism aged 10-17. The experience consisted in a guided tour in the museum coupled by an opera performance in the exedra room of the Museo Teatrale alla Scala, such as the adaptation of Mozart's Magic Flute. The measurement of the impact of this experience on psychological well-being, carried out using a special analogue chromatic scale, allowed to establish a strong emotional impact with a statistically significant increase in the momentary psychological well-being (Grossi et al, 2020).

This pilot study suggested that a visit to a museum can stimulate parts of the brain that remain intact even after the onset of neuro-psychiatric diseases, and that the measurement of momentary well-being is feasible even in subjects with autism.

Emotion detection using EEG signals

It is becoming increasingly attractive to detect human emotions using biological brain signals. Electroencephalography (EEG) is a reliable and cost effective technology used to measure brain activity. Detecting emotion using EEG signals involves multiple steps being performed in sequence to satisfy the requirements of a brain–computer interface (BCI). Traditionally, these steps include removing artifacts from EEG signals, extracting temporal or spectral features from the EEG signal's time or frequency domain, respectively, and finally, designing a multi-class classification strategy. Feature quality dramatically increases the accuracy of the emotion classification strategy (Gannouni et al., 2021).

Traditional methods are used to extract features from a fixed group of the same EEG channels for all subjects. However, brain-behavior is sophisticated and changes from one person to another (Northoff, 2014) and from one emotional state to another (Huang et al, 2012). Moreover, extracted features are either computed from the whole sample of the EEG signal, which contains irrelevant information, or from an arbitrarily chosen portion of the sample and not necessarily the portion of the signal that corresponds to the emotional excitation instant. There is a growing need for additional steps, such as the identification of epochs, which are the instants at which excitation is maximum during the emotion, and the selection of electrodes that show significant variation in brain activity during emotional states, to accurately detect emotional states. Experiments show that the addition of these steps drastically improves the quality of features (Lindquist, 2012; Kragel et al, 2016).

Detection of emotions' expression through facial expression

Around the middle of the 20th century, a number of eminent scholars, most notably Paul Ekman (2003), undertook research on facial expressions with the aim of objectifying the universality of emotional expressions. Paul Ekman began his scientific research in the late 1950s, during which time he completed an experiment on facial expressions and body movements and behaviour. From these studies he came to the conclusion that at the origin of facial expressions and emotional experience there is a specific number of innate neurophysiological programmes. There is, therefore, a specific pathway for each emotion that ensures the invariability of facial expressions associated with each emotion. With his neurocultural theory, he succeeded in demonstrating the universality of emotions.

Observing changes in the face provides information about the emotions felt by people. The face is the most expressive part of the body thanks to its more than 40 muscles, which, by contracting involuntarily, make our every emotional nuance visible. The scientific analysis of facial expressions therefore provides us with tools to achieve a reliable interpretation of these emotions.

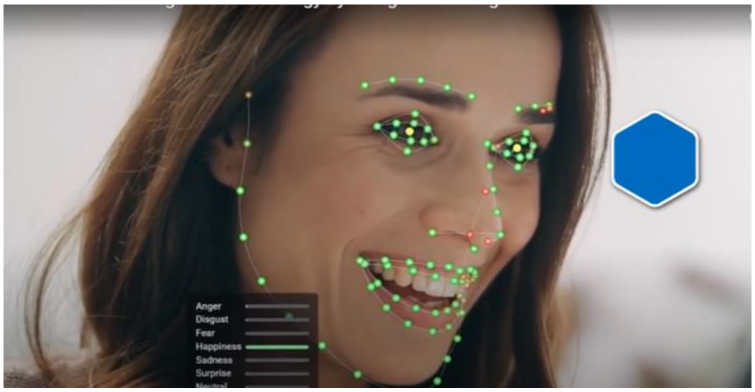

FIGURE 1: AUTOMATIC EMOTION DETECTION FROM FACIAL EXPRESSION

Source: Ekman, 2003

In figure 1, this is how an automatic emotion detection system from a photo of a face processes the information and produces an emotional profile, in this case decidedly aimed at happiness.

The computer establishes precise landmarks on the image corresponding to salient geometries for expression recognition.

Facial expression analysis software is emerging as a valuable aid for collecting objective data on emotions. Such software automatically analyses Ekman's seven universal emotions happy, sad, angry, surprised, scared, disgusted and neutral (figure 2). They can also recognize and analyze contempt, calculate valence, arousal, gaze direction, head orientation and personal characteristics such as gender and age.

FIGURE 2: EKMAN'S SEVEN UNIVERSAL EMOTIONS

Source: Ekman, 2003

Methodology

The MUS.E. project aims at testing and prototyping an innovative tool, composed of hardware and software, that can be used by Museums for proposing games (treasure hunts with artwork and emotional flashcards matching) to engage autistic children during their visit.

The tool will be exemplified by a customizable hat reproducing a funny animal (a bunny, a frog, a teddy bear), associated with EEG sensors and coupled with an app that also serves as a game to play while enjoying a cultural experience and as a platform for EEG data collection, monitoring, diagnosis and treatment. The combination with AI algorithms for the accurate reading of emotion-related signals from the brain, will allow children (of a target age of 5-10 years) and their parents to also benefit from a personalized chatbot with specific indications regarding the emotional situation experienced at that precise moment and how to manage it. Webcams will also be used, to perform facial coding to measure children's emotions. This project is also designed for greater inclusiveness in community activities in cultural contexts. This is to ensure that autistic children can meet new people and carry out activities together with others to share their emotions with.

After identifying the network of cultural institutions interested in the project and in proposing specific visit activities (even at separate times) for autistic children and their families, flashcards will be produced depicting a work of art (painting, monument, etc.) or a detail thereof. The child, after wearing the hat, will be invited to participate, with his/her parents and the cultural operators in charge, in a treasure hunt: he/she finds the work of art depicted in the flashcard and matches it with another flashcard which expresses how he/she feels (happy, confused, bored, amazed). For each guessed flashcard there will be prizes for children (badges that unlock subsequent levels of play to be continued at home) and for parents (points to be accumulated to take advantage of discounts on the purchase of products/services from partner companies or on the fruition of other cultural activities).

After the testing and prototyping phase in the laboratory (at the Link Campus University), a pilot study will be conducted at a Rehabilitation Centre experienced in well-being promotion for children with autism.

Subsequently, the tool will be tested and promoted at some Italian cultural institutions which have so far demonstrated greater sensitivity towards children, including autistic ones, by offering them specific visit itineraries and activities.

Among them:

- Museo Egizio (Torino)
- MUSE – Museo delle Scienze (Trento)
- Galleria Nazionale d’arte Moderna e Contemporanea (Roma)
- M.I.R.A. – Musei in Rete per l’Autismo (Arezzo)

Expected results and conclusions

The expected results are represented by:

- improvement of emotional regulation and of emotions’ interpretation;
- greater museum’s accessibility and specific cultural offer for autistic children and their families;
- expanded opportunities for diagnosis, treatment and research on autism;
- increased involvement of autistic children in community activities and improved social interaction skills;
- possibility of extending the tool also outside the sphere of autism and to other age groups.

The cap and the app, after adaptation, can be easily and profitably used in other contexts, such as schools and sport centers.

The proposed tool will represent an innovative integrated game-teaching-care model to improve the accessibility to cultural participation and the children’s emotional development. Its application by Museums and other cultural institutions will represent a great opportunity to better their engagement and management activities, to improve their sustainability, their impacts and, in turn, their performance (Jacobsen, 2016). At the same time, it will represent a challenge, as it will impose the preparation of structures, the training of specific highly qualified workforce and new reporting methodologies, such as the integrated and the impact ones.

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Be Resilient: An exploration of sustaining impactful co-creation with young people (ages 16-25) at the National Gallery of Ireland

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ABSTRACT

'Be Resilient: An exploration of impactful and sustainable co-creation with young people (ages 16-25) at the National Gallery of Ireland' links the theory of co-creation with a practice-based case study, the Gallery Youth Panel. The Apollo Project is the National Gallery of Ireland's core youth programme, by young people, for young people (ages 16-25). Creativity, education and wellbeing are at the heart of the Apollo Project, with an emphasis on collaborating with young people to co-create vibrant and fun experiences in the Gallery. Rooted in these values, a group of young people, in collaboration with the Apollo Fellow and Education Department, co-developed the Gallery's first Youth Panel in 2022. Since then, panel members have sparked monumental changes to work, and research-based practices at the Gallery. Utilising a qualitative action research framework, this paper illustrates the value and challenges in developing and sustaining a youth-led model of co-creation within cultural institutions.

Keywords:

Young people

Co-creation

Action Research Gallery

Sustainability

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Introduction

The National Gallery of Ireland's core youth programme, the Apollo Project, is by young people, for young people ages 16-25. The Gallery's Education Department works to create opportunities for all people to learn through, and about art. They are committed to embedding and upholding principles of equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) across their programmes and the wider Gallery, in consultation and collaboration with communities. Supported by the Apollo Foundation and Russborough House, Co. Wicklow, the Apollo Project was co-created between the Gallery and young people in 2018. Since then, this sustainable and adaptive Education programme continues to amplify and embed the role of young people within the Gallery.

Young people are a key stakeholder to both the Gallery's present and future. As such it's critical that they are involved in decisions, policies, and programmes which may affect them and generations to come. From 2018 to 2023, the Apollo Project engaged 224,951 young people and their communities, onsite at the Gallery through events and activities, across Ireland via outreach initiatives, and online via digital programming. The youth programme is co-created in collaboration and consultation with young people, ensuring it's relevance is grounded in their current lived experiences.

This paper will explore a practice-based case study, the Gallery Youth Panel, to show the immense value in cultural institutions actively involving young peoples' ambitions, creativity, and resilience in decision making processes. The title of the paper, 'Be Resilient', draws inspiration from the Gallery Youth Panel's mission statement, 'Be Sound', an Irish colloquial term meaning be kind, genuine, respectful. The theme of resilience has been a reoccurring sentiment since post-lockdown, with many young people who engaged with the Gallery youth programme from 2022 onwards expressing a sentiment of 'not giving up'. There are numerous barriers, including attitudinal, functional, practical, preventing young people's access to, engagement with, and enjoyment of arts and culture across

Ireland. One of these barriers is the ongoing cost of living crisis in Ireland. According to the National Youth Council of Ireland's *State of Our Young Nation: A Report into the Lives of Irish 18 – 29 Years-Olds*, "The cost of living is having a significant impact on this generation. In terms of the daily spending, 1 in 4 (25%) are having at least some 'difficulty coping' with rising prices, with 43% outlining that they are 'somewhat coping'. Only 1 in 10 state they are 'definitely coping'"[7]. However, despite various barriers, young people's resilience, compassion, and humour in the face of social, political and civil challenges continues to inspire and inform the Gallery youth programme. In order to meet young people where they are at, the Apollo Project must also be resilient.

As such, the Apollo Project utilises an adaptive, measured, and rights-based approach to co-creation so young people can engage on their own terms. In Mulvale G, Moll S, Phoenix M, et al. *Co-creating a new Charter for equitable and inclusive co-creation: insights from an international forum of academic and lived experience experts*, co-creation is defined as "any collaborative activity involving experience experts (ie, people who develop expertise arising from their experiences interacting with public services, often referred to as service users, patients, families, etc.) and staff/professionals (e.g., service providers) working together on an even playing field, that is inclusive of the lived experience from all perspectives"[8]. The Apollo Project was established to be an 'even playing field' where the Gallery and young people could learn, experiment, and fail together. By doing so, the programme also upholds the Convention of the Rights of the Child, ensuring the voices of children and young people are included in decision-making processes. Article 27 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that, "everyone has the right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts and to share in scientific advancement and its benefits"[9].

During the early-stage development of the programme, Jess Supple, the Gallery's first Apollo Fellow, worked with the Gallery and young people to outline the project's core values, ambitions, and identity. Central to the success of the programme was funding from the Apollo Foundation to establish a full-time Apollo Fellowship position. Initially a three-year contract, the Foundation extended their support to a further three-year contract in 2022. This role is designed for an early career professional so that they can hone their skills with on-the-ground experience, while being mentored and supported by the Gallery.

A key step in developing a youth programme at the Gallery involved co-creating a dynamic and adaptable visual brand identity with a group of young people and Dublin-based design company,

[7] National Youth Council of Ireland, *State of Our Young Nation: A Report into the Lives of Irish 18 – 29 Years-Olds* (2024), p.33. [file:///C:/NYCI_State-of-our-young-nation_A-report-into-the-lives-of-Irish-18-29-year-olds.pdf].

[8] Mulvale G, Moll S, Phoenix M*, et al*, *Co-creating a new Charter for equitable and inclusive co-creation: insights from an international forum of academic and lived experience experts*. (BMJ Open 2024). [https://bmjopen.bmj.com/content/14/3/e078950].

[9] United Nations General Assembly. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) (New York: United Nations General Assembly, 1948). [https://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/].

DesignWorks. The design concept playfully disrupts the signature 'Oblique' of the Gallery's branding, transforming it into a platform for fresh perspectives [See Appendix A]. During the co-design process of the Apollo brand identity, Supple worked closely with a group of young people to ensure they felt confident expressing their vision for the Gallery. By investing time and care into building this relationship, she alleviated an otherwise intimidating situation, so they felt comfortable attending a pitch meeting with the then Director of the Gallery, Sean Rainbird, and the Education and Communications teams. I was among this group of young people contributing to the development of the Apollo Project during its initial three years. Now, as a full-time employee in the Apollo Fellow role, I work with the Gallery and young people to further build upon key learnings from those initial three years and spark new connections.

Throughout the process of development, experimentation, and reflection, the youth programme has grappled with the core questions put forward by the writings of Mulvale G, Moll S, Phoenix M, et al, "'How do we embrace vulnerability within systems that value professional expertise, hierarchy, and power? How do we tolerate uncertainty and discomfort in a space that values certainty and some forms of knowledge over others? How do we take the time and space necessary to build relationships and mutual understanding by 'being with' and 'holding space' in a culture that values efficiency, measurement of targeted outcomes, and meeting 'deadlines'?'"[10]. One way in which the youth programme strives to address these questions is by utilising the Lundy Model, which gives guidance for implementing participation with purpose, meaning young peoples' views are heard and affect meaningful long-term change. The first six years of the Apollo Project are well documented and evaluated through in-depth mid-yearly and yearly reports. The four elements of the Lundy Model (voice, space, audience, and influence)[11] provide a basis for this evaluation. By doing so, it holds both the youth programme and wider Gallery to account so that time, space, and resources are consistently dedicated for building and sustaining relations and collaborations with young people.

The following case study is explored through a qualitative action research framework, utilising lived experiences, reports, reflections, and feedback to connect the theory of co-creation with practice. In utilising an action research framework, consideration must be given to the reason for this research and the subsequent implications. An action research framework resonates with the Youth Panel's model of co-creation as outcomes are not prioritised. Kemmis and McTaggart note, "The criterion of success is not whether participants have followed the steps faithfully but rather whether they have a strong and authentic sense of development and evolution in their practices, their understandings of their practices, and the situations in which they practice"[12]. The Gallery Youth Panel is a process-led

10 Mulvale, *et al*, *Co-creating a new Charter for equitable and inclusive co-creation.*

11 Hub na nÓg, Participation Framework Checklists and Evaluation Forms. [https://hubnanog.ie/resources/participation-framework-checklists-and-evaluation-forms/].

12 Kemmis, S and McTaggart, R, 'Participatory Action Research: Communicative Action and the Public Sphere' in The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research Third Edition (Sage, 2005), p.563.

initiative that's fluid, open, and responsive to the young people involved. As such, embracing the uncertainty, discomfort, and vulnerability of change is at the core of the Gallery Youth Panel. According to Bryman, action research is committed to the idea that change is good because change is seen as a useful way of learning[13]. The application of an action research framework provides an understanding of how the Gallery as a national cultural institution works and the way in which involving young people activates changes within those processes.

Case Study – National Gallery of Ireland Youth Panel

The Gallery Youth Panel is a group of young people (ages 16 – 25) who work together to find, make, and share impactful experiences for young people and their communities at the National Gallery of Ireland [See Appendix B]. They do so in two key ways:

- In collaboration with Gallery staff to inform existing related programmes and provide a fresh perspective on the institution.
- In collaboration with each other to create sustainable, innovative opportunities for other young people to explore creative careers, engage with the Gallery, and consider the role it may play in their artistic, social and civic lives.

The Youth Panel currently meet twice monthly on a Thursday evening, generally at the Gallery. Attendance is flexible as young people are encouraged to engage on their own terms. Travel expenses, materials, food and refreshments for all Panel meetings and events are provided by the Gallery. Paid exhibitions and events at the Gallery are also open to Youth Panel members free of charge. As part of joining the Youth Panel, they are promised a fun social experience and support in developing their creative career. However, the way in which this manifests may differ depending on the young person. It is important to note that the Youth Panel is process-led, not task orientated. The overall structure must be malleable to be reshaped by participants, facilitators, and wider Gallery. Due to the age range of 16 to 25, young people engage with the Panel at different stages of their life, career, and education, with some studying at secondary or third level as well as working in full time employment. While many live in the Dublin area, some members travel from across Ireland. The group encompasses a broad range of interests, backgrounds, and skillsets. This diversity of lived experiences informs their shared vision for a more accessible, inclusive, and relevant Gallery. One Youth Panel member shared, "Our voices are necessary and impactful in creating the changes we wish to see in the National Gallery"[14]. They work collaboratively to bring their vision into the Gallery's

[13] Bryman, A, *Social Research Methods Fifth Edition* (Oxford University Press).
[14] Kenny, O, *Apollo Project 2023 Report* [Ireland, National Gallery of Ireland].

present through a co-created youth programme, involving Youth Labs, displays, playlists, research, collaborations, training, tours.

In terms of action research, the Youth Panel can be seen as creating a communicative space for young people within the Gallery. This communicative space, according to Kemmis and McTaggart, “fosters a kind of ‘playfulness’ about action – what to do. At its best, it creates opportunities for participants to adopt a thoughtful but highly exploratory view of what to do, knowing that their practice can and will be ‘corrected’ in the light of what they learn from their careful observation of the processes and consequences of their action as it unfolds”[15]. Originally the Youth Panel was envisioned as a closed core group changing yearly, however in dialogue with panel members and acknowledging the transient nature of young people’s everyday lives, membership moved to an open, rolling basis in early 2023. This was a critical moment in the development of the Gallery Youth Panel as the overall structure had to be adapted to accommodate for a more fluid membership. While there is still an ongoing learning process around adapting to accommodate an ever-changing group, particularly in balancing fluidity with structure for those involved, the open membership approach has meant that the Youth Panel programme remains inclusive and collaborative. According to Kemmis and McTaggart, ‘When [action research groups] conceive of themselves as closed and self-regulating, they may lose contact with social reality”[16]. While the Gallery Youth Panel was not devised as an action research group, this closed off mindset can still present a concern. The Gallery Youth Panel addresses this possibility by ensuring collaboration is an integral part of the programme for both the young people involved and the wider Gallery through the use of a shared mission statement, a social contract, and open communication. The Youth Panel’s ‘Be Sound’ mission statement symbolizes their commitment to continuously create a communicative space together. Panel members advocate that the value of the Gallery lies with the people who work here, participant in the various programmes, volunteer, and visit. As such, the starting point for their programme is always with a social and personal perspective, finding new ways of opening the space up to diverse audiences and encouraging meaningful engagement. Towards this ambition, the Gallery Youth Panel is responsive to a range of lived experiences, practices, and learnings. This highlights the shared value placed in sparking new interactions, inviting fresh perspectives, and sustaining meaningful relations.

Significant time, space, and resources are dedicated to building trust between the Gallery and Youth Panel. Towards fostering trust and understanding, the Youth Panel co-developed a collective identity representing their values, ambitions, and creativity to the Gallery and wider public. Along with their mission statement, they drew on the Apollo branding to shape the Youth Panel’s own identity. Youth Panel members selected teal and purple from the Apollo colour chart. They gravitated towards these colours due to their soothing, relaxing qualities. Since then, all Youth Panel related documentation,

15 Kemmis and McTaggart, ‘Participatory Action Research’, p.580.

16 Kemmis and McTaggart, ‘Participatory Action Research’, p.580.

social media content, and such include this colour scheme [See Appendix C]. Youth Panel hoodies were co-designed with members to ensure they could be visible and present within the Gallery space. Mulvale G, Moll S, Phoenix M, et al. write, "'Being with' and fostering trust places attention on taking time to come to understand, and respect one another through shared reflective, cultural and educational experiences"[17]. Along with increasing the Gallery's understanding of the Youth Panel through a collective identity and co-created youth programme, members go behind the scenes to meet with Gallery staff, assist on the Gallery's Sunday Family Drop-in workshops, produce Apollo Project Instagram takeovers, facilitate Youth Labs, meet with key groups such as the Transition Year work experience students, and join the tour guide panel. In the process of budiling trust between Youth Panel members and the Gallery, it is important that these actions are not tokenistic, rather sustainable and meaningful for all those involved. This includes advocating, identifying, and developing paid opportunities for Youth Panel members, ensuring their time and involvement is respected and acknowledged. Along with paid opportunities, Creative Mentorship sessions, training, and offsite trips to cultural spaces are organised for Youth Panel members to support their individual professional development while also enjoying a fun, social experience. Vera John-Steiner states, "One of the greatest challenges is establishing trust. In a trusting environment, radical ideas are respectfully considered, opportunities for full participation are guaranteed, and peers and co-workers, as well as leaders, are influential in creative outcomes"[18]. A key challenge for this initiative is balancing long term and fluid ambitions with grounded short-term outcomes so that the young people involved can see the impact of their participation. While Youth Panel members are responsive to the programme's flexible and open approach, they also addressed the need for consistency as a way of strengthening their shared understanding of this process.

Based on feedback from Youth Panel members, two new strands of programming were co-developed in 2024. The first strand was the Youth Lab, a monthly space encouraging collaboration, experimentation, and creativity, facilitated by Youth Panel members. In 2023, the Youth Panel co-created a robust programme of creative activities, including a response to the *Lavinia Fontana: Trailblazer, Rule Breaker* exhibition (May 06 – Autumn 27 2023)[19]*.* The Gallery Youth Panel researched Fontana's life and work, identified key themes, and collaboratively devised learning opportunities for the general public as part of the Gallery's Trailblazers, Rule Breakers, Art Makers Summer Programme. The Youth Panel's inclusion in the Open Studio programme was devised to further embed the panel across the Gallery, create visibility of the panel and their work, and create a platform for them to inform public programming beyond their core audience of 16-25 year olds, while presenting learning and professional development opportunities for members. Building on learnings

[17] Mulvale,*et al*, *Co-creating a new Charter for equitable and inclusive co-creation*.
[18] John-Steiner, V, *Creative Collaboration* (Oxford University Press, 2000), p.xvii.
[19] *Lavinia Fontana: Trailblazer, Rule Breaker* exhibition [https://www.nationalgallery.ie/art-and-artists/exhibitions/lavinia-fontana-trailblazer-rule-breaker].

from the Youth Panel's 2023 programme, the Youth Lab provides an overarching identity to their programme, increasing awareness of what they do at the Gallery through repetition. At the start of 2024, Youth Panel members decided on a unifying theme of 'Identity' for their Youth Lab programme, with creative activities so far exploring faces and portraits, emotions, and places. This progression in their public facing programme also signals the Gallery's investment in their ideas and approach to programming. According to Mulvale G, Moll S, Phoenix M, et al, "When working with different communities, it is important to practice community care, recognising capacities for self-governance, fostering and nurturing new ecosystems, and being consistent and committed over time. Working together on a continuous basis as opposed to 'one-off' projects can enable trusting partnerships to flourish"[20]. Similar to the Youth Panel, their programme has a living presence within the Gallery. The practices of both the Gallery and Youth Panel will and can grow alongside the co-created programme, in a process of always learning, improving, and pushing forward without need for a definitive end.

The second addition to the Youth Panel programme was the representative roles. During the start of 2024, the Gallery Youth Panel nominated 8 members (3 from secondary level and younger years, 2 from third level and mid years, and 3 from later years and outside academics) to report on any key findings, ambitions, and concerns to wider Gallery staff. This role aims to provide a direct line of communication between panel members and Gallery staff, further working towards establishing an 'even playing field' between the two. According to Mulvale G, Moll S, Phoenix M, et al, "Establishing safer and brave processes means attending to the power imbalances that exist within and between groups, recognising the vulnerability people experience when engaging in honest, open, respectful dialogue and discussion, and creating safety to the extent possible"[21]. Cultural institutions are typically slow to change for a myriad of different reasons. The Youth Panel's model of co-creation is a new way of working for the Gallery, requiring an examination of current practices to make space for the voices of young people. This can lead to frustrations and disappointments among those involved as change is rarely immediate and may not emerge for many years. As Mulvale G, Moll S, Phoenix M, et al further write, "Shifting paradigms does not happen overnight. It is a process where stakeholders engage with each other differently, move out of their comfort zones and consider how to enact the principles within institutional structures that may not necessarily support this transformational work"[22]. The Youth Panel representative role is one way of making time and space for the Gallery and young people to engage with each other, encouraging open dialogue and transparency in both their practices. The development of this role also addresses the need for the programme to shift between co-creation and consultation as well as manage the expectations which come from that shift. Youth Panel members are vocal and passionate about the changes they want to see from the Gallery, however, while the Panel's strength lies within co-creation, the consultation process has required

[20] Mulvale,*et al*, *Co-creating a new Charter for equitable and inclusive co-creation*.
[21] Mulvale,*et al*, *Co-creating a new Charter for equitable and inclusive co-creation*.
[22] Mulvale,*et al*, *Co-creating a new Charter for equitable and inclusive co-creation*.

more time to take shape. As the young people involved continue to learn about the Gallery's inner workings, the Gallery also learns about young peoples' expectations, values, and interests. This has supported a rich dialogue building trust over time between both stakeholders, bringing the panel and Gallery to a place where perspectives are respected, compromise is made possible where necessary, and change can be activated. In 2024, the Gallery will launch its new 5-year strategic plan. As part of the planning process, the Gallery organised a World Café for staff, community representatives, and Youth Panel members to inform this new strategy. Two Youth Panel members were invited to actively engage in these discussions. During the planning session, they spoke to the importance of learning from the Gallery's collection but also interpreting these artworks and histories to make them more accessible, fun, and engaging. In 2024, the Education Department developed an Education Policy in consultation with invited external parties, including a member of the Youth Panel. During a round table meeting between artists, various community members, representatives of the arts and culture sector, and a Youth Panel member, the Education team heard from a broad range of perspectives about the value of an inclusive, engaging, and accessible living policy document informed by and responsive to the current social, creative, and political landscape in Ireland.

The Youth Panel's model of co-creation demonstrates the immense potential for young people to activate monumental changes, not only within the Gallery but also wider society. In a *Trinity News* article, one Gallery Youth Panel member stated,

> Young people contribute original ideas and distinctive experiences to the art world, so it is essential that the Youth Panel create programmes for them and encourage them to become involved in art. Many young people are deeply committed to addressing social issues and are using art to effect change. Including young people in galleries can give these crucial discussions a stage and inspire them to investigate the role of art in social activism[23].

One example of this can be seen within the Be Proud programme, introduced by the Youth Panel as part of the Gallery's LGBTQIA+ Pride 2023 programme. Be Proud is rooted in the panel's core value of collaboration as members work with queer young people to co-create a celebratory and safe space for queer expressions of creativity, hopes, and lived experiences. From Friday, 21 June, to Sunday, 23 June, 2024, 1,061 people engaged with the Be Proud programme. Speaking on their involvement in the programme, one of the young artists wrote, "I know how important finding a community can be, and it's always a very special feeling to know you're not the only artist (or queer person) in the room"[24]. There is immense value in this strand of engagement as discrimination is widespread across Ireland's

[23] McCrory, E,*Youth Panel Emits Sound*, (Dublin: Trinity News, 2023) [http://trinitynews.ie/2023/04/youth-panel-emits-sound/].

[24] Kenny, O, *Apollo Project Mid Year 2024 Report* [Ireland, National Gallery of Ireland].

arts and creative sector, according to the Irish Theatre Institution's research report, *AMPLIFY: A Call for Transformative Action*. 63% of disabled respondents experienced disability-related microaggressions, 43% of LGBTQ+ respondents faced microaggressions related to their sexual orientation, gender identity, or intersex status, and 51% of racially and ethnically minoritised respondents experienced racial microaggressions[25]. These findings further illustrate the significance of the Youth Panel grounding their programme in lived experience, creating inclusive and accessible spaces for all. As one visitor to the *Be Proud* display shared, “These spaces matter. Thank you for bringing this collection together! Keep going”[26].

Conclusion

In conclusion, this paper has presented one way of linking the theory of co-creation with practice through the case study of the Gallery Youth Panel. Based on key learnings from the past six years of the Apollo Project, it’s important to note that young people are not a stagnant, homogenous group and, as such, a youth programme must be open to change alongside them. The Apollo Project continues to be flexible, collaborative, and mindful of the broad and varied experiences of young people in Ireland today. It will always be for young people, by young people. However, there are various challenges to developing and sustaining these models of co-creation within cultural institutions that are typically structured around certainty and hierarchies of knowledge and power. This can result in a power imbalance between cultural institutions and young people, which erodes the trust-building process. Set practices must change to make space for safe and meaningful dialogue and action. As Kemmis and McTaggart write, “These people might not have changed the world, but they have changed their world. Is that not the same thing? They might not have changed everything everywhere, but they have improved things for particular people in particular places and in many other places where their stories have travelled”[27]. This change is a living, active process building a resilience rooted in shared experiences of uncertainties, failures, joy, and humour. By developing and sustaining an adaptive model of co-creation, cultural institutions can collaborate with young people to bring a more thoughtful and innovative future for the wider arts and culture sector into the now.

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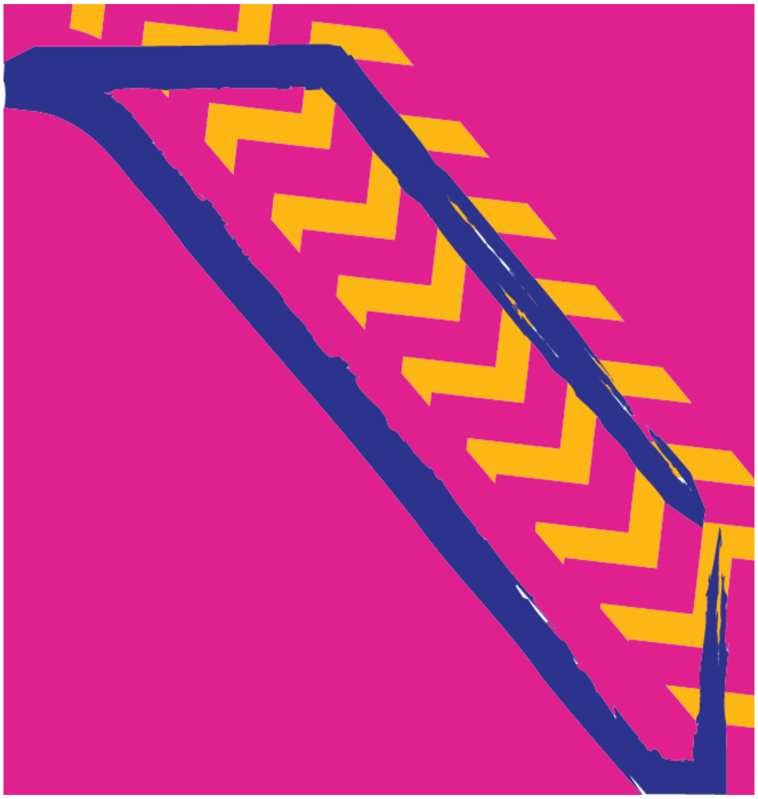
APPENDIX

A) *Apollo Project logo branding, DesingWorks*



B) *Images of National Gallery of Ireland Youth Panel activities*

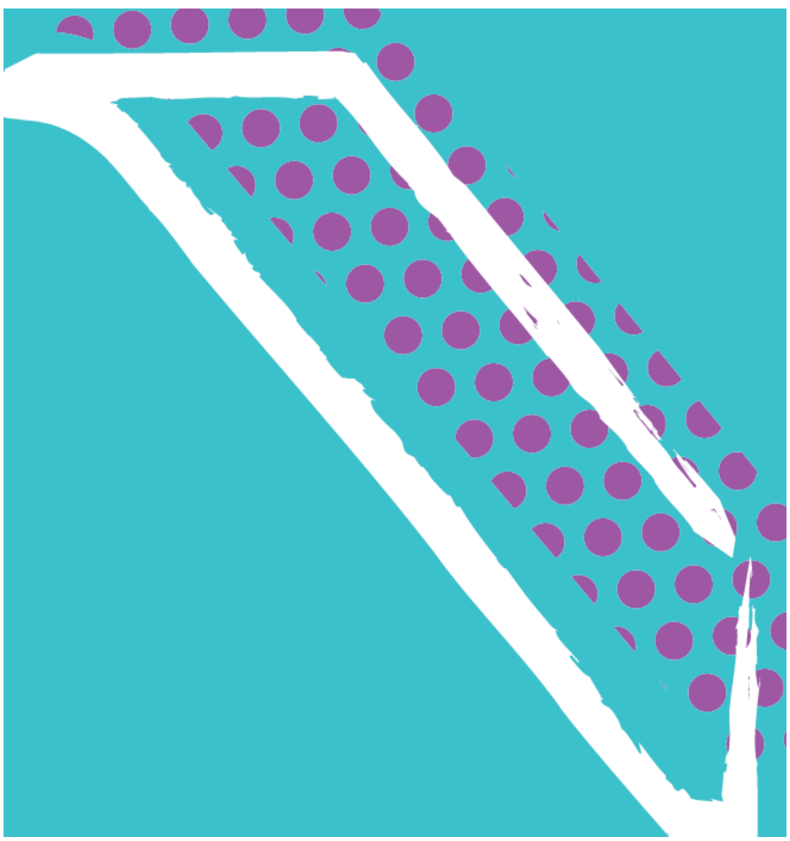
Image: Trailblazers, Rule Breakers, Art Makers Summer Programme*, National Gallery of Ireland*

Image: National Drawing Day 2023 at the Gallery, Ayesha Ahmad

Image: Be Proud display 2024, National Gallery of Ireland

Image: Sketching tour with the Youth Panel, National Gallery of Ireland

C) *National Gallery of Ireland Youth Panel colour scheme, Designworks*



The Cultural Impact of Theatre as a Public Sphere: A Case Study of Umay Theatre in Huashan 1914 Creative Park

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the significant yet often overlooked role of culture within the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The Ministry of Culture of Taiwan initiatives encourage the integration of corporate social responsibility with cultural development. Umay Theatre, situated in the historic Huashan 1914 Creative Park, serves as a public sphere that fosters cultural engagement and aligns with governmental cultural policies. The theatre supports local performing arts through diverse programming and annual events such as the Huashan Children's Arts Festival. These efforts enhance cultural appreciation and participation, thereby contributing to the broader social, cultural, and economic impacts of Huashan. The study underscores the theatre's role in promoting sustainable cultural development and improving the quality of life, highlighting the intricate linkages between cultural vitality and sustainable development objectives.

Keywords:

Cultural Impact,

Cultural and Creative Parks, Umay Theatre

Cultural Value

The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) have recently sparked widespread discussion in Taiwan. Government, enterprises, and public discourse primarily focus on achieving net-zero carbon emissions, mitigating climate change, and environmental sustainability. However, the role of “culture” as an overarching and integrating factor within these 17 goals and 169 targets is often overlooked, despite its significant yet intangible influence. In early 2023, The Ministry of Culture of Taiwan announced the project of “corporate social responsibility facilitate cultural development” within the scope of sustainable development practices to encourage enterprises to invest in cultural industries and cultural consumption. This initiative aims to harness cultural impact and demonstrate a committed effort towards cultural ESG.

Cultural and SDGs

On an international scale, as early as January 2001, Jon Hawkes drafted the concept of “The Fourth Pillar of Sustainability: Culture’s essential role in public planning” for the Cultural Development Network. He advocated for culture to play a substantial and significant role in government public planning. This includes sustainable development, well-being, diversity, globalization and uniqueness, civil society and citizen engagement, creativity and innovation, community building and social integration, livability and quality of life, identity and sense of place, ethics and moral progress, vitality, arts, and ecological sustainability - all of which pertain to governance of social, educational, and environmental policies and public affairs.

UNESCO has also made significant contributions to cultural sustainable development by publishing key declarations and conventions, such as the “Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity” in 2001 and the “Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions” in 2005. They further integrated cultural diversity into global agendas with initiatives like the “Culture for the 2030 Agenda” and the “Thematic Indicators for Culture in the 2030 Agenda” in 2019. In 2022, during the UNESCO World Conference on Cultural Policies, culture was recognized as a global public good essential for sustainable development. Additionally, other international organizations, including the European Union and the Global Cultural Districts Network (GCDN), have actively promoted cultural sustainable development through significant reports and policy monitoring.

In 2019, GCDN commissioned Geoffrey Crossick to write a report about “The Social Impact of Cultural Districts”, followed by “Cultural Districts: An Investment in Rich Urban Life” in 2021, and “Sustainable Development in Cultural Districts: A Public Realm Perspective” in 2023. These publications delve deeply into the social impact and cultural value generated by cultural districts. In “The Social Impact of Cultural Districts”, Crossick categorizes the social impact of cultural districts into six types: Equity and inclusion; Urban vibrancy and the public realm; Neighborhood and community; Targeted social interventions; Cultural social impacts; and Innovation impacts (GCDN, 2019:13). As in "Cultural Districts: An Investment in Rich Urban Life (2021)", cultural value is defined as "multi-dimensional and broadly refers to the worth attributed to arts and culture", and highlighting the diverse cultural values. It also defines impact as "something that changes as a result of cultural experience, at least temporarily", encompassing the variety of positive outcomes associated with arts and culture, from intrinsic benefits to tangible outcomes such as economic gains. This impact can be applied to individuals, communities, and cities, and include Cultural Impact, Social Impact, and Economic Impact (FIGURE 1). The impact dimensions and cultural value items proposed by GCDN correspond to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

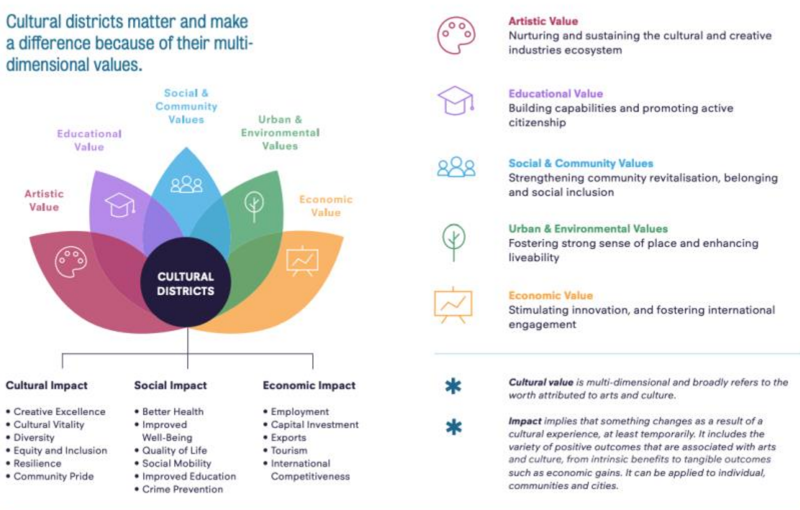

FIGURE 1. CULTURAL DIMENSIONAL VALUES

Source: Cultural Districts: An Investment in Rich Urban Life (GCDN, 2021:6)

Although Taiwan started relatively late in this international trend of sustainable development and cultural impact, in 2016, the Ministry of Culture commissioned the Taiwan Association of Cultural Policy Studies to write the "Preliminary Planning Research Report on the Policy of Cultural Impact Assessment". Following this, Taiwan held its first National Cultural Congress in 2017, published the Cultural Policy White Paper in 2018, and passed the "Fundamental Law of Culture" in 2019. These initiatives broadly discussed and encompassed issues such as sustainable development, cultural values, and cultural impact. Notably, Article 25 of the "Fundamental Law of Culture" stipulates that "the state shall assess the impact on national culture when concluding international treaties or agreements that may affect culture, in order to protect the cultural rights of the people and promote sustainable cultural development".

This research paper will use Umay Theatre as a case study to discuss how an experimental theatre located in Huashan 1914 Creative Park (Huashan) and operated by the Taiwan Creative Development Company (TCDD) under the commission of the Ministry of Culture, curates performing arts activities, aligns with government cultural policies, leads public discussions on art and culture, and promotes the development of the performing arts industry as well as cultural and creative industry. This paper also attempts to explore the cultural impact of the theatre as a public sphere through Christopher Balme's discourse.

Umay Theatre and Huashan 1914 Creative Park

Umay Theatre is an experimental theatre located in Huashan, which is situated in the core area of Taipei City. It serves as a professional performing arts venue and plays an essential part of the cultural network ecosystem of Huashan. Huashan was founded in 1914 during the Japanese colonial era as a privately-owned distillery “Houjou Wine Company”, where the “Moth Orchid Sake” was launched. In 1929, the Taiwan Governor-General’s Office, Monopoly Bureau, took over Houjou Wine Company and renamed it as “Monopoly Bureau Taipei Wine Factory”, which remained in operation until the late 1980s. When the distillery moved, the original warehouse was left abandoned for years while the government tried to figure out what to do with it.

In 1997, some artists formed the “Huashan Arts and Cultural District Promotion Association”, actively transforming the abandoned warehouses into an arts and cultural exhibition area. Coincidentally, artist Rong-yu Wang was also inspired by the European trend of repurposing large industrial sites or vacant spaces into cultural districts. At the end of 1997, he entered the park to perform an adaptation of Homer's epic “Gods of the Ancient Country - Sacrifice to Troy”, using the abandoned warehouses as an illusive post-apocalyptic landscape to restate the legend of the Trojan War, symbolizing Taiwan's chaotic era at that time. The premiere was well-received, but the next morning, Rong-yu Wang was arrested by the police for “occupying national land”. This incident brought together members of the original Huashan transformation advocacy group and other artists, attracting the attention of government officials, legislators, and the media. The combined efforts of civil societies and public discussions led to the successful transformation of Huashan into the “Huashan Arts and Cultural District” in 1998.

Through creative works advocating ideas, challenging the system, and civil societies advocacy injecting new appearances into idle spaces, Huashan has successfully prevented abandoned spaces from becoming nest of criminal activities. Today, it serves as an incubator for cultivating cultural and creative industry talents and new brands, a venue for emerging artists to make their debut, a quality living space for nearby residents, and enhances the leisure quality of life for the public in the Greater

Taipei area. Whether in terms of social mobility, crime prevention, improved education, better health, improved well-being, quality of life, or social mobility, Huashan has demonstrated its social impact beyond economic impact for the first time.

Later, the site was recognized as a protected historic property, and the urban regeneration of the old warehouse involved restoring the buildings and bringing them back to life. It was converted into a creative cultural park in 2007. The Ministry of Culture adopted the ROT model, commissioning TCCD to operate Huashan. The vision was to establish it as an incubation base for Taiwan's cultural and creative industries. They signed a 15-year operating rights contract. Several old warehouses have become exhibition spaces for art and fashion brands, featuring various exhibitions, cultural and creative stores, dining, and pop-up stores, which have brought vibrancy and economic benefits to Huashan. The park also hosts craft shops, an independent cinema, a live music house and a theatre. The phased development goals of Huashan initially focused on stable operations and economic development. In 2016, Huashan's operations turned profitable for the first time, leading to criticism from civil societies that the events and activities within Huashan were overly commercial and profit-oriented, dubbing it "pseudo-cultural creativity". They noted Huashan significant lack of publicness and public welfare, which a cultural and creative park should possess. This public opinion stimulated TCCD to accelerate their efforts in enhancing the park's public interest, public welfare, and professionalism.

Around the same time, performing arts spaces within Huashan were successively established, starting with the Fruit Wine Rehearsal Space, which provided space for performing arts groups to rehearse and perform a small-scale works. The Arch Hall served as a venue for experimental performances, script readings, and stand-up comedy shows. Both spaces could also be used as classrooms for courses related to performing arts, as well as venues for lectures and workshops. Umay Theatre was renovated and completed in December 2016, which was the final piece of puzzle for Huashan's art and cultural space. Over the years, Huashan has continuously enhanced its spaces for arts and cultural creativity cultivation. By 2019, the area dedicated to arts and cultural creativity with Huashan had reached 15.65% of the total park are, exceeding the 12% requirement stipulated in the contract with the Ministry of Culture.

Theatrical Public Sphere

Christopher Balme (2014) once said at his book, The Theatrical Public Sphere, "the theatre's role in the public sphere is threefold: as an interlocutor via its plays and productions; as an institution where it may be the subject of debate; and as a communicator where it harnesses various media channels to broadcast itself and its messages. There three, often interlocking functions combine to form the theatrical public sphere”. The building of Umay Theatre was established in 1931, initially serving as a plum wine and whisky factory and was designated as a municipal historical site by Taipei City government in 2003. It was later being renovated and officially opened as “Umay Theatre” in December 2016. Umay theatre is a professional and well-equipped performing arts venue with a capacity of 160-250, it could be presented as a thrust stage, a proscenium stage or a black box, its mission is to serve as a platform for artists to tryout their creativities, to promote the vitality younger generation, and commit itself to promote Taiwanese artists and performing arts groups to align with global networks.

The operational objectives of Umay Theatre are divided into two main domains: the cultivation of arts and cultural talents as well as performing arts programs incubation projects. Each year, Umay theatre collaborates with several non-profit organizations, performing arts groups, and universities to nurture future creatives and arts administrators. Regarding program incubation, Umay theatre acts as a curator and leads the planning of the Huashan Children’s Arts Festival every summer, organizing performances and workshops suitable for families in collaboration with performing arts groups. Additionally, Umay theatre also integrates technology and performing arts to host transdisciplinary performance and seminars. The “Script Market” is another project to cultivate scriptwriting talent, which includes play readings, post-performance discussions, and master dialogues, aiming to create a platform that connects scriptwriters with cross-disciplinary collaboration opportunities. Furthermore, the theatre hosts traditional opera performance as part of its cultural heritage preservation projects and organize numbers activities and forums in line with government policies.

Umay Theatre has clear guidelines for space usage and application, allowing performing arts groups to apply for performance, rehearsal, or press conference purposes. The theatre's performance programs are diverse, encompassing music, dance, drama, traditional opera, technology and arts, transdisciplinary performances, circus and more. It also collaborates with the major Japanese female pop idol group AKB48 to form AKB48 Team TP in Taiwan, regularly hosting pop concerts at Umay Theatre. The theatre also supports cultural intermediary organizations in organizing seminars, forums, and workshops related to cultural issues, fulfilling the artistic, educational, entertainment, and public missions of the theatre.

According to statistics from Huashan over the past five years (2019-2023), Umay Theatre has an annual average space utilization rate of nearly 60%, with about 140 activities held annually, attracting approximately15,000 participants. While the entire Huashan hosts an average of 970 performances per year, with around 345,000 attendees, accounting for 47% of Huashan’s entire activities with all kinds and 13% of Huashan’s entire total attendees. The number of Umay Theatre's activities and attendees account for around 14% and 4% of all performance activities in Huashan, respectively.

Area	Activities of Umay Theatre		Performances of Entire Huashan		All Activities of Entire Huashan	
Year	Activities	Participants (thousand)	Activities	Participants (thousand)	Activities	Participants (thousand)
2019	144	16.6	1171	565.4	2514	3970
2020	165	16.6	1025	270.7	2071	1840
2021	119	10.9	682	176.6	1482	2030
2022	153	19.1	946	258.1	2002	2030
2023	103	12.8	1030	454.5	2169	3350
Average	137	15.2	971	345.1	2048	2650

TABLE 1. HUASHAN'S ACTIVITIES AND PARTICIPANTS FROM 2019-2023.

Source: Huashan internal data.

Based on the data, it is undeniable that there is room for improvement in the usage frequency, number of activities, and audience participation ratio at Umay Theatre. However, we also understand that performing arts programs are different from (visual) exhibitions or other activities. First, the general public often perceives performing arts as "exquisite art," which can be less approachable and requiring more knowledge to appreciate it. Secondly, attending a performance is a form of experience economy, without experiencing it in the theatre, it is difficult for audiences to predict their preferences, unless they are interested in the specific performing arts groups, artists or topics, so audiences may hesitate to purchase tickets. Moreover, once a performing arts group has selected a theatre for their performance, they are constrained by the theatre's space and seating capacity. Regardless of how brilliant or popular the program is, Umay Theatre, for example, can only accommodate a maximum of 250 audiences. Even if a show is successful and there is a desire for additional performance, the theatre's schedule might not allow it. All these factors can affect the theatre's utilization rate and audience participation.

In 1968, American economists William J. Baumol and William G. Bowen proposed the "Cost Disease Phenomenon." In the performing arts industry, performing arts groups and theatre operations heavily rely on human resources as production factors. Productivity is difficult to improve and cannot easily be replaced by technology or artificial intelligence. Unit price (ticket prices and venue rental fees) cannot be reduced due to competition; instead, they may increase due to inflation, which can deter consumers and directly impact participation in performing arts activities.

Therefore, when we discuss theatre operations, we should think more about whether the topics explored in cultural and artistic programs have educational purpose or social implications, whether the program genres include innovative ideas or classic inheritance, and whether the overall operation of the theatre in terms of program planning demonstrate cultural diversity, equality and inclusion. We should evaluate whether the artistic, educational, social, community, urban and environmental, and economic values presented by the programs, performing arts groups and theatres are recognized by audiences. Additionally, we should progressively align with the “sustainable production”, “sustainable architecture”, and “sustainable operation” mentioned in the “Theatre Green Book”. Moreover, we should examine the cultural and social impacts brought by the theatre as a public domain.

Geoffrey Crossick (2019) once said that cultural districts would benefit from understanding the ecosystem of diverse partnerships within which they play a key part as a potential social impact in itself. Cultural districts can do more to clarify their social impact priorities and how they relate to their programs and other activities. This principle can similarly be applied to theatres.

Huashan Children’s Arts Festival

Umay Theatre was inaugurated at the end of 2016, and after six months of trial operations, it launched the “Huashan Children’s Arts Festival” in 2017. This festival aims to cultivate art appreciation for the arts and increase participation from an early age, thereby lowering the barriers to accessing performing arts, and bridging the gap between the theatre and the public. The Festival is held annually from late June to August (with the exception of 2021 due to the pandemic) and exclusively features original productions by local Taiwanese performing arts groups. Each year, 4 to 6 groups are selected, with each program performing approximately 5 to10 sessions. The collaboration involves Huashan provides the performance venue (primarily Umay Theatre), production funding and marketing, allowing performing arts groups to focus on innovative scripts and creative performance arts form. Umay Theatre also encourages selected groups to host workshops related to their performance topics or genres.

The festival’s performances have been diverse and rich, including circus musicals, beatboxing, storytelling, puppet theatre, glove puppetry, shadow theatre, musical theatre, and baby theatre. Topics covered in these programs range from environmental awareness, family relationships, folklore, monster stories, classic literature adaptations and reinterpretations, ecological protection, and sustainability. Many works have received high praise following their debut at the Festival, leading to invitations to perform in other cities or becoming popular programs at other venues, thereby achieving “sustainable production” and fulfilling the mission of Huashan to support the Taiwanese performing arts industry. This, in turn, advances cultural impact through creative excellence, cultural vitality, diversity, equity and inclusion, resilience, and community pride.

Cultural Impact and Social Impact

Lin Pu, the Cultural Director of Huashan, stated in an interview, “Many families come to Huashan for recreation on weekends. Therefore, starting in 2016, we began to consider how to curate activities like the Children’s Arts Festival to provide more joyful experiences and create shared memories for families. Our goal is to cultivate the next generation of audiences, integrating arts education into family life and become a natural part of their daily experiences”. Based on my years of teaching art appreciation courses at the university level, I have observed that students who attended performances with their families as children often continue to participate in arts activities as they grow, shaping their artistic preferences and cultural tastes, and developing a sense of cultural identity. They are also more willing to support arts and engage with cultural issues. The impact of viewing experiences subtly influences life, indicating that cultural impact cannot be immediate but requires long-term cultivation and accumulation. The biggest challenge is its difficulty in being quantified through data and necessitates long-term qualitative research. Huashan leverages the Children’s Arts Festival as a “nudge” to bring the arts into family life, planting cultural seeds, and gradually enhancing cultural impact.

Just like most cultural districts around the world, Umay theatre’s ecosystem containing a varied balance of non-profit arts organization, commercial creative businesses, retailing and leisure, small and large cultural institutions, and their customers and audiences (GCDN, 2019). It brings up lots of cultural values and has its own cultural impact and social impact. In order to sustain those ecosystems, it requires a wide mix of stakeholders and partners, including public sectors like the Ministry of Cultural, Department of Cultural Affairs and Department of Urban Development of Taipei Government; the private sectors like its operator TCCD, creative business and social agencies, theatre users as performing arts groups, audiences, consumers and visitors in Huashan, as well as influential third-party actors like local communities, cultural associations, cultural advocates, scholars and civil societies. Those stakeholders would fit into sustainability of cultural governance, sustainability of cultural economy, sustainability of cultural environment, and sustainability of cultural society as stated in FIGURE 2.

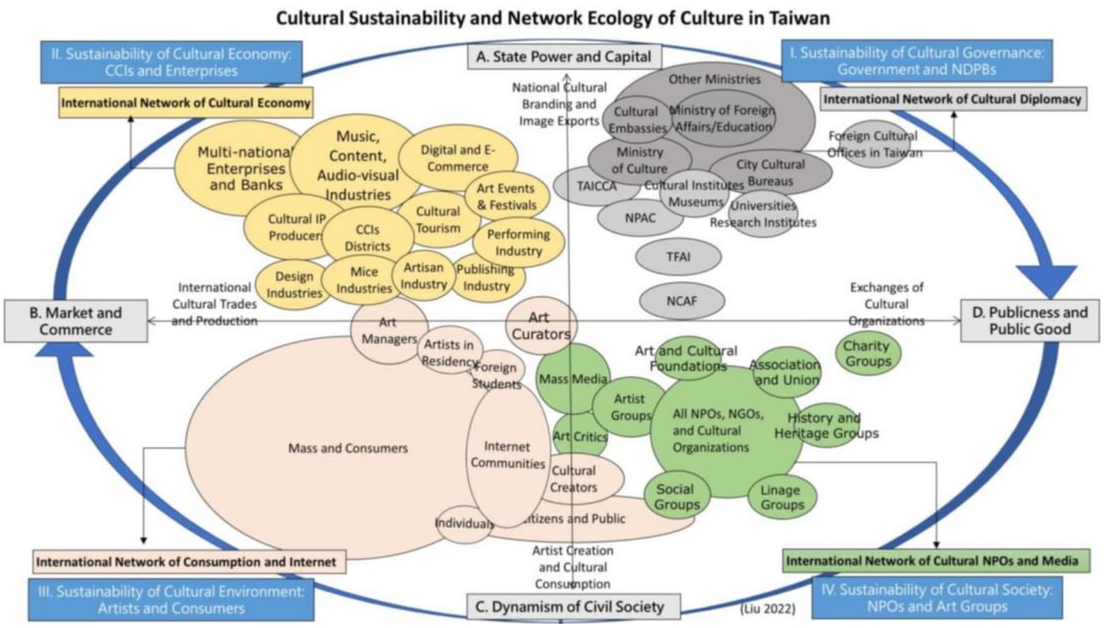

FIGURE 2. CREATIVE CULTURAL PARK NETWORK ECOSYSTEM

Source: Jerry, Liu (2022)

Conclusion

Edward Tylor defined culture as “the complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, law, morals, custom and any other capabilities acquired by man as a member of society”. Art and performing arts are ultimately just parts of this broader cultural framework, and as a public sphere and medium, the functions, roles, and values of theatres continue to evolve with the changing world. Umay Theatre, which has been in operation for less than eight years, is a relatively young venue. However, it has already established its own brand through "Huashan Children’s Arts Festival" and has installed 5G equipment to become an experimental venue for tech-art performance. Although it has faced operational challenges due to the opening of new public-funded venues in recent years, its convenient location, the vitality and diversity of Huashan, the cultural heritage value of the venue itself, and the flexibility of its current operator, TCCD, all suggest Umay theatre a promising future for diversified development.

Since its opening, Umay Theatre and Huashan have consistently fulfilled the threefold roles proposed by Balme as “an interlocutor, an institution, and a communicator”. They have continuously deepening their values, whether it is the aesthetic value, spiritual value, social value, historical value, symbolic value and authenticity value as described by Throsby (2001), or the intrinsic, instrumental, and institutional values as proposed by Holden (2015). Umay Theatre actively pursues goals of creative excellence, cultural vitality, diversity, equity and inclusion, resilience, and community pride.

As a public sphere, Umay Theatre significantly influences the facilitation of arts educatios in Taiwan, the cultivation of performing arts groups, the innovation and preservation of art forms, the development of cultural and creative industries, advocacy for cultural issues, and enhancement of the quality of life. With the abundant operational energy of Umay Theatre and Huashan, these cultural impact, social impact, and economic impact continue to permeate people's daily life and achieve a better future for all.

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Memory of the Sieve: Art and Cultural Heritage

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ABSTRACT

The exhibition titled "Memory of the Sieve" was held at the internationally acclaimed Kenan Yavuz Ethnography Museum in Bespınar village, located in the northeastern region of Turkey's Bayburt province, as part of the inaugural artist placement program in 2023. In this program that I curated, artist Loya Kader Ozturkmen reintroduced the sieve, which she used as a material in her art practice, to the present day. Thus, the sieve converged as an object in the common ground of the museum and the practice of the artist.

Keywords:

Sieve

Cultural Heritage

Art Exhibition

Sustainability

In her art pieces created with the use of different materials to create a medium inside and outside the sieve itself, the artist reflects the traditional phases of wheat cutting, gathering, and grinding practices of the local people in a reflective manner, also taking us on a journey back to the past. Constantly questioning the concept of reality in her own practice, the artist this time brought the past and present together into her agenda. The present time in the artist's paintings created with materials can be interpreted as reality, while the past can be conjured as a changing perception: The variability of the concept of reality in perception concurrent with the changing notion of the individual...

The exhibition reminds us of the importance sieves hold in Anatolian culture and daily life. The sieve, which was once a daily use object and later forgotten in a corner of houses without use, has regained value through the creativity of the artist.

Loya reflects the past time photographs of the local people on sieves with drawings and painting over the mesh, while placing the endemic plants of the region and wheat ears attaching with the help of epoxy.

The "Memory of the Sieve" exhibition opened up a connection in our memories not for what we experience today, but for different realities from the past; while the sieve, which is a part of our cultural heritage, has been sustainably utilized and passed on to future generations.

Introduction

Sustainable art is a burgeoning field within the contemporary art world that seeks to address environmental issues through the creative repurposing of materials. One common approach to sustainable art is the transformation of unused daily objects into works of art. By taking items that would otherwise be discarded and giving them new life as art pieces, artists are able to draw attention to the potential for reuse and recycling in our society.

In Turkish culture, the sieve, a traditional tool used for many years, has gradually become a disappearing everyday object. Within the framework of sustainable art, contemporary art has become a means to revive the sieve, reminding us of its significance and bringing unused wooden-framed sieves back to life.

In this study, I will explain an exhibition project where the traditional everyday object of a sieve is transformed into an art piece.

The exhibition titled "Memory of the Sieve" held at the internationally acclaimed Kenan Yavuz Ethnography Museum in Bespınar village, located in the northeastern region of Turkey's Bayburt province, as part of the inaugural artist placement program last year. In this program that I curated, artist Loya Kader Ozturkmen reintroduced the sieve, which she used as a material in her art practice, to the present day. Thus, the sieve converged as a material and object in the common ground of the museum and the artist.

In her art pieces created with the use of different materials to create a medium inside and outside the sieve itself, the artist reflects the traditional phases of wheat cutting, gathering, and grinding practices of the local people in a reflective manner, also taking us on a journey back to the past. Constantly questioning the concept of reality in her own practice, the artist this time brought the past and present together into her agenda. The present time in the artist's paintings created with materials can be interpreted as reality, while the past can be conjured as a changing perception: The variability of the concept of reality in perception concurrent with the changing notion of the individual...

In conclusion, it is evident that the artist has reinterpreted the sieve both in terms of content and form in various ways. By placing wheat ears inside the sieve and drawing images on the mesh, a common object has transcended its traditional purpose of production and use, reaching a conceptual dimension. The transformation of a traditional object into an artwork has reminded art enthusiasts and the local community of the sieve, evoking nostalgia and creating an awareness to preserve disappearing values. An ordinary cultural artifact has thus been transformed into a contemporary work of art, fostering a new artistic cultural element and environment. The artist's creation, inspired by this object from the past, is seen as a mission to be conveyed to other artists and future generations.

Sustainability in Art

The practice of repurposing everyday objects not only reduces waste and promotes sustainability, but also challenges traditional notions of what constitutes art. By incorporating materials such as plastic bottles, old newspapers, or discarded electronics into their work, artists are able to create thought-provoking pieces that encourage viewers to reconsider their own consumption habits and environmental impact. In addition to the environmental benefits of using recycled materials, sustainable art also has the potential to spark conversations about social issues such as consumerism, resource depletion, and the interconnectedness of human activity with the natural world. Through their work, sustainable artists are able to raise awareness of these pressing concerns and inspire others to take action towards a more sustainable future.

In contemporary times, both artists and designers dedicate significant time and effort to the sustainability of art, creating works that serve both as art pieces and design products. There are renowned figures globally recognized for their contributions to the field of sustainable art and design. The work of these artists and designers make significant contributions to this movement through innovative and environmentally friendly practices.

Olafur Eliasson is known for his large-scale installations that often incorporate natural elements, Eliasson emphasizes ecological awareness and sustainability. Studio Swine, design duo focuses on projects that address issues like waste and resource scarcity, creating works from recycled and sustainable materials. Fernando Laposse creates design pieces using local materials and traditional techniques from his native Mexico, promoting sustainability and community development. Formafantasma, an Italian design duo researches and experiments with sustainable materials and processes, aiming to reduce the environmental impact of their works. Tomás Saraceno is an artist who merges art, architecture, and science. Saraceno’s projects often explore sustainable living and the interconnectedness of ecosystems. EcoLogicStudio , an architecture and design studio which develops projects that integrate living organisms, such as algae, to create sustainable and innovative designs. Iris van Herpen is a fashion designer known for her use of cutting-edge technology and sustainable materials to create her avant-garde collections. Neri Oxman, an architect and designer whose work at the intersection of biology, technology, and design focuses on creating sustainable and innovative solutions. Marjan van Aubel specializes in solar technologies and integrates sustainability into everyday objects through innovative design. Studio Roosegaarde creates interactive designs that improve daily life in urban environments while promoting sustainability.

These artists and designers individually address environmental challenges and advance sustainable practices in their respective fields. Through they incorporate varied approaches and innovative techniques, these creatives show how art and design can bestow a more sustainable future.

In addition to the contributions of artists and designers to environmental sustainability, the transformation of everyday objects, fabrics or customs and traditions from various cultures into physical or conceptual artworks are also considered a form of feasibility in art. Numerous examples of this phenomenon exist. For instance, the Kente cloth, traditionally used by African tribes, is woven by the Asante people in Ghana and carries special meanings. Traditionally woven with specific patterns and colors, Kente cloths symbolize social status, belonging, and cultural heritage when worn. Today, Kente cloth is not only used in traditional ceremonies but also incorporated into modern designs by fashion designers, gaining international recognition as a work of art. Through this process, Kente cloth preserves its cultural heritage while transforming into a new and sustainable artwork, reaching broader audiences. Such examples contribute to the preservation and perpetuation of cultural heritage and the sustainable development of art and creativity.

Sustainability In Turkish Art and Cultural Objects

In traditional Turkish culture, there are also examples where everyday objects have been transformed into artworks by contemporary artists over time. Contemporary artists convert everyday objects, no longer significant in modern life, into art pieces or reinterpret them using different materials and techniques, drawing inspiration from these objects.

The artists interpret functional objects from daily life within their own cultural contexts either in form or content. When adapting traditional objects into ceramic, inspirations occur in two ways: some artists replicate traditional forms closely, while others alter shape and color to add new meanings. By doing so, these artists preserve and convey tradition to future generations.The historical progression of ceramic art reveals its initial functionality, with contemporary ceramic artworks drawing heavily from past cultural references. This connection underscores the robust traditional foundation of ceramic art.

A good example is the reflection of traditional Turkish objects in contemporary ceramic art, highlighting national artists who incorporate these objects into their works. Traditional objects are defined as inanimate items with weight, volume, and color, which can be classified based on usage, material, and context. The term "traditional" encompasses cultural remnants and practices passed down through generations, adapting to contemporary needs while preserving core characteristics.

Dowry Bundles were traditionally used by newly married women, they symbolized future aspirations. Artist Safiye Basar reinterprets them in porcelain, embedding cultural and societal commentary, particularly on women's roles. The Bath Bowls are round water-pouring tools used in baths, made from materials like silver and copper. Artists like Mehmet Tuzum Kızılcan and Hadiye Guvenates Kılıc incorporate these forms into their works, using traditional motifs and techniques to emphasize cultural heritage.

The Clogs were wooden slippers used in wet areas, reimagined by artists to reflect changing cultural values and to preserve the heritage. The Rubber Shoes were commonly worn in Anatolian villages; these are now used by artist Zehra Cobanlı to comment on women's social status and the passage of time. The Amulets were made up of harmal seeds used for protection against the evil eye and today transformed into ceramic forms by Aysegul Turedi Özen. The old Door Knockers symbolized social status in the past, these are recreated by Aydan Birdevim to reflect cultural identity and lost sensitivities. The Bells were used in various cultures for different functions; artist Betül Demir Karakaya adds acoustic and aesthetic dimensions to these forms. Tatting Shuttles were tools for making lace, artist Mustafa Tunçalp's works evoke historical and cultural connections to Anatolian craftsmanship. Artist Ezgi Hakan Martinez creates ceramic pillows that juxtapose the softness associated with them against the hard material of ceramics. Burçak Bingöl's works incorporate traditional Ottoman ceramic forms within contemporary contexts, questioning the visibility and preservation of traditional heritage.

The preservation and reinterpretation of traditional objects in contemporary Turkish ceramic art are vital for cultural continuity. Artists play a crucial role in transforming these objects, creating new cultural elements and artistic expressions. The artists will continue to draw inspiration from traditional objects, fulfilling an important mission in preserving and transmitting cultural heritage to future generations.

History of the Sieve

The history of the sieve dates back to the early agricultural practices of humanity. Evidence of the first use of sieves can be found in the remnants of the Mesopotamian and Egyptian civilizations. Archaeological excavations have revealed that sieves were used in these ancient societies to clean grains and separate seeds. During the periods of Ancient Greece and Rome, sieves were widely employed, particularly for sifting flour. Throughout the Middle Ages, sieves became indispensable in kitchens. The sieves from this era were typically produced with wooden frames and woven mesh. Following the Renaissance period, the materials used in the construction of sieves diversified, and metal sieves became more common. The Industrial Revolution further increased the production and utilization of sieves. In the modern world, traditional sieves have become rare. Nowadays, sieves made from plastic, stainless steel, and other durable materials are manufactured for both industrial and domestic use.

When delving into the history of the sieve and embarking on a research journey in art history, it is noticed that many artists depicted sieves while portraying famous individuals. The sieves held by these famous figures are imbued with metaphorical meanings beyond their utilitarian purpose.

In her catalogue *Art and Love in Renaissance Italy*, Andrea Bayer discusses a notable painting (circa 1540–1544) by Moretto da Brescia, found in a private collection in New York. This artwork portrays the Vestal Tuccia as a contemporary woman holding a sieve, symbolizing chastity. The inclusion of Augustine's quote from *De civitate Dei* reinforces the theme of purity. Tuccia's opulent attire and refined hairstyle integrate ancient iconography into the luxury of Renaissance portraits, suggesting the painting was intended for a learned individual familiar with ecclesiastical commentaries.

The depiction of Tuccia within church walls was not uncommon, as seen in the San Francesco church of Volterra, where her bust serves as a baptismal font with the word *innocent* inscribed. This links the act of dipping hands into water with the church community's purity and innocence.

Queen Elizabeth I's 'sieve portraits' take this Italian tradition further, presenting herself as a new Tuccia to demonstrate her knowledge of humanist iconographic conventions of chastity. These portraits emphasize Elizabeth's chastity and her conscious decision to remain unmarried, asserting her control over her body in a patriarchal society. The sieve, familiar in emblem literature like Geoffrey Whitney's 1586 work, symbolizes both Elizabeth's private and public personas, reflecting her unique position as a virgin queen.

The sieve in these portraits is paradoxical, representing both a celebration of chastity and Elizabethan eroto-politics. It symbolizes the queen's sexuality and power, appropriate for a virgin ruler. This duality extends to the representations and writings of other Renaissance women, who also navigated the tension between private and public identities.

Gail Kern Paster's article "Leaky Vessels" highlights how the female body was often depicted as a leaking sieve in Tudor and Stuart periods, symbolizing uncontrollable bodily fluids and gossip. This association of women with fluidity contrasts sharply with the virtuous sieve of Elizabeth, adding ambivalence to the motif. The sieve thus swings between positive and negative meanings, reflecting societal contradictions about female rulers.

In conclusion, Elizabeth's association with Tuccia's sieve separates her from other women, emphasizing her unique status. The sieve portraits combine her dual identities, reflecting the ambivalence and complexities of being both a desiring woman and a public figure. Elizabeth's enigmatic words capture this struggle: "I am and not; I freeze and yet am burn'd;/ Since from myself, my other self I turn'd." The sieve, embodying a binary nature, becomes a powerful symbol of choice and loss, underscoring Elizabeth's exceptional and multifaceted identity.

Kenan Yavuz Ethnography Museum

Established in 2013 in the Beşpınar village of Bayburt, the Kenan Yavuz Ethnography Museum is guided by a consultative board consisting of academics, writers, artists, and media communication experts, along with the participation of the local community (Kenan Yavuz Ethnography Museum, 2021). During its construction phase, stone and wooden materials collected from demolished houses and mansions in deserted villages and towns were used. The museum consists of a Village House, Water Mill, Oil Mill, Amphitheater and Open-Air Cinema, Village Square, Dede Korkut Turkish Identity Library, Mosque, Bakery, Exhibition Area, Covered Exhibition Halls, Swings, Pigeon House, Kitchen, Shanty, and Mansion. The museum employs the concept of a living museum, aiming to preserve "old life" while making it visible within the context of the "new life." In this context, events such as scythe mowing festivals, tandir festivals, threshing festivals, kem spinning festivals, series of Bayburt folk songs clips, and bulgur-making festivals are organized. The museum presents original examples of Bayburt folklore to visitors, appealing to their visual and emotional perceptions. The tradition of "mouth barı" can be performed on the earthen roof of the village house, and a village wedding can be held in front of the bride climbing the bride's pole. Next to the museum, a "Loru Han" built in the Seljuk architecture style has been constructed as a lodging project within the museum.

The purposes of the museum include preserving enduring beauties, engraving them into social memory, and carrying cultural richness into the future. The common denominator of these three objectives is sustainability; the ability to sustain memory, beauty, and richness.

Kenan Yavuz Ethnography Museum consists of 26 different venues on an area of 15 thousand square meters in Bayburt Province, Demirözü District, Beşpınar Village, under the roof of the Kenan Yavuz Cultural Foundation, was given the “Museum of the Year in Europe” award in 2021 by the European Museum Forum (EMF/EMYA) and won the European Union Cultural Heritage Europa Nostra award in 2022, becoming the first museum and institution to have the world’s two prestigious awards in its field. The European Museum Forum (EMF) owns the European Museum of the Year Award (EMYA) Silletto Award, which is given to a museum that demonstrates excellence in involving the local community in the planning, development, and implementation of museum and heritage projects, or receives support from volunteers to empower the public. In 2021, the Silletto Award was presented to Kenan Yavuz Ethnography Museum for finding effective ways to advocate for the return to local roots and heritage, and demonstrating how cultural projects built on village heritage can revitalize rural, social, and economic life (EMYA Silletto Award, 2021).

On 24 January 2023 the museum also received “2022 Ministry of Culture and Tourism Special Award” by President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan at a ceremony held in Ankara. The museum transfers the ancient culture of Anatolia to future generations. Kenan Yavuz Ethnography Museum, which grows and expands its activities day by day with the mottos What Comes to Us Lives us, Return to the Roots, Museum that lives and keeps alive, hosted hundreds of thousands of visitors from Turkey and abroad.

The meanings and definitions of museums are constantly evolving. The definitions and working methods of museums are determined by the International Council of Museums (ICOM). ICOM has designated the theme for the year 2023 as "Museums, Sustainability, and Well-being." Among the museums focusing on this theme, two emerging types that draw their strength from communities are noteworthy: "community museums" and "ecomuseums."

The Exhibition: Memory of the Sieve

Considering the museum's founding purpose, objectives, all the activities and projects carried out so far, it can be said that the museum is progressing towards sustainable living, art, and culture. Last year, I curated and advised an artist residency program aimed at bringing to light the wooden sieves, which are on the verge of disappearance, but are still occasionally used by housewives in some local homes.

The use of old and traditional sieves as a tool for painting scenes from old photographs is a unique and creative method that adds a touch of nostalgia and history to this traditional object. This technique involves using a sieve, typically made of metal or wood, to sift and scatter paint onto a canvas or paper, creating a textured and atmospheric effect reminiscent of old photographs.

The process of using a sieve to paint scenes from old photographs requires a delicate touch and a keen eye for detail. Artist carefully selects the colors and textures of paint to create a sense of depth and dimension in the work, mimicking the grainy and faded look of vintage photographs. By gently tapping the sieve over the surface of the canvas, artist can create a soft and ethereal quality that captures the essence of a bygone era.

The use of old and traditional sieves in this artistic technique adds a sense of history and tradition to the artwork. Sieves have been used for centuries in various cultures for sifting flour, grains, and other materials, making them a familiar and timeless tool. By repurposing these everyday objects as a medium for art, artists are able to connect the past with the present, bridging the gap between traditional craftsmanship and contemporary creativity. In addition to painting scenes from old photographs, artists can also use old and traditional sieves to create abstract and patterned designs that evoke a sense of nostalgia and whimsy. By experimenting with different techniques and materials, artists can push the boundaries of traditional art objects and create unique and innovative works that showcase the versatility and beauty of these humble tools.

Overall, the use of old and traditional sieves as a medium for painting scenes from old photographs is a creative and compelling technique that adds an element of history and tradition to traditional art objects. By repurposing these everyday tools in a new and imaginative way, artists are able to create artwork that is both visually striking and emotionally evocative, capturing the essence of a bygone era in a modern and innovative way.

Conclusion

Under the theme of Sustainability in Art, the aim was to revive the sieve, an everyday object on the brink of extinction yet rich in cultural significance, through artistic exhibitions and events. Despite its simple appearance, the sieve has been used by various civilizations throughout history and has been featured in numerous paintings in art history to convey different meanings and expressions.

This research aligns with the goals and objectives of the Kenan Yavuz Ethnography Museum, located in Beşpınar village of Bayburt, Turkey, where the exhibition "The Memory of the Sieve" was held.

The study highlights the decline of this craft, according to the estimated figures, where artisans who once produced two hundred wooden-framed sieves a day now make only about twenty. By showcasing this exhibition, there is an effort to revive this fading craft and honor the master artisans. The sieve is presented not merely as a material object but as one with diverse meanings and significance in the worlds of art and culture, contributing to the literature. This discussion also brings to light the goals, meaning, and importance of contemporary museology.

Transforming a contemporary cultural object like the sieve into a work of art introduces a new perspective on change, diversity, and sustainability in the field of contemporary art. The demonstration of this study is expected to inspire other artists to create different works, ensuring that traditional objects at risk of disappearing continue to be preserved and celebrated through art and artists from past to present.

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Small but Mighty[28]: Selected Business Model Practices of Small European Festivals in Peripheral Areas

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ABSTRACT

Small music festivals in peripheral regions face significant challenges such as limited infrastructure, demographic shifts, and audience engagement difficulties. This article presents the findings from exploratory research conducted within the "SMA! Small Festivals Accelerator: A New Model for the Sustainable Development of Small Festivals in Peripheral Areas" project based on qualitative data from interviews with festival directors and managers, identifying key strengths and strategies for overcoming challenges. Supported by the Creative Europe Programme and involving organizations and festivals in Italy, Spain, Macedonia, Estonia, and Germany, the project aims to create guidelines for developing sustainable business models applicable not only to music festivals but also to other cultural events in remote or challenging areas.

Keywords:

Business models
Festivals
Accessibility
Sustainability
Community

[28] Small but mighty! This phrase references an article in The Guardian from 2019[28], https://www.theguardian.com/travel/2019/may/01/20-great-boutique-music-festivals-in-europe-summer-2019

The article draws attentio to: Mission, Values, and Legacy Building, Festival's Unique Value Proposition, Accessibility and Environmental Sustainability, People, Partnerships, and Assets Channels and Communication and Revenue Model - Money In and Out.

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Introduction

How does it look like a sustainable business model for a small festival located in a remote/peripheral area? This article illustrates the exploratory research findings conducted within the project "*SMA! Small Festivals Accelerator: a new model for the sustainable development of small festivals in peripheral areas project* " (from now on, SMA!), a project supported by the Creative Europe Programme and run by different organisations and festivals in Italy, Spain, Macedonia, Estonia, and Germany[29]. The project aims to build guidelines for developing business models that are not limited to music festivals only but could be valuable for other festival organisers or interested people wishing to set up a festival in remote/challenging areas.

Motivated by the realisation that musical festivals can reveal peripheral regions to enthusiasts and professionals worldwide, this research focuses on developing guidelines for a replicable business model for small and medium-sized festivals in peripheral areas. Despite this potential, several challenges hinder this type of festival's long-term competitiveness on international circuits, such as:

- Infrastructure limiting attendee accessibility.

[29] SMA! project partner Glenn Gould Association, Italy (Project leader), Melting Pro Learning (Italy), Turismo Vivencial (Spain), Raum3 Konzertveranstaltung GMBH (Germany), Password Production Doo Skopje (Macedonia), Music Estonia (Estonia).

- Ageing local populations and the impact of emigration on demographics.
- Difficulties in renewing and maintaining audience engagement.
- Professional expertise and skills shortage.
- Lack of institutional and financial support, as it is challenging to sustain and develop the festivals to a level comparable to those organised by large sector multinationals.

We conducted exploratory research throughout March 2021 and April 2022, during the COVID-19 pandemic peak, by interviewing 15 festival directors or managers in high-level positions nominated by the SMA! Project partners. The SMA! project leader, Ypsigrock Festival (Italy), Haldern Pop (Germany) and D Festival (Macedonia), served as benchmarks to identify other festivals with comparable size, location, and cultural approach. It was a challenging time for everyone, especially for the festivals, which are physical events that rely mainly on their income, such as ticketing, direct sponsorship, and on-site experience.

The focus of these interviews was to identify the *key strengths* of each festival and understand how they *leveraged those to overcome challenges and become more resilient*. The interviews also delved into various factors that could influence their business models, such as artistic innovation, technology, audience expectations, demographic trends, funding context, levels, structures, and policy context. Financial sustainability was a particular focus, prompting questions about income streams.

The study[30] relies on insights from these interviews, showcasing the value-driven approaches of festival organisers. While recognizing the diversity of these festivals, preventing generalisations, the research aims to inspire and advocate for these cultural hubs.

During the analysis of the interviews, several elements surfaced that aligned with the business model frameworks for the cultural sector. As we know from literature, the discussion on business models within the creative and arts sectors highlights the necessity of adapting traditional business model concepts to suit the unique characteristics of arts and creative sector.

These models need to balance financial viability with artistic, cultural, and environmental missions, emphasizing innovation, adaptability, and diverse revenue streams (Osterwalder & Pigneur, 2010; Robinson, 2021; Rodriguez, 2016; Joyce, Paquin, & Pigneur, 2016).

[30] For the full research framework description please refer to **"Full Report: Small but Mighty: Selected Business Model Practices of Small European Festivals in Peripheral Areas." 2021-2022.** Publication year: 2024 (downloaded July 2024)

SETTING THE FRAMEWORK: RESEARCH SCOPE, TOOLS, AND LIMITATIONS

When selecting the case studies for the SMA! research, as mentioned, Ypsigrock Festival (Italy), Haldern Pop (Germany) and D Festival (North Macedonia), served as benchmarks to identify other festivals with comparable size, location, and cultural approach The Ypsigrock Festival takes place in Castelbuono (in Sicily, Southern Italy), about 400m above sea level at the foothills of the Madonie Mountains. The small village is about a 1hr 30 min drive from Palermo International Airport and a 20 min drive from the Mediterranean coast.

Haldern Pop Festival is in the Lower Rhine area, 88 km from Düsseldorf, in Germany. The venue is an old horse range, and the nearest village is Haldern, which is 1,5 km away and has its own train station.

D FESTIVAL is organised on the Dojran coast, North Macedonia; the distance from the nearest metropolis is 74km, and from the closest international airport, it is 92.5km. There are no train stations near the festival's area.

Starting from these, we focused definied the criteria to select the other festivals:

- defined as "small festival" according to the categories of the European festival awards with up to 10.000 people daily attendance; rarely, we have festivals with less than 500 hundred people per day; nonetheless, small festivals range from 0 to 10.000 per day). Instead, medium-sized festivals range from 10.000 to 40.000 per day.

- referenced as '*boutique*'. There are different definitions of a boutique festival. Di Bella's (2022, p.77) research unveils the origins and essence of the boutique festival, a term that surfaced in British journalism in 2003, characterised by events like The Big Chill and The Green Man. These festivals are celebrated for their elegance, intimacy, and independence, marking a departure from the mass-market appeal of traditional music festivals. According to Di Bella, "boutique festivals not only provide a platform for diverse musical expressions but also promote social and environmental responsibility, reflecting the countercultural ideals of the 1960s in a modern context." Also, according to Johansson and Toraldo 2017; Anderton, 2019 as cited by Di Bella (2022,p78) the term is being co-opted by an increasing number of organisations as a means of positioning and differentiation through which to promote an evolved format of music festival, intimate, alternative, exclusive and interactive, able to counteract both the imagery of festivals based on big names, created and managed in the interests of the record industry and big sponsors, as much as to traditional and stereotypical ones that portray youth festivals as places of degradation, transgression and mass consumption". However, it's crucial to mention that most of the festivals we analysed do not self-identify as 'boutique,' viewing the term as potentially exclusionary. Instead, they emphasise a welcoming environment for all attendees.

Therefore, we agreed within the SMA! Project for the following definition of Boutique Festival: small festivals with a strong link with the territory distinguished by the originality of productions and "family" management of their communities. These are very welcoming, unique events often suitable for families and set in unusual locations (compared to the norm of medium-large festivals that are instead organised in huge parks, countryside, or multipurpose areas such as trade fairs).

Finally, we focused on those aligned with our project's research objectives. We sought festivals that could be examples of investing in capacity-building, demonstrating financial sustainability, supporting local identity, and ensuring accessibility. Additionally, we prioritised festivals that foster community engagement and volunteerism, minimise environmental impact, contribute to tourism development, and embrace digital innovation.

Consequently, the project partners set the framework and selected the case studies for the research based on one or more criteria such as:

- Be in peripheral areas far from an "urban setting" or located in a "difficult" area to reach or in an unusual place.
- Be small/medium in size according to the European Music Festival Award categories.
- It can be known as a "Boutique" festival or have a reputation strongly linked to the territory.
- Be relevant to understand the specific topics capacity building investment, income differentiation, enhancing local identity, accessibility, community engagement and volunteering, low impact on the environment, tourist development and digital innovation.

We faced several obstacles throughout our research. Identifying festivals that possessed all the desired qualities was sometimes a lengthy process. For instance, locating a small, peripheral festival with strong volunteer support or a focus on digital innovation was challenging. Notably, Roskilde in Denmark, often referenced for its attributes, was excluded for its large scale. We included the Exit Festival in Serbia due to its noteworthy tourism and digital innovation strategy. Similarly, we included the Dutch festival Le Guess WHO?, which has an impressive community engagement program despite not being in a peripheral location.

This table shows the final list of case studies analysed:

DATA COLLECTED: LIST OF CASE STUDIES	
YPSIGROCK FESTIVAL - SMA! project leader	Italy
HALDERN POP FESTIVAL - SMA! partner	Germany
D FESTIVAL- SMA! partner	North Macedonia
LE GUESS WHO FESTIVAL	The Netherlands
MOONDANCE FESTIVAL	Croatia
TERRAFORMA FESTIVAL	Italy
INTSIKURMU FESTIVAL	Estonia
STATION NARVA FESTIVAL	Estonia
EXIT FESTIVAL	Serbia
OZORA FESTIVAL	Hungary
POHODA FESTIVAL	Slovakia
BAD BON KILBI FESTIVAL	Switzerland
ØYAFESTIVALSEN	Norway
BAY OF BISCAY FESTIVAL	Spain
JARDINS DE TERRAMAR FESTIVAL	Spain

TABLE 1. LIST OF CASE STUDIES FROM THE RESEARCH

Source: own elaboration

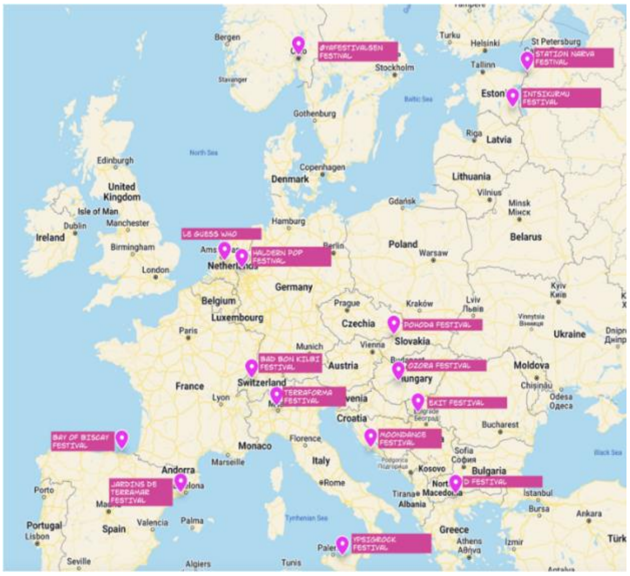

FIGURE 1 A MAP REPRESENTING THE FESTIVAL CASE STUDIES FROM THE RESEARCH
Source: own elaboration

We understand that the specific circumstances surrounding each festival, shaped by distinct geographical and political contexts that differ between countries, mean our findings cannot be broadly applied. We decided to adopt a more qualitative approach, since we wanted to have a clearer understanding of the motivations, behaviours and experiences behind the festivals. We are aware that a larger sample size would have been beneficial to expand the scope of our research, however it was not feasible within the constraints of our available time and resources.

Key insights from the research: proposals for a sustainable business model for small festivals in remote/peripheral areas

"Why do people come from Berlin and Amsterdam to a small village in North Rhine-Westphalia? Because the village is exciting but cosy and welcoming. Communicate that narrative and be authentic, honest, and true. It is important to create trust."

Stephan Reichman, director HALDERN POP FESTIVAL, Germany

In this paragraph we will present the main results following the elements of the business model for the arts sector. The main insights gathered from interviews with festival organisers have been grouped within each section that aligns with the adapted aspects of the Business Model Canvas for arts organisations.

Mission and Vision: The festivals covered in the research have a bold and courageous mission, focusing on long-term vision and legacy building. The festival directors and organisers have an entrepreneurial mindset, prioritising innovation, cultural impact, and adaptability. The festivals prioritise music and artistic values, and their marketing reflects their content. Most festival founders started their events to address specific community needs or enhance existing assets, fostering a strong sense of purpose and vision. These missions often focus on community engagement, environmental sustainability, artistic development and legacy building such as you would expect from a non-profit organisation[31]. Here some quotes:

"We started in 1999... to help the local music scene to grow..."

"There was no place here to listen to music... so we decided to bring our favourite artists here..."

"The D festival was born with the idea to promote the local identity and recuperate the area's socio-economic sustainability..."

"There are two biggest goals for organising Station Narva: social integration and maintaining good cultural relations despite political complications..."

Entrepreneurial Mindset: A key factor in the success of these festivals is the entrepreneurial mindset of their organisers. This mindset encourages creativity, innovation, and resilience, essential qualities for navigating challenges and pursuing long-term goals*. Festivals often begin modestly but plan for significant expansion*, *targeting international audiences from the start* and *ensuring year-round activities to maintain a lasting impact on their communities.* The quality of the music is a recurrent factor. With a strong knowledge of the music industry, competences, and good relationships, most started small, some as a small friend venture, with two of three bands playing at the beginning or had a booking agency, or just playing records. Yet, they had a long-term vision of seeing the potentiality of the investment*, "Think as it is a "company, a start-up. I would call this festival a start-up." "We know how to make festivals. I believe that we bring a new quality of organising to the Ida-Viru region, and through this, we raise the prestige and quality of event planning there."*

[31] Rodriguez (2016) also argues the importance of a mission-driven approach, especially in non-profit organisations exploring "the balance between fulfilling the artistic or cultural mission and financial sustainability". A mission-driven approach refers to how an organisation bases its strategy, decision-making, and overall operational framework on a clearly defined mission. This mission typically reflects the core purpose, values, and the organisation's goals. As Rodriguez mentions (Robinson, 2016, p.10) "Historically, the idea of the 'mission-driven organisation' has been associated with the non-profit sector, but this idea has been changing throughout the last decades. Many for-profit organisations proclaim themselves to be mission-driven or even start non-profit ventures. In fact, mission-driven businesses are a subset of social enterprises, an idea that is not new, but has increasingly captured the attention of a more mainstream audience attracted by socially-aware businesses". RODRIGUEZ, J. (2016) To sell or not to sell? An introduction to business models (innovation) for arts and culture organisations. IETM, Brussels. Retrieved from https://www.ietm.org/en/resources/toolkits/to-sell-or-not-to-sell-an-introduction-to-business-models-innovation-for-arts

Developing strategies to sustain the festival all year round is linked to the impact on the local community**.** "*We are a small music festival in the countryside; we must be a venue for the whole year. There is a little bar in the same area, and that's where the energy and all the quiet everyday life of that festival comes from. It's where we do about 100 and 120 shows per year. Almost every week, two shows. I think that may be a big difference from other festivals*. "

Legacy Building: A common focus among these festivals is on legacy building and maintaining a long-term vision. This involves transforming festivals into cultural hubs, expanding to include foreign artists, and forming partnerships beyond their countries. Organisers emphasise the importance of having a five-year plan and thinking internationally from the beginning.

"*I think when you come to an idea to start a festival, first you need to know it has to be a usually a five-year plan [..] you cannot do the festival and have a short-term plan; you need to have a long-term plan, and you need to be ready to change your ideas and change your structure and change your path". Moreover, it's essential to have a long-term vision and think internationally from the beginning* "

Unique Value Proposition: Each festival crafts a unique value proposition to differentiate itself in the crowded boutique festival market. This often involves promoting local cultural sustainability, creating a distinct festival atmosphere, and offering unique experiences. The festivals prioritise community engagement, sustainability, and artistic innovation, contributing significantly to the local economy and cultural life.

As an interviewee said "The thing that makes the festival unique is the connection to the territory. The story of the place has a unique value, which attracts tourists and keeps the locals engaged. In addition to the artists' quality, it mixes an intimate atmosphere with a historic location. All the performances are within walking distance from each other with ice cream or bowls of pasta in between."

Accessibility and environmental sustainability: All the festivals, at different levels and according to available resources, *are working on accessibility and environmental sustainability, showcasing a commitment to responsible business modelling and ecological consciousness.* For some, it's part of their value proposition; they are green-oriented and have sustainability ingrained in their DNA, considering it an essential element of integrating environmental consciousness into the festival atmosphere. Some others are adapting to become as sustainable as possible. Despite the dedication, significant challenges pose a major hurdle to reducing the festivals' ecological footprint*, such as transportation of the audiences and the artists and the festival's reliance on diesel generators*. One festival actively explores alternative solutions, such as hydrogen generators tested in German festivals, but needs help competing for such innovations. In this case, obtaining a larger electricity substation depends on local government investment. One of the biggest dilemmas is *balancing* *environmental actions and international cooperation;* as one interviewee said "We will need years to make all the touring businesses different". The festivals' core values meet the needs and expectations of their audience and they try to integrate these values into the festival's operations. These areas demonstrate the festival's commitment to inclusivity and responsibility,

Staff, artists, volunteers, locals, community, and audiences, refers to the section "Key Resources: People, Partnerships, and Assets", *play equally relevant roles in creating a sustainable business model*. It is crucial to strike a balance among these groups, especially as the festivals aspire to internationalise, foster a sense of community, and adapt to the evolving landscape of cultural events. From the interviews, a recurrent theme is taking care and security, "Taking care of the team is as important as taking care of the audience; they are an essential part of the festival." Key takeaways include creating a positive and supportive work environment, emphasizing teamwork and sharing festival values. Balancing international aspirations with a strong sense of community is essential, as is maintaining good relationships with freelancers, local communities, and partners by involving them in various festival aspects. Managing work intensity to ensure a healthy balance for the team is also highlighted, as an interviewee says

"*We cannot save anybody from the stressful periods that are just characteristic of this field of work. But what we can do is to make sure the stress level is not constantly up throughout the year. These stressful times should be alternated with calmer periods when people can deal with their own lives, families, friends, and hobbies*."

Effective volunteer management ensures volunteers feel valued and integrated into the team. The festivals recognise the immense value of volunteers, whose contributions go beyond cost-saving measures to foster community involvement and local pride, "*The role of volunteers is tremendous. Not a single festival could take place without them"*. Volunteering is integral to the festival business model, offering young locals a sense of belonging and opportunities to reconnect with their hometowns, often counteracting migration trends driven by limited job prospects. Volunteers are considered critical resources within the Business Model Canvas framework, essential for numerous aspects such as Key Activities, Customer Relationships, and Value Propositions. They gain new experiences and skills, particularly vital in areas undergoing socially fair economic transitions, as exemplified by initiatives in Ida-Viru County, Estonia, and the Ypsigrock Festival in Italy, where local youths working or studying elsewhere are engaged as volunteers. Also, as the Ypsigrock Festival, is trying to provide formal recognition of volunteers' skills, enhancing their career prospects in the festival industry. Structuring volunteer programs effectively is crucial, ensuring volunteers feel respected and valued, thus encouraging their continued participation and contribution. Successful examples include Oyafestival, which attributes its success to high volunteer return rates, and Haldern Pop, which fosters community engagement through "family" systems among volunteers.

Artist engagement and development are prioritised to give artists a sense of belonging. Community engagement is integral to the festival brand, involving and integrating the local community in festival activities to foster a sense of ownership and participation. Finally, enhancing *the unique locations of the festivals is seen as a significant aspect of their success.*

Networks and Partners: Cultivating partnerships is an ongoing endeavour that demands dedication and persistence. Yet, it is critical for adaptation and the navigation of challenges. As an interviewee said,"*If there ever was a festival organiser who said they didn't have time to deal with partner relations, they probably won't be able to organise a festival anyway. Without them, there is no point or possibility of doing it*."

Channels and Communication: The interviews suggest that festivals are adapting to digitisation dynamically and flexibly. They use digital platforms for ticketing and purchases while maintaining multiple payment options for customer convenience. Although cost considerations have limited the use of a festival app so far, some festival intent to move in this direction in the future. Social media has become a significant platform for engaging with audiences, and festivals invest up to 60% of their communication budget in digital channels, mainly social media. However, while digital solutions are used for marketing to engage a broader audience, personal interactions are still encouraged through in-person meetings and phone calls. For example, monitoring the bar and food service allows direct contact with the audience and encourages feedback.

As an interviewee said, *"Our community highly appreciates communicating and interacting directly with the festival organisation in an informal way and in a safe space. This affectionate attitude truly pays us and allows us to develop communication concepts involving content with a strong emotional value to drive more engagement."*

How: Revenue model money in and out: The festivals included in this report demonstrate diverse financial strategies and challenges, highlighting the importance of adopting multi-faceted approaches for sustainability and growth. Reliance on ticket sales, sponsorships, and public support varies, with some festivals struggling to secure sufficient public funding. Most of these festivals are now entering the consolidation phase, which involves finding a stable mix of income streams and managing a growing business. One of the interviewees highlights that the "*most challenging aspect of this process is making the transition from a festival's budget to an organisational budget*", requiring the expand the team and investing in new competencies. Sustaining the festival all year round is essential for the local community's impact and also to be try to be more sustainable in financial terms. Newer festivals, in particular, face challenges in meeting financial goals and achieving break-even points.

Many festivals adopt a mission-driven approach, blending for-profit ventures with mission-focused initiatives, similar to social enterprises. This hybrid model allows for financial stability through commercial operations while pursuing broader social, cultural, or environmental goals. Navigating the balance between aspirational goals and pragmatic financial strategies is essential. Some festivals employ a multi-sided platform business model, engaging diverse customer segments like attendees, the local community, and artists. This model requires creating experiences that cater to the interconnected needs of these groups, ensuring mutual value. Key financial strategies identified include incorporating multiple revenue streams such as government funds, private donations, ticket sales, membership fees, food and beverage, and collaborations with hotels for accommodation packages. Festivals emphasise careful sponsorship selection to align with their values and avoid over-commercialization. Strategic financial planning, including preparing for unforeseen costs, is crucial. Online ticket sales and exclusive packages can boost revenue, while e-commerce integration for merchandise sales expands sales opportunities beyond event dates.

Investing in a tourism strategy is another crucial aspect for festivals in peripheral areas. Collaborating with the tourism sector can provide extensive economic, cultural, social, and environmental benefits. Some festivals, like the EXIT festival (Serbia), have developed internal tourism departments to handle tourism-related matters, acknowledging the significant economic impact on their regions. Others collaborate with local tourism offices and businesses for support, despite challenges like increased accomodation prices during events.

From our exploratory research, a sustainable business model for festivals in peripheral areas seemed to be characterised by offering a:

- Memorable experience for festivalgoers.
- Robust community focus that engages local people in meaningful and respectful ways.
- Commitment to enhancing the local identity through cultural expressions and celebrations.
- Artistic innovation and diversity, presenting underrepresented talent and gender balance in an intimate and inclusive atmosphere.
- Strong volunteer force that reflects the festival's communal ethos.
- Strategic partnerships and collaborations that bolster resilience and growth.
- Adaptation, strategic plans, and diverse income sources, starting small with a long-term vision of growth.
- Managing international and local communities.
- Mission aligned tourist strategy.

CONCLUSIONS

Our investigation into small festivals in remote or peripheral areas has revealed a complex network of factors contributing to a sustainable business model. The insights from the interviews resonate with the theoretical foundations: while financial sustainability is vital, these festivals also prioritise their social and environmental missions. Often, it stems from a passion for music and an aspiration to bring people together in a harmonious and democratic environment with the funding necessary to organise line-ups, provide electricity, hire staff, and ensure safety. Their stories unravel nuanced strategies for expertly navigating geographic and cultural challenges. Financial gain is not the primary goal; strategies like premium experiences and VIP packages, like meet-and-greets with artists, backstage tours, and premium viewing areas, could probably achieve this. Instead, inclusivity, lasting impact, and the preservation of artistic integrity are core objectives across all the case studies examined. Their business models, however complex, showcase a profound dedication to mission fulfilment, ensuring that artistic integrity, community involvement, and sustainable practices stand alongside financial health, presenting a vibrant landscape where cultural expression, collective experiences, and social transformation are valued treasures. Embedding accessibility and sustainability into their operations, these festivals advocate for social equity, responsible consumption, and contribute to their area's economic, cultural, and environmental vitality, aligning with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Many festivals are in a consolidation phase involving finding a stable mix of income streams and managing a growing business. This approach is manifested in a hybrid organisation that combines the efficiencies of for-profit operations with the inclusivity of non-profit goals. As one partner said, "*We are not stupid; we have a creative agency that makes a profit all year round. The festival is a way to give back to the community; in some cases, the money earned from the festival is invested back into the village - social engagement and social projects*."

Fostering an entrepreneurial spirit, engaging local communities, and committing to artistic innovation are intertwined throughout the festivals' operational fabric. These festivals *resemble the multi-sided platform business model,* underscoring the mutual reliance on multiple customer segments—audience, community, and artists—where the presence and engagement of each are crucial for the festival's success. The interdependency of these segments demands a carefully orchestrated strategy to ensure each one's satisfaction.

Since the majority of these festivals operate within a high volatility or vulnerability context, as Robinson mentions (Robinson, 2021) it's important to identify strengths and vulnerabilities for future action planning to improve situation awareness, allowing organisations to adapt effectively, seize opportunities, and mitigate risks, all contributing to their resilience and long-term sustainability**.** As understood by the sustainable livelihoods approach that aims to enhance resilience and reduce hardship by supporting people in building their assets and capacities, festival organisers should be supported to enhabce their capacitiies and assets.

In conclusion, the sustainable business model for a small festival in a remote or challenging area is not a static blueprint but a dynamic framework that combines cultural dedication, community-centric approaches, environmental stewardship, and strategic alliances, all while fostering artistic innovation and social inclusivity. While grounded in local specificity, it is a model that can inspire and guide festival organisers globally to create impactful and enduring cultural hubs**.** By balancing commercial interests with *mission-driven goals*, managing resources effectively, and engaging with the local community and tourism sector, festivals can create lasting positive impacts on their regions.

FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

We understand that the specific circumstances surrounding each festival, shaped by distinct geographical and political contexts that differ between countries, mean our findings cannot be broadly applied. However we believe that the insights from the exploraoiry research within the SMA! project highlighst the importance of these festivals to create lasting cultural, social, and economic impacts on their communities. Future research direction is to demonstrate these festivals positive impact on the wellbeing of the community, not only the economical impact.

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The role of images in cultural organizations' non-financial reports

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ABSTRACT

This paper explores the role of visual elements in cultural organizations' non-financial reports. Despite the extensive use of visuals in for-profit and nonprofit reporting, there is limited research on their use in the cultural sector. Using semi-structured interviews and photo-elicitation methods, we analyze reports from the Museo Nazionale della Scienza e della Tecnologia "Leonardo da Vinci" in Milan and the Museo delle Scienze in Trento. Our findings aim to deepen the understanding of visual communication in cultural organizations and its impact on transparency and accountability.

Keywords:

Cultural organizations
Accountability
Sustainability
Reporting
Visual communication

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Introduction

In recent decades, organizations have increasingly integrated visuals into their reporting documents. Graphs, maps, pictures, photographs, and other visual elements are now implemented as independent forms of knowledge or accompanied by textual elements. This ubiquity of visuals profoundly influences the ways in which "we interpret, engage with, consume, and make sense of information" (Quattrone et al., 2021, p.1199). Moreover, digital technologies have facilitated their dissemination, making them promptly available to a broad audience (Rämö, 2011).

Corporate identity is continuously socially constructed and reconstructed through imagery (Breitbarth et al., 2010). Consequently, visuals have collected significant organizational interest (Kunter & Bell, 2006). However, scholarly attention has predominantly focused on verbal and numerical materials, relegating visuals to a peripheral apparatus. This has led to a need for more understanding of their impact within the overall organizational reporting system (Chong et al., 2023). Nevertheless, developing new report systems with a greater concentration of images has elevated the importance of visual material, stimulating deeper exploration by researchers.

Sustainability reports give us the opportunity to use visuals as data in order to understand meanings and messages. Initially developed for companies, non-financial reports are increasingly being developed also by non-profit organizations (NPOs) in general and, more in detail, by cultural organizations. Nevertheless, in the unregulated landscape of cultural organization reporting, there are several challenges in achieving objective and reliable operationalization (Vermeulen & Maas, 2020). These reports often take diverse forms, evolve over time through self-learning processes, and predominantly use qualitative indicators to report results and outcomes (Dubini & Monti, 2024).

This paper aims to understand how cultural organizations utilize images in their non-financial reporting efforts. While previous research has examined this phenomenon in both the for-profit and nonprofit sectors, studies have yet to focus on the cultural field. Therefore, examining this phenomenon in cultural institutions is particularly relevant because organizations in these settings have a strong familiarity with visuality. This is especially true for museums, which display objects of visual culture in ways that construct and communicate knowledge and reflect cultural assumptions (Hooper-Greenhill, 2000). Through the selection and arrangement of artifacts, museums shape knowledge and construct views, with audiences actively making meaning from their experiences (Hooper-Greenhill, 2000). Thus, the use of images in reporting within cultural organizations such as museums serves as a tool for accountability and parallels the institution's fundamental role of constructing and communicating knowledge through visual means.

The analysis will lead us to answer the following research questions: *What space is given to visual communication in cultural institutions' reports? What messages do these images convey? What is the process by which images are included in cultural organizations' sustainability reports?*

To explore the issue, we conducted a detailed analysis of two case studies: Museo Nazionale della Scienza e della Tecnologia "Leonardo da Vinci" (MUST) in Milan and Museo delle Scienze (MUSE) in Trento. These institutions were chosen for their extensive reporting history and strong commitment to sustainability, making them ideal subjects for our study. To answer our research questions, we carried out semi-structured interviews with the team ultimately in charge of preparing the report to appreciate differences and commonalities in image operationalization and photo-elicitation to catch meanings and messages behind visuals.

Background and justification for the study

In recent years, legislators and public opinion have increasingly focused on accountability and transparency (Buallay & Hamdan, 2023; Khan et al., 2021). Concerns about climate change and growing social inequalities have driven advocacy for implementing UN Agenda 2030 (Turzo et al., 2022). This trend began in the for-profit sector, where growing legislative and public pressure is requiring companies to report non-financial outcomes alongside traditional performance metrics as part of increased stakeholder scrutiny of corporate behavior and the growing importance of reputational risk (Landrum & Ohsowski, 2018). As a result, the number of organizations required to publish sustainability reports has increased, along with the development of a certification ecosystem for compliance and accountability (Raucci & Tarquinio, 2020).

As the number, scope, and recognized role of NPOs increase, they are recognized for their civic and political engagement (Ahunov, 2023). Cultural organizations, in particular, have begun to adopt some forms of non-financial reporting to increase their level of legitimacy and reputation (Carmo & Ribeiro, 2022). These reports are less formalized than those of companies, multidimensional in nature, and largely rely on qualitative data to report results and outcomes.

The study of narratives in non-financial reporting involves the operationalization of goals, activities, stakeholders, and results mainly through the analysis of specific terminologies (Cerquetti et al., 2023; Dubini et al., 2024; Dubini & Monti, 2024; Landrum & Ohsowski, 2018; Pencle & Mălăescu, 2016). Recently, a branch of literature on the topic has focused on the use of visual material in corporate reports with a specific focus on photography (Permatasari & Suryani, 2023; Rämö, 2011), on graphic elements (Cho et al, 2012; Kanbaty et al., 2020; Utami et al., 2023); or the whole system of visual communication elements (Breitbarth et al., 2010b; García-Sánchez & Araújo-Bernardo, 2020; Ruggiero & Bachiller, 2023; Santos, 2023). Some studies refer to the NPO sector (Davison, 2007).

Images have always served as a medium for conceptualizing reality (Schmid, 2012). Their role in shaping ideas and representing the external world has been widely recognized. In order to incorporate these instances, organizations have started to use massive visuals in their accounting documents. This phenomenon is referred to by scholars as the “pictorial or visual turn” (Mitchell, 1994) in the organizational field. The pictorial turn, theorized by William J. Mitchell (1994) in the 90s, refers to “a certain epistemological stance that takes into account the ubiquity of images in contemporary society and their centrality for the construction of perception” (Schmid, 2012, p. 77). Today, moving from visual sociology and visual anthropology, researchers’ attention to the visual apparatus in organizational communication has led to the development of disciplines such as “visual management studies” and the proliferation of visual organizational research (Bell & Davison, 2012; Boxenbaum et al., 2018; Davison et al., 2012; Kunter & Bell, 2006; Sørensen, 2015) that theorize the turn. These disciplines consider “accounting” as “an art of visualization” (Chong et al., 2023); they support the idea that “visual images constitute messages in their own right” (Kunter & Bell, 2006, p. 179), going beyond the theory that interpreting images implies that they are subordinate to text (Kunter & Bell, 2006).

Rämö (2011) notes that images in corporate reports are more than just random assemblages created solely to add visual flair to otherwise dull presentations. Visuals are “increasingly important as convention-based symbolic systems of visual rhetoric” (Rämö, 2011, p. 373). Therefore, visual information, previously relegated to the status of illustration, example, or support for written text, now represents an essential source of knowledge construction (Traue et al., 2019). As stated by Boxenbaum et al. (2018), “complex ideas are defined, made meaningful, transported, and stabilized not only by words but also by visual and material artifacts, triggering a range of cognitive, emotional, and other responses to novel ideas inside and outside organizations” (p. 598).

A visual artifact such as a photograph lives with a dual nature: being "both art and document, both 'rendered' and 'real'" (Ghosh, 2019, p.231). Therefore, it is "evaluated" by the viewer primarily for the reality it represents (Ismail et al., 2010; Ruggiero & Bachiller, 2023). Considering photographs in the class of communication means recognizing their ability to “convey meanings from one entity or group to another through the use of mutually understood media” (Ghosh, 2019, p.231); placing photographs in the realm of communication also implies that photographic images are indeed subject to interpretation (Ismail et al., 2010) and manipulation.

Graphs, charts, and infographics are considered tools of “functional visualization” (Utami et al., 2023), used to simplify rather than influence the viewer's mind. Compared to photography, visual materials such as graphs, charts, and tables are already legitimized in the organizational field (Muzzio, 2023). These elements are commonly used to facilitate the transmission of information from written or verbal evidence. In the case of photography, “as a source of evidence, there is not yet a perceived legitimacy commensurate with the potential of the method” (Muzzio, 2023, p.1).

As evidenced in the literature (Permatasari & Suryani, 2023; Santos, 2021; Kanbaty et al., 2020), building on the potential of visuals, companies aim to maintain specific methods of claiming legitimacy. Photographs related to the environmental dimension aim to remedy the “negative publicity received for polluting the environment” (Permatasari & Suryani, 2023: 62), while graphic elements enhance comprehension (Ramo, 2011). It is not uncommon to see the systematic manipulation of images to present a more favorable image of the company (Cho et al., 2012), according to impression management strategies (García-Sánchez & Cristina-Andrea Araújo-Bernardo, 2019).

While there is a “proliferation of misleading images” in the business world (Roszkowska-Menkes et al., 2024), we hypothesize that cultural organizations have unique characteristics that cause their visual choices to closely reflect their mission to educate, inspire, and engage the public through art, history, and cultural heritage. This approach allows them to engage and inform diverse audiences by authentically revealing the value and essence of their work. In contrast, corporations may focus on abstract or idealized representations rather than an accurate reflection of their actions.

Materials and research methods

To address how cultural organizations use visual elements in their non-financial reports, we focused on two case studies: Museo Nazionale della Scienza e della Tecnologia "Leonardo da Vinci" (MUST) in Milan and Museo delle Scienze (MUSE) in Trento.

The relationship between science and society has become increasingly evident in recent years. Humanity is becoming aware of its changed relationship with the rest of nature and its role on the planet. Thus, the communication of science has become “a widespread social need, a primary element of modern democracy” (Greco, 2007, p.2). Today, science museums have a much stronger and more ambitious social mission, offering themselves “as places where the new ‘scientific citizenship’ is being built, in all its dimensions” (Greco, 2007, p.3).

MUST was founded in 1953, “modeled on the classical museums that displayed scientific and technical exhibits, such as the Science Museum in London and the Deutsches Museum in Munich” (Miotto, 2003, p.5). In its 35,000 square meters, the museum explores the relationship between science, technology, and society. Over the years, it has progressively shifted its focus from the relationship with the collection to hands-on experience through laboratories and interactive exhibitions focusing on contemporary challenges. The heart of the museum is a large section dedicated to Leonardo da Vinci's machines, reconstructed from drawings in Leonardo's codices and Leonardo’s observations and interests across disciplines and techniques.

MUST published its first sustainability report in 2020, the first of four editions. Its reports reflect the museum's commitment to scientific citizenship, a dimension that is difficult to communicate in more traditional reporting. The report answers the question of how to preserve the uniqueness of the cultural institution while recognizing its intrinsic social function in serving the society in which it is rooted.

MUSE opened in 2013, replacing the Museo Tridentino di Scienze Naturali. The increasing number of exhibits and visitors led the Autonomous Province of Trento to approve a project for a new location in 2006, which was built as part of a larger urban redevelopment project in a disused industrial area. The building, designed by Renzo Piano, has a total surface area of approximately 19,000 square meters spread over six floors. The exhibition emphasizes the historical and current importance of the museum not only for the study of the territory and its ecosystems but also for its ability to provide valuable tools for the protection, management, and valorization of the biodiversity of the region, according to a “social necessity” around the conservation of nature. MUSE is a pioneer in non-financial reporting; its first report is dated 2011; over time, the report has changed and taken different forms: from a social report to a sustainability report in 2018 to a mission report in 2021.

Given their reporting history and strong commitment to sustainability, the two organizations are relevant to our work. To make the two cases comparable, we analyzed the reports relating to the years 2020-2021-2022-2023, bearing in mind that MUSE's reporting history and familiarity with the tool are much more established.

First, we observed visual elements in each organization's reports to track their evolution. We then used traditional semi-structured interviews and photo elicitation to i. Analyze the dimensions of image operationalization. ii. Understand the deeper meanings and messages behind the visual elements.

Photo-elicitation could be defined as an interview technique in which researchers elicit information from respondents through photographs (Richard & Lahman, 2015). Harper (2002) writes that the process by which our brain elaborates visual information extracts deeper elements of human consciousness than words. Therefore, photo-elicitation interviews extract more information and evoke different kinds of information (Harper, 2002). Photo elicitation usually uses photographs, but the researcher can use any other visual image. Respondents are either asked to take photographs or to examine and reflect on images taken by others critically.

Although most photo elicitation studies are used in visual anthropology, visual sociology, and visual ethnography, in recent years, the method has also influenced the field of organizational studies (Kunter & Bell, 2006; Parker, 2009).

We focused on images (photos, infographics, tables) included in each institution's sustainability report. The interviews followed the same structure and examined MUSE and MUST's practices and procedures in report construction and visual presentation regarding the choice of visual elements, the dimensions measured by visuals, and the focus of the chosen images.

Results and discussion

Both museums involve their entire organization in a participatory report-creation process, although in different ways. At MUSE, all the departments collaborate to gather numerical and textual data and identify relevant photographs, with the final content selection made by an editorial board. For MUSE, there is a shift "in the way people acquire information through continuous visual stimulation," which is why, in recent years, they have improved the visual apparatus and decreased the text of their reports.

This perspective is shared to some extent by MUST, where the development group drafts the initial report, and the editorial board refines the text before sending it to the museum's art direction, reorganizing the document, and inserting relevant images. In addition, efforts are made to gather feedback on the previous year's work and to involve the graphics department from the outset to plan photo campaigns throughout the year. MUST states that working with images, especially with graphic elements, is helpful in "*translating many of the important concepts in a way that is then easily recognizable, readable, and visible*". Similar to the business literature, graphics emerge as an element of "functional visualization" (Utami et al., 2023; Branch, 2011), capable of simplifying and giving immediacy to the text.

Moreover, over the years, both organizations have paid increased attention to the readability of their reports and reduced text in favor of images for this purpose; this function of images has yet to be reported in the literature. For MUSE, applying this policy means "*giving the idea without burdening the document, because people often do not read, while they are definitely captured by the images*". For MUST, the same considerations apply: "*The question is how communicative the sustainability report is, which means how much text is needed, how it relates to images, and how much can be mediated by powerful infographics*".

Over time, these considerations have led these organizations to devote increased attention to systematizing the processes of collecting, creating, and selecting images for the reports, as Table 1 summarizes.

		Muse	Must
	Commonalities	Internal contemporary archive of photos divided by subject. Photo collection has become increasingly functional and intimately connected to the non-financial report. Collection work has become increasingly specialized, and its cost is significant. Part of the process is internalized, part is outsourced. Photos require a high level of quality, especially for printed outputs. An employee is in charge of gathering authorizations and credits for photo material used. The importance of images has changed. From small photographs linked to the text, to large photographs independent from texts. The documentation is intended for multiple uses over time, such as websites and posters.	
	Differences	Photos taken by employees might be used to reduce costs of shooting if the quality is acceptable. *Text, images, and photographs are complementary; there is not a real hierarchy.*	Historical photographs from the museum's historical archive or from external archives. *There is a hierarchy of importance: graphic, text and photographs.*

TABLE 1. PHOTO COLLECTION AND USE: DIFFERENCES AND COMMONALITIES

Source: Personal elaboration

The growing importance of photographs has led to the improvement of processes related to their collection and, consequently, the need for professional results on which the decision to include or not include the photo in the report will depend. The photos are entrusted to professionals, both internal and external to the organization, collected throughout the year, and stored in internal archives[32] categorized by subject. Photo campaigns are explicitly organized to enhance the reports, ensuring i. high-quality photos and ii. good management of release forms. These aspects are crucial to making the process as efficient as possible. Photography is not an unlimited resource and can be pretty expensive for museums.

	Muse	**Must**
Dimension measured by photos	Identity of the museum: Scientific research Educational Approach Exhibitions	
	Interaction between people *Naturalistic observation* *Accessibility features* *Specific events*	*Relationship with collections* *Relationship with operators* *Individual curiosity through manipulation of objects* *Environment*
Covers of reports	Graphics and photos are alternated over the years, with graphics predominating. Inspiration from magazines as “Internazionale”.	Graphics and photos are merged, and the style is identical across the years. Human interaction is a central element. The graphic image of the cover is constant over the years.
Team	Institutional photos of the team are used in various sections of the document.	Institutional photos of the team are not used.
Environmental dimension	Embedded in the mission of the museum and in all exhibits.	It’s the hardest to represent. Motifs from corporations. Stock photos.

TABLE 2: DIMENSION MEASURED BY PHOTOS: DIFFERENCES AND COMMONALITIES.
Source: Personal elaboration.

Through photo elicitation, we focused on the logic behind the choice of individual photographs. Corporate literature suggests that the content of photographs is often misleading; stock photos are used to overemphasize environmental or social engagement (Roszkowska-Menkes et al., 2024; Permatasari & Suryani, 2023; Cho et al., 2012). In the cases analyzed, photos are the expression of

[32] Documentation is intended for various uses over time, such as on websites, social networks and posters.

the identity of the organization; images are used to operationalize concepts that are hard to describe in words; how visitors' imagination is triggered, to what extent a museum is a research organization, how each museum triggers visitors' curiosity and participation, how science becomes part of everybody's experience. In this sense, images are used to describe each organization's distinctiveness and specificity over other types of NPOs, given their specific mission associated with art production and valorization, heritage education, and material and immaterial heritage preservation (Dubini & Monti, 2024).

Throughout the years, there has been a gradual articulation of the dimensions to be made visible: the participation and cooperation of individuals, the activation of curiosity, the accessibility dimension, the relationship with technology, and digitization are dimensions that follow one another in the reports, articulated by the activities and projects active in the period to which the report refers. Instead, the dimensions measured by photographs in all reports are scientific research, celebration of the museum's identity [Figures 1-2], educational approach [Figures 3-4], collections, exhibitions, and events [Figures 5-6].

Comparing the covers of each museum's report, we discover two different uses of images: while MUSE's report covers change every year, MUST's keep the same style. MUSE's 2023 report covers an "*experimental and emotional way of communicating*" through pop graphics, while MUST's focus on the human component remains central [Figures 7-8].

Finally, while MUSE centers its activities on environmental issues, showcasing photos in reports with a distinctive and recognizable visual style, cultural organizations often struggle to highlight their ecological efforts effectively. MUST, for example, finds it challenging to present this aspect without resorting to the clichéd images commonly used in corporate contexts.

While companies usually outsource their reporting processes and often rely on standard stock images and established conventions, both organizations in our sample handle these processes internally, making the reporting effort a collaborative decision. Images are strategic elements for which systematic collection and decision-making processes have been established. This is consistent with the idea that visuals communicate knowledge that reflects the organization's identity (Hooper-Greenhill, 2000).

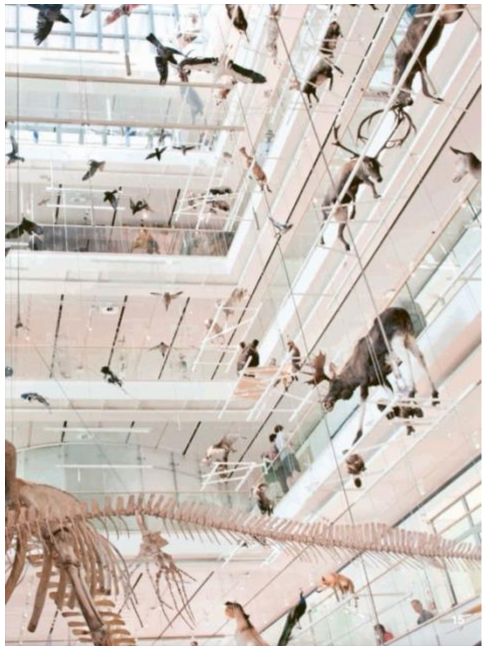

FIGURE 1. PLACES: "THE BIG VOID" AT MUSE.

Source: Bilancio di Missione 2023 "10 anni" p. 15 - Museo delle Scienze, Trento.

FIGURE 2. PLACES: I SETTE SAVI AT MUST.

Source: Bilancio di Sostenibilità 2023 p. 6 - Museo Nazionale Scienza e Tecnologia Leonardo da Vinci, Milano.

FIGURE 3. PARTICIPATION DIMENSION AT MUSE.
Source: Bilancio di Missione 2023 “10 anni” (2024) p. 75 - Museo delle Scienze, Trento.

FIGURE 4. PARTICIPATION DIMENSION AT MUST.
Source: Bilancio di Sostenibilità 2023 p. 66 - Museo Nazionale Scienza e Tecnologia Leonardo da Vinci, Milano.

FIGURE 5. PHOTO OF EVENT "SCATTI DAL DECENNALE".

Source: Bilancio di Missione 2023 "10 anni" (2024) p. 46 - Museo delle Scienze, Trento.

FIGURE 6. FROM THE COLLECTION: "VITE AEREA" OF LEONARDO.

Source: Bilancio di Sostenibilità 2020 (2024) p. 66 - Museo Nazionale Scienza e Tecnologia Leonardo da Vinci, Milano.

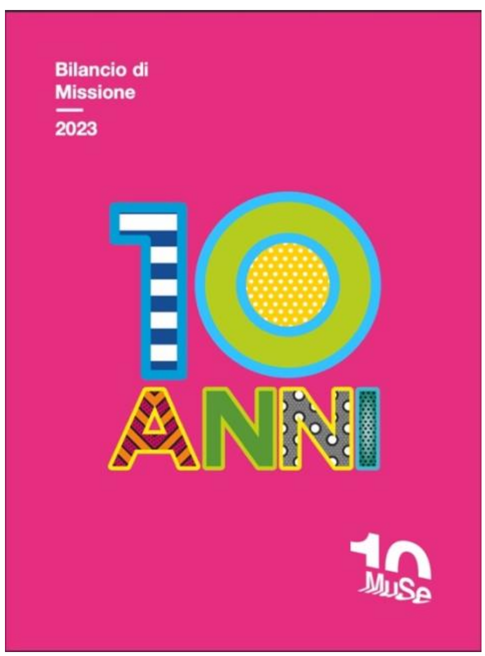

FIGURE 7. MUSE COVER REPORT 2023.

Source: Bilancio di Missione 2023 "10 anni" - Museo delle Scienze, Trento.

FIGURE 8. MUST COVER REPORT 2023.
Source: Bilancio di Sostenibilità 2023 - Museo Nazionale Scienza e Tecnologia Leonardo da Vinci, Milano.

Final Remarks

In this paper, we examined the role of visuals in the non-financial reports of cultural organizations. Compared to the high level of standardization in corporate documents, cultural organizations produce reports with a greater variety of characteristics and objectives. However, our study highlights that:

- Over time, the role of images over text increases.
- Compared to business, images play a more identity-building role and are used to clarify difficult concepts: what it means to be a research institution, how research informs all processes of the organization, and how to account for visitor participation in museum activities.
- The organization drives the choice of images, and over time, image production becomes central not only to the creation of the report but also to the stabilization of an expensive and relevant process.
- Some types of images are more important and work as indicators, unlike others that celebrate the organization.

In addition to these commonalities, the two museums also develop different paths, such as the consistency over time given by different visual elements: while for MUSE, the impact on the cover is essential and changes significantly each year, for MUST, the cover has stable visual patterns over time. Each organization has its unique way of choosing and using images, reflecting its internal consistency. Therefore, visual communication should be more effective in the cultural sector than business.

This paper offers a preliminary exploration of the topic and shows great promise. In future work, we will systematically extend our research to other types of cultural organizations.

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In the Service of Society: How an International Cultural Policy can set new paradigms for cultural diplomacy to enrich, embrace and elevate our future

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ABSTRACT

Keywords:
Diversity
Interdisciplinary
Holistic
Sustainable

This paper analyses how the policy of the Netherlands' 2025-2028 International Cultural Policy has the distinct potential to activate decentralized cultural dialogues beyond state-driven and institutional exchanges to move towards a de-colonized position to revision the idea of cultural diplomacy as a governmental tool that leverages cultural exports. The discussion focusses on the activations of the Dutch mission in Australia to reveal how its focus on a First Nations' Policy seeks “to break through thought patterns and offer new paths for action," so that democratic decision making and decentralized approaches to environmental management and cultural diversity in socio-ecological systems can thrive. For cultural policy to "succeed in this rapidly changing world,” this paper argues we must divert our attention from the business of definition to the

re-calibration of participatory processes, so that we can forecast a platform for cultural dialogue that embraces the diversity of peoples for a sustainable planet.

In 2024, the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs announced its International Cultural Policy for the 2025-2028 period. The freshly minted strategy states in its preface, that its "ambitious international cultural policy responds to a rapidly changing world." On the face of it, this objective can be perceived as an open and optimistic proposition. It's an all-encompassing invitation, with idealism at its core. But this deceptively approximate remark should not be perceived as accidental, nor lacking in precision or vision. If practiced effectively the provocation is a call to action that has the power to act as a catalyst to shift the paradigms of how we approach what we commonly umbrella as cultural diplomacy, soft diplomacy, or cultural exchange.

Cultural policy as enacted by nation state actors is interpreted today through history's gaze. Inevitably Jospeh Nye's 1980's substantive contributions on the power of 'soft diplomacy' rises to the fore in these discussions. Consequent and current rhetoric persuades us to consider cultural diplomacy, (as one instrument of soft diplomacy) less as a hierarchical mechanism and more as an instrument of exchange. American political scientist and author, Milton C. Cummings condenses some of the current interpretations of cultural diplomacy as an “exchange of ideas, information, art, language and other aspects of culture among nations and peoples in order to foster mutual understanding.” (Cummings, 2003). The goal of arriving at a definite conclusion for cultural diplomacy, whether its ideals reach beyond cultural exchange to build alliances, protect democratic and social freedoms, promote economic development or support security objectives must be increasingly deprioritized at this time in context of shift of the world order. For international cultural policy to "succeed in this rapidly changing world," it is useful to shift our attention from the business of definition to the re-calibration of participatory processes, to ask, who are stakeholders in the changing world, or more accurately who are the participants who have been overlooked. By looking at cultural exchange through the lens of participants we can forecast a platform for cultural dialogue which embraces the diversity of peoples and in particular the global majority, a term by which I reference by peoples who are Black, Asian, Brown, dual-heritage, Indigenous to the global south and/or have been referred to as ethnic minorities: a global group currently representing 80% of the world's population.

This paper analyses how the policy mechanisms of the Netherlands' 2025-2028 International Cultural Policy have the distinct potential to activate decentralized cultural dialogue beyond state-driven and institutional exchanges to move towards a de-colonized position to revision the idea of cultural diplomacy as a governmental tool that leverages cultural exports as a means of shaping global perceptions. In particular, the discussion will focus on the activation of the Dutch policy by the Australian mission in Canberra to reveal how its focus on a First Nations' Policy as one of its pillars seeks “to break through thought patterns and to offer new paths for action." It articulates how policy can function as an instrument of change through its considerations of what it means to be relevant to present and future society.

For the purposes of this discussion, the term international cultural policy–rather that cultural diplomacy or cultural exchange–will be deployed, because the aim of this analysis is to demonstrate how a progressive government cultural policy can offer a positive lever for systemic change.

The Netherlands' International Cultural Policy is able to act as a change agent because it empowers its network of global mission, the license to tailor the overarching strategy to their individual policy to reflect the culture of the country where it is stationed. "We provide space for flexibility. The implementing partners mentioned are the parties best able to select their instruments and make joint agreements." Further, the Dutch International Cultural policy concentrates its attention on twenty-five specifically designated countries that the government deems that its efforts "generate the greatest added value"... With this umbrella approach cultural institutions work together with the mission network, central government culture funds and other implementing partners, with scope for every party's role and expertise." The process allows each country to set their own targets through its own policy.

As the Cultural attaché for the Netherlands Embassy in Australia, I have interpreted the International Cultural Policy with a strategy based on three thematic pillars: *Enrich, Embrace* and *Elevate.* In *précis,* the policy of the Dutch embassy in Australia believes that culture establishes a deep ability to enrich, embrace and elevate co-operations to "spawn innovative solutions to social issues," and to promote broader interests between the Netherlands and Australia. The *Enrich* program actively promotes Dutch-Australian international heritage co-operations focusing on tangible and intangible legacies to enrich the "inspiration, knowledge acquisition, and mutual understandings" of the two countries. *Embrace* supports the key principles of "diversity, inclusion and justice" to actively "embrace" the participation of Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, acknowledges pluri-diversity, ands prioritizes the representation of women as framed in the Netherlands' Feminist Foreign Policy. Our *Elevate* program raises the critical issues that affect society and our planet by co-operating on selected cultural and creative industries collaborations that promote innovative, original, and sustainable practice. We work alongside the Netherland's signature to the Paris Agreement and the mutual commitments of the SDGs to "achieve greater ecological sustainability."

For this discussion, I focus on the second pillar, *Embrace*, and most particularly on our priority of our shared knowledge and cultural programs with First Nations peoples: Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures. The priority of First Nations' co-operations comes at a critical and societal and political climate in Australia. The rights of Australia's First Nations' peoples are the subject of polarized debates–on topics ranging from social disparities, cultural and linguistic rights to legal representation and self-determination.

Before proceeding to a snapshot of case studies, I offer an oversight on how the embassy's implementation of the *international policy* seeks to set new paradigms for cultural diplomacy.

The policy mechanisms established by the Dutch mission in Canberra respond to Indigenous modes of engagement and co-operations driven by the agencies of collaboration, co-sharing, and knowledge integration. We lean into the benefits of the so-called top-down umbrella directives from the Dutch government, alongside our citizen partnership approaches to implement our shared goals in heritage, creatives industries, and art projects in pursuit of participatory democracy.

A significant point of difference and departure from current cultural diplomacy practices, exemplified in our First Nations collaborations lies in the recognition and implementation of the process of *Inter-cultural* co-operations in opposition to inter-national or cross-cultural processes. The use of the term *inter-cultural* draws on the recognition of the relational dimensions of social forms that develop through the interactions of Indigenous and non-Indigenous societies, providing opportunities for innovation," (Hinkson, Smith & Merlan 2005). The concept of *inter-cultural* engagement is underpinned by Indigenous views of power sharing and participation. As part of the revisioning processes of our policy implementation we seek to share agency in decision-making levels, controls, and definitions, together with recognizing participatory organizational processes of both the international cultural policy and Indigenous relationship building. This recognition allows us to adopt an *inter-cultural* approach within the structure of an *inter-national* policy.

With any integration of an *inter-culturalism* approach, it is critical to not only excavate shared value systems such as decision-making processes but to respect and fold these practices with the deep history perspectives of Indigenous peoples. In writing a policy on International cultural policy for Australia our duty of care is informed by the complexities of the multiplicities of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and modes of historical practice practiced by over two-hundred and fifty different clans.

Another central consideration is the acknowledgement of divergent understandings of nation and country: nationhood, nationalism, and country. For the purposes of revisioning our ways of thinking and to promote a new template for the Indigenous/non-Indigenous inter-cultural exchange it is pertinent to be aware of Indigenous concept of country:

> *"Country* – is a term commonly used in Australia to denote the traditional land/seas that belong to a particular Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander cultural group. Indigenous peoples identify each other by their country, and "caring for country" is a term used to denote the traditional and ongoing management of Indigenous land and seas." (Wallbott, 2014)

By embracing Indigenous holistic views of *Country,* we have the opportunity to interrogate *Western* view of country typically defined as a political unit or an area of land with its own government. It's salutary to remind ourselves that the word country is derived from Latin contra, meaning *against* or *on the opposite side.* Contrata, from medieval Latin was literally coined as "that which is situated opposite the beholder." While land rights and sovereignty issues between non-Indigenous and Indigenous owners and between Indigenous clans remain, "Country is a holistic concept that prescribes ways of seeing and doing for Indigenous peoples and is underpinned by a belief that all things are connected, and that Indigenous peoples belong to and are part of their own country." (Wallbutt, 2014)

Western views of country within discussions on cultural exchange are often associated with values of nationalism and nationhood. I point to the consensus thinking amongst scholars that considers nations as socially constructed entities, informed partly by Benedict Anderson who defines "nations" as an imagined political community […] imagined because members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow members." (Anderson, 1991). This reconsideration of nationhood is particularly relevant in the current rising tide of nationalism, polarization, and geopolitical conflicts.

Current cultural diplomacy practices harness distinctiveness but at the same time seek to pave a way to co-operation and dialogue. There is a contrariness and superficial presentiment in this curiosity-tinged approach.

The Indigenous notion of country directly builds into the learning and understanding trajectory of the embassy's multi-year policy. The revisioning process is viewed as an always accreting one but the policy is designed as an open knowledge acquisition process that is respectful to the deep histories perspectives of the Indigenous peoples who have inhabited Australia for over 60,000 years.

In our shared ideals we seek to defer interest driven national politics. We defer to our knowledge acquisition of culture through the series of assets described in the UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity (2001) which reaffirms that "culture should be regarded as the set of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features of society or social group and that it encompasses, in addition to art and literature, lifestyles, ways of living together, value systems, traditions and beliefs."

At a conference for the Australian Anthropological Society, Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, researcher Professor Deborah Bird Rose speaks to the importance of dialogue and the meaning of knowledge in Indigenous culture.

> "Knowledge has a powerful dialectic element: it points to country and to relationships between the possessor of knowledge and the country to which it refers. Performance of knowledge (through song, dance, story, history, use of country) is a performance

> of ownership: it identifies the person as one with rights and responsibilities to that country." (Rose, 1994)

The embassy's First nations projects are represented in each of the three strategic pillars: *Enrich, Embrace* and *Elevate.* The projects range from intangible heritage projects to indigenous fashion design exchanges which support our central vision: "The Cultural Policy of the Netherlands Embassy in Australia activates the past to connect with the future and the future to connect with the past."

The inclusion of Indigenous narratives–in our intangible heritage projects–reinforces Dutch-Australian historical connections in a holistic and inclusive light. The connections between Australia and the Netherlands date back to the 17th century, when Dutch trading ships mapped and charted the Australian continent, long before the arrival of Captain Cook. In 1606, Dutchman Willem Janszoon and his crew on the Duyfken made the first European landing on the Australian continent. This igniting incident set the foundation for the 400-years of shared history.

In 2022, the First Nations' Mirning Community responded to our policy. The people of the Mirning Clan reside in the Yinyila Nation which encompasses the coastal seabed of the Nullarbor Plain *Ngargangooridri*, the limestone Bunda Cliffs and the waters of the Great Australian Bight and crosses Point Culver in Western Australia to near Streaky Bay in South Australia. The elders of the Mirning Clan together with the Australian Catholic University, the Nationaal Archiefs and the Wereld Museum (Netherlands) are collaborating on a multi-year project: *The Mirin: Echoes* of *Early Encounters.* The project looks an incident in 1627, when the Dutch VOC (trading) ship *'t Gulden Zeepaert* traversed the southern waters and coast of the continent that would later become known as 'Australia', mapping and naming this land *'t Land van Pieter Nuyts*. While the ship's log is said to have been lost, the memory and *mirin*, or echoes, of the voyage continue.

"The Mirin: Echoes of Early Encounters" brings the stories of the First Nations Mirning people together with the records and insights from historians in Australia and archivists in the Netherlands. There are very few studies which equally draw on Aboriginal oral histories and European accounts to provide mutual insights into the encounters. The collaboration between Elders, historians and archivists offers a rare dialogue and re-consideration of these early cultural encounters, their reverberations and opportunities for cross-cultural exploration and discovery.

The project includes academic research and on-Country meetings with the Elders and on-line knowledge exchange workshops with Dutch partners. As the Elders' stories are embodied and presented, the project is being documented by videographers. This project will provide new records of stories that will be developed into a documentary, museum exhibitions, as well as a community archive.

Another sub-pillar in our recalibration of Dutch-Australian history through First Nations' perspectives centres on our audit of monuments and memorials–the statues, plaques, markers, and place names that articulate the history of Dutch-Australian encounters. We ask the question, does the civic landscape in Australia accurately depict our shared history and can it pay closer attention to the experiences of our First Nations' peoples.

In 2021, the embassy in collaboration with a local government shire–the Margaret River Busselton Tourism Association in southwest Western Australia-began a multi-year commitment that was sparked by the 400th Anniversary acknowledgement of the mapping of the Cape of Wadandi-Pibulmun people (Cape Leeuwin) by the Dutch VOC (trading) ship the 'Leeuwin'.

The first phase commenced with the installation of a commemorative plaque and visitation centre at the Cape Leeuwin Lighthouse. The inscription on the plaque reflects the shared commitment to the role that memorials play in processes of symbolic and material recognition. The plaque is written from the perspective of the region's traditional owners and translated into three languages: Wadandi, Dutch and English.

With a view to including next generation First Nations peoples, design and in particular fashion design offers a distinctive passage for knowledge exchange between Indigenous designers and Dutch designers. The selection of our projects pivots on underlining the understanding of collective histories and future histories in the interests of forging non-transactional, i.e., non-outcomes-based, artist-to-artist connections in the service of inspiration, sharing values and artistic practice.

The embassy in co-operation with Het Nieuwe Instituut, and the Dutch Design Foundation encouraged and supported the participation of Indigenous and designer artist Grace Lillian Lee to present at Dutch Design Week in 2023. The selection of Grace Lillian Lee reflects the shared vision of the embassy and Dutch Design Week: to provide a platform of engagement that brings diversity into account. This initiative supported the respect for kinship of shared lessons of connection.

In 2024 Dutch designer Iris van Herpen, presented her exhibition *Sculpting the Senses* at the Queensland Art Gallery | Gallery of Modern Art (QAGOMA). The visit of the *Haute Couture* designer to South-East Queensland offered an opportunity to facilitate a two-way Indigenous and non-Indigenous cultural dialogue, prioritising women's voices, and creativity. A cultural immersion trip to the island of Minjerribah (also known as North Stradbroke Island) was curated with an itinerary led by First Nations women including Quandamooka artist and curator Avril Quail, Director, Quandamooka Art Museum and Performance Institute and one of QAGOMA's Indigenous Australian art curators.

The Quandamooka Peoples have lived on Minjerribah for at least 25 000 years, Quandamooka and three clans comprise the Peoples of the Quandamooka. They are the Nughi of Moorgumpin (now known as Moreton Island) and the Nunukul and Gorenpul of Minjerribah. The multi-day offered an opportunity for cross-cultural conversation with Iris van Herpen. The focus on sustainable creativity and the opportunity to experience *on-Country* histories, culture, flora, and fauna provided a seed for inter-cultural creativity for both van Herpen and local artists underlining and promoting sustainable cultural activity that is designed, controlled, and implemented by local communities.

In its aspiration to enrich, embrace and elevate the Netherlands International Cultural Policy the strategy of the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherland in Australia necessarily reflects UNESCO's policy measurements for cultural dialogue as a unique conduit for change with a view of realigning its positioning on democratic participation. The implementation of the policy aligns with the commitments outlined in UNESCO's Universal Declaration of Cultural Diversity (2001) highlighting the affirmation that "respect for the diversity of cultures, tolerance, dialogue and cooperation in a climate of mutual trust and understanding are amongst the best guarantees of international peace, and security.

In conclusion, the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in Australia measures the effectiveness of its First Nations policy through process of continuous refinement. The policy defers to a change process that are evolutionary in development. The consideration of relevance is a key assessment instrument. We consider various relevancies: our relevance to sustainable practice, how relevant we are to equal access and the representation of diversity and the relevance of inter-cultural co-operation. When we utilize the term *relevan*t we remind ourselves of the etymology with the word “relieve,” The common forebear of both “relevant” and “relieve” is the French *relever,* which meant, originally, to put back into an upright position, to raise again, a word that has morphed through time to offer meanings from: the ease pain or discomfort, to make stand out, to render prominent or distinct, to rise up or rebel, to rebuild, to reinvigorate, to make higher, to set free. when we talk about “relevance,” especially the relevance of international cultural policy we seek to adhere to the full meanings of the term to further our sustainable goals. By leveraging relevancy, as a touchstone and integrating inter-cultural practice between non-Indigenous and Indigenous peoples, we can bring democratic decision making and decentralized approaches to environmental management and promote cultural diversity in socio-ecological systems.

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Festivals in transition(s): instrumental growth, widening dilemmas

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ABSTRACT

The cultural sector, once thought to be protected by an exceptional situation, is now facing major transition challenges (Irle & al., 2021; Voices of Culture, 2023). Festivals are among the events that are most questioned in terms of their environmental footprint. They are also those that provide instrumental responses to these challenges, particularly when encouraged to do so by public eco-conditionality schemes.

The notion of transition, which is tending to replace that of sustainable development (Kangas, Duxbury & De Beukelaer, 2018), is however polysemous (Négrier, 2023). And it is precisely between several meanings of the term transition (economic, ecological, cultural) that lie the major dilemmas of festival transition.

Keywords:

Festivals

Transition

Instruments

Prospective

This paper presents the results of the CoFEST! quantitative survey of 1,237 French festivals in 2023. This research aims to gain a better understanding of the dynamics of festivals at the time of their creation, but also to analyse the evolution of their governance; and finally, to measure the way in which the sector is taking up the challenges of transformation and transition.

It is on this last aspect that the paper focuses, with a double prospective entry. The first looks at the major uncertainties facing festivals. The second looks at the transformations experienced by festivals during the 2022 edition, which marked the return of events to near-normal conditions after two years of pandemic degradation. We'll see whether these transformations were merely an adaptation to the context of 2022, or whether they are destined to become a permanent fixture at the heart of the festival ecosystem. Finally, we will examine the environmental strategies implemented by festivals, which constitute a more or less assumed and conflicting dimension of festival's transition.

The data from these analyses are systematically cross-referenced with variables identifying festival types in terms of age, territory, budget, artistic programming and seasonality.

Introduction

The "festivalization of culture" (Négrier, 2015) is enjoying both qualitative and quantitative growth. It has only recently become the focus of research, based on a curiosity that initially focused on three characteristics: a historical or monographic (Ethis, 2001; Autissier, 2008; Fabiani, 2008) logic; an approach centered on economic, managerial (Maughan & Bianchini, 2004; Bonet & Schargorodsky, 2012) or tourist attraction (Andersson, 2009) issues. These different dimensions have sometimes been crossed with more artistic or aesthetic issues (Newbold, Maughan, Jordan & Bianchini, 2015), or geographical dimensions, with research into the relationship between festival and public space (Delanti, Giorgi & Sassatelli, 2011). All this research shows that the event-driven nature of culture has gradually become a worldwide phenomenon. Operators attribute qualities to events in terms of mediatization, hybridization of social and cultural practices, and collective emulation. These qualities have taken center stage on the agenda. The debate also focused on the impact of this festivalization on citizens' relationship with culture. While most cultural policies are still geared towards permanence, learning and the primacy of the offer, the festival is more in line, even if critically, with presentism (Hartog, 2003), eclecticism and horizontal socialization (Octobre, 2010), that of interactions between siblings or peers.

The end of the festival exception means that festivals are confronted with global societal issues, rather than organizational niches or local dynamics. As a result, and increasingly so since the emergence of the pandemic, festivals are being questioned as to how they deal with issues such as transition.

In this paper, we'll be looking at the short-term prospects for festivals, with a two-pronged prospective approach.

The first is the vision of the future held by event managers. The second is the major uncertainties that festivals believe they face. We will then look at the transformations that festivals underwent during the 2022 edition, which marked the return of events to almost normal conditions after two years of pandemic deterioration. We'll see whether these transformations were merely an adaptation to the context of 2022, or whether they are destined to become a permanent fixture at the heart of the festival ecosystem. Finally, we will examine the environmental strategies implemented by festivals, which constitute a dimension, more or less assumed, of the transformation of the festival model. This analysis of the changes brought about by festivals involves first documenting the uncertainties, transformations and instrumental strategies of festivals. It also involves examining the dilemmas they face when deciding which direction to take. These dilemmas condition a more realistic vision of the way in which festivals, which have long considered themselves to be little or unconcerned by environmental issues, selectively integrate them into their projects.

This analysis is part of the results of the CoFEST! research project, which needs to be described in a few sentences. It is based on a dual qualitative and quantitative approach. Qualitatively, 46 semi-structured interviews were conducted with creators and directors of festivals in mainland France and Guadeloupe. The interview guide was structured in four main sections, covering the profile and career path of the interviewee, the context of the festival's creation, the changes specific to the 2022 edition and the main challenges for the future identified by the interviewees. On the quantitative side, we designed a questionnaire covering the same topics.

The questionnaire survey was carried out online between February and June 2023, and e-mailed to creators or, where this was not possible, festival directors in mainland France and overseas[33]. A total of 1,308 festivals responded at least partially, representing a response rate of 19.1%[34]. To guarantee the quality of our statistical processing, we excluded partial responses to the section on festival creation from the 1,308 responses. In the end, we came up with a usable sample of 1,237

[33] We e-mailed a link to the electronic form to festivals identified by Deps-Doc during the festival mapping exercise carried out in 2021 (Négrier, Millery, Coursière, 2023). At that time, 7,282 festivals were listed. Of these, 5,565 had provided an e-mail address. During the first mailing, 335 erroneous addresses were found. Our first task was therefore to find valid addresses for these 335 festivals, as well as to fill in the addresses of the 1,717 festivals that had not provided one during the mapping survey. This search, carried out manually using available online resources - websites, social networks, press articles - ultimately yielded 1,364 e-mail addresses. Ultimately, the link to the survey was sent to 6,929 festivals. Of these, 80 indicated that they had ceased operations. The reference population to which the survey was administered therefore comprises 6,849 festivals.

[34] This rate is acceptable in view of the characteristics of the survey and those of the target population, as well as its size. See Bartel S., K. (2001). E-mail Survey Response Rates: a Review. Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication, 6(2), JCMC621; and also WU, M-J., Zhao, K., Fils-Aime, F. (2022). Response rates of online surveys in published research: A meta-analysis. Computers in Human Behavior, 7, 100206.

respondents. The sample is made up almost equally of creators (n=688, 55.6% of the sample) and directors (n=549, 44.4%). In order to assess the representativeness of this sample and its possible biases, we can compare it with the 7,283 festivals referenced by the mapping survey conducted with Deps-Doc (ministry of Culture, department of studies and statistics), which provides an exhaustive French Festivals landscape (Millery, Négrier, & Coursière, 2023).

For the purposes of this comparison, three variables are used in both databases: dominant discipline, decade of creation and festival seasonality. The comparison reveals that the differences between the two databases are very small, although statically significant (Table 1). $\chi 2$ tests show that, in terms of dominant festival disciplines, the CoFEST! survey sample shows a slight over-representation of film and audiovisual festivals (13.6% of the sample, versus 10.1% in the mapping database), and a comparable under-representation of music festivals (42.6% versus 47.3%). There is also little difference in terms of event seasonality, with an over-representation of pre-season festivals (January to June) in the CoFEST! database (37.5% vs. 34.9%) and an under-representation (32.8% vs. 34.9%) of in-season festivals (June 21-September 5). Finally, in terms of decade of creation, we note that the proportion of events created after 2010 is lower in the CoFEST! database than in the cartographic database (45.6% vs. 48.5%).

		Base Cartographie	**Base Cofest**
Dominant art	Visual arts, digital arts	5,6	4,4
	Cinema, audiovisual	10,1	13,6
	Book, literature	13,1	15,1
	Musics	47,3	42,6
	Performing arts	23,9	24,3
	N	6 819	8 55
Saisonnalité	Before Summer	34,9	37,5
	Summer	37,7	32,8
	After summer	27,4	29,7
	N	7 217	1 167
	Before 1980	3,1	3,3
	From 1980 to 1989	6,3	6,8

Decade of creation	From 1990 to 1999	14,1	15,5
	From 2000 to 2009	28	28,8
	After 2010	48,5	45,6
	N	6 912	9 46

TABLE 1. COMPARISON OF DATABASES CARTOGRAPHIE DES FESTIVALS AND COFEST!

Source: Own elaboration

While these discrepancies must be pointed out, the structures of the two databases are nevertheless close enough to affirm that the empirical sample constituted during the CoFEST! survey is representative. Both sources of data (quantitative and qualitative) were discussed by a steering committee made up of a remarkably diverse range of festival specialists.

In the CoFEST! research, three areas were successively examined. The first analyzes the motivations and teams behind the creation of festivals across decades, disciplines and territories. Next, we look at the sociology of the creators and directors (those who succeeded the creators), their social, cultural and professional identities, and the trajectories they followed as the events developed. Finally, we looked at the transformations and new challenges they face today, which are the subject of this paper.

The resulting data are systematically cross-referenced with variables identifying festival types in terms of age, territory, budget, artistic program and season. They are, for the time being, partially accompanied by considerations drawn from our qualitative interviews with festival managers.

To stay or to go. Personal dilemma / collective response

The Key questions of this part is to examine how do festival directors see themselves in the next five years? And what do these answers tell us about the nature of the job of festival director?

While it's characteristic of festivals to take on the profound changes linked to their connection with the evolution of the territories and artistic sectors in which they operate, the way in which their management looks to the future, on the other hand, is marked by a multi-faceted logic of stability. We asked festival managers about the possibility, in the short term, of leaving the festival, staying on as its head, staying with the team and handing over management, or handing over management to a member of the team or to an outsider[35].

[35] Naturally, we're collecting the opinions of festival directors on their vision of their future at the head of the organization. However, this vision is part of a context that goes beyond personal decisions and aspirations. This context is

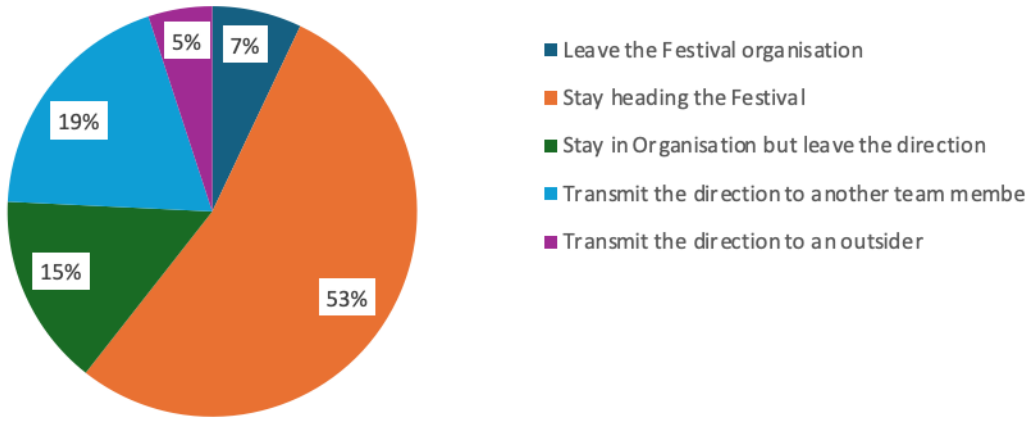

FIGURE 1. THE FUTURE OF FESTIVAL LEADERS (5 YEARS AHEAD)

Source: Own elaboration

On the one hand, in the sample as a whole, the prospect of leaving the festival permanently is only envisaged by 7% of managers. There is little variation in this figure by type of event. We can only observe that the prospect of leaving the festival is a little more often envisaged in the case of small events (9%) than in the case of large events (3%). Curiously, more managers aged over 70 (11%) than those under 40 (7%) are contemplating the end of their mandate. But it's the weakness of this gap that is striking, and the idea that for 89% of seniors, it's a question of staying with the organization, even if it means organizing the handover. This data demonstrates an extremely strong attachment to the event, which is not left until well beyond the end of the employability threshold, even if it is - as we shall see - by passing on the management.

On the other hand, it's precisely the prospect of stability that is in the majority: 87% of responses point in three directions. Firstly, a clear majority (53%) opted to remain at the head of the festival. This response varies more widely than the previous one. It is all the more important the larger the festival itself: this is the case for 66% of festivals with a budget of over 1.4 million euros, and 49% (only) of festivals with a budget of less than 20,000 euros. The fact that more women (59%) than men (50%) intend to remain at the helm of the event cannot be directly taken into account.

also that of internal governance relationships, between management and boards of directors for example; but also of relations between the festival and its partners, which may take a different course from, or even oppose, that of the managers. As analysis of this context does not lend itself well to a quantitative approach, we can only approach it qualitatively, through a few illustrations.

In reality, it's because women have, on the whole, entered into the management of these festivals much later than men. The "hidden" variable behind this data is the age of the person in charge: only 21% of the over-70s intend to remain in charge, compared with 43% of the 60-69s, which is still considerable; while 62% and 68% of the under-40s and 40-50s respectively do so.

The second option for stability (19%) is to hand over management to a member of the existing team. Here again, it's the age of the person in charge that has the greatest influence on this figure: 27% of the over-70s are preparing for this handover, compared with 10% of the 40-49s. Curiously, the under-40s are more likely (16%) to be considering it, as if the idea of a time-limited responsibility were more common among new managers than older ones, especially those who created the event in the first place. For younger people, especially volunteers, the tension between festival involvement and the constraints of other activities, particularly professional ones, is very high indeed.

The third option for stability is for managers to remain part of the team, without retaining the main direction of the event. This concerns 15% of responses. This is another way of understanding how, in this field, we are not exactly in the presence of a professional logic, but more broadly in an activity of commitment, which lasts beyond the assumption of a leadership role. The more rural (19%), older (19%), summer (19%) and medium-budget (23%) festivals are, the more this option is adopted. But here again, variations are fairly small, except for one variable: it's the age of the person in charge that makes the difference. The over-70s are 30% more likely to consider this option.

The last option is the least favored: handing over management to someone from outside the organization. This is the option that would come closest to a logic that, if not purely professional, is at least the furthest removed from the idea of collective commitment. It's no coincidence that this is the option least present in the future prospects of festival-goers. Admittedly, 10% of the over-70s are considering it, twice as many as the average. But no other variable (seasonality, territory, age, budget) has the slightest influence on this possibility. One might have thought that it would be more prevalent in events with large budgets, but this is absolutely not the case. This information underlines a conviction that runs through this work: the activity - albeit professional in substance - of running a festival goes beyond the narrow confines of what is commonly referred to as a profession. Succeeding to the head of a festival does not first and foremost mobilize a set of skills linked to a professional frame of reference, a know-how, but much more than that, what is commonly called a "savoir-être", and more generally a diffuse identification that affects, as we know, a large number of volunteers. And this is the principle of inheritance, to the extent that - to paraphrase the adage - it's not so much the manager who inherits the festival as the festival that inherits new faces.

The way in which festival managers envisage their future at the helm of events is therefore widely shared by all events, whatever their place in the succession of seasons, their aesthetic orientation, their budget volume or their territorial affiliation. It is rather the variables linked to individuals, and in particular their age, that allow us to understand a certain variation in responses. However, while we might have expected different types of festival to respond differently to the question, it is - once again - a fairly high degree of homogeneity that emerges from the responses. For example, there is virtually no difference in the answers to the question on the maintenance or transmission of music in universes as different as classical music, jazz, contemporary music or the visual arts.

On the one hand, these responses indicate an extremely strong attachment on the part of managers to "their" festival, which they do not willingly consider handing over, even when they have blithely exceeded the usual threshold of professional employability. On the other hand, when transmission is envisaged, it is not an obstacle to keeping the person within the team, or passing them on to another team member, to the detriment of recruiting an outsider.

While this multi-faceted stability testifies to a very specific sociology of festival managers, it also points to a number of associated risks. The fact that the most senior managers have no intention of leaving the company makes seamless successions more likely, and we all know how fragile these can be. The same is true of a rapid handover to another person whose social and cultural capital may be very different, as it has not been accumulated over years of presence in a given environment and territory. This mainly concerns the classical music, jazz and live performance sectors, where almost a quarter of managers are over 70. What's more, the fact that the majority of handovers take place within the team that has been set up, and value relational rather than competency-based recognition, means that we need to think about training new managers in the various tasks of the position entrusted to them.

Unstructured uncertainty

Cultural uncertainty can be described as unstructured, and linked to a situation that is recurrently more complex than complicated. In a complicated situation, uncertainty concerns the possibility of providing an efficient response to a well-identified or structured problem[36]. This is the case, for example, with the possibility of achieving economic equilibrium for a festival. In a complex

[36] Galbraith, J.R., 2014, *Designing organizations : Strategy, Structure and Process*, Jossey-Bass

situation, on the other hand, possible solutions relate to a problem whose structure is difficult to identify. This is the case when the objectives to be achieved are both multiple and potentially contradictory. This is particularly true in the field of culture, where there are ongoing debates and conflicts about the public policy paradigms to be defended: artistic excellence, cultural democratization, cultural and participatory democracy, the creative economy, etc[37]. This ill-structured uncertainty is also due to the diversity of situations that give rise to different perceptions of problems and solutions.

The festival world is itself affected by multiple sources of uncertainty. It was therefore of interest to examine in greater depth the motives that could affect the long-term survival of festivals. Naturally, these factors are closely linked to local ecosystems and are by their very nature multiple. We therefore narrowed the questioning down to four possible causes: the fact that no one is willing to take over responsibility; the fact that its economics are now too uncertain; the precariousness of the jobs it requires; the withdrawal of a public partner.

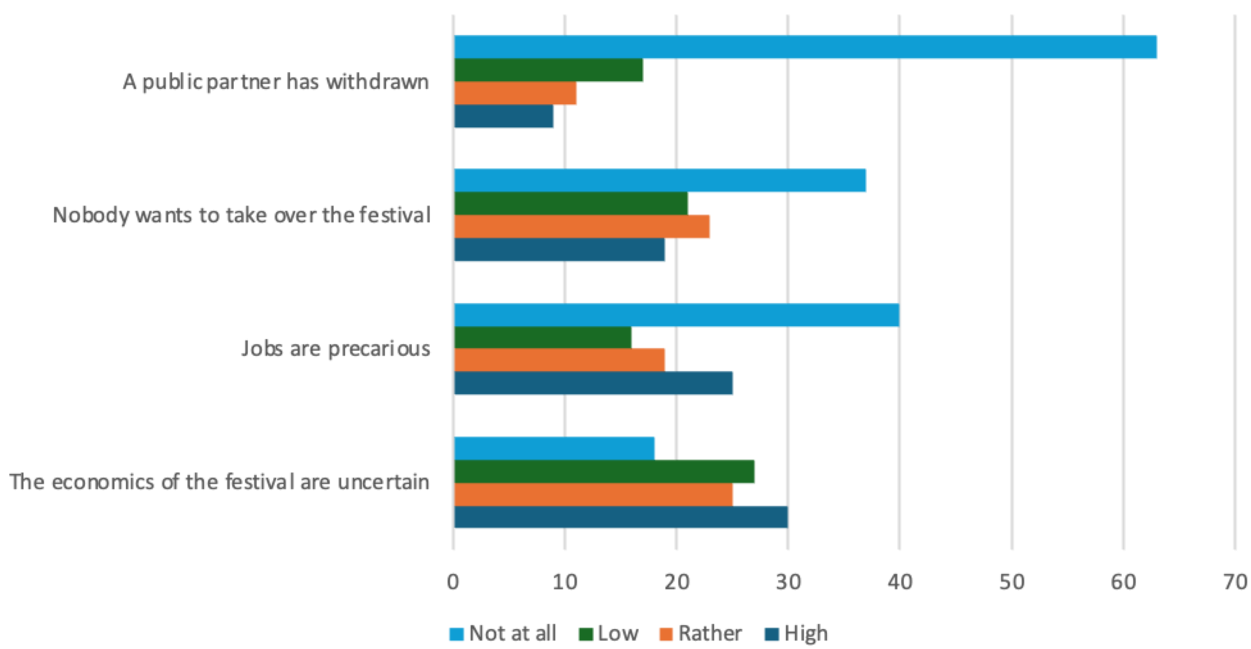

FIGURE 2. TRANSMITTING A FESTIVAL : TEST ON 4 CONTEXTUAL FACTS

Source: Own elaboration

[37] Dupin-Meynard, F., Négrier, E., 2021, *Cultural Policies in Europe : A Participatory Turn ?,* Toulouse : Editions de l'Attribut ; L.Bonet, E.Négrier, 2018, « The Participative Turn in Cultural Policy: Paradigms, Models, Contexts." *Poetics n°66*, p.64-73 - https://doi.org/10.1016/j.poetic.2018.02.006

Analysis of the responses to these four considerations leads us first to consider the hierarchy of importance accorded by the teams to each of them. As can be seen from the table above, it is economic uncertainty that is highlighted by a majority of respondents. If we combine the answers "a lot" and "quite a lot", it is the only answer with a clear majority (55%). Job insecurity ranks second, with the same cumulative figure reaching 44%. The impossibility of identifying a buyer for the festival is only slightly less significant, with a cumulative figure of 42%. It is - and this situation could well become more frequent in the future - the recent withdrawal of a public partner from the event that is the rarest modality, with an accumulation of only 20%. On this last point, it should be remembered that the questionnaires were filled in during 2023, at a time when public support for festivals was not showing any signs of decline, contrary to what seems to be happening in the run-up to the 2024 edition of the events.

But unlike the previous analysis, it's the variations in responses by type of festival that are most interesting here.

Economic uncertainty affects more :

a) Festivals located in rural areas, especially those with scattered to very scattered settlements;

b) Film and audiovisual festivals;

c) The most recent festivals;

d) Festivals with budgets ranging from 230,000 euros to 1.4 million euros.

Here we find situations which, to varying degrees, constitute objective handicaps in the festival world. Contrary to popular belief, it's not the smallest budgets that show this concern. As we have shown in our previous work, their economic model relies much more heavily than that of large festivals, on a combination of very diverse resources, with a high level of volunteerism. Setting up in rural areas therefore has a greater impact on festivals whose budget level, while not maximal, is closer to the upper average of the sample. This data confirms the observation made by the CNM in 2023, for example, that the economic downturn was hitting medium-sized and larger contemporary music festivals the hardest, due to their difficulty in coping with the high growth in artistic and technical costs, in particular, unlike the larger festivals.

The other information concerns the most recent festivals (of which film and audiovisual festivals are an important contingent) which, because they are the latest arrivals in the field, do not have the same capacity for public support, nor the same heritage of partnerships or a loyal, consolidated audience. It is therefore understandable that their economic uncertainty is greater.

Job insecurity follows a slightly different logic. Responses affirming above-average sensitivity to this situation are found in the following cases:

a) festivals in large urban centers ;

b) visual and digital arts festivals, as well as film and audiovisual festivals;

c) more recent festivals.

Employment and job insecurity are central issues for festivals. If they affect urban events more than others, it's primarily because, as we've already said, rural festivals rely more heavily on volunteer work. This poses the challenge of renewing the workforce, and not that of job insecurity, by definition. On the other hand, very urban festivals, more than others, are faced with this uncertainty of professional resources in tension. What they have in common with economic uncertainty, however, is that it affects more recent festivals (where the visual and audiovisual arts form a significant part of the contingent), for reasons similar to those we have already outlined: lesser recognition in the milieu, lesser partnership and social heritage. In the negative, this analysis confirms the idea that the economic and social model of festivals - the mixed economy in tension that we have already described[38] - is consolidated over time, but with the limitation of the conditions of transmission.

The impossibility of finding a buyer is, however, more noticeable in the following situations:

a) Festivals in the most rural areas

b) Summer-season festivals

c) Classical, jazz and blues festivals

d) Festivals with budgets under 50,000 euros

Here we have four of the major characteristics of a traditional festival world, whose identities correspond to each other: the most rural festivals are more often musical, summer-season festivals, with more modest budgets. These four criteria underline the major challenge of renewal and transmission. Paradoxically, one factor is missing from this panorama: the age of the festival. Festivals that encounter problems with takeovers are not the oldest, no doubt for two cumulative reasons. On the one hand, because of their age, they may already have made the transfer, sometimes more than once. Secondly, since seniority coincides with recognition and less economic and social uncertainty, these festivals are more motivating for would-be buyers.

[38] Djakouane, A., Négrier, E., 2022, « Demain, les festivals : Essai de prospective ». *La musique en mouvements - Horizon 2030*, CNMlab, pp.135-150. ⟨hal-03663272⟩

As for the recent withdrawal of a public partner, the least sensitive of the situations perceived, it is slightly more perceptible in the case of festivals with the most modest budgets, but the difference is not significant enough to make it a determining factor.

...

The prospects facing festivals place them at the heart of a paradox that could be expressed in the form of an oxymoron: shifting stability. The elements of stability are clearly to be found on the side of attachment to the festival project, whether in the ultra-majority motivation of managers to continue their activity, or in the logics of transmission which are clearly situated within existing teams. But this vocational stability is expressed in a configuration marked by uncertainties regarding the sustainability of an economic and social model that is more or less threatened by economic prospects, human resources and public support. Generally speaking, the festivals that are most affected by these threats are more rural than urban, and tend to be among the most recent. This shifting stability opens up a new dimension: that of the changes brought about by the emergence of the pandemic and their maintenance over time.

The pandemic: a nightmare and/or a lever

Covid's pandemic came at a time when we were developing a major quantitative survey of festivals, with a sample of over 1,000 events. This enabled us to measure the intensity of the shock that this health phenomenon and its treatment by public policy had caused events. We identified a three-dimensional shock[39]. The first is a reflexive shock, in which the players, especially the festivals, question their place in society, when their ability to act is called into question. This question is usually latent, but the pandemic made it all the more acute as the halt to events gave time to formulate an uncertainty that had become directly vital. The second is the shock of innovation, through which the players, faced with this existential threat, were able to deploy new tools to deal with it. Remote tools were the best illustrations of this innovation shock. But there was a third, more discreet but no less important shock: the hermeneutic shock. By this, we mean the questioning of players not about their place, but about the meaning of their actions, as well as about the more general value of cultural policies. Of course, this questioning of meaning is not unique to periods of crisis. But in the case of the pandemic, it directly affected some players (artists, technicians, administrators) who gave up on pursuing their careers in the cultural sector, while others put forward the idea that it was the entire

[39] Négrier, E. (2022). Les politiques publiques à l'épreuve de la pandémie. *Pôle Sud*, 56, 21-30. https://doi.org/10.3917/psud.056.0021

cultural and festival model that needed to be called into question, notably by integrating new imperatives such as the ecological transition or cultural democracy[40].

To what extent has 2022, the year festivals are making a comeback after two years of declining activity due to the COVID pandemic, been an opportunity to change the festival model? To find out, the festivals were questioned about a list of changes they had undertaken for this edition. For each of these decisions, they were then asked to what extent these new directions were a direct consequence of the epidemic or whether, on the contrary, they were motivated by entirely different considerations. Finally, they were asked whether these decisions would be maintained beyond the 2022 edition. The result is an overview of the changes made by festivals in the context of overcoming the crisis, which can be seen to operate differently depending on the identity of the events.

Among these changes, we have reserved a singular place for the treatment of environmental issues, for which festivals have been among the cultural players most challenged and encouraged to take an active part in managing the ecological transition, notably on the occasion of the introduction of the sustainable development charter for festivals, presented in December 2021 by Roselyne Bachelot, then Minister of Culture, and implemented from the year 2022.

Significant changes, but a certain continuity

The types of change proposed to the festivals were designed to test most of the areas in which strategic dilemmas have arisen in recent years. These concern the territory (physical and social), the relationship with audiences, artistic programming and technical choices. The commentary begins by examining the varying degrees of responsiveness of different types of festival to each item. It then looks at the influence Covid may have had on these changes. It concludes with the festivals' vision of the likelihood of maintaining these changes in the future.

[40] Irle, D., Roesch, A., Valensi, S., 2021, *Décarboner la culture*, Grenoble : Presses Universitaires de Grenoble, coll. *Politiques Culturelles*

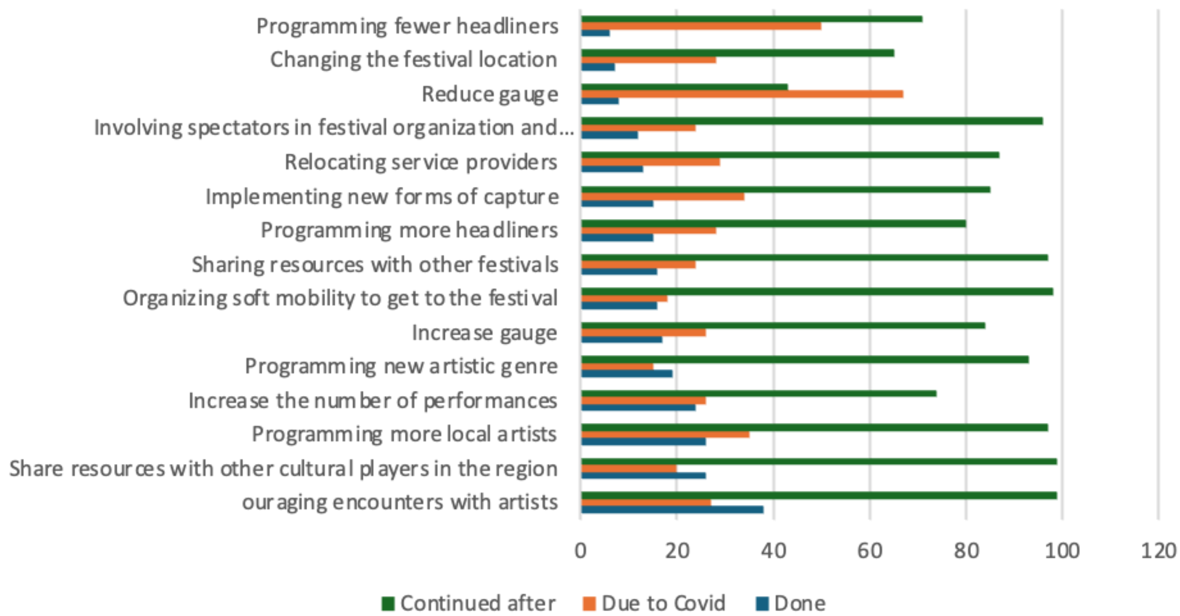

FIGURE 3. CHANGES MADE IN 2022, CAUSAL LINK WITH COVID AND DURABILITY

Source: Own elaboration

The various actions can be classified into four areas. On the one hand, there's that which concerns the relationship with the audience, with encounters with artists, audience involvement, and increased or reduced audience sizes. Next come programming actions (number of performances, increased or limited headliner programming, new artistic genres) and decisions with a territorial impact (more local artists, pooling with local cultural players, relocation of service providers, change of festival venue). Last but not least, we find two instruments accompanying a change in the economic model: mutualization between festivals and the implementation of new forms of video capture.

The first thing to note is that 2022 has not been a great night for festival dynamics. The prevailing impression is that of an attempt to return to normal, often with success. Even the first modality, by far in order of importance (encouraging encounters with artists: 38%), was not chosen by a majority of events. In this respect, it's the most recent festivals with the smallest budgets that put the most emphasis on this point, particularly literary, visual arts and film events.

Secondly, we note that there is no major area of focus: at the top and at the bottom of the ranking, there are concerns about audiences, territories, programming and economic instruments. This indicates that new initiatives (or the reinforcement of existing strategies) have been deployed in all directions. In this respect, audience-related issues are slightly in the lead. But programming and territorial issues are very similar. With regard to the former, we can see that programming more headliners (15%) is clearly ahead of the prospect of reducing them (6%), although the idea of programming more local artists is in the top three of the modalities chosen. There is thus a certain ambivalence in the festival community towards opposing programming strategies (reduction/increase of headliners, local programming[41]). Here again, growth (17%) far outweighs reduction (8%).

Distinct changes by festival

Let's take a quick look at the main modalities selected, to see what is driving them upwards.

As far as pooling is concerned, two strategies (territorial and/or sectoral) are experiencing varying fortunes. Pooling with other cultural players in the region (26%) is more common in post-season festivals, performing arts, visual arts and literature, as well as for older events, especially those with medium-sized budgets. Here we find favorable factors linked to the period: the post-season is more conducive to territorial cooperation with players who, in the summer, are often inactive; the most recent festivals, especially the smaller ones, are less equipped to develop such cooperation, while the larger ones may feel they have an autonomy that distances them from the interest of such mutualization. Pooling with other festivals (16%) is lower than the previous figure, but is more common in small towns, in contemporary and world music, and among the oldest festivals, as well as events with large budgets, but not the highest: it affects 30% of festivals with budgets between 230,000 and 1.3 million euros.

In terms of artistic programming, four modalities show contrasting fortunes:

Programming more local artists (26%) is more common in small towns and urban belts, as well as in widely dispersed rural areas. Festivals of traditional and world music, as well as contemporary music, are more often found here. But festivals with the highest budgets are almost indifferent. The increase in the number of performances (24%) is more often found in large urban areas, in the fields of film and literature, and among the most recent events with the largest budgets. Diversification of programming towards new artistic genres (19%) is a fairly common decision, regardless of the region, season or budget level of the event. More recent festivals, with medium-sized budgets, and visual arts festivals are more likely to make this commitment. The programming of more headliners (15%) highlights both music festivals and those with larger budgets, in a very significant way. As in the case of increasing the number of performances, this modality, which is not without risk, can only be taken on condition that certain resources are available. It should be emphasized that the opposite strategy (programming fewer headliners), which could make sense in a context of significant growth in artistic fees, particularly in the contemporary music sector, is very rarely considered (6%).

In terms of audiences, four strategies are put forward in various ways, but are generally not very active. They relate to audience size, audience involvement and new forms of audience capture, which

[41] Of course, local artists can also be headliners. But that's not the majority of the genre.

aim to extend the audience in other ways. Increasing audience size (17%) is the other modality favored by proponents of growth. It follows a logic fairly comparable to the previous ones, with the emphasis on large budgets, but also on the most recent festivals. On the other hand, a reduction in audience size (9%) is favored by current music and world music festivals, but also by larger budgets! This points to an interesting dilemma among the largest festivals: some are choosing to pursue an upward trajectory in terms of reception and artistic appeal, while others, belonging to the same group, are taking a downward turn. It should be noted that this second group remains much more modest than the previous one, as we have seen with the programming of more or fewer headliners. Degrowth remains a very minority idea. The implementation of new ways of capturing audiences (15%), which concerns both audiences and the search for new sources of revenue for events, is strongly linked to the visual arts, cinema and literature, provided they have substantial budgets. Contrary to what one might have thought, it is very little present in music festivals. The involvement of spectators in the organization and programming of the festival (12%), while a recurrent theme in debates on cultural policies in general, is not very popular with events, particularly those with larger budgets. It is more common among performing arts festivals, the field in which these initiatives were initiated the earliest. Lastly, the organization of soft mobility for festival access (16%) is more the concern of events located in urban belts and in rural areas with widely scattered settlements, in summer-season festivals and in the music sector. Above all, this choice is strongly influenced by budget level: 45% of festivals with a budget of over 1.4 million euros (versus 16% on average) subscribe to this action. There's a certain logic to this, insofar as these are the festivals that are now convinced of the higher carbon impact associated with audience mobility. We'll take a closer look at the environmental measures taken by these events.

Changes linked in various ways to the pandemic

How do these decisions relate to the specific context of the end of the pandemic? We questioned the festivals - decision by decision - on their particular influence, and on the long-term maintenance of these choices. What's striking here is that the decisions most closely linked to this context are also those least often implemented: reducing the number of seats, implementing new ways of capturing audience, programming more or fewer headliners, changing the festival venue or relocating suppliers are all decisions whose link is attested to by a quarter of the events, but whose frequency of implementation, as can be seen in the previous table, is among the lowest. The only exception to this inversion is the programming of a greater number of local artists, which affects both more than a quarter of festivals in 2022, and therefore 35% believe it to be a more direct effect of the pandemic. To a lesser degree, this is also the case for the most shared change (encouraging encounters with artists, 38%), which is seen as linked to the pandemic by over a quarter of festivals.

Three configurations of change

Combining these data (change linked to the pandemic, probability of maintaining these decisions over time) gives us three configurations.

Firstly, "Lever" changes: initially linked to COVID (for over a quarter of festivals), they are envisaged on a long-term basis and attest to the leverage effect of the pandemic on transformations in the festival model. First and foremost is the increased programming of local artists, which affects a quarter of all events and is, for them, clearly part of a long-term approach, even though it has been influenced (for 35% of festivals) by the pandemic. To a lesser degree of influence, meetings with artists are also part of this register. On the other hand, the other leverage effects attested to (increased audience size, new bookings and relocation of service providers) concern fewer festivals.

Secondly, there are "circumstantial" changes. Influenced by the pandemic, they are less likely to be maintained over time. Here we find the rarest modalities: change of festival venue, reduction in capacity, programming of fewer headliners. This group also includes the programming of more headliners, a strategy which is the opposite of the previous one, but which can be found among players with similar characteristics, notably big-budget festivals. This highlights a strategic dilemma for these events.

Lastly, there are the "structural" changes: although they have little to do with the pandemic, there is a strong consensus that they should be maintained over time. We're dealing with trends that come from further afield and have causes other than COVID. They will have a lasting effect on the festivals that adopt them: pooling with other cultural players in the region is one of them, as are, to a lesser degree of frequency, pooling between festivals, programming new artistic genres or involving spectators.

Logically, the fourth theoretical modality (weak influence of COVID, and decision without tomorrow) is absent from the landscape. The changes in question, which - it should be remembered - are never experienced by a majority of festivals, therefore show a relative but lasting influence of the epidemic episode on festival modes of action. Firstly, it is relative, because major, lasting changes have little to do with the pandemic. It is also relative because the changes most affected by COVID are also those least likely to last, and are also the least frequently implemented. But this influence is lasting in certain respects (encounters with artists, territorialization of partnerships and programming, for example). For those who have experienced them, the changes of 2022 have become registers of future action.

The influence of the pandemic can therefore be seen more as a further incentive for an evolution in the festival model, linked to more structural causes, than as the sole trigger. This is also why, overall, the changes observed are more in line with continuity than with a radical break. Last but not least, it's worth noting that many of the changes that are now a permanent feature of festival life are linked to the strengthening of their territorial footprint.

Revival under pressure

The festivals were then asked about the prevalence of certain difficulties that were widely echoed in the public arena after the resumption of cultural activities. Among these difficulties, the following were tested and analyzed according to our event typologies, in the form of "lived situations".

Situation faced	%
Decline in public attendance	33
Growth in artists' financial claims	31
Volunteer shortages	21
Unavailability of usual locations	10
Shortage of technicians	10
withdrawal of a local authority	10
Shortage of material	9
withdrawal of Sponsors	9
withdrawal of Patron	8
withdrawal of State support	4

TABLE 2. SITUATIONS FACED BY FESTIVALS IN 2022

Source: Own elaboration

The first comment to make is that none of these difficult situations was experienced by a majority of events. Even the highest (the drop in audience attendance) only concerned a third of festivals. And yet, behind these averages, some of these difficulties were experienced more acutely by certain events. Here are a few illustrations. The drop in audience attendance (33%) shows no territorial variation, but is more noticeable in the pre-season (a period too close to the pandemic?) and for film, jazz and classical music festivals. Above all, it has a much greater impact on events with large budgets (48% of festivals with over 1.4 million euros in spending), which are more sensitive than others to the economic stakes linked to audience size. The growth in artists' financial ambitions[42] (31%) is more marked in the urban belts (40%), for contemporary and world music (46%) and above all for festivals with large budgets: 67% of festivals with over 1.4 million euros in expenditure are concerned. They are naturally more sensitive to these issues, given their programming, which is more focused on expensive artistic line-ups. Defection of volunteers affects 21% of events, and 30% in large-scale events.

Other situations are more of a minority. The unavailability of venues naturally affects post-season festivals the most, as summer festivals are often held outdoors. It also affects more film and visual arts festivals. The shortage of technicians (10%) is primarily a problem for contemporary and world music or performing arts festivals, especially the larger ones (36%). The same applies to the shortage of equipment. The defection of a local authority (10%) concerns the oldest events a little more (17% of festivals born before 1990), but remains a very small minority, at least for this edition. The hypothesis of a withdrawal of the State (4%) is even more confidential. These latter situations deserve to be monitored over time, as the 2023 and 2024 editions seem to signal new, mostly regressive movements. As for the defection of sponsors and patrons (just under 10%), here again it's the major festivals that suffer the most, indicating that it's not necessarily at the most important festivals that the solidity of the economic model is the most systematic. This economic issue deserves to be explored in greater detail.

Growing tensions on the ecosystem

We have taken a closer look at the economic situation, examining both expenditure and revenue trends according to three possible scenarios: stable, rising, falling.

Overall, we can see an upward or stable trend in expenditure in 2022. The average decline in these various expenditure items is only 9%. Increases account for 45% and stability 46%. In financial terms, these findings corroborate what we have seen in terms of change and continuity. The increase in expenditure items is most marked in the artistic and technical fields, as we have observed in previous years. It is lower in other areas: communication, health and safety. The decline is slightly more marked in communications, no doubt due to the transition that some festivals are making from costly publicity campaigns (paper, media) to social networking and dematerialization.

[42] This question was understood in the broadest sense, without targeting the artists themselves, who often bear little responsibility for the inflation of artistic fees concerning them.

Types of expenses	Lower	Higher	Stable	Total
Artistic	11,1	63,9	25,0	100,0
Technique	9,1	57,9	32,9	100,0
Communication	14,6	44,2	41,2	100,0
Security	6,4	35,1	58,5	100,0
Health	6,2	33,3	60,5	100,0
Mediation	6,8	37,6	55,7	100,0
Moyenne	9	45	46	100,0

TABLE 3. EVOLUTION OF EXPENSES IN 2022

Source: Own elaboration

Compared with expenditure, the trend in revenues is quite markedly different. Upward trends are contained, on average, at 27%, while stable trends average 47%. On the other hand, downward trends are much more pronounced than for expenditure, with an average of 26%. Increases in revenue were mainly generated by the most important items: ticket sales, subsidies and other own resources. Decreases are more pronounced for sponsorship, but also for ticket sales, a sign that festivals, from this point of view, are not experiencing the same reality. We therefore need to break down these trends and analyze their impact on our different types of festival.

Type of income	Baisse	Hausse	Stable	Total
Ticketing	33,9	33,4	32,7	100,0
Own resources	22,9	31,9	45,2	100,0
Voluntary contribution	19,1	23,2	57,7	100,0
Public Grants	23,1	34,7	42,2	100,0
Sponsorship	29,6	17,5	52,9	100,0
Patronage	27,1	22,0	50,8	100,0

	26	27	47	100,0

TABLE 4. EVOLUTION OF INCOMES 2022

Source: Own elaboration

Stable or rising expenses

Of all expenses, artistic expenses are the most divided, with nearly two-thirds of festivals affected. Current music and world music festivals are the most recent, and above all have the largest budgets (72%). Technical expenses concern the same festivals (contemporary and world music), with a peak of 85% of festivals with budgets in excess of 1.4 million euros affected. Communication expenses are more prevalent among film, literature and visual arts festivals, where they were already higher than average in our previous studies. Major events are less affected. Security costs rose even more sharply for the largest contemporary and world music festivals: 71% of festivals with budgets in excess of 1.4 million euros were affected, compared with an average increase of 35%. Hygiene expenses are higher for the biggest festivals in terms of budget volume, but also for pre-season festivals. This is no doubt linked to a period when sensitivity to Covid was still very marked. Lastly, spending on mediation is more specific to books, an area in which these festivals were already very active.

All in all, it emerges from this examination of expenditure that the biggest festivals, and within them the contemporary music and world music festivals, are more affected by upward pressure than the others. The other lesson is that, apart from a few secondary data points, territorial, season and event age variables play virtually no role. It's the aesthetic and budgetary variables that count.

More uncertain income trends

On the revenue side, the situation is even more varied. Ticket sales are generally more stable for smaller events, in rural areas and urban belts. They are more often on the rise, but also on the decline, for big-budget festivals, which can be divided into two opposing trends. Declines in box-office receipts also affect classical music and jazz festivals more than others. Other own resources, which include merchandising, catering and refreshment services, among others, are on the rise to a greater extent in dispersed and very dispersed rural areas, and in medium-budget festivals. Subsidies are on the rise for the most recent festivals, those of the visual arts, and decreases are more frequent in the larger festivals. Interestingly, trends in patronage and sponsorship revenues - two sources with a priori distinct support philosophies - are identical: indifferent to territories, seasons and aesthetic genres, they are more often down among the oldest festivals, and more often up among the most recent. Large budget volumes show both a greater frequency of decreases and increases, a further sign of the instability affecting this particular stratum of events.

As for voluntary contributions, they are more common in rural areas, and for classical and jazz aesthetics. Very few festivals with large budgets record an increase in voluntary contributions. In the case of the latter, it's more a question of stability - on a very ancillary resource for them - that dominates.

The influence of our variables on revenues is therefore both more varied and more unstable. More varied, because territorial and generational dimensions play their part. Unstable, because for the same resource, the most frequent increases and decreases can affect the same types of event. So, while the responses attesting to stability (47% for revenues, 46% for expenses) might suggest a festival world without pressure, in reality a situation of tension is revealed, the intensity of which may be reinforced by subsequent editions.

A world in transition. The ecological dilemma

Among the issues facing festival projects, the ecological footprint of events has taken on major importance in recent years[43]. Large festivals have often been the focus of particular attention, due to the massive impact of their programming in terms of materials, energy and transport. More recently, public authorities have emphasized the importance of these issues, offering specific incentives to support them. On a national scale, we're thinking of the Sustainable Development Charter for Festivals, presented on the occasion of the 3rd edition of the États Généraux des Festivals, in Toulouse in December 2021. It makes state support for events conditional on their adherence to an eco-responsibility approach and a commitment to a three-year operational action plan. At regional level, festival funding is, more often than at other levels, subject to an eco-conditionality logic that guides beneficiaries towards equally progressive approaches in terms of diagnosis and actions[44].

[43] IRLE, D., ROESCH, A & VALENSI, S., 2021, *Décarboner la culture*, Grenoble : PUG, coll. Politiques culturelles

[44] Cf. FOURNIER, H., 2023, « La question environnementale (écologique) dans les budgets et choix culturels des collectivités », Observatoire des Politiques Culturelles/Le Média, novembre 2023. https://www.observatoire-culture.net/environnement-budgets-culturels-collectivites/

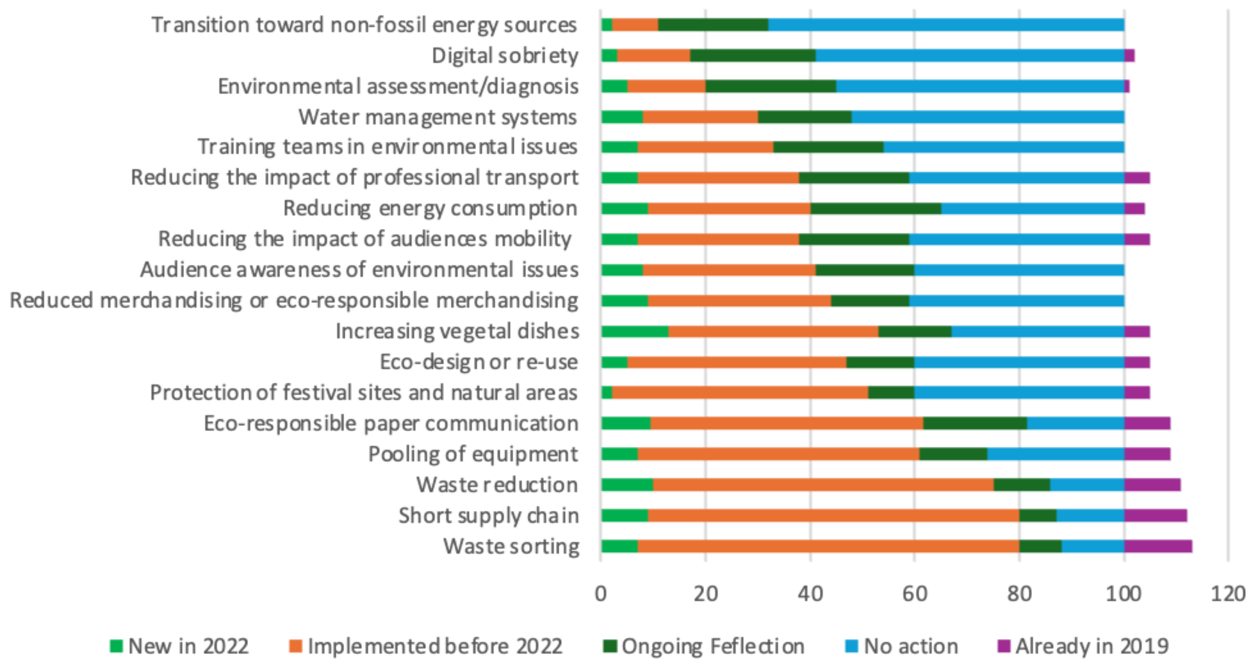

FIGURE 4. ENVIRONMENTAL ACTIONS (EN %)

Source: Own elaboration

Insofar as the sensitivity of festivals to this subject, which preceded many other cultural operators, is in full evolution, it was interesting to question them in the most diversified way possible. To the variety of environmental action themes, with 18 proposed actions, were added four possible response modalities: action already undertaken before 2022, new action in 2022, reflection in progress, no action. These results compare with those of our 2020 survey, in which we asked festivals whether or not they were active in most of these areas.

First of all, four action groups stand out for the entire sample. The first group contains actions that are taken up by the vast majority of festivals, since over 60% of festivals are involved in actions that are already well established and those that will be new in 2022. These include waste sorting and reduction, short-distance sourcing, pooling of equipment and eco-responsible paper communications. The second group includes actions that concern between 50% and 60% of festivals, with a significant proportion of ongoing reflection: these include the protection of festival sites and natural areas, eco-design or re-use of equipment, and increasing the plant-based portion of food. The third group is at a lower level of mobilization, with actions affecting around 30 to 40% of festivals. Six actions are included: reducing merchandising or eco-responsible merchandising; raising public awareness of environmental issues; reducing the impact of transport for the public; reducing energy consumption; reducing the impact of transport for professionals; and training teams in environmental issues. The last set of actions concerns four subjects that concern less than 30% of festivals, and for which the majority have not even begun to think. These include water management systems, environmental assessments/diagnosis of the festival, digital sobriety and the transition to non-fossil energy sources. This initial scan of actions reveals a festival world highly aware of the variety of environmental issues. Only four actions out of eighteen are currently excluded from any action or reflection in progress by a majority of events.

Secondly, comparing these results with those we produced on this subject in 2020 shows that in three years, festival mobilization on these issues has taken a spectacular leap forward. It's interesting to note that in both cases, we find more or less the same hierarchy: the five actions in the lead in 2023 were already in the lead in 2020; those in the other three groups - excluding actions not surveyed in 2020 (such as "team training", for example) - were practically in the same place. But it's the gap in commitment between the two surveys that's impressive, in all areas. In 2020, 13% of events were active in waste sorting. Three years later, the figure had risen to 80%. 5% of festivals were working to increase the proportion of plant-based food in 2020. Today, the figure is 53%. At the same time, active awareness of energy consumption issues has risen from 4% to 40%. And even more confidential initiatives have made considerable progress: the number of festivals carrying out an assessment/diagnosis has risen from 1% to 15%.

Finally, it should be noted that the areas of eco-responsibility that have the biggest carbon footprint, notably transport, are not necessarily at the top of the list of actions undertaken. This is because real artistic and cultural dilemmas exist in this area: limiting the impact of transport (for both professionals and the public) is a direct challenge to the festival's economic model, which is based, for the most part, on extraterritorial artistic posters and on welcoming the widest possible audience.

Finally, it seemed clear that the degree of involvement of festivals in these actions was not identical according to the nature of the event. That's why we cross-referenced these levels of commitment with what we knew about them: their territory, age, seasonality, artistic discipline and budget level. Here is a table (n°5), by action, which summarizes the influence of these variables on the propensity to act in each area.

ACTION	INFLUENCING FACTORS: upward / *downward*
Waste sorting	**Rural areas, summer, large budgets** *Urban, cinema, small budget*
Short supply chain	**Rural, summer, contemporary and world music** *Urban, cinema, large budget*

Waste reduction	**Rural, summer, large budgets** *Urban*
Pooling of equipment	No significant variation
Eco-responsible paper communication	**Cinéma, visual arts, literature, large budgets** *Classical Musics*
Protection of festival sites and natural areas	**Rural, summer, popular musics, large and average budgets** *Urban, small budgets*
Eco-design or re-use	**Rural, summer, visual arts, popular & world musics, large budgets** *Jazz, Classical Musics*
Increasing vegetal dishes	**Sparsely populated rural areas and densely populated urban areas, visual arts, performing arts, large budgets** *Small budgets*
Reduced merchandising or eco-responsible merchandising	**Visual arts, large budgets** *Classical musics, jazz, small budgets*
Audience awareness of environmental issues	**Rural areas, summer, contemporary and world music, cinema, large budgets** *Cinema, literature, classical musics*
Reducing the impact of audiences mobility	**Urban, summer, large budgets** *Small budgets, classical musics*
Reducing energy consumption	**Rural areas, summer, large budgets** *Small budgets*
Reducing the impact of professional transport	**Cinema, literature, large budgets** *Rural areas, small budgets*
Training teams in environmental issues	**Summer, large budgets** *Small budgets*

Water management systems	**Rural areas, summer, contemporary and world music, large budgets** *Classical musics, urban, small budgets*
Environmental assessment/diagnosis	**Large budgets** *Small budgets*
Digital sobriety	**Urban, Summer** *Small budgets*
Transition toward non-fossil energy sources	**Rural, summer, contemporary and world music, large budgets** *Small budgets*

TABLE 5. VARIABLES INFLUENCING ENVIRONMENTAL ACTIONS

Source: Own elaboration

A few comments are in order when reading this table. On the one hand, environmental commitment almost universally highlights the weight of the economic variable. The bigger the festival's budget, the greater its scope for developing a wider range of actions. Insofar as these festivals also have the biggest environmental footprint, a certain logic seems to be respected. We also note that it is these same festivals that are committed to the rarest niches, as if they were a vanguard of ecological action.

However, this fact needs to be put into perspective by two considerations. The first is that we don't know the real impact of these numerous, proactive measures on the ecological footprint itself. To what extent does the declaration of activity in all these areas have a measurable impact on reducing the carbon footprint, for example? This question can only be addressed by a specific survey[45]. The second consideration lies in the kind of inaction we see, conversely, in festivals with more modest budgets. One might hypothesize that these events, because they are sober in many respects, don't feel the need to intervene where, for the big festivals, this is now essential. More generally, ecological action or inaction is a question of both means and necessity. For example, it's quite logical that the most urban festivals are less concerned with protecting natural areas, just as the reduction of merchandising is less of a concern for classical music festivals, or smaller festivals, where this practice is rarer or on a smaller scale.

[45] RIBAC, F., 2023, *Pour une autre écologie musicale : Partie 1 : L'impasse de l'approche managériale*, Audimat Éditions, ⟨hal-04201147⟩

A final point concerns the specific case of rural areas. As we can see, rurality is often a lever for environmental action, particularly for the most widespread actions: sorting and reducing waste, short circuits, raising public awareness, reducing energy and water consumption. Admittedly, these are often rural but fairly large events, and these two factors combine to increase active environmental awareness. But the fact is that the festival world is concerned in all its diversity by the wide variety of possible actions, without having urban operators as the only vanguard, as a caricature of ecological sensitivity would sometimes have us believe.

Conclusion

Faced with economic constraints and the uncertainties associated with the transitions that are taking shape, has festivalization reached a plateau? The scissor effect between flat revenues and soaring expenses might suggest so. However, two facts raise questions. Firstly, and paradoxically, there is a counter-intuitive trend towards the creation of new festivals. Secondly, event organizers are not ready to throw in the towel, and are even extending their commitment beyond sometimes canonical ages, as we saw above.

To resolve this paradox, we need to adopt a broader definition of the company. Far from being just a product, the festival generates a social world of complex motivations, where artistic passion, collective effusion and social recognition keep the economy of the counters at bay, without ignoring it. This is why festival buyouts are so rare, particularly in France. Acquiring a product is conceivable. Taking possession of a world is another matter.

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Shared or contradictory heritage?[46]

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ABSTRACT

The article explains the recently popular concept of "shared cultural heritage" and its variations in different (cultural-political) contexts. It briefly traces the emergence of the concept and applies it to a case study from Germany, the Humboldt Forum in Berlin.

Keywords:

Cultural policy, Heritage concepts, migration societies, postcolonialism

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[46] This article is an abridged version of the author's essay from the anthology "Shared Heritage revisited" (Dätsch, 2024: 45-66).

Introduction

Cultural heritage, as it is widely defined in Europe, is the visible sign of a past that an individual or a collective preserves, transmits and communicates. For this purpose, actors resort to artifacts or customs whose materiality and messages have proven to be adequate and durable for their collective memory. Cultural heritage, in this description, is both an intellectual and social idea that relates to time and space and is realized through objects, people and knowledge. In this sense, cultural heritage is a factor of public and of educational discourses that engage in identity politics through material culture, but also of economics and global tourism. But can cultural heritage be shared beyond one's own collective?

This article attempts to address this question by outlining what cultural policy and scholarship are currently discussing as the concept of shared cultural heritage. The concept can be seen as a variant of the cultural policy discourse on heritage, which comes into play in transnational contexts (Labrador, 2013) and is based on the realization that the ideas of cultural heritage developed in the 19th century no longer apply. Thus, states find that their national remembrance can come into conflict with a global public, that they are highly differentiated, and that the old self-image of the nation no longer holds – and that is irritating.

At least four developments can be outlined as causes for this phenomenon in the second modern age (Beck, 1996): globalization including digitalization, the emergence of supranational alliances such as the EU, worldwide migration, and postcolonial discourse (Thiemeyer, 2016). Both states and institutions try to find answers to these transformation processes and react with searches that preserve the official cultural heritage (Harrison, 2013). At the same time, first approaches to solutions are presented: Among them is the concept of shared cultural heritage, which explores the function of heritage at the interfaces, and links national heritage narratives with global contexts. The fact that the idea of sharing cultural heritage is not always unproblematic, however, becomes apparent where the relationship between heritage and communities of heirs changes and where questions of ownership and interpretation shift. This is the case in Europe, among other places, where non-European cultural is at stake and where decolonized states demand to reclaim their heritage for the construction of a (national) culture of memory in their own countries.

Based on these observations, the chapter attempts to clarify the preconditions for the concept of shared cultural heritage. It then narrows its focus to an example in Germany, for which it refers to a postcolonially transformed culture of memory: the Humboldt Forum in Berlin. Using this inclusive "cultural forum" (Humboldt Forum Foundation, 2020: 9),[47] will shed light on the ways two contrasting

[47] For better readability, quotations from German literature have been translated into English. German sources are marked as such in the bibliography.

varieties of the concept of shared heritage can meet in one house, and on the opportunities and limits of the concept.

Definitions: Cultural heritage revisited

In everyday language, cultural heritage is often used as an undefined collective term referring to the recognized artifacts and cultural practices of a community (Tauschek, 2013). In a narrower definition, cultural heritage is a *policy term* that seeks to "ensure the protection of cultural heritage for the enjoyment of present and future generations" (Hauser-Schäublin, 2021: 64). This makes it clear that the term does not primarily refer to ownership issues, but to a social function. To better describe this function, three components of cultural heritage are often used: the inheritance, the community of heirs, and the horizon of values in which the inheritance is inscribed (Schüppel & Welzel, 2020). Accordingly, agents in the policy field ascribe meaning to a cultural heritage and refer to religious, national, aesthetic, historical, or anthropological contexts. The selection and application of those contexts reflect, on the one hand, the beliefs of the actors who shape the policy field of heritage and, on the other hand, the values of the society. The combination of selection, interpretation, discourse, and transmission also gives rise to that culture of remembrance that, according to A. Assmann, is "just another term for a political education" (Assmann, 2018: 56).

As Michael Falser (2013) and other researchers have shown, the frame of reference against which the understanding of cultural heritage emerged in the first modernity is that of the nation. With this historical concept, which was established in the course of the modern reordering of Europe in the 19th and 20th centuries, a description could be found not only for enlarged state territories, but also for a past that was shared by all those who inhabited these territories (Bolten, 2007). Thus, connected to the idea of the nation from the very beginning was an essentialist understanding of culture and heritage, which France was the first nation to apply (Nietzel, 2021). While France (and in its wake the other European nation-states) initially followed the normative concept of culture of the Enlightenment, and therefore focused primarily on objects of art, the 19th century saw a broadening of the concept of what was worthy enough to be preserved and collected. Now, not only art and objects of antiquity were considered cultural heritage, but also objects that were ascribed a symbolic or exotic function – objects from overseas, for example, which symbolized earlier stages of human development within the framework of an evolutionary understanding of history and served as a counterpoint to Europe's progress in civilization (Conrad, 2008). Even if this understanding was apparently modified in the course of the decolonization of the Global South, and even if at the beginning of the 21st century the intangible cultural heritage of indigenous peoples was given equal status with the material heritage of Western and Arab cultures (UNESCO, 2003), the imagined connection between cultural heritage and nation and the method of cultural comparison (with all its implications) have persisted in the political and legal thinking of many actors (Assmann, 2018).

The question of the extent to which the reference point "nation" is also useful as a frame of reference for the discourses of the second modernity is answered differently in view of the increasing interconnectedness of the world (Thiemeyer, 2018). While the nation-state and its understanding of culture is experiencing a boom in some regions, the model is proving increasingly outdated for others. Critical historians are re-examining national historiographies (Houben & Rehbein 2022) and showing that migration and cultural exchange is the real constant in human history (Conrad 2013; 2017). Such findings also have an impact on national memory discourses, as well as on their conventional closure mechanisms such as nation, territory, ethnicity, religion, or language (Geertz, 1995; Bolten, 2007). Worldwide migratory movements of people and objects explode genealogical notions of identity, just as the simple equation that a cultural heritage and its community of heirs must be located in the same (geographical) place no longer holds. It is against this background that the concept of shared cultural heritage emerges.

Varieties: Common or shared heritage?

As Sigrid Weigel (2016) points out, the concept of shared cultural heritage is often conflated with the controversy over the restitution of cultural property.[48] Shared heritage, however, is less about questions of legal ownership than about how a cultural heritage is interpreted by transnationally or -culturally positioned communities of heirs. Crucial is the idea that cultural heritage can be interpreted beyond the borders of a nation, that cross-community connections exist, and that they can be made fruitful for remembering in an increasingly interconnected global society. It emphasizes both the possibility that different heritage communities share a (hitherto nationally contextualized) cultural heritage and that individuals can belong to multiple heritage communities. Shared heritage thus means allowing and actively thinking about multiple meanings and affiliations for cultural heritage. Such a *de*-nationalized culture of memory focuses less on the homogenization of national memory and more on what the multiple interconnected past means for the actions of the collective in an equally interconnected present. Such an approach changes the mission of those institutions responsible for preserving cultural heritage. Hence, the concept of shared heritage is referred to in some studies as a "tool for transformative heritage management" (Küver, 2022: 139).

[48] This is the case, for example, when cultural heritage is equated with cultural property and artifacts are understood as property whose (rightful) owner is to be determined. The concept of cultural property is therefore used primarily in legal contexts, where – as the following definition from international law shows – it refers to movable or immovable property that is "of great importance to the cultural heritage of all peoples" (Hague Convention 1954, in Federal Office of Civil Protection, 2007: 33).

In this context, two approaches to shared heritage must be distinguished: the institutionalized heritage discourse as represented by the politics of nation-states and UNESCO, and the Critical Heritage Studies, who see themselves as a critique of the former. They expose conceptual distortions and the asymmetrical power relations in the institutionalized heritage discourse and accentuate the understanding of sharing differently (Simpson, 2018; Meskell, 2018; Harrison, 2013; Smith, 2006; Lowenthal, 1998). While the institutionalized discourse interpret shared heritage as a *common heritage* that people share because they have common values and stand on common ground as a community of heirs (Bernecker, 2023), Critical Heritage Studies emphasize that this precondition does not exist. They criticize the institutionalized heritage discourse for ignoring, for the sake of the notion of common ground, opposing memory frames as well as hegemonic relations. Critical Heritage Studies base their critique on a discursive concept of culture, which assumes that cultures have always been intertwined but that power asymmetries prevent a consensual reception; this also applies to cultural heritage. They therefore speak of a *shared* but not a common heritage and also call for a critical revision of the framework of remembering (Harrison, 2013). Shared heritage thus emphasizes the hegemonic, which is why the concept is said to have transformational power where an intertwined but contradictorily remembered heritage is up for discussion. Before showing that these two approaches can clash in one and the same institution, I will outline four contexts in which different actors in the field of cultural heritage currently refer to the concept of common or shared heritage.

(1) *Common heritage as a universal archive*: The notion that a cultural heritage can have world validity is represented by the institutionalized heritage discourse. It is based on the conviction that cultural heritage has a universal value, i. e. it is an expression of the creative power of the human spirit, and as such it represents the universal archive of humanity. On the basis of this assumption, UNESCO has defined World Heritage Sites of Culture and Nature since 1972 and Intangible Heritage of Humanity since 2003 (UNESCO, 1972; UNESCO, 2003). It lists both and justifies its international protection by its scope: It dissolves the spatial connection of heritage and inheritance by "transforming a recognized local cultural asset into a world-public asset" (Hauser-Schäublin, 2021: 64). Locally produced, cultural heritage enters into a relationship with the heritage community of humanity, which has neither produced nor transmitted this heritage. This can sometimes entail a tension between the local community of production and the global community of reception, and sometimes the expansion also goes hand in hand with an arbitrariness of the place of storage, because "global" heritage no longer necessarily has to be stored at the place of production, but can also be found in other places, such as the great museums of the world (Hauser-Schäublin, 2021).

(2) *Common heritage as a transnational space:* The idea that cultural heritage can create a transnational space of memory also goes back to the institutionalized appeoach. It is advocated by communities of heirs and supranational agents such as the European Union that seek to form a common canon of values. In this way, for example the EU assumes that emphasizing the *de*-national

value of cultural heritage can lead to a supranational heritage community and create a new collective identity. Unlike UNESCO, however, the EU pursues this goal primarily with respect to its members and thus within the defined territory of the EU countries. In the eyes of its critics, this leads to the EU resorting to geographical and genealogical closure mechanisms for the idea of Europe, as already known from the discourse on the nation, and applying them to an enlarged territory instead of the model of the nation (Vinken, 2018). The heritage of member states is to be experienced as a common heritage, which is why historical lines of connection between regions and cultures are emphasized, national perspectives are modified, and transnational narratives are designed. Such an understanding was propagated by the EU's *Cultural Heritage Year*, proclaimed in 2018 under the motto *Sharing Heritage* (German National Committee for Monument Protection, 2019). While the imagined community is enlarged into the supranational, it continues to pursue the goal of (idealistic) homogenization.

(3) *Shared heritage as a discursive practice*: In contrast to the institutionalized approach, critical heritage studies ask what these "new", enlarged heritage communities look like when they are no longer thought of as homogeneous. To do so, they focus on two heritage communities: migrated people and societies of the Global South. People who migrate to other societies often find that as minorities they are exposed to hegemonic thinking in the host country, experiencing exclusion mechanisms that make them or their culture invisible or devalued. Therefore, Critical Heritage Studies point out that heritage communities in migration societies are hybrids (Simpson, 2018) – just as they are in societies of former colonies. Members of these societies, too, must negotiate the rules by which their commemoration takes place. In this sense, the concept of shared heritage is realized as an inclusive idea: Through the process of equally authorized negotiation, multi-perspective approaches emerge, which are interpreted and received at eye level. Thus, important for this understanding of shared heritage as a discursive practice is that access to heritage communities is free and that people can belong to multiple heritage communities. That such a process of negotiating also entails conflict is obvious; it reveals cultural overlaps, but also conflicting perspectives and untranslatability.

(4) *Shared heritage as a conflict research*: Where there are no preconditions for inclusive narratives, the concept of shared heritage has a difficult time. This is especially true where "difficult heritage" (Grimme, 2018) is negotiated, as is the case with artifacts from former colonies and especially from Africa. This heritage proves to be the most complex because it is opposed in all three components that make up the social heritage function: Neither have the cultures of remembrance of the victims and perpetrators involved in colonialism converged – the joint reappraisal of trauma is taking place hesitantly (Assmann, 2018) – nor do the communities of heirs have a common understanding of how to deal with the shared heritage. The particular geographical situation of the mobile and immobile heritage that makes up this cultural heritage as a whole also contributes to this (Küver, 2022): While Africans on their continent have to deal with the question of how to relate to a heritage that reminds

them of the suffering of their ancestors during the colonial period (in the form of buildings, sites, or monuments), European states see themselves in the role of owners of mobile heritage that was made by Africans for export or that was forcibly stolen as elite art by Europeans (VanHee, 2016). The spatial relationship between inheritance and community of heirs is thus more thoroughly turned upside down in this variant than in any other. At the same time, the answers to the question of how to deal with inheritance often differ among those involved. While politicians of the decolonized countries see in the restitution of artifacts an (at least partial) correction of historical injustice and its reparation, some of the successor states of the former colonial powers, amongst them Germany, invoke the fact that not all ethnological objects were acquired illegally, or that many of them would not even exist anymore without European "rescue ethnology" (Kohl, 2019; Penny, 2019; König, 2017). In the case of thi "difficult" heritage, two discourses thus intersect that were kept apart at the beginning of this article: that of ownership and restitution and that of transnational appropriation through joint research, interpretation, and provision of cultural heritage (also digitally). How both discourses are currently merging in the German culture of remembrance and the Humboldt Forum as a place of mediation will now be shown.

An Example: The Humboldt Forum in Berlin

No other museum manager has made the concept of shared heritage as well-known in Germany as the president of the Prussian Cultural Heritage Foundation, Hermann Parzinger (Parzinger, 2021). Together with its partners (the *Humboldt Forum Foundation in the Berlin Palace*, the *Humboldt University*, the *City Museum Berlin*, and the *Berlin Society Cultural Projects*), the Foundation runs the Humboldt Forum in the center of Berlin, which has been inviting visitors to engage with Germany, Europe and the world since 2021 (Fig. 1).

At the same time, the Forum was continuously the focus of media criticism. The reasons for this are manifold and do not only concern the holdings that the Foundation has exhibited on two floors since the opening of the Humboldt Forum: the collections of the Asian Museum of Art and the Ethnological Museum, which were formerly on display in Berlin-Dahlem. Already the decision to house the Humboldt Forum in the partially reconstructed Berlin Palace of the Hohenzollerns (and thus on the site of the former Palace of the Republic of the GDR) had caused many controverse discussions in the media, but also among activists and the Berlin population (Dorgerloh, 2021). The name of the Forum and its conception were also criticized and perceived as just as backward-looking as the postmodern but nostalgically transfigured architecture of the building.

FIGURE 1. THE HUMBOLDT FORUM IN THE BERLIN PALACE, EAST FAÇADE.
Source: Christiane Dätsch

According to the conception of the founding directors, the Forum was to be a "cosmopolitan place" (Appiah & Thiemeyer 2021: 55) in the spirit of its namesakes Wilhelm and Alexander von Humboldt. Three museums, a library, a laboratory, a terrace, numerous open spaces, and a café invite visitors today to engage with the world's knowledge in one central location – Berlin (Humboldt Forum Foundation, 2020). Science and museum, architecture and art, nature and culture, the living environment of visitors and the cultures of the world are to be networked on around 44,200 square meters of floor space. Three terms are repeatedly used to describe this narrative in the sense of a *universal archive*: dialog, encounter and inclusion. In this way, the Forum wants to contribute to discovering the "own" in the "foreign", to understanding Europe, the world and its modernity. In doing so, the Forum does not ignore the dark side of colonialism, but uses a rhetoric that points to an understanding of history that affirms progress, that idealizes rather than deconstructs Europe.

Against this background, the reference to two humanist scholars, who at the same time symbolize the geographic coordinates of center (Wilhelm) and periphery (Alexander), is a point of criticism. Architecture, program, and name served the "formation of a Prussian-German-European identity"

(Other Sources: No. 1), the accusation goes. In fact, the three founding directors, the prehistorian Hermann Parzinger and the art historians Horst Bredekamp and Neil MacGregor, seemed to orient themselves less on postcolonial discourses than on the cosmological concept of the German history of ideas (König, 2021a: 307). Thus, the directors did not notice that their decision to bring the ethnological collections into the reconstructed building symbolically reiterated the ambivalence of an epoch that is now seen as the beginning of modern expansion, colonialism and the power of old elites. Many of the Ethnological Museum's approximately 500,000 objects that came to Berlin between 1884 and 1918 are heavily burdened by this past. The collection contains objects that were captured after the suppression of uprisings, as in the former colonies of German East Africa (Tanzania) and German Southwest Africa (Namibia), or after punitive expeditions, as in Papua New Guinea (Aly, 2021; Binter et al, 2021; Parzinger, 2021: 106), or that were acquired in the international trade, which in turn drew its goods from colonial campaigns, as in the case of the so-called Benin bronzes (König, 2021b). Thus, even while preparing the permanent exhibition at the Humboldt Forum, the Foundation was confronted with restitution claims from Nigeria, which stopped the work for a while. In July 2022, the federal government complied with this request and returned all 512 Berlin Benin bronzes. The decision ultimately led to a compromise in the permanent exhibition, which has been fully open since the fall of 2022, and in which around a third of the transferred objects are now on loan for ten years (Other Sources: No. 2).

Far less noticed by the media, other restitutions also took place during this period (Parzinger, 2021). However, Hermann Parzinger does not see the return of objects as the only beatific solution, as many museum objects are not reclaimed at all because they are simple everyday objects or – as is often the case with artifacts from the trade – because their provenance can no longer be fully clarified (König, 2017). In light of such facts, the migration of many objects must be seen as a permanent condition – a realization that puts today's owners under an obligation to deal with collections *in situ*. To meet this responsibility, Parzinger advocates the concept of shared heritage, which is realized in the ethnological collection. In binational research projects, German and curators from the countries of origin jointly interrogate the objects of the collection, identify contexts, elaborate multi-perspective interpretations, and break down "old hierarchies of interpretation" (Parzinger, 2021: 108). Such research brings to light shared expertise or "sharing knowledge" (König, 2017) and recontextualizes the objects. This knowledge is also made fruitful in the permanent exhibition of the Humboldt Forum, which has changed its narrative and adapted it to postcolonial aspects.

When visiting the permanent exhibition on Africa, the visitor learns in a documentary film about the research project with the Museums Association of Namibia (MAN), which examined about 1400 objects of the Namibia collection (Parzinger, 2021), and about the country's colonial history and the painful memory of this part of its history (Fig. 2). In the display cases, the objects are explained by several texts from different dates that reflect different, sometimes conflicting interpretations. They represent the respective knowledge about the objects in the culture of origin and in museum culture, whereby the contexts of everyday life often conflict with the view of (Western) science on the object. In this way, not only multiperspectivity is generated, but at the same time the hegemonic view of African culture (often practiced in the past) is deconstructed. The exhibition narrative thus makes the curators' learning and knowledge process visible, and shows a piece of (Western) scientific history. It questions practices and attribution processes as well as Western certainties of perceiving the world. This postcolonially inspired approach is complemented by subjective interpretations that artists from the countries of origin have made of the collection. They address not only colonial conquests and violence, but also hybridized identities today, inherited traumas and "white spots" in their collective memory culture, as many objects of everyday life are missing. Through this form of mediation, the visitor receives new information about the exhibited heritage and experiences artistic conflict research as part of a shared heritage process that sees itself as a *discursive practice*.

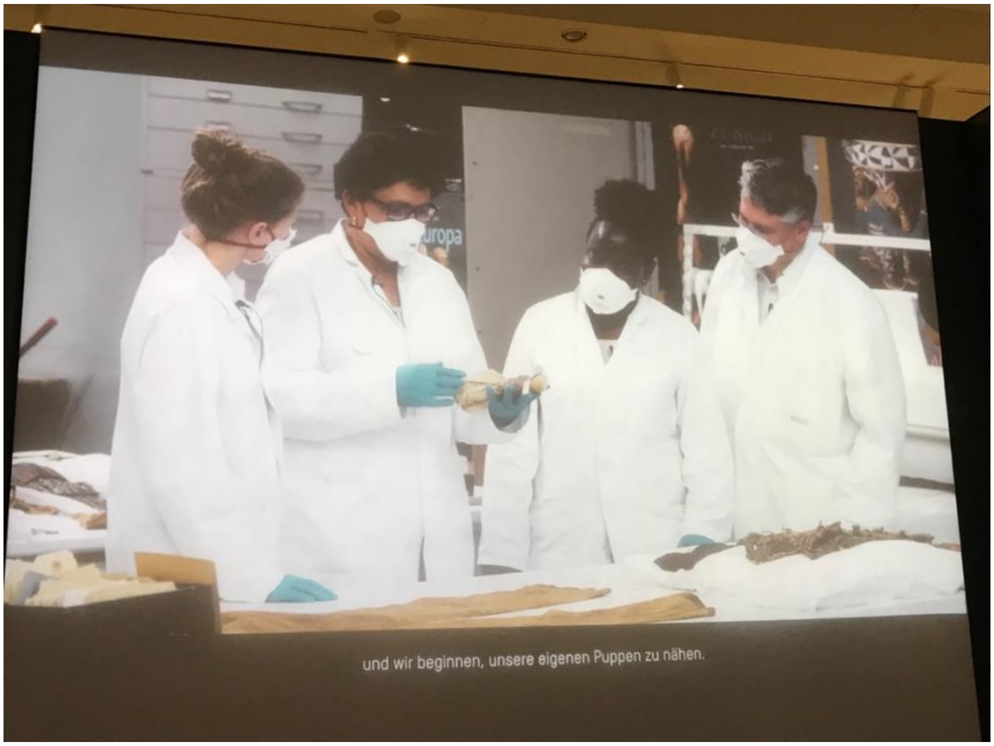

FIGURE 2: JOINT RESEARCH: SCENE FROM THE DOCUMENTARY.
Source: Christiane Dätsch

As plausible as the implementation of the concept of shared heritage is in the collection and in the exhibition's communication, the approach raises questions when it touches the level of the museum as an institution. Thus, Parzinger formulates the thesis that "the cultural heritage of the museums is not only preserved, but is considered the property of all mankind" (Parzinger, 2021: 108). He is referring to the ethnological collections exhibited in the Humboldt Forum, which he elevates to the rank of world cultural heritage with this sentence. By proposing to apply to these collections the idea of universal heritage (developed from the Western concept of art), not only a different idea of shared heritage as *common heritage* comes to light, but also an essentialist idea of culture. It can also be used to justify the current location of these collections. Accordingly, ethnological collections, similar to world heritage, have a universal scope and no longer necessarily have to be presented at their place of origin (Parzinger, 2021). And similarly to how UNESCO perceives itself as merely the manager of this heritage, Parzinger ascribes to (national) cultural institutions the role of a "governor", a non-partisan administrator in an internationally intertwined culture of memory that neither has to clarify nor automatically refer to questions of (national) ownership. This goes hand in hand with the denationalization of the museum as an institution and as a player in the policy field of cultural heritage, since such a museum does not have to see itself as committed to the self-image of the country that finances it, nor to questions of (national) memory culture; it serves a universal heritage alone.

What at first sounds like a visionary way out of that aporia in which the institution of the museum as a 19th-century Western invention finds itself today (Tyradellis, 2014), raises questions at a second glance. How can a museum, which also has the task of protecting the heritage it holds, be absolved of questions of (legal) ownership? And which decision-makers does such an institution follow, despite all the "democratization of museums" (Parzinger, 2021: 108), if not the respective state to which it is subordinate? Even in the case of an institution like the Humboldt Forum, (national) politics does not remain without effects on concrete action. The museum as the "governor" of a common heritage remains a metaphor.

Parzinger's concept of a shared heritage furthermore shows an epistemic discontinuity. While it follows the understanding of shared heritage as discursive practice and conflict research on the object when researching and mediating the ethnological collections, it returns to shared heritage as a universal archive when describing the institution of the museum. Embedded in the overall narrative of the Humboldt Forum as a place of dialogue with the world, the argument shifts from questions of "sharing" to the transnational idea and finally to the argument of ethnological cultural property as a kind of world heritage. By invoking the universal in the transnational, the idea of cultural heritage as a universal archive overlaps that of shared heritage as a discursive practice. The ethnological collections and their postcolonial approach to research are thus reincorporated into the "master narrative" of the Humboldt Forum. In the end, the European, perhaps even Eurocentric self-image of the Forum proves to be stronger than the confrontation with opposing African memories and their traumas. It remains to be seen whether, under these conditions, the Forum will indeed become the "epicenter of a [...] new kind of relationship with the world" (Parzinger, 2021: 109).

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How do artists contribute to urban and cultural sustainability?

Taking care of urban green areas as a creative and sustainable practice

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ABSTRACT

The conventional dynamics of the art market and traditional economic studies often reduce artists to solitary actors whose work is designed to satisfy collectors or fit into museum exhibitions. However, artists also highlight their civic responsibility through their creative output and social engagement, particularly in self-governed spaces and grassroots initiatives in urban areas. Their creative practices contribute to reducing environmental impact and promoting urban sustainability. Conversely, cultural institutions struggle to produce sustainability reports and reduce their environmental footprint. This paper explores how artists contribute to urban and cultural sustainability, focusing on their role in maintaining urban green spaces. Through observational practice and analysis of specific artworks, it describes three practices - Losaeter in

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Oslo, Los Angeles Eco-Village and Associazione Bastione in Turin - to explore how artist-led initiatives promote urban environmental sustainability. It suggests that these practices should inform cultural policies that address environmental change, sustainability and urban degrowth.

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Artists and the spirit of time

The role of artists in contemporary society extends far beyond the creation of aesthetic objects for galleries and museums. In recent years, there has been a growing recognition of the diverse ways in which artists contribute to the social and environmental fabric of urban spaces (Cohendet et al., 2011, 2021; Parra-Agudelo et al., 2017; Murzyn-Kupisz and Działek, 2017; Morea and Sabatini, 2023). This shift reflects a broader understanding of cultural sustainability, where creative practices are intertwined with the environmental and social well-being of communities.

Artists, which often operate independently of conventional market structures, play a crucial role in these dynamics. Not only they foster artistic experimentation, but they also promote community engagement and awareness on contemporary issues and controversies (Murzyn-Kupisz and Działek, 2017).

For example – and this is the focus of this paper – by revitalising neglected urban areas and integrating the care of green spaces into their practices, artists are redefining their role as civic contributors and specifically as stewards of the urban environment, overcoming their beneficial role as Shakspeare's fools, offering critical views to an otherwise idle society, and directly acting in order for new and effective orientations to appear materially possible. This phenomenon is particularly important in the framework of growing urbanisation and the consequent need for strategies and practices aimed at sustainable development. But it is also crucial to the cultural and creative sector, where museums, galleries and festivals are trying to make an impact on sustainability, but have yet to demonstrate their role in change: for the moment, their orientation is wishfully unveiled in statements and labels (among which the renewed ICOM definition can prove useful when it will be translated into appropriate and clear metrics), but their present action still is quite far from this new role.

Accordingly, the paper explores artists' contributions to urban and cultural sustainability, focusing specifically on their engagement with urban green spaces and communities. By examining three exemplary cases – Loseter in Oslo, Los Angeles Eco-Village and Bastione in Turin – the research highlights how artists are transforming and nurturing these spaces through innovative, community-driven initiatives. These practices illustrate a wider trend in which artistic practice intersects with ecological awareness and social responsibility, fostering environments that are both creatively vibrant and sustainably managed. Rather than simply (and usefully) shakespearian, artists prove socratic.

The theoretical framework for this research is drawn from studies of autonomous artist-led practices, cultural sustainability and urban degrowth. This multidisciplinary approach proves relevant for understanding the complex interactions between art, environment, the city and its community. By integrating insights from these fields, the study aims to provide a comprehensive analysis of how artist-led initiatives contribute to environmental sustainability and urban degrowth.

Through qualitative interviews, participant observation and analysis of artworks, this research explores the ways in which artists promote sustainability. The findings contribute to ongoing debates about the role of cultural policy in environmental sustainability and highlight the importance of grassroots artistic practices as key advocates for sustainable practices.

In doing so, this research not only broadens the understanding of artistic practice in urban contexts, but also highlights the need for cultural policies that support the integration of creative and sustainable practices into urban governance.

Three stories of artists and communities growing with urban nature

An urban farm in the city centre: Losaeter in Oslo

Losaeter began as a visionary art project under the auspices of the Future Library initiative launched by the Norwegian Public Art Programme. Located in the Bjørvika district, an area historically characterised by industrial activity, Losaeter has become a thriving urban farm and cultural center. Originally conceived to highlight the interplay between art and nature, it has become a symbol of sustainable urban living and community resilience (Losaeter, 2024). At the heart of Losaeter is a commitment to sustainable agriculture and ecological education, which is part of a wider and growing interest in the creation of urban agriculture (Evensen and Stafseng, 2024; Ruggeri, 2024).

Run by a collective of artists, environmentalists, and local residents, the farm grows a variety of crops and incorporates permaculture principles. Seasonal events and communal dinners are a regular feature, fostering a strong sense of community and encouraging the sharing of knowledge about sustainable practices. Workshops on urban farming, beekeeping, and organic cooking further enrich the community's understanding of environmental stewardship. Evensen and Stafseng (2024) emphasize the importance of such initiatives in fostering urban sustainability, noting that projects like Losaeter not only contribute to local food security but also enhance community resilience by creating spaces for social interaction and environmental learning.

The combination of art and agriculture at Losaeter has made it one of Oslo's cultural landmarks. The space regularly hosts art installations and performances that reflect themes of sustainability and environmental awareness. These artistic interventions not only enhance the aesthetic value of the farm but also engage visitors in meaningful dialogues about the future of urban living. By combining cultural activities with ecological practices, Losaeter serves as a model for integrating green spaces into the fabric of urban life, promoting both environmental sustainability and cultural vitality. According to Evensen and Stafseng (2024), such integrative approaches are crucial in urban planning as they address multiple dimensions of sustainability—environmental, social, and cultural—thereby fostering more holistic and resilient urban communities.

This comprehensive approach at Losaeter exemplifies the potential for urban agriculture projects to serve as hubs of environmental education and cultural exchange. By embedding sustainability into everyday practices and artistic expressions, Losaeter not only cultivates food but also nurtures a culture of sustainability that can inspire other urban initiatives.

Responding to urban decay and social fragmentation: the Los Angeles Eco-Village

The Los Angeles Eco-Village (LAEV) was created in response to urban decay and social fragmentation in some areas of Los Angeles. Founded by a collective of artists, environmentalists, and community activists, LAEV set out to create an intentional community that embodied the principles of sustainability, communal living, and social justice. The vision was to transform a deteriorating neighbourhood into a beacon of sustainable urban living (Los Angeles Eco-Village, 2024; Arkin, 2012). Central to LAEV's mission are its sustainable practices and communal ethos. The eco-village features community gardens, permaculture landscapes, and green building techniques, including retrofitting existing structures for energy efficiency. Shared resources and communal spaces, such as kitchens and meeting rooms, encourage a sense of cooperation and mutual support among residents. Regular workshops and educational programs on topics such as composting, water conservation, and renewable energy empower residents and visitors alike to adopt more sustainable lifestyles.

Artists within the LAEV community play a key role in its development and vibrancy. Through murals, sculptures, and installations, they transform public spaces into visually stimulating environments that reflect the community's values of sustainability and social justice. Art is used as a tool for community engagement and education, with projects often involving local residents and addressing relevant social and environmental issues. This artistic engagement not only beautifies the space but also strengthens community identity and cohesion. This aligns with Irrgang's (2005) concept that community-based art projects can foster social ties, create a shared sense of place, and empower communities to address local challenges collectively.

The author argues that art in communal settings can serve as a catalyst for social change by fostering dialogue, participation, and a shared vision for the future. At LAEV, artistic practices do not just beautify the environment but are integral to building social capital, enhancing environmental awareness, and fostering a culture of collaboration. By engaging residents in creative processes, LAEV leverages the arts to enhance social cohesion, foster a sense of belonging, and inspire collective action towards sustainability. This holistic approach ensures that sustainability is not only an environmental goal but also a social and cultural one, reinforcing the idea that ecological well-being is deeply intertwined with the health and vitality of community life.

Responding to the institutional void through artistic experimentation: Associazione Bastione in Turin

Associazione Bastione began its path in 2017 within the historic but neglected Bastione San Maurizio in Cavallerizza Reale, Turin. Here, a group of ten artists aimed at revitalising the former royal garden through creative actions and community engagement. The initial stage was marked by dynamic artistic projects that integrated the decaying architecture of the space with contemporary art, transforming it into a vibrant cultural centre. These efforts included installations, performances and workshops that not only beautified the area, but also brought residents and visitors together, fostering a strong sense of community and cultural exchange.

The artists played a crucial role in the management of the gardens at Cavallerizza, using sustainable gardening practices and encouraging local participation in the maintenance of the green spaces. Their work included the cultivation of native plants, the creation of community gardens and the implementation of permaculture principles. This commitment to sustainable urban gardening not only enhanced the aesthetic appeal of the gardens, but also promoted environmental awareness and stewardship among community members.

However, the group faced significant challenges, including a forced eviction in 2019, which disrupted its activities and compelled them to relocate (Osservatorio Futura, 2024). Despite this setback, Associazione Bastione continued to advocate for the preservation and revitalisation of urban green spaces, highlighting the importance of community involvement and sustainable practices in urban regeneration. Their work in Cavallerizza Reale is a testament to the transformative power of art and community engagement in promoting urban sustainability and resilience.

Their experience highlights the potential of artistic and cultural initiatives to drive environmental and social change, even in the face of significant obstacles. By integrating creative expression with ecological practices, Associazione Bastione not only revitalised a historic site, but also created a model for sustainable urban living that can inspire similar efforts in other cities.

After being evicted, Associazione Bastione found a new home in Villa Rey, a 17th-century villa in the hills above Turin. Here the group continued its mission of combining art with urban green spaces.

They transformed both the indoor and outdoor spaces of Villa Rey into venues for exhibitions, performances and community events. Despite not having formal access to the villa's extensive garden, the artists persistently engaged with the space through informal interventions and 'friendly occupations', advocating its use as a public artistic and environmental resource.

Their artistic work at Villa Rey is characterised by an innovative approach to integrating art and urban ecology. Interviews and participation in the Observatory have shown how performative events and collective or personal exhibitions demonstrate how the group uses art to promote community interaction and awareness of urban built and green spaces. These events involve local residents and wider audiences, transforming the villa and its surroundings into a vibrant cultural and environmental hotspot. The artists' resilience in the face of institutional challenges highlights the potential of grassroots initiatives to create sustainable and inclusive urban spaces.

The emphasis on social and environmental issues and the related encounragement to share and participate give a crucial role to the width of action, overcoming the material goals of occupiers, and shifting the focus of the strategy on the “genuine political interest” of a “pacific multitude” not certainly driven by any economic goals, as Lenna, Randazzo and Trimarchi (2020) highlight with reference to the occupation of Cinema Palazzo in Rome in the year 2012. Such a focus effectively counterbalances the controversial isues about legality, since no real fracture exists between possibly conflicting interests.

Beyond aesthetic creation for the market and towards communities: Artists in urban contexts

According to the literature on the art market, artists are an essential part of the market itself, where production begins and deploys. They can be defined as producers who devote a specific amount of time to creative work, crafting a product whose semantic and aesthetic value can be determined within the system (Galenson, 2002; Thompson, 2008; Zorloni, 2016). Given that the art market is characterised by high barriers to entry, especially in the early stages of a career, there is a strong incentive for artists to invest in the accumulation of relational capital in order to build visibility. However, this often results in artists devoting a significant proportion of their efforts, both in terms of time and money, to networking rather than their artistic projects.

This perspective frames the artist as a solitary actor and typically views artist-run spaces as the most effective environment where artists can work collectively and independently, unavoidably (and purposedly) cross-fertilising their creativity as well as their market orientations. However, literature generally describes these spaces as a response to market institutions (Blessi et al., 2011). This binary separation between creative action and relational energies reduces the value chain to components aimed solely at generating financial returns, either directly through sales or indirectly through gaining reputational value through inclusion in museum collections. However, artistic action is much more complex and multi-layered. Its features shuld be clear just exploring the structure and dynamics of ateliers in the past, in ancient times when the binary separation between art and craftsmanship was not yet sculpted on marble, and in the Renaissance (and after) when the practice of collective works was quite diffused with no copyright worries. The superior value of collective intelligence proves unquestioned when creativity is at stake.

Grassroots artistic practices emphasise the role of artists as contributors to the creative city, highlighting their engagement in collective activities that promote community development and urban transformation. These practices involve artists working together in informal settings, often outside the commercial art market, to create works of social and cultural significance (Florida, 2002). By participating in grassroots initiatives, artists generate creative externalities that benefit local communities and enhance cultural vibrancy and social cohesion (Murzyn-Kupisz and Działek, 2017). These activities are consistent with the concept of the commons, as artists collaboratively manage resources and create shared value, contributing to the wider urban environment (Potts, 2018; Cohendet et al., 2021).

Artist-run spaces provide a crucial platform for collective artistic experiences in urban areas, operating independently of traditional market structures. These spaces allow artists to collaborate, experiment and exhibit their work without the constraints of commercial galleries and institutions. In doing so, they foster innovation and support emerging artists who might otherwise struggle to gain visibility in the competitive art market (Blessi et al., 2011). These spaces also serve as hubs for community engagement, where artists and local residents can interact, share ideas and co-create projects that reflect and address urban issues (Murzyn-Kupisz and Działek, 2017): in such a way, the endemic openness facilitates a reverse value chain, allowing creative artists to actively interpret the spirit of time and the genius of the place due to the continuous interaction with the resident community whose shape is normally diverse, heterogeneous and somehow evolutionary. This collaborative approach helps to democratise art, making it accessible to a wider audience and fostering a sense of ownership and participation in the cultural life of the city (Ostrom, 2005).

In such a participatory framework, artists often take on the role of urban activists or public entrepreneurs, using their creative skills to advocate for progressive and inclusive social programmes. These artists are committed to civic and social responsibility, using their work to address urban challenges and promote social justice (Bertacchini and Pazzola, 2015; Loots et al., 2021). By acting as catalysts for change, they contribute to the transformation of urban spaces, creating environments that are more inclusive, dynamic and responsive to the needs of diverse communities (Morea and Dalla Chiesa, 2024). This proactive engagement with urban issues underlines the nature of artistic action, which goes beyond aesthetic creation to encompass social, political and economic dimensions (Throsby, 2001).

Cultural sustainability and urban degrowth: Theory and practice?

The concept of cultural sustainability has been significantly influenced by the foundational theories of cultural economics, particularly the work of Baumol and Bowen (1966), Peacock (1969), and later elaborated by Throsby and Withers (1979). These theories have argued that the arts represent a case of market failure, thereby justifying public support for culture and the arts. Throsby's (2001) framework for cultural sustainability builds on these economic foundations by emphasising the dual value of cultural goods - both economic and cultural.

Throsby's (2001) articulation of cultural sustainability provides a nuanced understanding of how cultural assets contribute to broader sustainability goals. His framework highlights several critical dimensions, starting with the preservation of cultural heritage. This involves the protection of historic sites, artifacts and traditions to ensure that future generations can access and learn from past cultural achievements. Preservation encompasses both tangible elements and intangible practices, such as languages and rituals, which are crucial for maintaining cultural diversity and fostering social resilience.

The importance of cultural diversity in Throsby's framework cannot be overstated. A rich variety of cultural expressions fosters innovation and reflects social complexity, enriching the collective experience. In addition, participation and access are fundamental to cultural sustainability. Ensuring broad participation in cultural activities and equitable access to cultural resources supports social cohesion and equity, and contributes to a vibrant cultural landscape that benefits all members of the community. Cultural vitality, which includes supporting the dynamic and evolving nature of culture, enables contemporary cultural expressions that address current societal challenges and reflect modern values.

However, as the sustainability discourse increasingly shifts towards environmental concerns, there is a growing need for cultural practices to evolve and contribute to ecological well-being. This evolution has become particularly relevant in the discourse on museums, especially after the discourse on the efforts that museums and cultural institutions should make to be closer to their audiences and communities (Bollo, 2017) and to measure their impact (Scott, 2003; Kelly, 2006). The focus on environmental sustainability requires cultural institutions and activities to integrate environmental considerations into their operations. This includes assessing and minimising the environmental impact of cultural practices, such as reducing the carbon footprint of cultural events and using sustainable materials in artistic production (Le Monde, 2022; Future Observatory, 2024). In addition, cultural institutions will need to adapt to environmental changes brought about by climate change and environmental degradation by incorporating environmental themes into artistic works and supporting community-based ecological practices (Keller et al., 2020; Hahn and Berkers, 2021).

So far, the concept of environmental sustainability and the cultural sector's impact on it has been studied in the tourism sector and in relation to UNESCO sites (e.g. Becken, 2012; Dwyer, 2021; Samuels and Platts, 2022), to a lesser extent in the museum and gallery sector (Cassar, 2013; Dwyer, 2021; Merriman, 2024) and in the creative industry, with particular attention to festivals (Collins and Cooper, 2017). Specifically, there is a gap in connecting the efforts of the cultural and creative sector and the role of contemporary artists beyond market dynamics (Keller et al., 2020) in this mission. This specific gap suggests the need for further research, theorisation and structured frameworks to guide sustainable practices in the creative industries.

How, then, can culture, contemporary art and sustainability be combined in the urban framework? The concept of degrowth and urban degrowth, as discussed by Schmid (2024) and Savini (2024), offers a framework for analysing artists' practices that address environmental sustainability and community engagement in urban contexts. This framework emphasises an economy that thrives on care, culture, education, health and ecological regeneration. Degrowth challenges traditional notions of continuous urban expansion and economic growth, advocating reduced consumption and equitable distribution of resources, also in the light of the gap between the total dimensions of growth on one hand, and its distributionary impications on the other: quite normally, the material and financial benefits of growth accrue to a very limited proporition of the urban community while its costs are widespread and of course end up exerting a much more painful impact on the excluded and the poor. Degrowth strategies aim at satiation, the satisfaction of all essential needs in a society, and rely on diffused social power arising from existing practices of reduction. These strategies follow a non-linear trajectory that seeks to anticipate satiation, popularise it among the masses and then put pressure on existing institutions. Strategic spatial planning offers important insights to address these challenges, but needs to embrace satiation as a strategic goal. This can be achieved by creating complementarities between prefigurative practices that perform satiation.

In this context, urban degrowth provides us with a valuable lens through which we can effectively interpret the practices of Losaeter, Los Angeles and Associazione Bastione. These initiatives can be framed within the range of efforts aimed at reducing the environmental impact by advocating sustainable resource management and aligning cultural practices with ecological principles. This approach encourages the promotion of local creativity and innovation that adheres to the principles of environmental sustainability.

Engaging practitioners in degrowth strategies can enhance their role in promoting environmental awareness and action. This includes incorporating environmental themes into cultural programmes, supporting artist-led and community-based ecological initiatives, and promoting sustainable practices within the sector. In this way, cultural sustainability and urban degrowth can work together to create more equitable and environmentally conscious urban environments.

Concluding remarks: Directions for change through artistic practices

As the urgency of environmental challenges increases, the intersection of cultural practices and environmental sustainability becomes more relevant. This paper has explored how artistic practices contribute to environmental change by integrating ecological considerations and promoting environmental responsibility within communities and cultural institutions. The integration of environmental concerns into cultural practices should not simply be a response to environmental crises, but a proactive approach that is consistent with broader sustainability goals. Artistic practices, traditionally viewed through the lens of aesthetic production and market dynamics, are now being re-imagined as critical components in the pursuit of environmental sustainability and urban degrowth. This shift underlines the need for cultural institutions to adapt and adopt practices that reduce environmental impact and involve artists and artistic practices in rethinking their cultural production and its impact upon the urban communities.

Firstly, the need for reducing the carbon footprint of cultural events and adopting sustainable materials in artistic production has become evident and analysed in the literature on cultural industry. The carbon emissions associated with large-scale art events, exhibitions, and performances can be substantial. By incorporating sustainable practices—such as using recycled materials, energy-efficient technologies, and reducing waste—cultural institutions can significantly lower their environmental impact. These measures not only contribute to environmental sustainability but also set an example for other sectors to follow.

Secondly, and this is the main focus of this paper, the cultural sector and creative industries need to respond to the environmental changes brought about by climate change and environmental degradation by exerting a visible impact. This adaptation includes incorporating environmental issues into artistic work and supporting community-based environmental initiatives. Artists have a unique ability to address environmental issues through their work, raising awareness and inspiring action. By reflecting environmental concerns in their creations and engaging with community-based environmental projects, artists can catalyse broader societal shifts towards sustainability. In such a delicate framework, many benefits can be generated simply overcoming the rigid cgrid of cultural formats still prevailing in the institutional preferences and practices: the present taxonomy, where standard shapes for museums, theatres and other spaces devoted to cultural practices are considered almost compulsory also in view of the value chain, a less prejudicial examination of the cultural and social dynamics clearly shows that the present formats were crafted in response to the Nineteenth Century's value hierarchy, that was tailored on the manufacturing industry and its material needs of a precise social and economic structure. The emersion of a more complex society, and its often unusual multicultural orientations, requires an almost virginal re-exami atio of spaces, frameworks and toolboxes adopted for cultural creation, production and exchange. In such a boiling cauldron, new experiences give us the moving picture of unstructured attempts at molding infrastructures, technology, skills and strategies within the emerging trails of society, culture and the economy. This is the specific focus of this paper, which presents exemplary practices in cities and conceptualises them within discourses of cultural sustainability and urban degrowth, in the light of higher civic responsibility and social capital.

Promoting sustainable artistic practices involves several strategic actions. Supporting local and sustainable arts and crafts promotes a link between cultural activities and environmental sustainability. Encouraging the use of environmentally friendly materials and green building practices in cultural spaces not only minimises environmental impact, but also promotes a culture of sustainability. In addition, advocating for policies that align cultural activities with environmental sustainability goals is crucial. Such policies can provide a framework and incentives for cultural institutions and the creative industries to adopt sustainable practices and integrate them into their operating models.

The practices outlined in this paper – from the role of artists as urban activists to the integration of environmental concerns into the creative industries – highlight the potential of artistic practices to drive environmental change and contribute to urban degrowth. The three case studies discussed in this paper – Loseter, Los Angeles and Associazione Bastione – were chosen precisely because they represent practices led by collectives of artists in dialogue with the community, rather than isolated art installations with no direct ecological or community impact. These initiatives reduce environmental impact by promoting sustainable resource management and aligning cultural practices with ecological principles. Artists, cultural institutions and the creative industries are in a unique position to influence public perceptions and behaviour on environmental issues and strategic spatial planning in cities. By embracing sustainability, the arts can play a transformative role in creating a more sustainable and environmentally aware society.

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Cultural factors supporting the design and development of PEDs – Positive Energy Districts: a comparative analysis of case studies in Italy and Turkey

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ABSTRACT

Positive Energy Districts (PEDs) are defined as energy-efficient, flexible urban areas or connected buildings producing net-zero greenhouse gas emissions while managing a surplus of renewable energy. Central to European policy initiatives, PEDs aim to achieve clean, sustainable urbanization by 2025 and expedite the transition to a low-carbon energy system. Current literature predominantly explores economic and environmental dimensions of PEDs, partially neglecting social, behavioral, and cultural aspects despite their importance in fostering pro-environmental behaviors. This paper addresses this gap by examining the socio-cultural factors influencing PEDs' design and development. A comparative case study of two PED projects in Italy and Turkey, analyzed in the framework of the PROPEL project, employing qualitative methods such as desk research, document analysis, and semi-structured interviews, reveals that integrating cultural strategies (e.g., cultural events, heritage enhancement, community festivals, etc.) is vital in promoting community dynamics conducive to PEDs' success. The findings underscore the significance of socio-cultural elements in advancing PEDs.

Keywords:

Positive Energy Districts

Sustainability

Socio-cultural factors for pro-environmental behaviours

Cultural sustainable urbanization
Sustainable development

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Introduction

PEDs – Positive Energy Districts are defined as "energy-efficient and energy-flexible urban areas or groups of connected buildings which produce net-zero greenhouse gas emissions and actively manage an annual local or regional surplus production of renewable energy" (*SET-Plan Working Group*, 2018). PEDs have been at the core of key policy initiatives in Europe as a fundamental approach for successful, clean, and sustainable urbanization by 2025 and to speed up the transition to a low-carbon and sustainable energy system and development model (e.g. in the *European Green Deal*, 2020). So far, the literature on PEDs has focused mainly on economic and environmental aspects in the district's design, development, and monitoring while research on social, behavioural or cultural elements is still rather scarce. This research gap contrasts with the literature highlighting the importance of social and cultural factors in encouraging pro-environmental behaviors (Huang et al., 2023; Liu et al., 2014). Indeed, it has been demonstrated that pro-environmental behavior is also related to cultural dynamics and that cultural factors could significantly influence positive environmental habits (e.g. recycling, use of public transport, better waste management, etc…) (Agovino, Crociata, and Sacco, 2015 and Crociata, Agovino, & Sacco, 2015). Furthermore, calls have been made for putting a stronger research focus on the influence of social and cultural elements in urban development (Crociata, Agovino, & Sacco, 2016), thus further emphasizing the interest in investigating these topics also in relation to PEDs.

More specifically, this paper aims to address this research call by answering the following research questions:

1. What are the environmental, social, cultural and behavioural aspects of PEDs emerging in literature and how are they interconnected?
2. How can they inform and support the design and development of PEDs?

This work presents the preliminary results of a comparative theoretical analysis of the economic, socio-cultural and behavioural aspects emerging in literature and a comparative case study investigation of two PED projects based in Italy and Turkey carried out in the framework of the international project PROPEL. Through a qualitative approach based on the triangulation of sources of evidence (desk research, document analysis, questionnaires, and semi-structured research interviews) (Yin, 2015), the research results highlight how PEDs are integrating key cultural factors or strategies (such as cultural events or the enhancement of the historical and cultural significance of the districts and their cultural heritage) to shape the understanding and leveraging of local community dynamics for promoting lifestyles and behaviours that are functional to PEDs implementation.

The paper is structured into five sections. After this introduction, a literature review on economic, environmental, and socio-cultural aspects will be presented, leading to the development of a framework for analysis of PEDs which also considers socio-cultural elements. The following section explains the research design and methodology. Section three presents the analysis of the case studies, highlighting in particular the relevance of socio-cultural aspects in the overall development of PEDs. Finally, the last section draws some concluding remarks.

Literature review

As mentioned in the introduction to this work, PEDs – Positive Energy Districts have been at the core of the green transition agenda over the last ten years and are increasingly attracting the attention of policymakers, urban planners, industry professionals, and academic researchers. Overall, the research on PEDs increased over the last five years with a peak of contributions published between 2018 and 2023. It explores the topic of PEDs from various angles: there is a notable predominance of papers with a comprehensive approach, addressing both environmental and additional aspects such as social or behavioral factors. This is followed by contributions that concentrate primarily on environmental issues and, to a lesser extent, on social and behavioral research (Sassenou et al.,2023). The following sections provide a summary of the primary topics related to these areas, divided into the previously mentioned categories: environmental and energy-related aspects, followed by a separate section dedicated to social and behavioral aspects. These two dimensions are presented independently from one another. At the end, a proposal of a framework for PEDs analysis is presented based on the results of this analysis.

Environmental and Energy Aspects In PEDS Design and Implementation

The environmental aspects of Positive Energy Districts (PEDs) are predominantly centered around energy dynamics and greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. Sassenou et al. (2023) note that various definitions of PEDs have evolved, shifting focus from building-level energy considerations to district-level urban sustainability transformations. A key distinction of PEDs is their dual emphasis on energy balance and GHG emissions, as highlighted in the SET plan (Sassenou et al., 2023). The term "positive energy" primarily refers to energy balance, but it also encompasses contributions to climate change and urban mobility, indicating net zero GHG emissions (Derkenbaeva et al., 2022). This broadened scope connects energy assessments with district sustainability factors like waste management and resident behaviors.

Research on PEDs often addresses energy sources, carriers, infrastructures, and applications, emphasizing renewable and local energy sources (Amaral et al., 2018; Ala-Juusela et al., 2021; Wilberforce et al., 2021). Energy production and efficiency are central, focusing on surplus energy, high efficiency, and related activities such as business, mobility, and smart management (Komminos, 2022; Castillo-Calzadilla et al., 2022). However, there is a need for consensus on PED definitions and calculation methods to fully realize their potential (Erba et al., 2021).

PED literature identifies several key research areas:

1. *Energy Demand and Consumption:* This involves studies on theoretical and applied aspects of energy required and used within districts. Energy demand refers to the energy needed to meet district requirements, while consumption is the actual energy used (Hasanuzzaman et al., 2020; Steixner et al., 2007). Calculations consider factors like building physics, installation types, and residential appliances.
2. *Energy Generation and Supply:* This research focuses on energy production within district boundaries and its delivery to end users, including the associated energy losses (Erba et al., 2021; Hasanuzzaman et al., 2021).
3. *Energy Balance:* Studies explore the relationship between energy used and produced within specific units, considering factors like balancing period, metrics, and district boundaries (Hawila et al., 2022; Derkenbaeva et al., 2022; Amaral et al., 2018). Metrics may include CO2 emissions, final energy, or energy costs, influenced by project goals and stakeholder intentions (Marzal et al., 2011).
4. *Energy Efficiency:* This area examines measures to address energy disparities within districts, relying on internal storage systems or energy exchanges with external networks (Salom et al., 2021). Efficiency is assessed by the balance between imported and exported energy (Aghamolaei et al., 2021).

These research streams often overlap, reflecting interconnected themes in PED studies. Additionally, emerging research areas include:

- *Mobility in PEDs:* Sustainable mobility systems enhance urban sustainability by improving transport efficiency, electrifying transit, and encouraging behavioral changes (Castillo-Calzadilla et al., 2022; Pignatta and Balazadeh, 2021).
- *Biodiversity Risks:* PEDs can mitigate biodiversity degradation through urban habitat optimization and sustainable resource management, reducing reliance on chemical fertilizers and managing nutrient cycles effectively (Bracco et al., 2018; Haase and Baer, 2024).
- *Outdoor Area Management:* PEDs must adapt outdoor environments to climate change impacts, balancing green spaces and addressing biodiversity and mobility concerns (Foshag et al., 2020; Ceron-Palma et al., 2013; Marotta et al., 2021).

This comprehensive framework highlights the multi-faceted approach required to achieve environmental and energy sustainability in PEDs.

Social Aspects in PEDs: Energy Justice and Human-Centric Energy Transition

The literature exploring the social aspects of PEDs focuses on energy citizenship, community participation, and energy justice. These themes are crucial in understanding how citizens engage with energy systems and the equitable distribution of energy resources.

- *Energy Citizenship and Community Engagement:* Energy citizenship, a key concept discussed by Devine-Wright (2007), refers to the public's active role in the energy system, emphasizing equitable rights and responsibilities in addressing climate change. Initially, the term energy citizenship was associated with public endorsement of energy technologies, but it has evolved to denote proactive engagement. This includes participation in energy-related decisions, joining energy communities, and engaging in prosumer activities—where citizens produce and consume energy (Biresselioglu et al., 2024). Energy citizenship is closely tied to the idea of *energy democracy*, which involves inclusive and transparent decision-making processes. This concept stresses decentralized governance, where local communities play a significant role in energy policy and administration, fostering a bottom-up approach over hierarchical decision-making (Szulecki & Overland, 2020). This decentralized framework promotes citizen involvement in the energy transition, sustainable land use, and reduced consumption (Bomberg & McEwen, 2012; Becker & Kunze, 2014).
- *Energy Justice:* Energy justice is defined as the fair distribution of energy services' benefits and burdens, ensuring unbiased decision-making in the energy sector (Sovacool & Dworkin, 2015). This concept is built on John Rawls' theory of social justice, advocating for equitable access to primary goods irrespective of individuals' socioeconomic status (Walker, 2012). The literature on energy justice adopts a three-dimensional approach encompassing *distributional, recognitional, and procedural justice* (Jenkins et al., 2014). Distributional justice focuses on the equitable allocation of material resources and public benefits, calling for a fair transition to sustainable energy sources (Jenkins et al., 2014; Bartiaux et al., 2019). Recognitional justice examines whether marginalized groups, such as the elderly or disabled, are adequately considered in energy policies (Groves et al., 2020). Procedural justice emphasizes the need for fair decision-making processes that include increased public participation (Heffron & McCauley, 2014). Restorative justice addresses past injustices in the energy sector, aiming to correct previous

unfairness and procedural errors (Lacey-Barnacle, 2020). Energy justice also incorporates global and restorative dimensions, considering the broader implications of energy inequalities and efforts to rectify them (Heffron & McCauley, 2014).

- *Inclusiveness and Equity in PEDs:* The concept of inclusiveness is integral to discussions on energy citizenship and justice. Effective participation in PEDs requires addressing barriers such as energy poverty and vulnerability, which hinder access to sufficient energy services (Gillard et al., 2017). Energy poverty not only impacts living standards but also limits individuals' ability to engage as energy citizens (Bouzarovski & Simcock, 2017). Thus, achieving energy justice necessitates mutual recognition between citizens and energy providers, ensuring all individuals have access to energy resources in line with socio-economic welfare principles (Boamah & Rothfuss, 2020).
- *Socio-political Context and Participation:* Energy citizenship's socio-political context significantly influences citizen involvement in energy policy at various levels (Biresselioglu et al., 2024). A fair energy system that imposes costs and benefits equitably fosters citizen enthusiasm for active participation (Sovacool & Dworkin, 2015). This participation is crucial for the successful implementation of PEDs, promoting community involvement and sustainable energy practices (Mendes et al., 2020). Participation in PEDs is analyzed at both micro and macro levels. At the micro level, citizens focus on energy efficiency in personal spaces, while at the macro level, they engage in broader political activities related to climate policy (Radtke, 2014). The intersection of these levels highlights the interconnected responsibilities of energy citizens, advocating for both individual and collective actions to achieve PED goals (Amadori & Votta, 2021).

The document underscores the importance of energy citizenship, justice, and community participation in PEDs. These concepts are interlinked, emphasizing the need for equitable energy policies, inclusive decision-making processes, and active citizen engagement. The literature suggests that achieving a just and sustainable energy transition requires addressing socio-economic barriers, fostering decentralized governance, and promoting proactive community involvement. This comprehensive approach ensures that PEDs not only meet environmental objectives but also enhance social well-being and equity.

Behavioural Aspects: Psychological Dynamics, Enablers and Citizens' Behavior for PEDs

The research into the behavioral aspects of PEDs, emphasizes the psychological dynamics and the significant yet underexplored role of citizen behavior in these systems. It identifies key themes such as energy citizenship, prosumerism, stakeholder collaboration, and governance, highlighting how these elements intersect with social aspects of PEDs and proposing areas for future research (Biresselioglu et al., 2024).

*Energy Citizenship and Prosumerism***:** A central concept in energy citizenship is prosumerism, which refers to citizens who both produce and consume energy. Despite its potential to drive energy transitions, current PED business models often overlook this aspect (Brown et al., 2019). Prosumerism is viewed as a social concept that empowers citizens by promoting new energy consumption behaviors, enhancing their engagement and participation in energy systems (Campos & Marín-Gonzalez, 2020; Huttunen et al., 2020). Empowerment in this context means encouraging individuals and communities to participate actively in PED initiatives, fostering awareness, and increasing responsibility. This involves collaborative dynamics among residents, civil society, and local governments to empower groups within energy systems (Haf & Robison, 2020; Heldeweg & Saintier, 2020). Effective empowerment strategies include mechanisms for knowledge production and socio-cultural learning, which motivate individuals to engage in creating new technologies and governance models (Seyfang & Haxeltine, 2012; Jamison, 2003, 2006).

Psychological Drivers and Pro-PEDs Behavior: The documents underscore the importance of psychological traits in influencing pro-environmental behaviors and engagement in PEDs. Extensive research links individuals' pro-environmental actions to psychological characteristics such as personality, values, attitudes, and self-perceptions (Barr & Gilg, 2006; Heath & Gifford, 2006; Dietz et al., 2007; Schultz et al., 2007). These studies suggest that socio-demographic traits like gender, age, and education play a role but are significantly influenced by psychological factors (Dorfleitner & Utz, 2014; Holstenkamp & Kahla, 2016).

Research Streams on Pro-Environmental Behavior: Research on pro-environmental attitudes and behaviors can be categorized into three main strands: personality traits, values and social norms, and self-perception (Biresselioglu et al., 2024).

- *Personality Traits:* Studies emphasize essential psychological needs—competence, relatedness, and autonomy—as critical factors in pro-environmental behavioral changes (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Internal attributes such as self-efficacy and self-control significantly influence individuals' engagement in energy systems (Kotilainen et al., 2016). Personal values ranging from 'egoistic' to 'altruistic' and from 'conservative' to 'open to change' also affect pro-environmental behaviors (Stern et al., 1995; Corraliza & Berenguer, 2000).

- *Values and Social Norms:* Research indicates that environmental attitudes are closely tied to personal values categorized as biocentric or anthropocentric. Individuals with a biocentric perspective are more likely to engage in environmentally friendly actions (Schwartz, 1992; Dunlap & Van Liere, 1978; Dunlap et al., 2000). Ecocentric views, advocating human-nature collaboration, and technocentric perspectives, emphasizing technology's role, influence pro-environmental behaviors (Barr, 2003; O'Riordan, 1985).
- *Self-Perception:* The link between pro-environmental behaviors and self-perception involves factors like perceived competence, relatedness, autonomy, self-efficacy, and control over one's environment (Yuriev et al., 2020). Theories such as the Value-Belief-Norm theory (Stern et al., 1999) and the Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1991; Wolske et al., 2017) provide frameworks for understanding these behaviors.

Governance and Behavioral Perspectives

A crucial aspect of PEDs is the integration of behavioral perspectives with governance. Nguyen and Batel (2021) argue for a shift towards active involvement and inclusiveness in governing processes related to energy management. Their research criticizes conventional approaches that focus on changing individual behaviors without addressing the underlying social and environmental inequalities. Such approaches, they argue, may perpetuate socio-ecological disparities and reinforce existing power hierarchies, undermining the effectiveness of sustainable energy transitions.

Structural Influences on Energy Behavior

The document identifies several structural factors that influence energy consumption behaviors:

- *Social Factors:* Cultural norms, societal ideals, and community dynamics play significant roles in shaping energy use patterns.
- *Economic Factors:* Income levels, affordability of energy services, and financial incentives affect access to energy resources.
- *Political Factors:* Governance systems, regulations, financial support, and energy planning methods influence the accessibility and utilization of energy (Nguyen & Batel, 2021).

External Motivations for Pro-Environmental Views: Finally, the diffusion of innovations (DOI) theory is highlighted, which posits that environmental behaviors are influenced by the spread of new knowledge through media and interpersonal interactions (Wolske et al., 2017). This underscores the role of communication channels in shaping pro-environmental attitudes and behaviors in PEDs.

This analysis emphasizes the need for a comprehensive approach to understanding and promoting pro-environmental behaviors in PEDs. This involves considering psychological traits, values, social norms, self-perception, and structural factors. By addressing these elements and integrating them into governance and policy frameworks, PEDs can foster more inclusive, equitable, and sustainable energy transitions

Research design and methodology

The literature review identified potential thematic areas, which were used at a later stage for focusing on cultural elements in PED design, implementation, and monitoring. The subsequent preliminary study of relevant cases of PED implementation evaluated the alignment of PED implementations with this framework. These initial findings, developed in the framework of the Propel Project with project partners EURAC and ITU, should be considered as preliminary since the PED implementation is ongoing. The two case studies were selected —one from Italy and one from Turkey — based on the criteria of coherence and comparability (Patton, 2003), and are related to the PEDs implemented in Kadıköy Municipality (Turkey) and by Cooperativa Sociale Giotto (Italy). Both Kadıköy and the Cooperativa Sociale Giotto case studies exemplify progressive approaches to sustainable urban development and energy management. Kadıköy's efforts in Istanbul and the innovative Social Hub in Padova showcase the potential of Positive Energy Districts to enhance urban sustainability and community well-being through technological innovation and inclusive governance. Moreover, in both cases cultural elements are introduced to support the PEDs development, especially to foster awareness and stimulate pro-environmental behaviours.

The case study analysis followed the protocol identified by Yin (Yin, 2014) and involved triangulation of sources (document analysis, desk research, research interviews, questionnaires).

Data collection involved a 7-month collaborative effort, starting with the development of a SWOT analysis questionnaire through online meetings among PROPEL project partners. Meetings with stakeholders from the Municipality of Kadikoy and CoopGiotto, further supported data collection. Information was gathered via questionnaires and semi-structured interviews, followed by a second phase focusing on social, cultural and behavioral aspects through open-ended questions and online interviews conducted by the authors.

The empirical research led to the creation of case reports for each of the cases, which are presented in the next section of this paper.

A framework for analysis: what is the role of culture in PEDs design and implementation?

As anticipated in the research design section, the empirical analysis of this paper is based on two case studies of PEDs implementation: Kadıköy Municipality, Turkey, and Social Hub – PED Implementation by Cooperativa Sociale Giotto (Italy). The following sub-sections will present the results of the analysis of these case studies. It leads to a reflection on the role cultural activities and organizations have played in the designing and implementation phases of the two cases.

Kadıköy Municipality, Turkey

Kadıköy, a central district in Istanbul, Turkey, is renowned for its innovative practices in mobility, climate action, and smart city initiatives. The municipality is a signatory of the Global Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy and is involved in several networks, such as the International Council of Local Governments (ICLEI) and the World Health Organization (WHO) Healthy Cities. Kadıköy's commitment to sustainability is further evidenced by its participation in the Horizon 2020 project "Making City – Energy Efficient Pathway for the City Transformation: Enabling a Positive Future," which aims to develop a small-scale Positive Energy District (PED).

Kadıköy is Turkey's first local authority to engage in PED research. Through the MAKING-CITY initiative, Kadıköy collaborates with Tecnalia to develop a strategy for implementing PED concepts. This includes conducting field inspections in cities like Oulu and Groningen and raising public awareness through initiatives like the "City Vision Awareness Questionnaire." These efforts are part of a broader goal to enhance energy efficiency and sustainability within the municipality. One notable achievement is the installation of 384 solar panels on the Wedding Hall's roof, providing 40% of the building's annual electricity consumption, with plans to expand this capacity.

Kadıköy Municipality's approach to creating Positive Energy Districts involves a multifaceted strategy that integrates cultural initiatives, educational activities, and extensive community engagement. The involvement of local organizations, educational institutions, and public-private partnerships plays a pivotal role in fostering a culture of environmental responsibility. Through festivals, workshops, platforms for citizen input, and innovative projects, Kadıköy is effectively working towards its sustainability goals, promoting energy efficiency, and enhancing community involvement. In a nutshell, the municipality employs various cultural initiatives, activities, and collaborations with cultural organizations to drive its sustainability goals.

In particular, the cultural elements that the city is incorporating in its PEDs implementation are:

- *Educational Campaigns and Workshops:* Kadıköy Municipality organizes numerous educational initiatives aimed at raising awareness and promoting sustainable practices. These include workshops on energy conservation, waste reduction, and the circular economy. Specific programs such as the "World in My Schoolyard" educate children about climate and environmental issues through hands-on activities.

- *Community Engagement Platforms:* The municipality uses platforms like "Anlat Kadıköy" to engage residents in discussions about local plans and projects, allowing for direct community input and feedback. This platform enhances transparency and encourages active citizen participation.

- *Surveys and Focus Groups:* Surveys, such as those conducted under the MAKING-CITY Project, collect data on residents' energy consumption habits and climate awareness. Focus group meetings and the World Café technique are employed to facilitate in-depth discussions and stakeholder engagement.

- *Festivals and Campaigns:* Annual events like the Kadıköy Environment Festival serve as major engagement tools. These festivals not only raise awareness but also involve various stakeholders, including non-governmental organizations, in promoting environmental responsibility. The Environment Festival, being the largest in Turkey, features workshops, panels, and activities related to sustainability.

- *Co-creation Spaces:* Design Atelier Kadıköy (TAK) functions as an innovation hub where citizens, designers, and students collaborate on projects addressing urban issues. This space fosters creativity and community involvement in the sustainable development of the district.

- Moreover, these activities imply the cooperation with various cultural Organizations, such as:

- *Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs)*

- *Local Networks and Volunteer Groups:* The Kadıköy Climate Ambassadors Network and Kadıköy Volunteer Centers exemplify local initiatives that drive community participation in environmental projects. These groups work on raising awareness and implementing sustainability practices at the grassroots level.

- *Educational Institutions:* Collaborations with schools are integral to Kadıköy's strategy. Programs like "Schools Taking Green Steps" involve theoretical and practical training sessions to instill environmental consciousness among students and teachers.
- *Public and Private Sector Partnerships:* The municipality collaborates with various sectors, including technology providers and local businesses, to promote the adoption of smart

technologies and renewable energy sources. Projects like the CODALoop initiative, which uses behavioral nudges to encourage energy-saving habits, highlight these partnerships.

Social Hub – PED Implementation by Cooperativa Sociale Giotto (Italy)

The Cooperativa Sociale Giotto is developing a proof of concept for a "SOCIAL HUB – PED" in Padova and Noventa Padovana, located in the Veneto Region in North-Eastern Italy. This project covers a 47,000 m² area, including 12,000 m² of buildings and 35,000 m² of roads, parking, and green spaces. The hub aims for climate neutrality through extensive urban regeneration, including building rehabilitation, architectural redesign, energy system replacement, and fleet conversion.

A feasibility study for a biodigester to process green waste and fertilizer is underway. The project leverages Italy's "superbonus" tax incentive scheme, offering a 110% tax credit for energy refurbishments, which can be monetized through financial institutions or construction companies. An innovative management structure for an energy community is also being tested, empowering residents to generate, store, consume, and share energy. A 343kWp photovoltaic (PV) plant on existing buildings exemplifies this initiative, with plans to expand the Renewable Energy Community (REC) to surrounding areas.

The project integrates multiple social benefits, including training programs for green jobs, the development of ethical business models like Social Return on Investment (SROI), and the redesign of green areas for local food production and therapeutic gardens. These gardens are intended to support disadvantaged individuals, including those with physical and mental disabilities or cognitive diseases such as Alzheimer's.
Before the PED (Positive Energy District) initiative, Cooperative Giotto engaged with the municipalities of Padua and Noventa Padovana to establish Giotto as a socio-environmental hub. The cooperative aims to utilize the green space in front of its premises for therapeutic purposes, particularly for patients with Alzheimer's and other conditions, transforming it into a therapeutic garden. Communication is primarily conducted via their website, which attracts 400-500 visitors, and there is no significant advertising due to Giotto's established local reputation.

The cooperative has implemented several management-saving policies adhering to ISO standards for energy conservation. Actions include the use of LED lighting and electric machinery for garden maintenance. Plans are underway to propose circular economy activities in collaboration with the agrarian consortium, potentially involving local industries in waste management and recycling efforts. Engaging 6-7 surrounding companies and the residential area is under consideration.

Initial discussions have taken place regarding partnerships between public and private sectors, including NGOs and local communities, to ensure a comprehensive approach to PED implementation. However, public entities have shown a preference for top-down approaches, creating challenges in securing municipal funding. Cooperative Giotto aims to use part of its warehouse for commercial activities benefiting disadvantaged individuals.

The cooperative utilizes an app to monitor photovoltaic panels and is exploring the integration of a digital system to consolidate and manage energy data efficiently. Currently, data is maintained in separate Excel documents from the app. Discussions with the environmental sector are ongoing to communicate environmental initiatives to citizens. Incentives are available for replacing the vehicle fleet with more sustainable options. Giotto uses indicators to measure the performance of its activities, aligned with eight goals of the 2030 Agenda. The cooperative has undergone a Social Impact Assessment (VIS) covering governance, environment, energy, and the well-being of employees and their families.

Future plans include establishing feedback mechanisms to engage stakeholders continuously, facilitating their input into the decision-making process.

With reference to cultural initiatives and activities, the main ones planned in the PED implementation are the following ones:

- *Therapeutic Garden:* The transformation of the green space into a therapeutic garden for Alzheimer's patients and others.
- *Circular Economy Activities:* Engagement with local industries for waste management and recycling in collaboration with the agrarian consortium.

The cooperative collaborated in initial discussions to position Giotto as a socio-environmental hub with the Municipalities of Padua and Noventa Padovana.

Overall, Cooperative Giotto is committed to integrating sustainable practices through community engagement, smart infrastructure, and effective stakeholder collaboration, despite challenges in securing public sector support. The focus on therapeutic green spaces and circular economy activities highlights their innovative approach to social and environmental sustainability.

Conclusions

This paper aimed to identify the cultural elements that could be at the basis of PEDs design, implementation and monitoring. Using a case study analysis of two cases of PED implementation in Turkey and Italy, this work presents some preliminary insight into this research topic.

Both case studies—Cooperative Giotto in Italy and Kadıköy Municipality in Turkey—highlight the intertwining of cultural, social, and behavioral factors in the successful implementation of PEDs.We can indeed observe that cultural initiatives (e.g. festivals, educational initiatives, ecc..) are used to reinforce community engagement, trigger citizens commitment and increase awareness.

Cooperative Giotto has focused on transforming green spaces into therapeutic gardens, targeting community well-being, particularly for individuals with Alzheimer’s and other conditions. This initiative not only enhances environmental sustainability but also promotes social inclusion and health benefits, and the creation of a common “environmental” culture. Giotto’s adherence to energy-saving policies and circular economy practices demonstrates a holistic approach to resource management and sustainability. The cooperative’s challenges in securing public sector support highlight the need for robust public-private partnerships and active community engagement.

Similarly, Kadıköy Municipality has adopted a multifaceted strategy that includes cultural initiatives, educational activities, and extensive community engagement. The municipality's efforts in raising public awareness through educational campaigns, community platforms, and festivals reflect a comprehensive approach to sustainability. Kadıköy’s collaboration with local organizations, educational institutions, and public-private partnerships plays a pivotal role in fostering a culture of environmental responsibility. The integration of smart technologies, such as the installation of solar panels and the use of innovative co-creation spaces, illustrates the municipality's commitment to energy efficiency and community involvement.

Common elements between the two case studies include the emphasis on community engagement, the adoption of smart infrastructure, and the integration of cultural strategies to promote sustainable practices. Both initiatives highlight the importance of educational programs and the active participation of local communities in achieving sustainability goals. Additionally, the use of digital tools for energy monitoring and the promotion of renewable energy sources are key components in both case studies.

The comparative analysis also reveals that despite geographical and contextual differences, the success of PEDs relies heavily on the inclusion of socio-cultural dynamics, community participation, and the strategic use of smart technologies. These findings underscore the necessity of a comprehensive and inclusive approach to urban sustainability, ensuring that environmental objectives are met while enhancing social well-being and fostering community resilience and sense of belonging, often through cultural initiatives. The lessons learned from Cooperative Giotto and Kadıköy Municipality provide valuable insights for future PED implementations, emphasizing the potential critical role of cultural and social factors in driving sustainable urban transformation.

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Towards aligned standards for reporting sustainability in the cultural and creative sector

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ABSTRACT

Over the past two decades, sustainability-related disclosures have gained increasing importance in the cultural and creative sectors. However, while there is a relative abundance of reflection on independent standards and models, there is still a scarcity of papers investigating the use of GRI, <IR>, or EFRAG in CCISs. Hence, this paper aims to address this research gap by examining the state of the arts of sustainability reporting on cultural and creative organizations in Italy to understand how we can implement better sustainability reporting standards and practices for CCISs. The authors conduct a preliminary qualitative investigation of selected case studies of sustainability reports for Italian cultural organizations. These initial results could be instrumental in advancing the theoretical discussion on sustainability reporting for the cultural and creative sector and potentially lobbying for the development of sector-specific GRI standards related to cultural and creative domains.

Keywords:

Sustainability reporting, GRI sector-specific standards, cultural and creative sector sustainability

Introduction

After the campaigns to have culture recognized as the fourth pillar of sustainable development (CHCfE, 2015; Throsby, 2010; UCLG, 2010) and in its transversal contribution to SDGs (CAE, 2019; Nocca, 2017), CCISs are currently trying to reflect both on how to make the sector more sustainable and on how to communicate their sustainability efforts through appropriate non-financial indicators, disclosure frameworks, and standards. The latter has, however, proved to be particularly challenging. Over the last two decades, the cultural and creative sector has found two main solutions to this issue. The first solution consists of the development of independent standards and frameworks for sustainability reporting for culture by main international cultural associations, organizations, and agencies (Adams, 2010; Cicerchia, 2021; ICOM & OECD, 2019; Jelinčić, 2021: Julie's Bicycle, 2017; UNESCO, 2019). The second solution consists of cultural and creative organizations attempting to use the main international sustainability reporting standards (in particular, GRI standards, EFRAG standards, and <IR> Integrated Reporting). In doing so, however, cultural organizations have encountered several problems, such as the inappropriateness of indicators or the lack of standards related to cultural sustainability (Esposito & Fisichella, 2019; Esposito & Ricci, 2019; Pop & Borza, 2016; Pop et al., 2019). This results in being able to report on a rather limited number of standards, hindering the possibility of appropriately communicating their sustainability impact. Moreover, there is a relative scarcity of academic research investigating the use of GRI, <IR>, or EFRAG in CCISs

(Borin, 2023). These issues even impact the attitude and willingness of companies to invest in culture, according to a 'Corporate Cultural Responsibility' approach (Valeri, 2022).

This paper has the objective of addressing these research gaps by presenting the preliminary results of an investigation that is still ongoing, and that aims to answer the following research questions:

- What are potential sector-specific standards and indicators that could be developed to better testify to cultural organizations' impact, contributions, and efforts to sustainable development in the GRI framework?
- Could the development of these standards be an incentive for private companies to support, invest, or partner with cultural organizations and incentivize corporate investment in cultural organizations and activities?

The research consists of a two-stage qualitative investigation that aims to explore the perspectives of both cultural organizations and potential investors.

After a review of the literature on sustainability reporting with a specific focus on CCIs (section 2) and the explanation of the research design and methodology (section 3), the paper presents and briefly discusses the preliminary results of the investigations and describes the next step of the further phase of investigation (section 4.1-4.4). Finally, section 5 introduces some concluding remarks on how these results could be instrumental both in advancing the theoretical discussion on sustainability reporting for the cultural and creative sector and in potentially lobbying for the development of sector-specific GRI standards related to cultural domains.

Literature review

Over the last three decades, sustainability accounting and reporting have evolved significantly, addressing the need to integrate environmental, social, and economic aspects into corporate accountability. Indeed, traditional accounting's focus on financial metrics has been critiqued for inadequately capturing the broader impacts of corporate activities (Burritt & Schaltegger, 2010; Gray, 2010). As sustainability accounting emerged, it incorporated eco-justice and broader stakeholder engagement, moving beyond the limitations of conventional frameworks (Bebbington & Unerman, 2018). The push for sustainability disclosures gained momentum with significant influences like the Brundtland report and the European Commission's Green Paper on Corporate Social Responsibility, leading to legislative measures such as the Non-Financial Reporting Directive (EU Directive 2014/95/EU) and its most recent expansion in the Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive or CSRD (EU Directive 2022/2464). While the first EU directive mandated sustainability reporting mainly for larger companies (Rimmel, 2021), the CSRD significantly expanded the number and types of companies that are requested to produce sustainability-related non-financial disclosures (Barangă & Ifrim, 2023). The development of the EFRAG standards further confirms the relevance and vibrancy of the debate on sustainability reporting standards in the European context (Giner & Luque-Vílchez, 2022).

Historical links trace sustainability accounting back to early corporate social responsibility reports in the 1890s and the development of human resource and social accounting in the 20th century (De Villiers et al., 2014; Guthrie & Parker, 1989). The theoretical background of sustainability reporting is, however, commonly identified in the Triple Bottom Line (TBL) framework, encompassing economic, social, and environmental dimensions (Rimmel, 2020). Several research highlight the theoretical underpinnings of sustainability accounting and reporting, emphasizing its roots in established theories such as legitimacy theory, institutional theory, principal-agent theory, and stakeholder theories.

Currently, the most used sustainability reporting standards are the ones published by the GRI – Global Reporting Initiative. GRI standards aim to create a unified sustainability reporting framework, emphasizing materiality and stakeholder engagement (Lamberton, 2005; Buallay, 2022). GRI's guidelines have transformed into comprehensive standards: they were first issued in 2000 and, evolving through G3/G3.1 and G4 versions, they led to the current GRI Standards (GRI, 2016 and 2021). The GRI Standards are still grounded in the Brundtland definition of sustainable development, emphasizing accountability, materiality, and the reporting boundary, helping organizations communicate their economic, environmental, and social impacts comprehensively (GRI, 2022; Tregigda & Laine, 2022). At the moment, 40 sector-specific standards are in the development phase.

Another widespread framework is Integrated Reporting (IR); it represents another critical initiative, promoting the assessment of business success through sustainable value creation. The IIRC, introduced the IR Framework in 2013, focusing on integrated thinking and value creation processes involving six types of capital: financial, manufactured, intellectual, human, social and relational, and natural (IIRC, 2013; De Villiers et al., 2017). The IR Framework's principles and content elements aim to enhance the comparability, reliability, and completeness of corporate disclosures, though it has faced criticism for its investor-centric focus (Kannenberg & Schreck, 2019; Milne & Gray, 2013).

The importance of sustainability reporting frameworks and standards is essentially related to improving the regularity, uniformity, and comparability of disclosures, ensuring that organizations address significant sustainability issues while meeting stakeholder expectations (Laine et al., 2021). Characteristics of effective sustainability reporting include accuracy, balance, clarity, comparability, reliability, stakeholder inclusiveness, and timeliness (Tregidga & Laine, 2021). These standards facilitate organizations in focusing on critical issues and provide a basis for stakeholders to evaluate corporate sustainability performance, driving long-term value creation and enhancing transparency and accountability in organizational practices (GRI, 2016; IIRC, 2021).

The issue of standardization of sustainability-related non-financial disclosures is particularly relevant for those socio-economic sectors that are attempting to claim their relevance in the sustainable development paradigm and to make their impact visible also in comparison to the sectors that are attracting the most attention and, often, financing and policy support. This is also the case of the cultural and creative sector, which has campaigned for approximately two decades to have its role recognized in the sustainable development debate.

The integration of culture and creativity into the sustainable development paradigm is indeed a relatively recent academic and policy debate. Cultural and creative organizations now face scrutiny regarding their sustainability amidst social, economic, and environmental crises (Borin & Donato, 2022; Borin & Sinapi, 2023). Throsby's (1995) concept of cultural sustainable development catalyzed a two-decade-long discourse on culture's role in sustainability, underscoring its transversality among traditional sustainability dimensions (CHCfE, 2015; Duxbury et al., 2012; Nurse, 2006; Throsby, 2010; UCLG, 2010; Yildrim et al., 2019). Campaigns like #culture2015goal and #culture2030goal advocate for culture's explicit inclusion in the UN's 2030 Agenda (UN, 2015; Yildrim et al., 2019). In these debates, cultural sustainability is proposed as an essential pillar of sustainable development, alongside economic, social, and environmental aspects (Hawkes, 2001; Loach et al., 2017; Nurse, 2006; UCLG, 2010). However, this fourth-pillar concept faces critique and alternative interpretations suggesting culture's integration within existing pillars rather than as a standalone dimension (Soini & Dessein, 2016). Nevertheless, the cultural sector increasingly adopts sustainability approaches, integrating them into performance metrics and reporting frameworks, reflecting a global shift towards sustainable practices across all sectors (Borin & Donato, 2022; Cicerchia, 2021; Landoni et al., 2020). Among the different subsectors of the cultural and creative field, the cultural heritage and, more vertically, the museum sectors have been attracting considerable attention, both at the local and international level, for their complexity and potential peculiarities of sustainability impact and disclosures. Sustainability accounting and reporting in museums have gained prominence through practice and policy recommendations from museum associations and cultural NGOs, notably in the Anglo-Saxon context (Museums Australia, 2003; Museum Association, 2008; Julie's Bicycle, 2017). Pioneering frameworks, such as the UK's "Framework for Environmental Action for Museums" , have laid the groundwork for integrating sustainability into museum management and reporting (Adams, 2010; Esposito & Fisichella, 2019). Despite advancements in countries like Australia and the UK, Mediterranean Europe, and Global South countries lag in developing and harmonizing sustainability indicators and reporting standards (Wickman & Lehman, 2015; Borin & Donato, 2022).

Efforts like the OECD and ICOM's guide "Culture and Local Development: Maximising the Impact" and UNESCO's "Culture|2030 Indicators" highlight the role of museums in local development and the broader 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (OECD & ICOM, 2019; UNESCO, 2019). These frameworks emphasize museums' contributions to community well-being, urban redevelopment, and cultural inclusion, urging museums to prioritize and disclose relevant sustainability information.

Overall, while fragmented, existing research and guidelines underscore the need for further reflection and investigation on comprehensive frameworks for sustainability reporting in museums, addressing their specificities and enhancing transparency in their sustainability practices. This gap could be filled particularly through case studies analysis that can illuminate best practices and innovative approaches in sustainability disclosures for museums and cultural heritage institutions.

Promising research has also investigated the importance of structured and standardized sustainability-related disclosures in cultural and creative organizations as a tool to stimulate policy debate and incentivize corporate investment, funding, support, sponsorships, or partnerships. Indeed, literature on other sectors has testified that appropriately disclosing sustainability could have a positive correlation with investment (Plastun et al., 2020). The proposal of developing a “Corporate Cultural Responsibility” framework, which could enable companies to highlight the importance of their investment in culture (Civita, 2017), has been one of the most promising proposals of the last decade and has further triggered the reflection on how GRI sector-specific standards are still partially neglecting the peculiarities of CCISs, thus impacting on the attitude and willingness of companies to invest in culture (Valeri, 2022).

It seems, therefore, crucial, in this historical moment of reflection and transition of the sustainability reporting debate, to provide further research on the state of the arts of the sustainability reporting debate as a means also to stimulate the relevance and connection of cultural organization in the sustainability practices of their broader economic context.

Research design and methodology

The authors have implemented a two-step qualitative research to investigate the research topics, which were still in the development phase when this paper was submitted. Since the research questions suggested collecting data on two different perspectives (the cultural organizations and the companies potentially investing in culture), the research design involved a sequential collection and analysis of data regarding two different research samples (namely, the cultural organizations and the companies potentially investing in culture). Analyzing these two perspectives through qualitative research was considered the most appropriate research method since it allowed the integration of the two dimensions and since qualitative approaches are considered most suitable for investigating a phenomenon (Creswell & Clark., 2007; Yin, 2014). The literature analysis was functional in understanding the challenges related to sustainability reporting for the cultural sector and setting the basis for the design of the two following phases of the research. Most of all, it allowed the authors to identify two research gaps: the first related to the relative abundance of research on sustainability reporting in Anglo-Saxon countries (Adams, 2009; Garthe, 2022; Hedges, 2021; Wickham, & Lehman, 2015), which implied the need to better investigate this topic about other countries, for instance, Mediterranean countries (Esposito & Fisichella, 2019). The second is the scarcity of research on how sustainability-related disclosures could influence the interest in investing, sponsoring, supporting, or partnering with cultural organizations in private companies of other sectors.

Based on the need identified in the first research gap, the research focused on the geographical area of Italy. Italy was also selected given its richness in cultural heritage (it ranked first for the number of UNESCO WHSs - World Heritage Sites in 2023) and because it is among the first ten countries in the world for the number of museums (UNESCO, 2022; STATISTA, 2022). Indeed, in this preliminary phase, it was decided to carry out a vertical analysis of the museum sub-sector, which will be expanded to other cultural sectors in the future. The first sample of two museums (MUSE – Museo delle Scienze in Trento and Museo Egizio in Turin) was selected based on the literature, which identified them as best practices of sustainability reporting, as well as based on the recognition and awards for reporting they received. The qualitative research was carried out through a semi-structured interview with the managers in charge of sustainability reporting and through the analysis of the sustainability reports of the organizations over three years (2018-2020 for data consistency) through software for content analysis (Nvivo) to visualize words frequency and distribution, to identify thematic clusters and key themes.

The implementation of this phase is still ongoing, but the authors have been able to draw a first map of sustainability reporting standards that could be integrated into the GRI framework as sector-specific standards for the cultural sector. In the meantime, the authors are also selecting the sample of companies that will be analyzed in the second stage of the research, identifying them in the dataset of donors, sponsors, and investors of previous research which was carried out by CIVITA Association, one of the most important association in Italy which aims at translating the dialogue between the business world and cultural realities into concrete opportunities for supporting and co-designing initiatives with a high social, cultural and economic impact.

Research results

Results of the first phase: investigating the sustainability reporting practices of cultural organizations.

MUSE – MUSEO DELLE SCIENZE DI TRENTO (SCIENCE MUSEUM IN TRENTO)

The sustainability reporting journey of MUSE – Museo delle Scienze of Trento, a prominent science museum in Trentino Alto-Adige, Italy, began in 2011, driven by a staff member's undergraduate dissertation proposal, which led to the development of the museum's sustainability reports. The reports aim to supplement traditional financial statements with qualitative data to meet stakeholders' diverse information needs. The sustainability reporting process evolved through stakeholder mapping, indicator development, and developing a framework that was partially inspired by models such as the Integrated Reporting model and GRI, albeit tailored to the museum's unique context.

The museum's first sustainability report was issued in 2018, following initial social reporting efforts in 2011. By 2022, the museum had introduced its first "Mission report" for 2021. The reporting team, initially four members strong, has seen contributions from over fifty staff and collaborators. The report production process spans about a year, with intense activity over six months, and involves internal staff with external support for editorial and graphic development.

The NVIVO content analysis of the 2018, 2019, and 2020 sustainability reports highlights thematic variations and word density. In 2018, sustainability (1.7%) and development (1.1%) were the predominant themes, followed by culture, identity, and accountability (0.7% and 0.6%, respectively), with research and local activities (0.4% and 0.3%). The 2019 report continued to emphasize sustainability (1.8%) and introduced development, collaboration, and research (0.4% each), as well as public and visitors (0.3%). By 2020, sustainability (2.1%) remained the leading theme, with collaboration (0.6%), activities, research (0.5% and 0.4%), and public and visitors (0.3%) also featured prominently.

The compliance analysis with GRI Standards revealed that the museum consistently disclosed general requirements but focused more on social and economic disclosures than environmental ones (respectively, with compliance from 24% to 32% for universal topics, 11% for social topics, 15% on economic topics and 3% for environmental topics in the three reports). The general low level of compliance might show that the GRI framework does not fully capture the comprehensive and unique sustainability information presented by the museum, as already emerged during the research interview.

It must be noted that the 2018-2020 reports increasingly follow the structure of the ICOM/OECD guidelines 'Culture for Local Sustainable Development' (ICOM & OECD, 2019), focusing on topics such as economic development, urban regeneration, cultural and educational development, inclusion, health and well-being, and local development relationships. This structure reflects the museum's strategic alignment with local sustainable development and with an approach to SDGs based mainly on a local perspective.

MUSEO EGIZIO DI TORINO (THE EGYPTIAN MUSEUM IN TURIN)

The Egyptian Museum in Turin, founded in 1824, is one of the oldest dedicated to Egyptian civilization. Managed by the Fondazione Museo delle Antichità Egizie di Torino since 2004, the museum has embarked on a social and sustainability reporting project over the last six years. This initiative includes the publication of Social Reports (2017-2019) and an Integrated Report in 2020, which combined strategic communication with value-creation disclosures. The museum's reports align with the 'Guidelines for the Preparation of the Social Report of Non-profit Organizations', with the <IR> and GRI Standards, focusing on material issues and stakeholder expectations. Challenges in the reporting process included identifying relevant indicators and collecting data from diverse departments. Despite these issues, the reports have proved instrumental in guiding day-to-day operations and strategic planning, highlighting quantitative trends and operational insights. The 2020

Integrated Report has indeed received recognition at the 57th Oscar di Bilancio awards for its comprehensive approach.

In the analysis of the sustainability reports of the Egyptian Museum from 2018 to 2020, we can note an increase in the quantity and quality of disclosed information over the period. The reports predominantly focus on cultural sustainability, with the 2020 Integrated Report highlighting the museum's contribution to sustainable development more effectively. This shift is attributed to the adoption of the Integrated Reporting (IR) framework, which allowed for a comprehensive description of the museum's core values and their impact on various stakeholders. Moreover, the museum introduced a document titled 'The Creation of Value' in 2019, inspired by the IR framework. This document detailed the value creation process, focusing on the preservation and enhancement of the collections. It served as a precursor to the more structured 2020 Integrated Report, which was initially planned for 2019 but postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The 2020 Integrated Report marked a significant transition in the museum's sustainability reporting, managed by an Interdepartmental Working Group. It integrated the Social Report and the Creation of Value document, adhering to the IR model's guiding principles and content elements. The report included disclosures on organizational profile, governance, value creation model, opportunities and risks, strategic directions, performance, and future outlook. The adoption of the IR format and GRI Standards improved accountability and transparency.

From the NVIVO content analysis, it emerged that the interest in sustainability varied across the years. In 2018, the focus was on the preservation and enhancement of collections (2.3% coverage), followed by research activities (1.1%) and visitors (0.8%). Cooperation and partnerships were minor themes (0.4%). In 2019, the focus shifted to research activities (1.9%) and collections (1.7%), with education and training (0.7%), collaboration (0.4%), and social impact (0.4%) also highlighted. The 2020 Integrated Report emphasized collections (1.5%) and research (2%), with new themes like value creation (0.4%) and capital discourse (0.2%) emerging.

Regarding GRI Standards compliance, the reports disclose mainly information related to universal standards (with the 2020 report appearing to have lower compliance (31%) compared to 2018 (34%) and 2019 (37%) and related to the social dimension, with lower compliance with environmental standards and economic standards. Despite narratives on environmental sustainability actions, specific disclosure metrics or results were scarce, indicating a need for more detailed disclosures in future reports. It must also be noted that the 2020 report, although showing a lower level of compliance with GRI, provided broader descriptions and data, focusing on the value-creation process rather than specific metrics.

Potential sector-specific standards for cultural organizations

Based on these partial results, the authors have started to reflect on potential sector-specific standards for culture that need to be further enriched, amended, or confirmed in the following phases of the research. As in the GRI model, this phase began with the identification of probable material topics pertinent to the museum sector, associated Sustainable Development Goals, and the predominant sustainability dimensions, in alignment with the four-pillar sustainability development model. The temporary list of material topics is presented in the table here below: it has been developed taking into consideration the findings of the case study analysis as well as the key documents that have been analyzed in the literature review. Notably, the approach to sustainability testified in this list is holistic, taking into account the cultural, social, economic, and environmental dimensions.

Sustainability Dimension	Likely Material Topics	Corresponding Sustainable Development Goals
Cultural, Social, Economic	Cultural Heritage Preservation and Enhancement	SDG 9 – Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure SDG 11 – Sustainable Cities and Communities SDG 3 – Good Health and Well-being
Cultural, Social	Educational and training activities for staff, schools and training organizations	SDG 4 – Quality Education SDG 5 – Gender Equality SDG 10 – Reduced Inequalities SDG 11 – Sustainable Cities and Communities SDG 8 – Decent Work and Economic Growth
Cultural, Social, Economic	Cooperation and engagement with local stakeholders	SDG 9 – Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure SDG 8 – Decent Work and Economic Growth SDG 11 – Sustainable Cities and Communities SDG 17 – Partnership for the goal
Cultural, Social, Economic	Research and dissemination activities	SDG 4 – Quality Education SDG 9 – Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure
Cultural, Social	Local communities	SDG 11 – Sustainable cities and communities SDG 3 – Good Health and Well-being SDG 1 – No Poverty SDG 10 – Reduced Inequalities SDG 17 – Partnership for the goal
Cultural, Economic	Visitors and audiences	SDG 4 – Quality Education SDG 3 – Good Health and Well-being

Social	Employment practices	SDG 8 – Decent Work and Economic Growth SDG 4 – Quality Education SDG 10 – Reduced Inequalities
Social	Occupational health and safety	SDG 8 – Decent Work and Economic Growth SDG 3 – Good Health and Well-being
Social	Non-discrimination and equal opportunities	SDG 8 – Decent Work and Economic Growth SDG 10 – Reduced Inequalities
Economic	Economic impact	SDG 8 – Decent Work and Economic Growth SDG 11 – Sustainable Cities and Communities
Economic, Social	Public policy	SDG 17 – Partnership for the goal SDG 16 – Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions
Environmental	Environmental impact (Waste Management, Emissions, Energy consumption, Environmental education)	SDG 12 – Responsible Consumption and Production SDG 13 – Climate Action

FIGURE 1 - LIST OF POTENTIAL MATERIAL TOPICS FOR CULTURAL ORGANIZATIONS
Source: own elaboration

Development of the second phase: investigating the potential investment effects of sector-specific standards for the cultural sector

As explained in the previous sections, the second phase of the empirical research aims to investigate the effect that sector-specific GRI standards for cultural organizations can have on the willingness of other sector companies to invest, support, or partner with cultural entities. This research phase is still at the preliminary stage of development since it depends on the finalization of the first phase. It will be indeed carried out by testing the potential influence that the sector standards (developed based on the list of material topics presented above) might have on a selected sample of companies.

Given that the proposal of cultural sector-standards has not yet been finalized when this paper was presented, at the moment the authors have worked on the selection of the research sample, identifying the potential list of companies. As illustrated in section 2 of this paper, the companies have been selected on the database of previous research carried out by the CIVITA Association on the investment in the culture of its members.

The selected research sample comprises 27 companies that have invested in or supported cultural initiatives (often with co-creation and partnership implementation) during the previous 5 years. The

companies are evenly distributed in the Italian territory and operate in different sectors. They have been mainly investing at the national level (20 companies) but also at the local/regional level (7 companies).
The impact of their willingness to invest in cultural organizations will be investigated both through a questionnaire and through semi-structured interviews.

Concluding remarks

This work aims to study the sustainability reporting practices in cultural organizations, design potential sector-specific GRI standards for culture, and understand how these standards could incentivize private support to cultural organizations.
These topics are explored through two-phase qualitative research, which is still in the initial stage of development. So far, the authors have analyzed the reporting practices of two museums in Italy (MUSE in Trento and Museo Egizio in Turin); these initial findings led to the proposal of a preliminary list of sector-specific material topics that need to be further confirmed as the analysis of other case studies will be carried out. The second phase, in which a set of 27 companies will be analyzed, has the objective to understand if these standards could attract corporate support.
This ongoing study could both contribute to the debate on the development of sustainability reporting for the cultural and creative sectors and help cultural practitioners in their sustainability reporting activities. However, the research is at too early a stage to truly understand the potential impact of its findings on scientific debate and professional practice. Future developments of the investigation will include the increase of the case studies analyzed in the first phase and the development of the investigation in the second phase. Moreover, the research could also be implemented in other countries and geographical areas in order to test or further expand its results.

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Taking up the digital transition challenge: enhancing the competences of cultural heritage professionals.

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ABSTRACT

The growing rate of technology of the professional practice, the development of sophisticated digital platforms, and the growing complexity of global challenges, particularly the social aspects, have brought about a new awareness regarding the need to equip cultural heritage professionals with digital skills and competences adequate to manage such rapid and radical changes.

The huge funding that the European Union has delivered to Member states to encourage the digital transition after the pandemic is an opportunity to

Keywords:

Integrated approach

Education and training

Digital transition

Skills enhancement

Charter alliance

rethink the training paradigm in which people are at the center of the process.

The Fondazione Scuola dei beni e delle attività culturali, being in charge to implement the training programme of the National Plan of Digitisation of cultural heritage of the Ministry of Culture, is experimenting with a digital skills framework for cultural heritage based on the CHARTER project model and thus on the functions performed by those working in this sector.

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The context

Global challenges - environmental sustainability, digital transition, and especially social and economic crises due to wars and epidemics - are shaping contemporary society, including the way it approaches knowledge, which is increasingly interdisciplinary to cope with the complexity of events. Academic training, but especially continuous education, is influenced by these dynamics and is becoming increasingly complex to equip professionals with a set of transversal and interdisciplinary knowledge and skills.

In this landscape, cultural heritage represents a laboratory for change, a strategic asset for technological disciplines, and a catalyst for addressing the triple transformation: social, green, and especially digital. [49] The latter not only concerns how technology is used but also the strategic approach and mindset towards its use. Indeed, to overcome the dichotomy between humans and machines, technological innovation processes must also be understood as social innovation processes in which people are simultaneously recipients and co-creators (Kohlgrüber et al., 2019).

The development of digital libraries and national cultural portals in the early 2000s, along with the exponential growth of the knowledge market and the push by the European Union for the digitisation and online accessibility of cultural heritage, has helped to make the professionals aware and capable of coping with the pandemic crisis when, in many cases, having or not having digital skills was crucial for the survival of cultural institutions. However, studies produced during that period, especially surveys conducted in the museum sector (NE-MO 2020; NE-MO 2021), highlighted the need for a higher level of competence but, above all, for awareness and strategic vision in the use of digital tools for cultural heritage.

The growing recognition of the importance of digital technology for cultural heritage is the basis for Italy’s decision to allocate substantial funding from the NextGenerationEU funds for the digitisation of cultural heritage (investment ‘Strategies and digital platforms for cultural heritage’).[50] The coordination of the programme has been entrusted to the Central Institute for the Digitisation of cultural heritage - Digital Library of the Ministry of Culture, which, under the leadership of architect Laura Moro and through a process of sharing and co-creation, has delivered the National Plan of Digitisation of cultural heritage (PND 2022), the strategic planning tool to develop models, processes, methods, and rules

[49] Council of the European union, Council conclusions 15732/23 of 21.11.2023: A social, green and digital transition. “In order to leave no-one behind, leverage the benefits of the green and digital transitions, and render them just, sustainable, resilient, transformative and inclusive, a strong and positive social agenda should be enhanced and promoted in cooperation with partner countries. The Council stresses that this comprehensive approach, based on the social, green and digital transitions, reflects EU values, aims to strengthen the autonomy of partner countries and gives EU partnership added value”. https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-15732-2023-INIT/en/pdf.

[50] PNRR Cultura 4.0. MIC 1C3 Investment 1.1 “Digital Strategies for Cultural Heritage.” The investment, with a total value of 500 million euros, is divided into 12 sub-investments and aims at bridging the current digital gap both in terms of infrastructure and systems, as well as in the skills of personnel. Cf. www.pnrr.cultura.gov.

to implement the digital transformation process, guide the actions of stakeholders contributing to digitisation, manage digital resources, and upskill and reskill operators.

The National Plan of Digitisation of cultural heritage, better known as PND, is divided into three interconnected sections following a procedural logic (fig. 1): the vision, which outlines the long-term objectives; the strategy, which defines the enabling factors and actions for achieving the objectives; and the guidelines, which are operational tools that support all digitisation activities of cultural heritage and the digital transformation of cultural sites

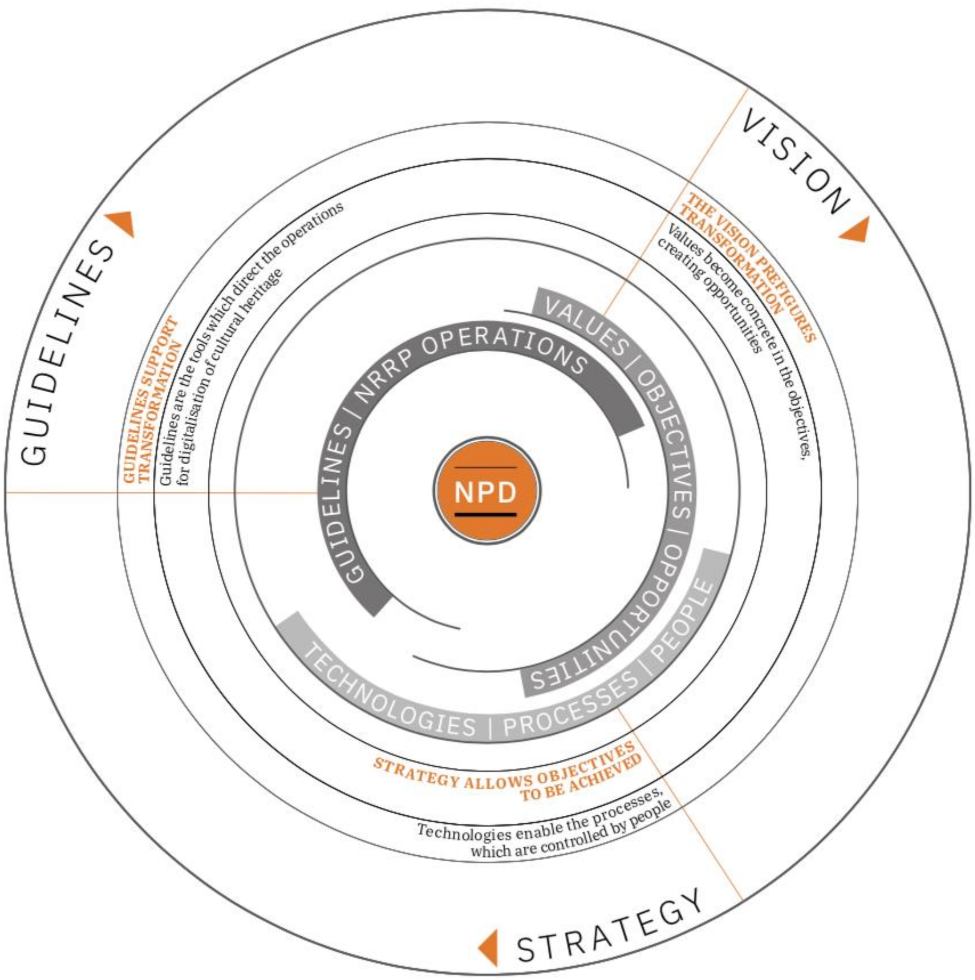

FIGURE 1. GRAPHIC REPRESENTATION OF THE NATIONAL PLAN OF DIGITISATION OF CULTURAL HERITAGE.

Source: National Plan of Digitisation of cultural heritage 2022-2023 v. 1.1.

A key aspect of the PND is the emphasis on the importance of people, who are both the end and the means of the Plan. Digital technology can transform the relationship with the public, facilitating innovative participation practices that place people at the center of strategies and enable them to interact with cultural heritage in a conscious and innovative way. Similarly, according to the procedural vision of the PND, while technologies enable processes, these are governed by people (fig. 2).[51]

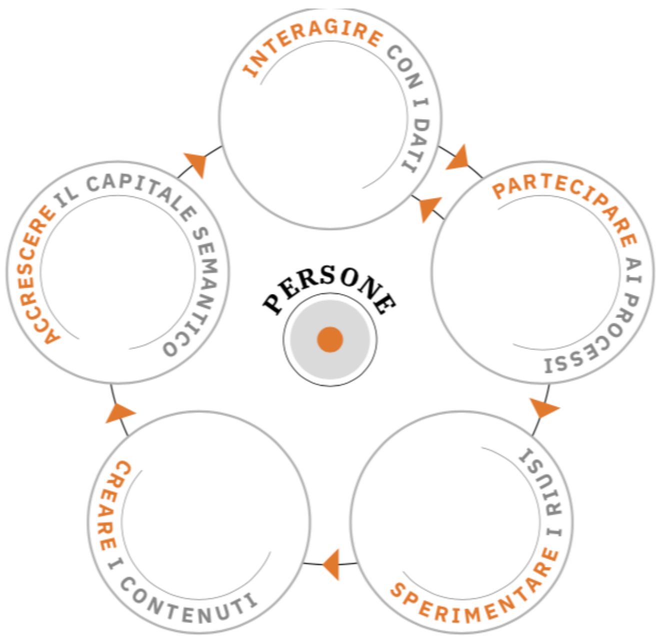

FIGURE 2. LE PERSONE AL CENTRO DEL PROCESSO DI TRASFORMAZIONE DIGITALE.

Source: National Plan of Digitisation of cultural heritage 2022-2023 v. 1.1.

Based on these assumptions, great emphasis has been placed on the need to support professionals in the cultural heritage field through a skills enhancement programme, with the belief that training is a "fundamental tool for ensuring that innovation can take root, grow, and generate value."[52]

Indeed, one of the twelve sub-investments within the programme "Digital strategies and platforms for cultural heritage" is dedicated to "Training and improvement of digital skills." Its implementation is

[51] "For the digital transition to produce cultural, economic, and social value, it is essential to place people at the center of change processes. Investing in human capital is indispensable for creating the organizational framework necessary for administrations: too often, digital transformation is hindered or obstructed by the lack of internal technical and organizational skills. Training represents the fundamental tool to ensure that innovation can take root, grow, and generate value; in this context, it should be understood as a long-term transversal process aimed at the constant updating of individuals' skills and knowledge." PND 2022, p. 51.

[52] PND 2022, p. 56.

entrusted to the Fondazione Scuola dei beni e delle attività culturali. This programme is significant due to its scale (aiming for 40,000 certificates by 2026), duration (four years), the diverse audience it targets (including public and private employees of cultural institutions, freelancers, and employees of companies operating in the cultural heritage sector, as well as graduate students and doctoral candidates), and the lack of an established format for digital training for the digital heritage themes.

To address these challenges, it was necessary to develop an innovative training model that included diversified actions to create a modular, scalable, qualified, and certified offer. The potential of e-learning became evident immediately, as it can respond to multifaceted needs with the same agility as the evolving technological context. Additionally, issuing an open badge at the end of each course can guarantee and qualify the learning experience, making it clearly identifiable and applicable in other learning or professional contexts.

But how to identify and describe the competences needed by programme participants? How to structure a massive programme with such significant qualitative and quantitative objectives? What is the ultimate goal?

The digital competences to be identified are like pieces of a mosaic, encompassing technological skills, methodological knowledge, managerial attitudes, and cognitive processes for creating and managing cultural information and content. It is widely accepted that competences related to software, languages, systems, and platforms quickly become outdated due to rapid innovation. Instead, adopting a long-term, broad perspective that integrates historical understanding is essential for navigating our new era, interpreting the present, and consciously designing the future. What characterizes the digital realm is its complexity: given the vast amount of data produced and processed, today's professionals—and especially those of tomorrow—must be adept at navigating and relating data and information across networks. It is no coincidence that we speak of a 'digital ecosystem,' an open interconnected structure characterized by a dynamic balance. But how can these principles be articulated in a vision of cultural heritage that is consistent with its meaning and role in contemporary society, as outlined by the Faro Convention, the new ICOM museum definition[53] or the Manifesto for the digital libraries?[54]

[53] The ICOM museum definition adopted on 24 August 2022 by the Extraordinary General Assembly of ICOM state that "A museum is a not-for-profit, permanent institution in the service of society that researches, collects, conserves, interprets and exhibits tangible and intangible heritage. Open to the public, accessible and inclusive, museums foster diversity and sustainability. They operate and communicate ethically, professionally and with the participation of communities, offering varied experiences for education, enjoyment, reflection and knowledge sharing."

[54] https://www.aib.it/documenti/nuovo-manifesto-per-le-biblioteche-digitali/.

Preliminary analysis

To address these questions, the design of the training programme for the PND, named Dicolab. Cultura al digitale,[55] was preceded by researches, consultations with heritage professionals, and public reflections gathered in the 'Relazioni digitali' pathway.[56] This aimed to collect and analyse significant experiences of work processes for the digitisation of cultural heritage, the organisational changes these processes trigger, and the ways in which digital skills enabling this transformation can be described. These insights can guide the design of training activities with an interdisciplinary approach, tailored to different levels of knowledge and competence[57].

The most significant finding from the research phase[58] is the lack of specific digital skills frameworks for cultural heritage. In Europe, the reference for the development and assessment of citizens' digital skills is DigiComp,[59] the latest version of which is also available in Italian.[60] DigiComp describes 21 specific digital competences in terms of knowledge, skills, and attitudes, and organizes them into five competence areas: Information and data literacy; Communication and collaboration; Digital content creation; Safety; Problem solving. These can be articulated into eight proficiency levels. DigiComp has the advantage of being a framework for structuring a widespread, consolidated learning path that is generally neutral regarding technological choices. However, the skills it describes, although foundational for any professional activity, are too generic for those working in cultural heritage.[61]

The analysis of advanced European experiences from the Netherlands, Sweden, and Belgium,[62] which are comparable in governance and ambition to the Italian Digital Library, particularly regarding their work processes and skills for the digitization of cultural heritage, and the organizational changes

55 Dicolab. Cultura al digitale, https://dicolab.it/.

56 Relazioni digitali is a pathway that Fondazione Scuola dei beni e delle attività culturali implemented between 2021 and 2022 as a measure to inform the cultural heritage stakeholders abiout the opportunitites given by the digital trasnformation. https://www.fondazionescuolapatrimonio.it/relazioni-digitali/.

57 The definition of digital competence this paper relies on is the one given in the Recommendation of the Council of the European Union on key competences for lifelong learning of 22 May 2018 (2018/C 189/01): "Digital competence involves the confident, critical and responsible use of, and engagement with, digital technologies for learning, at work, and for participation in society. It includes information and data literacy, communication and collaboration, media literacy, digital content creation (including programming), safety (including digital well-being and competences related to cybersecurity), intellectual property related questions, problem solving and critical thinking." https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?toc=OJ%3AC%3A2018%3A189%3ATOC&uri=uriserv%3AOJ.C_.2018.189.01.0001.01.ENG.

58 Research on the definition of framework models of repertories for digital competences in the framework of the design of the training and upskilling programme edited for the Fondazione Scuola dei beni e delle attività culturali da Margherita Sani (2021-2022).

59 DigiComp 2.2, the digital competence framework for citizens with examples of knowledge, skills and attitudes https://publications.jrc.ec.europa.eu/repository/handle/JRC128415.

60 DigiComp 2.2 in italiano è disponibile a https://repubblicadigitale.gov.it/portale/-/da-oggi-il-digcomp-2.2-parla-italiano.

61 A version of DigiComp for educators exists too (DigiComp Edu disponibile a https://joint-research-centre.ec.europa.eu/digcompedu_en). It demonstrates the possibility that this framework, based on competences areas and prooficency levels may be mapped on other specific thematic domains.

62 Cf. footnote 10.

these processes trigger, has also highlighted the absence of models despite training being a cornerstone of these initiatives. Existing tools pertain to the self-assessment processes of the digital maturity of cultural institutions and the definition of the entity's digital strategy, such as the DEN Focus Model proposed by the Dutch DEN Academy (fig. 3),[63] or the self-assessment tool for cultural institutions proposed in Belgium by Meemoo,[64] and sector-specific professional profiles (such as those produced by the Erasmus+ Mu.SA[65] and BIBLIO[66] projects) which either do not refer to digital cultural heritage or express an extremely specific and specialized vision; in both cases, they constitute only one aspect of the practice of cultural heritage professionals.

63 The DEN Focus Model was elaborated to help cultural institutions implement their digital strategy; it can be used to measure how integrated to digital is the approach of a cultural institution and to identify growth opportunities. It is associated to a questionnaire to retrieve detailed information. Available at https://focusmodel.den.nl/en/intro.

64 The Meemoo Digital Maturity Self-Assessment Tool is available at https://meemoo.be/en/tools/digital-maturity-self-assessment-tool.

65 The Mu.SA project (2020-2022) identified four emerging job role-profiles to help museums face the digital challenges: Digital strategy manager, Digital Collections Curator, Digital Interactive Experience, Developer, Online Community Manager, all related to the e-Competence Framework 3.0 recommendations, European reference framework, developed by the working group of the European Standardization Organizations on ICT skills, aligned with the EQF – European Qualification Framework. http://www.project-musa.eu/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/MuSA-Emerging-Job-Profiles-for-museum-professionals.pdf.

66 The BIBLIO project (2019-2022) released the proposals of two emerging job role profiles in the library sector: Community Engagement and Communication Officer and Digital Transformation Facilitator, both available at https://www.biblio-project.eu/studies-reports/. The digital competences of both profiles are mapped on DigiComp 2.1.

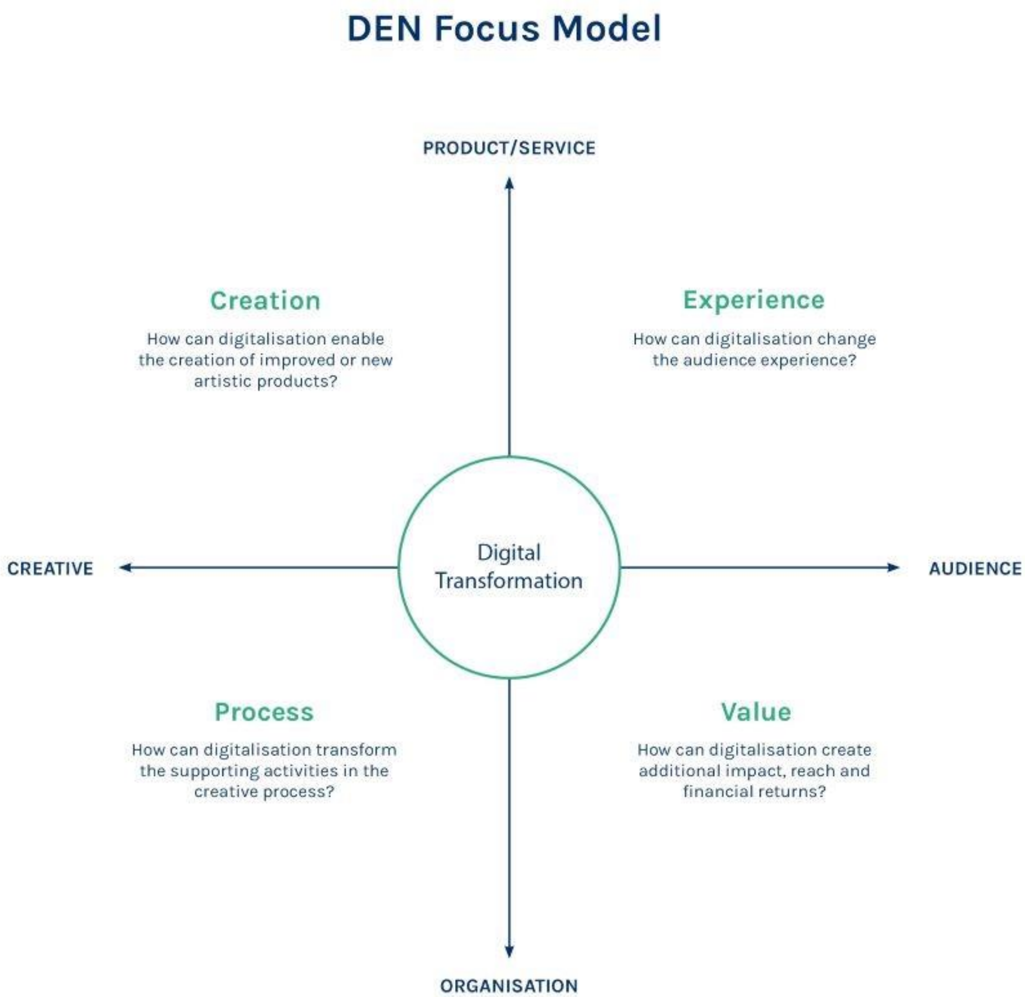

FIGURE 3. DEN FOCUS MODEL.

Source: DEN Academy.

It is important to note that none of the analysed models/frameworks focus on a single skill or approach; what unites the various experiences is their structure around (macro)processes. All cultural institutions view digital literacy as something plural, comprising multiple elements or requirements and usually combining technical, psychological, and interpersonal dimensions. In fact, digital literacy frameworks are visually represented as matrices, quadrants, or diagrams (like the aforementioned DEN Focus Model), emphasizing their multi-element nature.

Based on this evidence, we began working to build a digital skills framework based on an integrated vision consistent with the new demands and contexts of cultural heritage. In this context, our concurrent participation in the CHARTER project[67] provided an opportunity to delve into issues related

[67] CHARTER is an Erasmus+ funded project running from 2021 to 2024 to create a lasting, comprehensive sectoral skills strategy to guarantee that Europe has the necessary cultural heritage skills to support sustainable societies and

to professional profiles, training, and the labor market in the field of cultural heritage. Given the absence of a specific conceptual framework and the lack of shared definitions at the European level regarding the skills for cultural heritage, CHARTER's mission is to develop a comprehensive model that outlines heritage practices and demonstrates their social impact. CHARTER has thus developed a model (CORR et al., 2021) that places cultural heritage as a common good at its center and identifies six functions - three specific and three systemic - of professional practice (fig. 4):

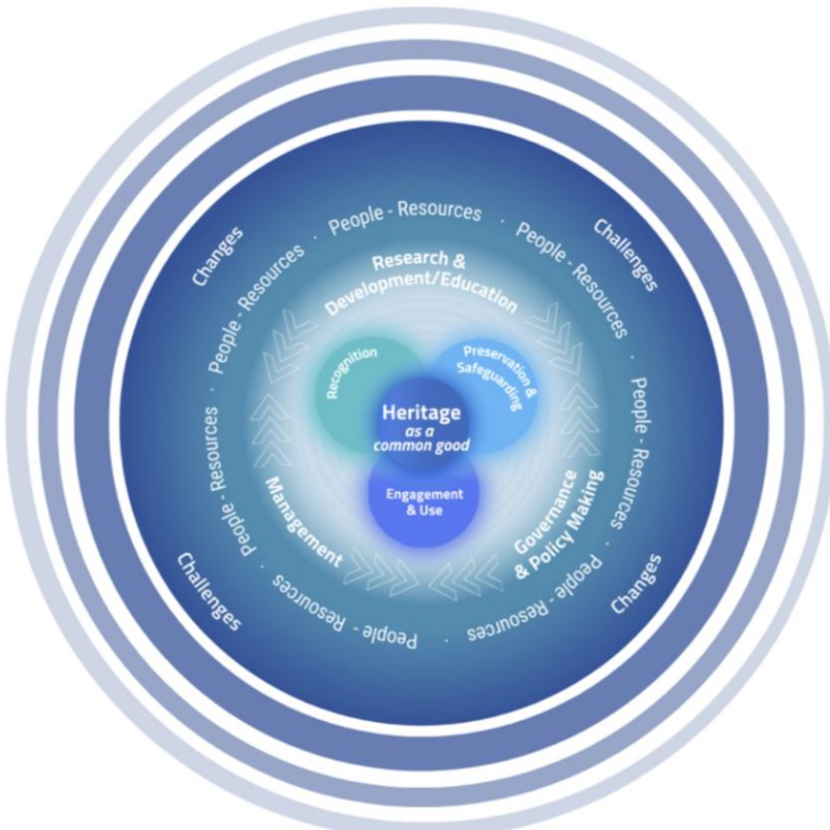

FIGURE 4. THE CHARTER ECOSYSTEM MODEL

Source: CHARTER connsortium.

The specific functions CHARTER described are:

economies, including transversal competences such as digital/technological and green/blue economy skills. The consortium of 47 partners represents some of the top education and training institutions, organisations, networks and employers of the European cultural heritage sector. They have joined forces to professionalise the cultural heritage sector and combat the lack of statistical recognition of the sector as an economic force. Fondazione Scuola dei beni e delle attività culturali is work package leader on Educationn & Training. https://charter-alliance.eu/.

1. ‘Recognition’ refers to all the activities necessary to identify and assess cultural heritage it can lead to its legal and official protection. It includes recognition by communities, experts and institutions, as well its outcome in legal and official acts.

2. ‘Preservation and Conservation’ includes the multitude of activities that need to be put into place to ensure the long term survival of heritage, from maintenance to conservation-restoration, safeguarding of intangible heritage and it also includes investigations and studies and the digital means to achieve this purpose.

3. ‘Access, Enhancement and Use’ refers to a broad range of activities necessary to open heritage to the public, make it understandable, make it available for consultation and use, raise awareness, etc. and its use as a resource by all stakeholders. It also includes forms of commercialisation of heritage and heritage related products, including digital means.

The systemic or transversal functions are:

4. ‘Education and Research’ refers to all the activities that are necessary throughout the process that goes from the discovery to the preservation and enhancement of heritage. Education is necessary to acquire the skills and knowledge necessary to operate in the field. Research is an ongoing activity that relates to all the above mentioned Functions. It is necessary to do research to identify heritage, to find the best tools for its preservation and conservation and to devise the best strategies to guarantee access to heritage, enhance it, make people use it.

5. ‘Management and Planning’ includes all activities necessary to undertake the multitude of functions listed above. It can support the undertaking of restorations, excavations, openings of heritage to the public, processes leading to heritage recognition and so forth. The activities included in this group can be considered as instrumental and fundamental at the same time as they can help multiplying the activities undertaken and the sustainability of heritage.

6. ‘Governance (participatory) and Policy Making’ refers the decision-making processes about heritage both with organisations and in the wider domain of heritage policy on local, regional, national and international level. Referring to the rules in place in every country and the institutions that set and implement them are fundamental to define the same concept of heritage and the range of activities that can/cannot be undertaken. It is a set of activities that are fundamental for the existence and development of heritage including those holistic democratic and participative mechanisms of governance that bring communities to the fore of heritage advocacy and decision making.

This model aligns with the renewed conception of cultural heritage, which considers, in an ecosystemic vision, its relationship with people and the ongoing global challenges. It thus appeared as the most suitable framework for identifying the necessary skills for the sector, in our case, applied to the processes of digitization and digital transformation

A proposal for a digital coompetence framework for cultural heritage

As a consequence, the proposed design scheme for the Dicolab. Cultura al digitale courses was thus based on two key elements: the CHARTER functions, representative of all activities of heritage professionals, and the macro-process approach of the digital realm.[68]

The model being tested for the Dicolab courses is based on a generative process that, starting from the six functions identified by CHARTER, refines them progressively to identify the training unit (the 'course', fig. 5). The aim is to design a value chain model for digitization that expresses the set of relevant macro-processes for the value production of cultural heritage, anchored to the eight levels of the EQF – European Qualification Framework, articulated by knowledge, skills, autonomy, and responsibility. The eight levels are linked to the six levels of Bloom's taxonomy, according to the following correspondence:

- Level 1 – Know/remember
- Level 2 – Understand
- Levels 3 and 4 – Apply
- Levels 5 and 6 – Analyse/conceptualise
- Level 7 – Evaluate
- Level 8 – Create

[68] Document on the reference sources of the Dicolab. Cultura al digitale framework, edited by Barbara Bacocco, Virginia Di Bari and Mirko Vecchiarelli for Fondazione Scuola dei beni e delle attività culturali.

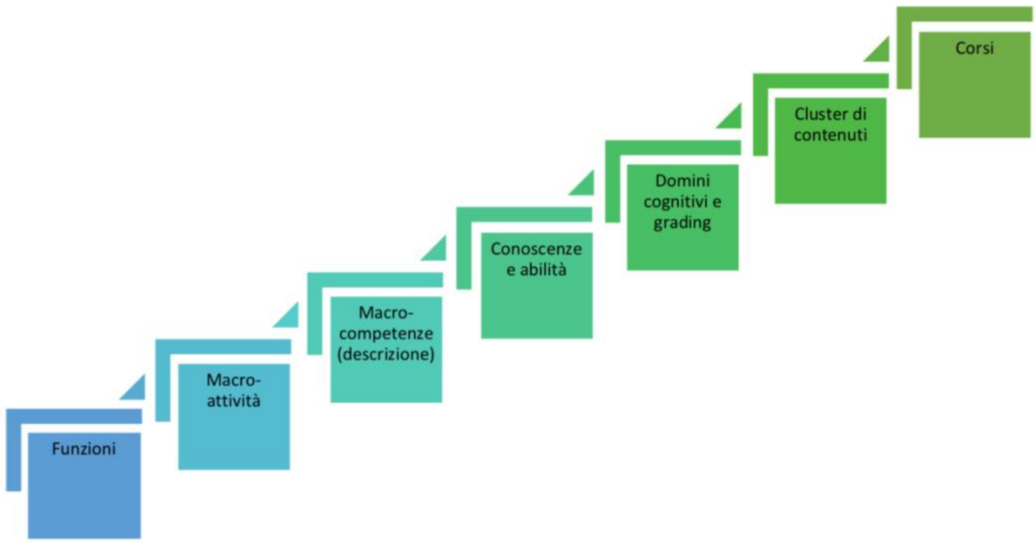

FIGURE 5. THE GENERATIVE PROCESS OF THE DICOLAB PROGRAMME.

Source: Document on the reference sources of the Dicolab. Cultura al digitale framework, edited by Barbara Bacocco, Virginia Di Bari and Mirko Vecchiarelli for Fondazione Scuoola dei beni e delle attività culturali.

Each function is structured as follows:

- Macro-activities: the activities that characterise the individual function;
- Macro-competences: the competences required to perform the individual activities;
- Competence description: the description of the specific competence;
- Knowledge and skills: for each competence, the individual related knowledge and skills are identified;
- Cognitive domain/level of proficiency: each individual knowledge and skill is linked to the relevant cognitive domain based on its level of complexity;
- Content clusters: the individual knowledge and skills are aggregated into content clusters that guide the training program.

The design of the Dicolab training offer is therefore presented as an open and ongoing process, characterized by content that is itself evolving, also tailored to the needs of homogeneous user groups or the digital maturity level of the organizations involved. It allows for the experimentation of innovative formats for both distance and in-person training.[69]

To this end, it is necessary to keep the process of listening to the training recipients and the policymakers who guide the implementation of the PND open to embrace collaboration and co-design with entities, institutes, and professional associations that hold layered knowledge and competencies, as well as active participants in the digitisation processes of cultural heritage. Additionally, it aims to promote training directed at both individuals and organisations. The training offer will be accompanied by the provision of a self-assessment system for the digital competencies possessed by the operators, allowing them to identify their specific training needs and build personalized update paths. Similarly, programmes of activities to be carried out with and in the territories are planned and partially already underway.[70]

However, this process is not without possible critical issues that are under constant monitoring. The main ones concern the risks of over-programming too quickly to meet monitoring and reporting needs, without the competence library being sufficiently structured. At the content level, there is also the risk of endorsing a possible interpretation of digital as a solution to organizational problems of an entity or project, for which it may eventually represent a resource.

Expected impacts

The challenge and opportunity for Dicolab. Cultura al digitale is to build a programme that takes into account the complexity and heterogeneity of the topics, the continuous and rapid updating of technology and the related ethical and regulatory issues, the need to reach very different recipients in terms of expectations and needs, and that knows how to open up to collaboration and co-design.

The goal then becomes to implement initiatives of information, training, dissemination, as well as to promote spaces for reflection, research, and studies that can persist over time to ensure the project's longevity. The adoption of the framework described in these pages is the tool to plan, design, and implement the training program as a whole until 2026, not as a simple addition of courses and themes, but as the creation of a training ecosystem based on research logics and relationships between individual training objects, with entities and institutions in the sector (research, training, and operational in the field of cultural heritage) and the same recipients of our training.

[69] Dicolab is working with Regions (e.g. Regione Umbria), professional associations (AIB, the Italian libraries association, ICOM-IT, the Italian branch of museums, ANAI, the national association of archivists, etc.), and single cultural heritage institutions in order to face specific gaps and needs.

[70] The creation of ten Dicolab territorial hubs in ongoing at the time of this paper. They will be run by universities, private companies, and other E&T providers and will serve to relaunch and integrate with tailored proposals the Dicolab training offer.

In this way, we intend to give concreteness to the proposal developed in the context of the CHARTER project, contributing to the dissemination and sharing of a way to describe the professional figures of cultural heritage and the competencies associated with them, consistent with the principles of the Faro Convention.

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Regenerating Historic Urban Neighborhood through Cultural Networks

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ABSTRACT

Within the Extended Partnership “CHANGES”, a project funded by the NextGeneration EU initiative, the University of Roma Tre and Coopculture are developing a collaborative governance model for cultural initiatives. This research aims to create a methodological approach employs scientific data on cultural heritage to enhance knowledge, cultural enrichment, and societal revitalization. A key component of this collaboration is the application of the SoPHIA model within the “CHANGES” framework, tailored to the revitalization of Rome’s Celio District, a culturally rich area impacted by over-tourism, serving as a pilot case study. The SoPHIA model addresses the limitations of traditional evaluation methodologies by providing a nuanced understanding of impacts areas such as empowerment, social cohesion, well-being, and community engagement. Initial findings hightlight the district’s and contextual complexities and cultural dynamics. Through an analysis of data gathered from semi-structured interviews, we identify potential stakeholders role in fostering a collaborative cultural network, safeguarding and enhancing the district's heritage.

Keywords:

Cultural Heritage

Holist Impact Assessment
Participatoty Governance
SoPHIA model
CHANGES project

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Introduction

As part of the "CHANGES" Extended Partnership, a NextGeneration EU funded project, Roma Tre University is collaborating with Coopculture to develop an innovative model for the management and governance of cultural offerings. This initiative involves constructing a methodological process that utilizes research data related to cultural heritage as a source of knowledge, cultural development, and social regeneration. The primary objective is to create value and maximize impacts for stakeholders, particularly citizens.

The research group is engaged in a cultural project aimed at enhancing the cultural heritage of Celio, a Roman district that is a microcosm of different cultural realities, ranging from tangible artistic and archaeological heritage to churches, natural beauty, and green spaces. Despite its significant potential, the district suffers from a lack of synergy and networking. The district's heritage has enormous potential, Celio's strategic location near the Colosseum, its heritage offers substantial opportunities. However, the potential for synergy between the various organizations in the Celio area remains unexploited. While the Colosseum area is often congested with the vast influx of tourists, there is a neighboring nearby that is rich in cultural, artistic, and natural heritage, remains largely unrecognized by tourist circuits and underappreciated by residents. Various entities in the public, private, and third sectors develop their cultural projects in isolation, without engaging in meaningful dialogue with one another.

The central aim of our research project is to explore new approaches for the utilization, management, and governance of cultural heritage to enhance the well-being and civic wealth of the Celio district. By promoting the cultural life and identity of the area, the project seeks to attract both citizens and tourists who are interested in understanding local culture (Garcia et al., 2015).

In alignment with the steps outlined by the "CHANGES" project, the ultimate goal is to develop guidelines for the participatory governance of cultural heritage. This process begins with identifying different communities, exploring networking possibilities, and culminates in the creation of a cultural ecosystem that offers substantial advantages and benefits. The SoPHIA model (Marchiori et al., 2021) serves as the foundational framework for this initiative, providing a reference model for holistic impact assessment in cultural heritage governance.

This paper aims to present the results achieved this far, focusing on understanding the context and the "cultural humus" embedded in the Celio district. The analysis draws on primary sources, including data from semi-structured interviews with stakeholders, as well as secondary sources such as statistics and reports.

The reminder of the paper is organized as follows: Section explores the SoPHIA model as the underpinning framework for our research; Section 3 describes the methodology employed for selecting stakeholders and analyzing the context; Section 4 presents the findings of our research, elaborating a typology of stakeholders. Finally, Section 5 concludes with a summary of the results and outlines directions for future research.

The SoPHIA model as our underpinning framework

In recent years, there has been an increasing recognition that impact assessment serves as a crucial tool for comprehending how decisions regarding cultural heritage resources can effectuate changes in individuals' lives and their environments. The Europa Nostra report, *Cultural Heritage Counts for Europe* (CHCfE, 2015), has significantly contributed to the evaluation of impacts related to cultural heritage interventions. It underscores the importance of employing a holistic approach encompassing four domains: social, economic, cultural, and environmental (CHCfE, 2015). This document further incorporates an analysis of interventions in terms of both positive and negative impacts, and elucidates how to examine the correlation between objectives (policies, projects, initiatives) and impacts. Another significant document is the ICOMOS report, European Quality Principles for EU-Funded Interventions with Potential Impacts on Cultural Heritage (ICOMOS, 2019, 2020). Drafted by a panel of experts convened by ICOMOS under the mandate of the European Commission and within the framework of the European Year of Cultural Heritage 2018, this document provides guidance on quality principles for all stakeholders directly or indirectly involved in EU-funded interventions with potential impacts on cultural heritage.

Building on these recommendations, the SoPHIA model (Marchiori et al., 2021), developed as part of an H2020 European funded project, forms the foundation of our research project aimed at exploring new possibilities for the use, management, and governance of cultural heritage for territorial regeneration. The SoPHIA model (Baioni et al., 2021) employs a multi-dimensional approach based on three axes, emphasizing: the multifaceted aspects of the impacts related to CH interventions (multi-domain perspective); the complex interactions among stakeholders that can have different and sometimes conflicting interests on CH (people perspective); the balance between expected or current impacts and the legacy towards the next generations (time perspective) (see figure 1).

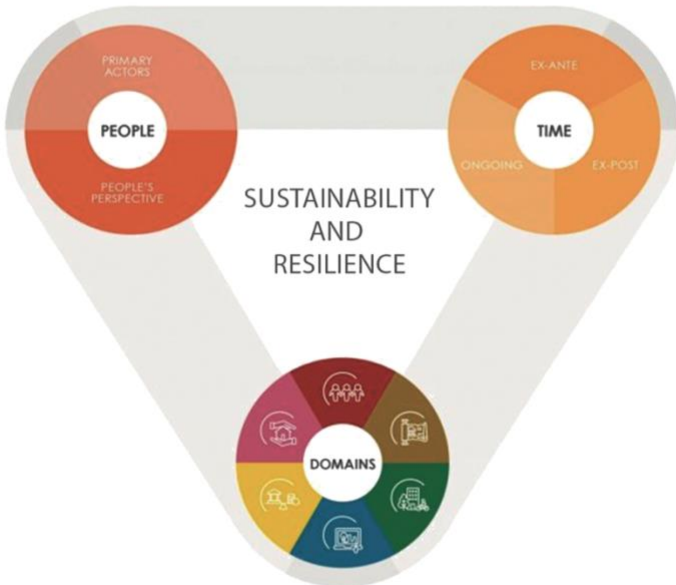

FIGURE 1. SoPHIA CONCEPT BASED ON THREE-AXIS
Source: Marchiori et al. (2021)

Regarding the multi-domain perspective, the SoPHIA Model delineates six impact areas/themes: Social Capital and Governance, Identity of Place, Quality of Life, Education, Creativity and Innovation, Work and Prosperity, and Protection. It further identifies 28 sub-themes designed to capture the cross-sectoral and multidimensional nature of impacts. The multi-domain aspect of the SoPHIA model is conceptualized as an "open" framework, where the six themes and their corresponding 28 sub-themes are not mandatory minimum requirements for assessment. Concerning the people perspective, participatory approaches to impact assessment have become increasingly significant in the realm of cultural heritage interventions (Marchiori et al., 2021; Demartini et al., 2020). Participatory evaluation incorporates a diverse stakeholders in the evaluation process, including local communities, heritage practitioners, researchers, and policymakers. This approach fosters collaboration, shared decision-making, and the integration of multiple perspectives to comprehensively understand the social, economic, cultural, and environmental impacts of heritage interventions. The diverse data generated by such research can facilitate new experiences and interactions for various audiences and actors.

Research methodology

This paper presents the initial phase of a research initiative aimed at enhancing a historic district in Rome, which has been selected as a pilot case study for the larger ongoing project "CHANGES".

Stakeholders'mapping and data collection

This paper employs a qualitative research approach to present our findings on context analysis and stakeholder mapping, following the SoPHIA methodology. Through contextual analysis, we were able to understand the history of the Celio district. It was created around 1870 as a working-class district, a poor neighbourhood that supported the construction of wealthier areas. In recent years, there has been a shift towards a slightly more affluent social class. However, the neighbourhood is still characterised by a significant presence of accommodation (such as: AirB&B, apartments), which disrupts the livability of individual residential blocks and alters the social fabric.

An essential step in the SoPHIA model is stakeholder analysis, which helps to understand local interest groups, their relevance and their role in relation to the intervention. This analysis helps to assess their potential impact on heritage management, avoid, resolve or mitigate conflicts, identify potential partners and involve them more closely in future collaborations.

Information for the case study was gathered from primary and secondary sources, including unstructured interviews with key project stakeholders, public discussions, mapping tools, and statistical sources (Mappa Roma). As emphasized by scholars, it is crucial to scan data from multiple sources to capture people's perceptions of cultural heritage (Sontum et al., 2018) and to identify approaches for citizen engagement (Billore, 2021).

Interviews are a vital tool in qualitative research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In this study, semi-structured interviews were used, allowing interviewees the freedom to express their views (Qu & Dumay, 2011). The primary goal for researchers employing such techniques is to delve deeply into the interviewees' opinions, perspectives, and perceptions, seeking comprehensive information that quantitative methods might overlook.

The first critical decision was selecting stakeholders to be involved and interviewed. The Roma Tre research team opted for a top-down approach initially, identifying stakeholders based on their role in influencing the evaluation of the cultural heritage intervention. An additional method employed was the "Snowball method," a non-probability sampling technique used in qualitative research (Johnson, 2014). This method relies on "networking" and "referral," where initial contacts meeting the research criteria recommend other potential participants, who in turn recommend further participants, and so forth. Due to its networking characteristics and flexibility, snowball sampling is particularly useful when complete information is unavailable (Parker, Scott, & Geddes, 2019).

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with key representatives from the first group of relevant stakeholders, identified as cultural associations, organizations, or institutions (see annex 1). The interviews focused on the following topics:

1. The history of the association/organization/institution and its relationship with the territory.

2. The impacts created by the association/organization/institution, as outlined by the SoPHIA model.

3. The possibility of establishing a cultural ecosystem/network with other local stakeholders.

These interviews aimed to understand the cultural and social context and to discuss concerns and challenges related to the regeneration and future development of the district. They were conducted to gain insights into the communities' perspectives. Seven semi-structured interviews were conducted between late 2023 and early 2024, each lasting approximately 60 to 90 minutes.

Data analysis

Following the suggestion by Miles et al. (2014) that data analysis should be an ongoing process, we analyzed the data iteratively to develop an interpretative framework. Therefore, we extracted data from the conducted interviews, identifying stakeholder values, impacts, and perceptions within the domains of the SoPHIA model, aligning with our research objectives.

The impacts reported were categorized into macro-categories according to the SoPHIA model. Our aim was to assess the relevance of the impacts each organization generates or might generate for district development. Each author read the empirical material and performed manual open coding, categorizing the flow of words within the SoPHIA domains. We also evaluated the stakeholders' willingness and commitment to creating a network among themselves. This involved assessing their readiness to collaborate and their perceived benefits of such a network. After the initial coding and categorization, we compared and discussed the results obtained by each author, ensuring the reliability and validity of the coding process. We utilized Gioia’s (2013) approach to structure our data analysis. This approach involves gathering primary data from semi-structured interviews coded according to first-order concepts and then developing second-order themes. These themes are next used to create aggregate dimensions through a further reasoning phase. This structured approach facilitated the interpretation of the investigated phenomenon by connecting data, emerging concepts, and the resulting grounded theory.

Data Structure

Gioia and Chittipeddi (1991) first introduced the data structure methodology in qualitative research (Gehman et al., 2018). This approach was further elaborated on by Corley and Gioia (2004) and Gioia (2013). The methodology ensures that the voices of the interviewees are represented in the research report, creating opportunities to discover new concepts. The data structure was crucial to our research approach (see Figure 2). It not only helped us organize our data into a clear visual representation, but also illustrated how we moved from raw data to concepts during the analysis (Pratt, 2008; Tracy, 2010).

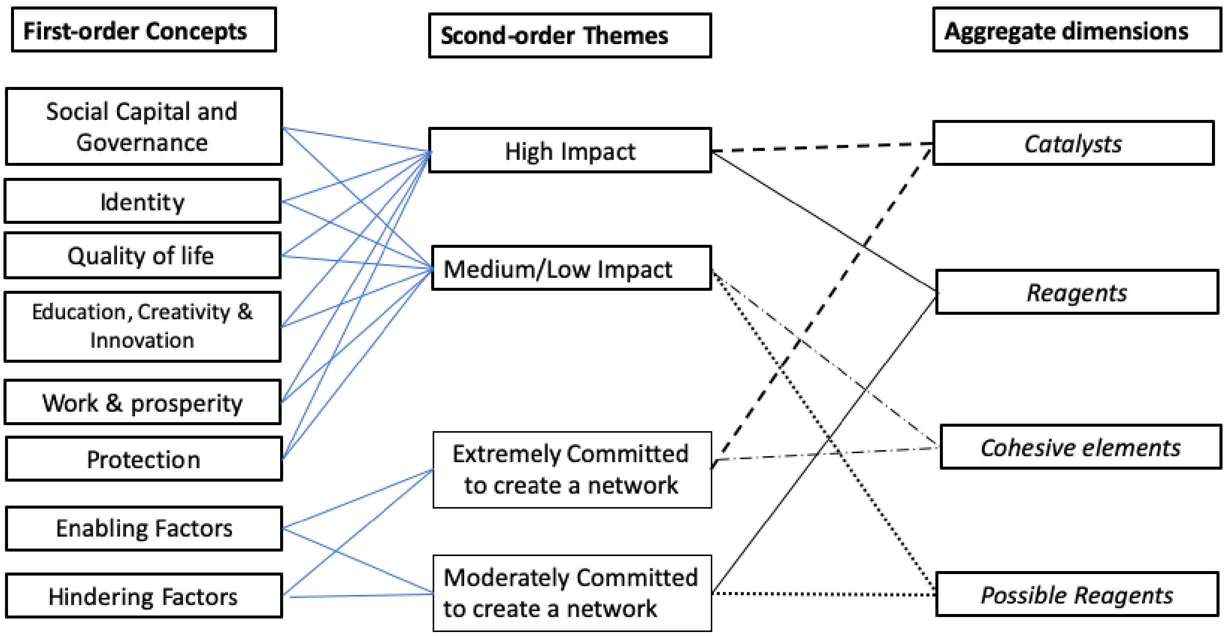

FIGURE 2 DATA STRUCTURE

Source: own elaboration

Findings

We compiled two tables highlighting the results in terms of impacts and commitment to creating a cultural network. Each table is divided into first and second-order data. In Table 1 (see Annex 2), the first-order data displays individual impacts of organizations, extracted from interviews and coded according to SoPHIA's six themes. The second-order data indicates the researchers' assessment of the potential relevance of these impacts on urban regeneration, categorized as “High” or “Medium/Low”.

Table 2 (see Annex 3) follows a similar structure, showcasing the commitment to network creation among stakeholders. The first-order data outlines the enabling and hindering factors underlying their vision. The second-order data assesses their willingness and commitment to creating a stakeholder network, rated by researchers as “Extremely” or “Moderately”.

Structuring the data allowed us to achieve a higher level of abstraction by cross-referencing the 'impacts' and 'commitment' dimensions. This enabled us to visualize the mapping of stakeholders through aggregate dimensions, revealing the main roles that actors could play in constructing a network. This marks the initial step in establishing a territorial cultural ecosystem.

A Typology of various roles in the formation of cultural networks

As illustrated in Figure 3, we created a 2x2 matrix and employed the analogy of a chemical reaction to describe the processes in which elements combine or transform to create something new.

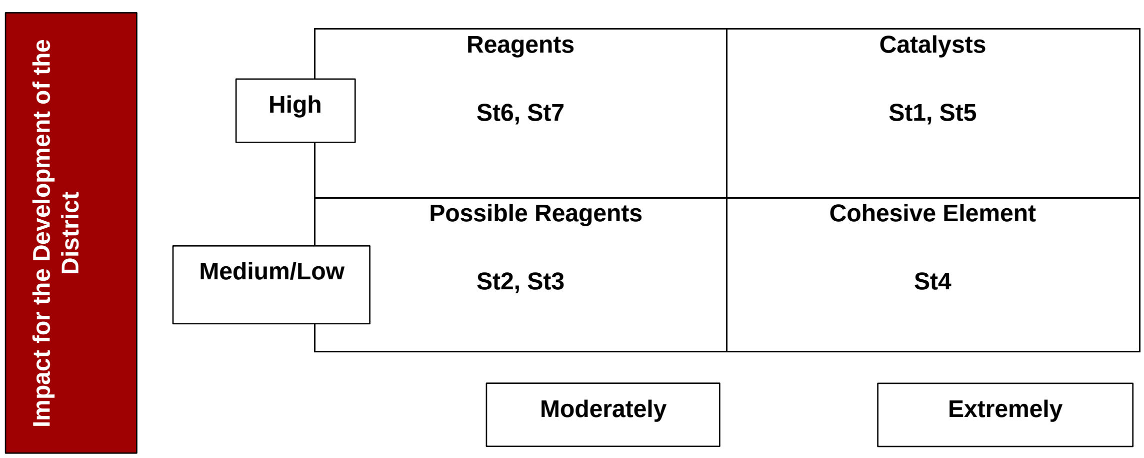

FIGURE 3. A TYPOLOGY OF VARIOUS ROLES IN THE FORMATION OF CULTURAL NETWORKS
Source: own elaboration

We have categorized the following roles:

- Catalysts: Primary, proactive and leading local actors actively driving cultural development in the district through initiatives and projects, eager to facilitate networking;

- Reagents: Key local entities capable of participating in network co-creation. They contribute significant impacts individually and maintain their own networks, though currently without clear intentions for collaborative synergy with other local actors;

- Cohesive Elements: Local actors who generate more limited impacts for the development of the neighborhood but demonstrating a willingness to collaborate with other stakeholders, thereby fostering cohesion;

- Potential Reagents: Actors with cultural or social roles in the area, making smaller impacts on neighborhood development but showing moderate interest in participating in a local network with other stakeholders;

This typology highlights the diverse roles stakeholders can play in establishing a cultural network to enhance and promote the neighborhood. It provides a framework for discussing strategies to develop a cultural ecosystem involving public administration, public and private organizations, and community members.

Conclusions, future reseach, implications and limitations

The primary objective of our study is to explore whether and how the establishment of networks among diverse stakeholders in urban neighborhoods, rich in cultural heritage but affected by gentrification, can initiate a beneficial process of urban renewal and regeneration. In this paper, we have endeavored to assess the cultural humus of a selected neighborhood as a pilot case study. We have delineated the perceived impacts that cultural associations within the neighborhood aim to achieve, utilizing the dimensions developed by the SoPHIA model. Each stakeholder asserts their contribution to cultural and social impacts through their activities, yet a comprehensive, integrated vision of these efforts is lacking.

Our research presents a typology that underscores the potential roles stakeholders can assume in outlining pathways towards establishing a cultural network aimed at promoting and enriching the neighborhood. This typology represents an initial step towards fostering a transformative ecosystem.

As researchers, our objective is to gather additional data by engaging with diverse stakeholders and advancing our research. This collaborative effort aims to foster synergies between local stakeholders and public authorities to safeguard and promote the rich historical and cultural heritage of Rome's Celio neighborhood. The substantial data gathered through this research may has the potential to generate new experiences and interactions between different audiences and stakeholders.

The discussion of our findings within the multidisciplinary framework of the CHANGES project, along with subsequent debates within different communities (including citizens, policymakers, academics, and experts), will facilitate the formulation of guidelines for the participatory management and governance of cultural sites and spaces.

However, it is important to acknowledge the limitations of our study. Typologies, by their nature, have inherent constraints. They serve as heuristic tools that facilitate comparison among concrete occurrences. Yet, it can be challenging to categorize heterogeneous experiences into standardized labels. In reality, the concepts of "impacts" and "commitment" may not be so clearly and distinctly defined by interviews and interpreted by researchers; typologies may overlap partially or fail to fully capture the complexity of the phenomenon. Therefore, all individual concrete occurrences may deviate from the four identified ‘types’ in some respect. Nevertheless, the typology presented in this study serves as a tool to simplify the complexities of real-world experiences into a clear framework.

ID	STAKEHOLDERS	HISTORY, MISSION AND ACTIVITIES	CULTURAL HERITAGE AND LINK WITH THE TERRITORY	CONNECTION WITH BENEFICIARIES
ST1	**ASSOCIAZIONE CULTURALE PROGETTO CELIO**	A participatory grass-root initiative design in the Celio area between built-up area, archaeology, architecture, greenery, and ancient paths. The main objective is to enhance the historical and environmental identity of the Celio area through the reconnection of a disintegrated community.	Park and ancient vestiges of the Celio district	District citizens and citizens of Rome
ST2	**SOCIETA’ GEOGRAFICA ITALIANA**	Cultural institute association active in the dissemination, scientific research, and education of geographic studies with a focus on digital innovation in the use of GIS and Story Map tools. The Institute is based at Villa Celimontana in the Celio district.	Tangible heritage: Headquarter in the Celio district, historical archives Intangible assets: Studies and research on geography/economic geography	Community of Italian scholars but also international

ST3	**CELIO AZZURRO**	Intercultural centre dedicated to childhood established in 1990, first in Italy. It is located in the central Park of San Gregorio al Celio. Since its inception more than 1,000 children (and their families) have grown up at Celio Azzurro, from more than 70 countries. Celio Azzurro is an experimental project carried out by 10 educators and has established itself in the world of national and international child pedagogy as an Educating Community.	Born from a grass-root initiative of the 1970s/80s developed within the neighbourhood committee (historical social identity)	District citizens and citizens of Rome
ST4	**CINEMA ALLE MURA**	The Cinema alle Mura is a project that the Mura Latine Committee that pursues with determination. It is an initiative that represents a moment of sharing by the neighbourhood, but it is also the transformation of a place into an inclusive space, set in a unique setting: the Mura Latine. Cinema alle Mura was the winner of the Public Notice "Estate Romana 2020 - 2021 - 2022." As of now, it is a winner of the notice for the second time.	Tangible heritage: Latin Walls (Aurelian period)	Citizens of the Porta Metronia district, also of the Celio
		Is a cultural association, deputed as an art gallery. The exhibition space is managed by the cultural association " Arca di Noesis," directed by Rossana Placidi, hosting Italian and international artists, making it a place to reflect		

ST5	**GALLERIA D'ARTE ARCA DI NOESIS**	in distinct cultural moments through the dissemination of professional and non-professional artists	Located in the Celio district	District citizens and citizens of Rome
ST6	**DIGILAB RESEARCH CENTER – SAPIENZA**	The DigiLab Research Centre was established to enhance interdisciplinary scientific research in the area of cultural heritage and production, manage particularly complex instrumentation and laboratories in the area of digital technologies for culture, and communicate and enhance cultural heritage.	Located in the Celio district Intangible cultural heritage of the Research Centre	Buyer: companies
ST7	**Co.de. COLAVORO / MöBIUS**	Is a unique, design-driven coworking space in the centre of Rome. it has been carefully designed to increase casual encounters and productivity. Within Co.de, there is the cultural association Möbius, which was created as a contemporary "Wunderkammer," a space devoted to the arts and debate. An environment that serves as an incubator of ideas, a laboratory for professionals and non-professionals, a conference centre and a literary salon.	Located in the Celio district and links with contemporary artists	Community Roman contemporary art artists and citizens of Rome

ANNEX 1: HISTORY, MISSION AND ACTIVITIES OF STAKEHOLDERS INTERVIEWED

Source: own elaboration

FIRST ORDER DATA: ORGANISATIONS' IMPACTS							
IMPACT AREA AND PRIORITY FOR THE PROJECT	ASSOCIAZIONE PROGETTO CELIO	SOCIETA' GEOGRAFICA ITALIANA	CELIO AZZURRO	CINEMA ALLE MURA	GALLERIA D'ARTE ARCA DI NOESIS	DIGILAB SAPIENZA	CO.DE COLAVORO ROMA COLOSSEO /MöBIUS
Social Capital and Governance (High Priority)	Bottom-up participation. To involve other cultural associations and religious communities. "To open rather than close".			We try to integrate Chinese, Indian Sinhalese and Pakistani communities	I have a circle of friendships that come from my past both as a teacher and as a political activist	It was an intentional choice to include the community in the co-design process of our research.	We mainly collaborate with companies. We have interested in the "Roma Diffusa Project"
Identity (High Priority)	Mending ancient topography, forgotten paths		Legacy of neighbourhood social life in the 1980s-90s		Legacy of neighbourhood social life in the 1980s-90s		

Quality of Life (High Priority for the subthemes: social life and environment)	Walking both day and night in the neighbourhood	Our library is open to students, and we organize cultural events, which may be of interest to citizens	Caring for childhood and organizing meeting opportunities for families	Bringing families and friends together to enjoy Roman evenings	The artist relates to the who are interested at their paintings. We organize musical events and public poetry readings		The event hall also houses a cultural association, Mobius.
Education, Creativity and Innovation (High Priority for the subthemes: awareness raising, arts &creativity)	Mending a cultural community, exchanging culture and reflections		Intercultural centre		Many artists are amateurs, the gallery is quite affordable	Our project (Metaverso) intersects with that of CoopCulture: the enhancement of a community aspect and Case Romane del Celio.	

Work and Prosperity (High priority for subthemes: tourism economy, social innovation & entrepreneurship)			Social innovation & Entrepreneurship		A few art critics come to value works that the artist can sell	A public-private collaboration on design between us and CoopCulture	The cultural association mainly cooperates with artists, thus it acts as a promoter of various kinds of artists as street artists, sculptors or painters
Protection (High for safeguarding against human-related risks)	Reviving abandoned civilian buildings within the Parco del Celio			Projecting the films on the Aurelian walls and then disassembling everything the same evening			
SECOND ORDER DATA: RELEVANCE OF IMPACTS RELATED TO THE PROJECT							
RELEVANCE	HIGH	MEDIUM/LOW	MEDIUM/ LOW	HIGH	HIGH	HIGH	HIGH

ANNEX 2: ORGANIZATION'IMPACTS AND POTENTIAL RELEVANCE OF IMPACTS RELATED TO THE PROJECT Source: own elaboration

FIRST ORDER DATA: ECOSYSTEM VISION							
ENABLING/ HINDERING FACTORS	ASSOCIAZIONE PROGETTO CELIO	SOCIETA' GEOGRAFICA ITALIANA	CELIO AZZURRO	CINEMA ALLE MURA	GALLERIA D'ARTE ARCA DI NOESIS	DIGILAB SAPIENZA	CO. DE LAVORO ROMA COLOSSEO
ENABLING FACTORS	We would like to mend a broken community. My vision, the one I try to instill in everyone else, must be systemic.	Cultural assets are common goods, and there should be a common interest in fostering an integrated network creation.		It would be nice if our committee was a bonding factor for the neighbourhood.	I wanted to give Via Ostilia an art-like character. We had in mind a space that could bring forms of creativity to life. Between the craftsmanship and the art: the great comes from a multiplicity of inputs.	It was an intentional choice to include the community in the process of governance of co-creating research assets. It means that it is something that over time becomes usable, therefore sustainable	We always try to network in the end, at the neighbourhood level it would probably be interesting.

HINDERING FACTORS	Today it is difficult to activate participatory processes. Firstly, there is great fragmentation within institutions; there is never an integrated systemic vision.	Our relationship with the Celio neighbourhood is a sporadic one. Our information channels are national, possibly international, but not neighbourhood based.	We are aware of our isolation compared to the citizens of the neighbourhood.		The neighbourhood committee disappeared in the 1980s. Today this social and political dimension of the area has been lost.		
SECOND ORDER DATA: COMMITMENT							
COMMITMENT	Extremely committed	Moderately committed	Moderately committed	Extremely committed	Extremely committed	Moderately committed	Moderately committed

ANNEX 3: COMMITMENT TOWARD POTENTIAL NETWORK CREATIONS

Source: own elaboration

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CO-DESIGN INCLUDING PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES TO INCREASE THE SOCIAL SUSTAINABILITY OF MUSEUMS: FROM ACCESSIBILITY TO INCLUSIVE MANAGEMENT

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ABSTRACT

Museums are living entities that evolve together with the society of which they are the main representatives. As specified by international and national legislation, they must be socially and culturally sustainable, participatory, and inclusive with all communities, including that of people with disabilities. However, museums are trapped in excessively rigid governance that is no longer representative of the fluid needs of 21st-century museums and therefore need to be re-examined through an intersectoral and transdisciplinary lens. Through the study of literature and

Keywords:

Accessibility management
Disability right
Museum
Governance

Co-design
Participation

the investigation of an Italian museum good practice, this article highlights that the most effective and transformative initiatives have emerged through co-creative practice when people with disabilities have been actively involved in working with staff to identify and tear down barriers to participation.

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Introduction

Over the centuries, museums have gone from being places for the protection and preservation of precious objects to being precious places for the preservation of the past, the protection of the rights of contemporary society, and reflection for the values and culture they want to perpetuate for future generations. This paradigm shift encouraged museums to rethink and develop new management and governance strategies that were more attentive to sustainability. In recent decades it has become a multi-focal agenda (Rasouli & Kumarasuriyar, 2016) of which the social field has become one of the three pillars (McGuinn, Fries-Tersch, Jones, & Crepaldi, 2020). As for the social one, the cultural field should also be an obvious issue with sustainable development, but the incorporation of culture into sustainability debates seems to remain a major challenge, both scientifically and politically (Dessein et al., 2015). Some scholars have concluded that museums play a key role in cultural and social sustainability (Belfiore & Bennet, 2007) because culture has a transformative role and can be seen as a creator of sustainability through the connections between people and the worlds they inhabit. One of the most numerous and neglected communities is that of persons with disabilities (PwD) who only in 2006 finally saw their rights protected by the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), including the right to participate in cultural and social life and the accessibility of artistic and cultural products. But for museums to become true bulwarks in the promotion of sustainability, they cannot avoid involving PwD not only as visitors, but also as co-designers. In fact, accessibility projects can and must only be implemented together with people with disabilities, because they are the only experts on their condition (Bilotta, 2022). This is why it is necessary to investigate what legal and managerial problems need to be solved so that the involvement of PwD in museums is not just an isolated good practice, but becomes customary. This paper attempts to enter this nascent debate and tries to answer the following research question:

- RQ: Can the involvement of PwDs in accessibility management for the co-design of accessible tools increase the social and cultural sustainability of museums?

The socio-cultural sustainability of 21st-century museums

Sustainability is a key concept that was defined for the first time in 1987[71] as "a paradigm for thinking about the future in which environmental, social and economic considerations are balanced to achieve a better quality of life." (Brundtland & Khalid, 1987). The Report offers a vision of a sustainable future that goes beyond the purely economic profit motive, embracing the need to satisfy human needs and

[71] In the Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development: Our Common Future of the Brundtland Commission, established by the United Nations. More information at link https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/5987our-common-future.pdf

aspirations, declared as the main goal of development (Dessein et al., 2015: 23). From this moment on, the concept of sustainable development has been interpreted in various ways from ecological to social one.

There are different definitions of social sustainability. According to Sachs (1999), it includes the achievement of a fair degree of social homogeneity, an equitable distribution of income, employment that allows the creation of dignified means of subsistence and equitable access to resources and social services, a balance between respect for tradition and innovation and self-sufficiency, endogeneity, and self-sufficiency. This definition lends to be used in this study because it finds its *raison d'être* in the fundamental values of equity and democracy, the latter understood as the effective appropriation of all human rights, political, civil, economic, social, and cultural, by all people (Sachs, 1999). Social sustainability is interpreted as a process, based on equity, diversity, quality of life, networking, and eventually democracy and government (McKenzie, 2004). Therefore, the later evolution of the concept of social sustainability is more concerned with the importance of the right of social participation (Foladori, 2005) and with the capacity of social systems or societies to deliver social integration of all people (Pieper, Karvonen & Vaarama, 2019). Participation also becomes a key element of social sustainability in the transition from substantive to procedural aspects as argued by Boström (2012), who recommends increasing: the access to participation and decision-making in different stages of the process and over time; the proactive stakeholder communication and consultation throughout the process; and the empowerment for taking part in the process. According to Rasouli and Kumarasuriyar (2016), social sustainability can be interpreted as a condition and a process within the community that addresses key issues regarding quality of life and equity. In the latter case, social issues, access to goods and services, and the democratic involvement of citizens in governance are very influential factors. These challenges can also be introduced into the debate on the social sustainability of culture and in the debate on the socio-cultural sustainability of museums (Rasouli and Kumarasuriyar, 2016).

Defining the role of culture in sustainable development is a multifaceted field of research because both culture and sustainable development are broad concepts, covering different spheres of life (Dessein et al., 2015). Åhman (2013) notes that different authors have debated that culture as a sustainability entity should be treated either as a fourth pillar on par with the other three (economic, social, and environmental) while other researchers (Stylianou-Lambert, Boukas & Christodoulou-Yerali, 2014) consider the culture a dimension that penetrates the three original pillars and takes into account the inclusion and participation of the entire society. The aforementioned Report states that "To advance successfully in solving global problems, we must develop new methods of thinking, to elaborate new moral and value criteria and, undoubtedly, new models of behavior" (Brundtland & Khalid, 1987: 38). This assumption makes the cultural turning point towards a new path of development (Dessein et al., 2015: 23). During the four years 2011-2015, the European research network Investigating Cultural Sustainability[72] focused on the relationship between culture and sustainable development to highlight European research across its State Parties to provide policymakers with instruments for integrating culture as a key element of sustainable development. On the sidelines of the research period, the COST Action IS1007 includes the concepts of governance, democratic participation, and social equity in the field of cultural sustainability, arguing that there is a need to re-examine these concepts through a cross-sectoral and transdisciplinary lens. As highlighted in the study, culture is capable of being integrated in three ways: culture *in* sustainable development; culture *for* sustainable development; and culture *as* sustainable development (Dessein et al., 2015). For the third one, participation should be a fundamental premise of public policy that refers to a cultural system guided by ethical and moral, thus sustainable, choice (Horlings, 2015), that is particularly attentive to people's rights, well-being, and happiness. People's participation is realized both in the macro dimension of policy-making, i.e. in the construction of formal plans, and strategies, and in the definition of implementation modalities in regulations and institutions; both in the micro dimension of individual actors involving multiple stakeholders in decision-making processes, based on values and principles such as local democracy, transparency, cooperation and exchange (Blondiaux, 2017).

In these fields, the role played by the museums is fundamental but, for a long time, they have ignored the changing nature of society and individuals relegating the valorization of diversity to the margins of museum activity (Sandell, 2002). The need to define (or redefine) the 21st museum's social role lies at the heart of the management challenge in creating museums that seek to achieve wide relevance and public value. To be real and effective, socio-cultural sustainability must permeate every area of museum life, especially at the leadership and governance level[73], and must permeate all policy choices[74] (Fleming 2002; Janes 2009). Several authors (Cepiku, 2016; Edelenbos & van Meerkerk, 2016; Morse, 2011; Bovaird et al., 2016; Nabatchi, Sancino & Sicilia, 2017) have proposed collaborative forms of governance, highlighting how co-production and collaboration with the people directly interested in the cultural product are forms of governance networks (Klijin, 2008) capable of satisfying the expectations of the subjects directly involved, facilitating objectives of involvement of the public and increasing the competitiveness of the museum. For collaborative governance interventions to occur, it is necessary that all interested parties are involved in every phase of the provision of the cultural service, and that the processes are linked to general policies (Debernardi & Rosso, 2007). There is also a global dimension to managing social sustainability, i.e. through 17

[72] The network was composed of around 100 researchers of 25 EU countries organized in three thematic clusters (Concepts, Policies and Assessment). The work of the network was supported by the European COST Association (COperation in Science and Technology) and funded by the European Commission's research program Horizon 2020. Find more information about the network on the official website http://www.culturalsustainability.eu

[73] Governance refers to the institutional, organizational, and management aspects of the museum and is the set of interaction processes that involve multiple stakeholders in decision-making processes (Blondiaux, 2008).

[74] When we refer to museum policies we mean the set of strategies, decisions, rules, and guidelines that are formulated or adopted to achieve long-term objectives (Muller, 2011).

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) adopted in 2015 by the United Nations, because there is growing support for the idea that museums should lend their support to a range of rights-based social issues (Sandell and Dodd 2010; Sandell, 2012; Message, 2012; Varutti, 2012). This dimension is also confirmed by the agencies and international committees supporting and encouraging museums to take a socially responsible role[75]. CIMAM, the International Committee for Museums and Collection of Modern Art, an affiliated organization of the International Council of Museums (ICOM), launched in 2021 a Toolkit on Sustainability in the Museum Practice to help institutions move towards environmental, social, and economic sustainability to achieve the 2030 Agenda. Regarding the social aspect of sustainability, the goal of reducing inequalities states that museums are referents for the defense of fundamental human rights in museum practice and in society as a whole; and that they are responsible for generating discussions that put visible groups at risk of exclusion or representation.

Talking about “group at risk”, this contribution focuses on the role museums can and should play in protecting the rights of PwD and how museums can be socially and culturally sustainable ensuring their participation not only as visitors or audiences but also as policymakers, making them active members of museum governance. Stakeholder and beneficiary participation is therefore a necessary feature that new-generation museums must have, and for this type of participation to take place, it would be important to change the internal management of museums (Napolitano & Bifulco, 2024).

The involvement of people with disabilities in museum governance

The first binding human rights instrument on disability (Leahy & Ferri, 2022) is the CRPD, since its adoption by the United Nations (UN) has promoted the protection of the economic, social, and cultural rights of PwD. The Article 30 of CRPD requires States Parties to “recognize the right of [PwD] to take part on an equal basis with others in cultural life” and to take “appropriate measures to enable persons with disabilities to have the opportunity to develop and utilize their creative, artistic and intellectual potential, not only for their own benefit but also for the enrichment of society”. As this Article highlights, participation in cultural life can be understood in two ways: such as the possibility to participate in events, visit museums, or use cultural services and programs; and the possibility to contribute to the design and formulation of accessible policies (Laaksonen, 2010). In this research we focused on this second way expressed with the motto “Nothing about us without us” (Charlton, 1998). Although the participation of people with disabilities in cultural life is both an obligation imposed by international bodies and a (un)expressed need by PwD themselves, it is not yet common practice to provide

[75] Examples include SUSTAIN (The International Committee on Museums and Sustainable Development); SOMUS (International Committee for Social Museology) and FIHRM (Federation of International Human Rights Museums).

museums with a multidisciplinary team that includes people with disabilities themselves (Napolitano & Bifulco, 2024) and there is still a long way to go before equality is fully integrated into the organizational values of museums (Smith, Ginley & Goodwin, 2012; Weisen, 2010). In the European context, also thanks to the Framework Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society (Council of Europe, 2005) underlined the value of cultural enjoyment for the whole society (Zagato & Pinton, 2014) the right to participation for PwD have gained more and more importance (Šubic & Ferri, 2022) and, also at the national level, several countries have introduced legislation on accessibility (Zhang, 2019).

To be effective, policies and procedures to make museums accessible for PwD rely on a thorough understanding of the needs of the public, as well as what is required by law (Smith, Ginley & Goodwin, 2012). Considering that many authors, e.g. Woodcraft et al. (2011), think of social sustainability as a process of creating a thriving society through a careful and thorough understanding of people's needs, a failure to involve PwD in museum governance results in a missed opportunity for socio-cultural sustainability. Nina Simon clarifies that public participation in the cultural project of an institution involves the transfer of a part of power in the name of a horizontal and democratic approach in which different voices can express themselves and be heard. (Simon, 2010). In this field, anti-discrimination legislation has been an important driver for change, although those changes have been largely technical in nature: effective and lasting change requires a change in organizational culture and individual behavior and practices to improve access for all. According to Govier (2009), the most effective and transformative initiatives have come about through co-creative practice, when PwD have been actively involved in working with staff to identify and dismantle barriers to participation. In cases where cultural institutions have adopted the collaborative and co-creative approach with groups of PwD, they have seen both an improvement in the quality of the offer for disabled visitors, but also in the depth of understanding by staff of what PwD expect and want from cultural organizations (Smith, Ginley & Goodwin, 2012).

The accessibility manager in the museum's Italian regulation

Ensuring physical, sensory, and cognitive accessibility in museums for people with disabilities, as we have seen, is necessary for 21st-century museums that need to achieve standards of social and cultural sustainability to keep up with the times and regulations. However, the actions that are implemented nowadays in most Italian museums are still slight compared to what is needed and this is the reason why many museums are still not considered sustainable or accessible. According to the authors, this lack can be explained through two main reasons: (i) very vague legislation and (ii) too many tasks assigned to the same person. The first reason concerns the fact that the legislation produced by ICOM-Italy (which acts as a bridge between Italy and the international context and harmonizes internal legislation with the supranational one) and by the Ministry Ministry of Culture (Hereinafter "Ministry") has always been vague with regards to accessibility and the figure who must deal with it within museums. In both cases, actions to make cultural places accessible were always highly recommended, but there were no real guidelines to follow. The following table (Table 1) summarizes the fundamental stages of the birth of the Accessibility Referent figure in Italian and international legislation.

Year	Title	Accessibility responsible
2005	*Carta Nazionale delle Professioni Museali* (ICOM-Italy, 2005)	Museum's educational services
2008	Frame of Reference for museum professions in Europe (Ruge, 2008)	Shared responsibility within museum governance between: - Museum Director, who promotes public access to the museum and its services; - Curator who collaborates with the person responsible for educational services and mediation in order to encourage communication relating to the exhibitions and access by the public
2008	*Linee guida per il superamento delle barriere architettoniche nei luoghi di interesse culturale* (MiBAC, 2010)	Technical profiles such as: engineers, architects, public officials or freelancers
2010	*Profili professionali nel Ministero per i Beni e le Attività Culturali* (MiBAC, 2010)	*Funzionario per la Promozione e l'Educazione* who provides for the "production of documentation, guides, cultural mediation tools and specific dissemination plans"
2016	*Raccomandazioni in merito all'accessibilità a musei, monumenti, aree e parchi archeologici* (MiBACT, 2016)	The Directors of Museum Centers and Museums with special autonomy have to identify a responsible for accessibility issues.
2018	*Linee guida per la redazione del Piano di eliminazione delle barriere architettoniche (P.E.B.A) nei musei, complessi museali, aree e parchi archeologici* (MiC, 2018)	Accessibility Referent

TABLE 1. FUNDAMENTAL STAGES OF THE BIRTH OF THE ACCESSIBILITY REFERENT FIGURE IN ITALIAN AND INTERNATIONAL LEGISLATION

Source: Own elaboration

The "*Linee guida per la redazione del Piano di eliminazione delle barriere architettoniche (P.E.B.A) nei musei, complessi museali, aree e parchi archeologici*", reiterating the need to appoint a bridging figure between the individual museum and the Ministry, better outlines the figure of the accessibility Referent. The table below (Table 2) shows all his tasks.

Design Tasks	**Implementation Tasks**
• Drafting p.e.b.a. • Designing new interventions • Planning new activities • Organising exhibitions • Modifying museum routes • Setting up museum communication tools • Organise educational workshops	• Implement interventions planned in the p.e.b.a. • Implement the interventions and activities for extended use
Monitoring Tasks	**Interrelation Tasks**
• Monitor the implementation of new interventions • Monitor new museum activities • Monitor the existing situation	• Establish relationships with museum audiences • Interacting with other professional figures in all phases of planning, implementation and monitoring of activities involving the dimension of accessibility • Interact with other professionals in the planning, implementation and monitoring of activities involving the dimension of accessibility • Create networks with stakeholders outside the museum • To create networks with sector associations • To create networks with the territory

TABLE 2. TASKS OF THE ACCESSIBILITY REFERENT IN MUSEUMS

Source: Own elaboration

As the Circular itself admits, his tasks relate to a "very broad area that includes the vast majority of museum activities" because he must enforce the point of view of accessibility both on new activities and on those already in existence (MiBACT, 2018). The qualitative-quantitative research entitled "*Accessibilità e percorsi interculturali dei musei dell'Emilia-Romagna*" presented in December 2022 and carried out by the Cultural Heritage Sector of Emilia Romagna Region with the technical-scientific collaboration of Promo PA Foundation, in 61% of the museums interviewed there was no formally appointed accessibility manager and among the main operational proposals, the study suggests to invest in training, networking and co-planning with PwD.

The need to network with PwD was also underlined during the training course "*Musei e accessibilità – Nulla per noi senza di noi*" organized in collaboration with the Ministry which highlighted how the direct experience of PwD can become the winning strategy for museums that intend to invest in accessibility to increase their sustainability. Participatory governance of cultural heritage is a great opportunity to make cultural heritage accessible to all civil society and to take inclusiveness into account when managing its access. To respond to the needs of the demand and supply of accessible culture, the authors propose as a possible solution the creation of working groups that collaborate permanently with the museum and are managed by the Referent of accessibility. A case study that comes close to the author's idea is that of the MAXXI in Rome.

Methodology

The research is conducted with a bi-disciplinary approach that borrows a method or technique from another field, while, simultaneously, keeping its own walled and well-defined disciplinary home (Tsagorius & Deplano, 2021; Hirsch, 2015). As the right to participate in cultural life has been deeply rooted in international human rights law since it was enshrined in Article 27 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), an anthropological approach to research has been used from a legal perspective (Gonzalez-Salzberg & Hodson, 2020). This approach allows for a connection between the reality of social life and the 'big picture', paying attention to the gap between human rights theory and what is in reality and is not satisfied with a superficial analysis, but digs deeper. For this reason, a qualitative methodology was used. The research began with a review of the literature on the topic to relate the study to a broader, ongoing dialogue, identifying and filling gaps and expanding on previous studies (Creswell, 2009). Subsequently, the MAXXI case study was explored in depth to gather detailed information using a series of data collection procedures such as semi-structured interviews, the search for information on the official web channels of MAXXI, MIXT, the Ministry of Culture, and the head websites (Stake, 1995). Some authors argue that a case study can serve to generate a new theory that can then be tested and verified immediately using measurable constructs (Gagnon, 2010).

Case study: the National Museum of 21st Century Arts

The National Museum of 21st Century Arts (hereinafter MAXXI) is a museum managed by a private law body under public control, the *Fondazione MAXXI*, established in 2009 by the Cultural Ministry. As stated on the official website, it 'is a hub open to all languages of creativity and a place for meetings, exchanges and collaborations, a space open to all, a laboratory of ideas and the future".

At MAXXI, accessibility intertwines with audience engagement and is a duty shared by all museum governance, but is practical and procedural responsibility of the Public Engagement Office in which there is an Accessibility Referent that is responsible for the design, development, and management of public engagement and intercultural programs for vulnerable people; for the implementation of PEBAs and MAXXIperTUTTI, that is an inclusiveness project that was awarded EUR 2.5 million in PNRR funds in December 2022. For this project a round table on accessibility was set up, which meets once every three weeks and is attended by: representatives of all the Museum's offices; associations representing and protecting the rights of PwD[76]; and the President of the Foundation. People with disabilities, chosen by the associations, have been involved from the beginning in all the processes of coacting working groups on visual impairment, deafness, cognitive disabilities and neurodivergence. These advisory committees have the function of guiding and monitoring the entire project; they are composed of four/five professionals with and without disabilities representing the main associations and institutions involved in protecting the rights of people with disabilities. The objectives of the working groups are:

- mapping of barriers
- identification of specific needs for each disability
- drawing up guidelines and procedures to guide internal workflows
- drawing up a checklist for monitoring and implementing accessibility projects
- to introduce accessibility as a shared method in museum management.

During the Covid-19 pandemic, two projects 'Collections in LIS' and 'Collection to Listen' were realized to allow the deaf and blind public to enjoy the museum's collections even when it is closed through a digital palimpsest. In March 2020, the project 'MIXT. Musei per tutti' (Hereinafter MIXT) born by a funding from the POR-FESR 2014-2020. PwD were involved as co-designers, playing various roles as co-authors of the texts, mediators of the video guides, testers of the technological applications, narrators of the experience in the space, lecturers, and mediators to the public. The preliminary project (Annex 1) was submitted to the *ex ante* evaluation of UICI members and ENS members, specifically chosen by the two bodies based on their expertise, who had the fundamental

[76] *Ente Nazionale Sordi - Consiglio Regionale del Lazio* (ENS-CR Lazio*); Unione Italiana dei Ciechi e degli Ipovedenti* (UICI), Rome section; Institute L. Vaccari, the *Associazione Italiana Persone Down* - Rome section, the cooperatives Isidea and aCapo.

role of highlighting critical issues from the point of view of disability. This evaluation produced a series of suggestions and improvements to the project (Annex 2) that helped improve the final product with a 26% increase in visits to MAXXI by PwD themselves and an increase in their sense of belonging to the museum community. After the implementation phases of the project, the *ex-post* verification was carried out through open interviews with participants, and multiple-choice questionnaires to pathway users outside the project group, studying the minutes of meetings and the narrators' productions. The results of the verification were included in the quick checklist of the ILFA's Global Learning Goals model[77], which summarizes them through the four P's model as shown in the following table (Table 3).

People. Providing more effective learning opportunities	**Places. Creating inspiring and accessible learning environments**
• blind people have made the content on MAXXI's architecture more accessible to all visitors (families, adults, schools) who visit the museum on a daily basis • the participants have been the true protagonists of the project and have guided its objectives and practices from a participatory and emancipatory perspective • the narrators with disabilities are the expert companions of the audiences • the representation of disability has entered the museum's narrative, breaking down societal stereotypes	• the MIXT route has made MAXXI's architecture more accessible to all visitors, not just those with disabilities • suggestions from PwD have modified the signage and permanent installations in a Universal Design perspective • a permanent tactile route has been created
Partnerships. Building creative learning partnerships	**Policies, Plans, Performance. Placing learning at the heart of the museum, archive or library**
• MAXXI Fundation • Mediavoice S.r.l • DSTech S.r.l • UICI CR Roma • ENS CR Lazio • *Federazione Nazionale delle Istituzioni Pro Ciechi Onlus* • Architalab • Lucky's Pr	• The MIXT itinerary involved 8 MAXXI offices and the management • The management wanted and supported the project of a permanent accessible route • The budget of the Public Engagement Office that oversaw the project was tripled

77 More information on https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/sites/default/files/S2D12_Detailed_framework.pdf

TABLE 3. THE MIXT PROJECT EX-POST VERIFICATION THROUGH THE FOUR P'S MODEL

Source: Own elaboration

The MIXT project was recognized by the World Federation of Deaf as a unique good practice for the active participation of deaf people, for the relevance of the museum route, and was invited to present at the WFD quadrennial conference in South Korea.

Discussion and Conclusion

The literature review has shown that contemporary museums need to increase their social and cultural sustainability and that they need to rethink their governance from a participatory perspective to include all visitor communities. This contribution focuses on the PwD communities that are asking to be involved in solution design practices for them. Accessibility requires a series of measures that are effective and efficient only if they are the result of co-design. At the same time, although Italian legislation has made progress by adapting to international standards through the creation of the figure of the Referent of Accessibility in museums, this professionalism alone cannot deal with the amount of work required to make a museum universally accessible to all types of disabilities but needs to be supported by those concerned. The approach used by MAXXI for accessibility management and PwD engagement can be described as emancipatory and participatory (Barton & Hayhoe, 2021; Hayhoe, 2020) and for this reason is to be considered good practice for cultural management, cultural policy, and promotion of inclusive, sustainable and democratic development of arts and culture for the benefit of society.

This case study, responding positively to the RQ posed in the introduction, shows that the involvement of PwDs in the co-design of accessible tools can increase the social and cultural sustainability of museums. These results influence the social sustainability of the museum and have a positive impact on society as a whole.

Limitations and future scope of the research

The limitations of the research can be linked to the single case study methodology used to investigate the phenomenon, which has shortcomings in terms of the generalizability of the results that cannot be applied to the entire population. This difficulty in generalization can however be overcome by integrating the case study with quantitative research. The future scope of this research is to understand, both from a managerial and legal point of view, how Accessibility Management for the co-creation of accessible solutions in museums can become a real practice and not just a virtuous and isolated example.

ANNEXES

General objectives	Project outputs	Communication strategies
• promote the participation of the deaf community and people with visual disabilities in MAXXI's cultural project • involve a plurality of voices in the narration of museum contents • enhance the participation of PwD as an active component in the co-creation of cultural content • promote PwD's interpretative point of view and consider it on the same level as that of museum employees • strengthen the consideration of MAXXI's architecture as a social and relational object by supporting the museum-audiences connection • strengthen the role of the museum as a place of participation, lifelong learning and social recognition	• A digital platform for remote consultation of video and audio guides • A permanent exhibition in eleven tactile areas on MAXXI's architecture • A mobile App linked to beacon sensors in the museum	• Institutional: audio descriptions and video guides in LIS and IS • Personal: video narrations of PwD's experience of the space • Social: possibility for all visitors to share their visit experience on the platform's social wall using the hashtag l'#MAXXIperTUTTI

ANNEX 1. GENERAL OBJECTIVES, PROJECT OUTPUTS, AND PRELIMINARY COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES OF MIXT PROJECT.

Source: Own elaboration

UICI members suggestions	ENS members suggestions
• Don't name the project "*MAXXI al buio*", but "*MAXXI da ascoltare*" • Be phygital: autonomy in the visit is necessary, but digital technology alone is not enough • Involve PwD in an ongoing relationship with museum governance • Provide a reception service adapted to the PwD • Allow people to touch works of art whenever possible because tactile enjoyment is so important • A permanent, well-maintained tactile route is necessary • Great care is needed regarding content, duration and interpretation in the production of audio descriptions • Digital applications must be user-friendly and open	• Don't name the project "*MAXXI in silenzio*", but "*MAXXI da guardare*" • Greater recognition of the identity of the Deaf community • For video guides and all deaf products involve native Deaf mediators and not just signalling hearing people • Providing cultural training for deaf people • Aiding in the recognition of LIS as a minority language • Production of dynamic, youthful and engaging content • Efficient technological support

ANNEX 2. SUGGESTIONS FROM UICI MEMBERS AND ENS MEMBERS AFTER THE EX ANTE EVALUATION OF THE PROJECT.

Source: Own elaboration

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