

The European Journal of Cultural Management and Policy (EJCMP) | 2023-2024 Retrospective

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**Fabio Donato
(1969–2023)**

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The European Journal of Cultural Management and Policy (EJCMP) | 2023-2024 Retrospective

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Dear ENCATC community,

It is with joy that we present this eBook compiling the manuscripts published by EJCMP in 2023 and 2024.

We are very grateful to all the authors, editors, and reviewers who have been contributing to EJCMP. Their dedication and high-level work have been crucial in shaping the journal into a platform that not only fosters academic excellence but also bridges the gap between theoretical research and practical applications in the field of cultural management and policy.

This collection represents a diverse range of topics ranging from the impact of digital transformation and Artificial Intelligence on the cultural sectors to new trends in cultural policy, including the intersections among culture, diversity and sustainability values. And all that using new and diverse research methods and perspectives, reflecting the dynamic and interdisciplinary nature of cultural management and policy studies.

As we celebrate our second compilation, we look forward to the continued growth and impact of EJCMP. Our goal remains to provide a vibrant forum for the exchange of ideas, fostering a deeper understanding of cultural policies and practices. We encourage scholars, practitioners, and students to engage with the content of this eBook, and we hope it serves as an inspiration for future research and discussions.

Anna Villarroya
Editor-in-Chief

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In Memoriam: Professor Fabio Donato (1969–2023)

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KEYWORDS

Fabio Donato, cultural and creative ecosystems, models of governance and management in the cultural and creative sector, cultural heritage networks, cultural policy, cultural tourism, in memoriam

The communities of researchers and academics in cultural management and policy remain shocked and saddened by the recent passing of Professor Fabio Donato (26.07.1969–15.10.2023), a renowned academic and beloved colleague, friend, and father.

Professor Donato was an internationally recognized academic and researcher in arts and cultural management. Over the years, his commitment and dedication have significantly contributed to the theoretical and scientific discussion within the cultural and creative sector and to policy-making and decision-making on research and innovation at the European level.

Educated at the University of Pisa (Italy), Fabio Donato has worked since 2001 for the Department of Economics and Management of the University of Ferrara (Italy), where he became a full professor in 2007. Within the University of Ferrara, he held various roles, including Director of the Ferrara International School on Culture, Innovation, and Sustainable Development (2008–2011), Director of the Doctoral School in Humanities and Society at the University of Ferrara (2009–2013), Deputy-Director of the Department of Economics and Management and Director of the MuSeC—Master in Cultural Management together with Prof. Anna Maria Visser (2005–2017). During his career, he has authored around 100 scientific contributions. After an initial interest in the management of public services, Fabio focused mainly on studying the cultural and creative sectors. In Italy, he has been among the main advocates of the application of managerial approaches to cultural heritage, promoting and studying the introduction and evolution of performance measurement systems applied to cultural heritage organizations. His contribution to the theoretical and professional discussion in this field was instrumental in promoting the need for a collaborative, ecosystem, and holistic approach to the cultural and creative field, which could foster dialogue, civic participation, and collaboration between the various actors operating in the cultural and creative subsectors and beyond. These issues have become key themes in political and academic discussions in the following years and are still highly topical.

This e-book collects his contributions published in the EJCMP, which he co-founded in 2011, which represent the evolution of his thinking over the last decade. In his article “*The Financial Crisis and its Impact on the Current Models of Governance and Management of the Cultural Sector in Europe*” (published in 2011 in the first volume and issue of the journal and co-written with Prof. Lluís Bonet), he invites us to interpret

the 2008 financial and economic crisis as an opportunity to rethink the governance systems and management models of the cultural sector, in a “meso” (territorial) perspective, open to the various local stakeholders and based on the logic of collaboration and creation of territorial systems.

The “multiscale” approach, proposed in much of Fabio’s production, is visible in the concept of cultural ecosystem and his focus on cultural networks (as in the paper *“Developing local cultural networks: the case of Dante 2021 in Ravenna,”* co-written with Alessia Patuelli). His attention to the link between culture and territory is well represented in his studies on ecomuseums (*“Management perspectives for ecomuseums effectiveness: a holistic approach to sociocultural development of local areas,”* co-written with Francesco Badia). He studied participatory governance and was interested in an approach to heritage management also based on bottom-up stimuli from the communities and citizens, which could involve civil society in a transformative perspective (as visible in the paper *“Governance of cultural heritage: towards participatory approaches,”* co-authored with Sakarias Sokka, Francesco Badia, and Anita Kangas).

His interest in the evolution of European policies is well underlined in his scientific contributions published since 2018, including the reflection on the long-term impact of European initiatives such as the European Year of Cultural Heritage 2018 (as in the paper *“What is the legacy of the European Year of Cultural Heritage? A long way from cultural policies towards innovative cultural management models,”* co-authored with Elena Borin).

In deed, concurrently with his career in academia, Fabio had also played an active role in the development of the policy discussions concerning research and innovation at the European level, in line with his interest in the promotion of research and a strong belief in the key role of institutions. After having served as president of the technical-scientific committee “Museums and the Economy of Culture” of the Mibact (Italian

Ministry for Cultural Heritage, Environment and Tourism) and member of Italy’s Higher Council for Cultural and Landscape Heritage, since 2017 Fabio has taken up the position of Scientific Counsellor to the Permanent Representation of Italy to the EU. Fabio believed in the value of diplomacy and negotiation and in a vision of research and innovation that could benefit all European member states. Over the years, his commitment and dedication made a decisive contribution to policymaking and decision-making, enhancing innovation in research at the Italian and European levels.

We would also like to remember Fabio for his prominent role within ENCATC. Fabio has served in the ENCATC network with strong commitment and passion from 2005 till 2019. During that time, he made an invaluable contribution to the global academic and research community: as a Board Member from 2009 to 2015, he co-designed and launched the ENCATC European Journal of Cultural Management and Policy in 2011, and the Education and Research Sessions in 2013. In 2022, he was appointed by the ENCATC Board, Editor-in-Chief of the European Journal of Cultural Management and Policy after his proposal to have it published by top academic publisher Frontiers, showing visionary commitment to open science and taking the publication to an unprecedented international dimension.

This e-book is intended to be a moment to remember his thoughts, thank him for his contribution, and emphasize how his legacy can stimulate the international scientific community to continue reflecting on the issues he held dear.

Author contributions

All authors listed have made a substantial, direct, and intellectual contribution to the work and approved it for publication.



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Articulating arts-led AI: artists and technological development in cultural policy

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As both artificial intelligence (AI) and creativity are being foregrounded in UK policy agendas, this paper identifies a striking underrepresentation of artists and artistic practice in cultural policy discussing creative innovation. This is despite increasing academic literature, arts-led research, and case studies evidencing a close and dialogic relationship between art and AI. To illustrate this, we first call attention to the impact artistic practice has on AI, against the more common discourse of AI's impact on the arts. We then review UK policy addressing the intersection of the cultural sector, creative industries, and digital sector. Taking this context into account, we argue that artists and artistic practice are currently underrepresented in cultural policy advocating for investment in creative innovation. We suggest this under-acknowledgement is embedded as foundationally as the policy language used to articulate the intersection of arts and technologies, foregrounded by the semantic separation of "Visual arts" and "Artistic creation" from the "Digital Sector" in UK Standard Industrial Classifications. This separation reveals a misalignment of policy and practice that risks underrepresenting the important contribution artists make to the development of AI, and discourse around its role in society. Addressing this misalignment requires a review of policy language used to articulate the intersection of the cultural sector, creative industries, and digital sector in order to more closely align artistic practice with the development of AI. This is an important first step in establishing cultural policy that recognises, prioritises, and invests in artists as the agents of creative innovation that literature and practice evidence them to be.

KEYWORDS

AI artists, AI-generated art, AI policy, artificial intelligence, creative technology

Introduction

In recent years, it has become impossible to ignore the impact of artificial intelligence (AI) on the cultural sector and creative industries. With the impact of AI widely recognised, policymakers are working across sectors to establish frameworks around AI risk, intellectual property, and ethics ([Council for Science and Technology, 2023](#); [Culture, Media and Sport Committee, 2023](#); [UK Parliament, 2023](#)), whilst the UK Government has identified the creative industries as an important sector to realise national AI strategic objectives ([DCMS and DSIT, 2023](#)).

Against this backdrop, there has been a consistent community of artists practising across disciplines to make and interrogate at the intersection of art and AI. This is not a new phenomenon. In the 1970s Harold Cohen was drawing in collaboration with AARON and its autonomous “turtles” (Garcia, 2016), and Vera Molnár created her computer plotter series *Transformations* (Tate, 2024). In the decades since, artists have driven both the technological development of AI, and created important spaces for engagement with ethical questions associated with the technology. In the UK, for example, Ginsberg (2024) is algorithmically generating living sculptures for pollinator insects that call into question anthropocentric design biases, Elwes (2023) is exposing underrepresentation of queer communities in AI through deep fake drag cabarets, and Chung (2023) is pioneering human-machine creative collaboration.

However, despite welcomed and necessary efforts in cultural policy to invest in the creative industries as drivers of AI innovation, artistic practice with AI, such as that of Ginsberg, Elwes, and Chung, and thus artists’ impact on the development of AI more broadly, goes largely overlooked in cultural policy.

We shine light on this impact, arguing that the limited recognition of artistic practice in cultural policy designed to support creative innovation, reveals a misalignment of policy and practice that risks underrepresenting artists as important contributors to the development of AI, in both technical and social contexts.

Focusing on the United Kingdom, we ground our argument by bringing attention to the policy language used to define elements of the arts within creative industries and the cultural sector. Then we draw on existing literature to spotlight the impact of artistic practice on AI, against the more common discourse of AI’s impact on artistic practice. We follow by outlining current UK policy that engages with AI and the creative industries, before highlighting the underrepresentation of artists and artistic practice in this literature. In addressing this underrepresentation, we invite an interrogation of the policy language being used to articulate the intersection of the cultural sector, creative industries, and digital sector to formalise a closer alignment between art and the development of AI. This is an important first step in developing cultural policy that recognises, prioritises, and invests in artists as important contributors to the technological development of AI and advanced technologies more broadly.

A word on definitions

As this paper makes a case for the reconsideration of language, it is important to recognise the language currently used. UK Standard Industrial Classifications (SIC) are used to categorise and measure the size of the economy with national consistency.

The activity that defines the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (2022)’s core sectors is classified according to the latest SIC, published in 2007. These include the “Creative Industries,”¹ defined as, “those industries which have their origin in individual creativity, skill and talent and which have a potential for wealth and job creation through the generation and exploitation of intellectual property” (Department for Culture, Media and Sport, 2022) and the “Cultural Sector”² defined by “those industries with a cultural object at the centre” (Department for Culture, Media and Sport, 2022). The SIC codes that fall under the “Digital Sector”³ are now the responsibility of the Department of Science, Innovation, and Technology (DSIT), which was transferred from DCMS in 2023 (National Audit Office, 2023). The SIC codes recognise the overlap of the “Creative Industries” and the “Digital Sector” within the sub-sector of “Film, TV, video, radio and music.” Strikingly however, “Visual arts” and “Artistic creation,” whilst recognised as part of the “Creative Industries,” are not classified to contribute to the “Digital Sector.”

As this paper argues that this lack of overlap is inaccurate, we will be both using and critiquing the definitions offered by the SIC. Critique, discussed in part 6, will centre on the classifications’ semantic separation of “Visual arts” and “Artistic creation” from the “Digital Sector.” While AI activity in the UK is not defined by a formal SIC (Department for Science, Innovation and Technology, 2023), we identify the “Digital Sector” classification as the most relevant space for advanced technology activity at the intersection of creative and cultural industries. Furthermore, in seeking to align art and artists more closely with the “Digital Sector,” and thus the development of AI, we will use the term “Artistic practice” as opposed to “Artistic creation” (SIC code 9003) as we feel this is more representative of the iterative process of artists working with AI than “Artistic creation” which is, by definition, bound to the creation of an output.

1 The nine sub-sectors that fall under “Creative Industries” are; “Advertising and marketing, Architecture, Crafts, Design and designer fashion, Film, TV, video, radio, and photography, IT, software and computer services, Publishing, Museums, galleries, and libraries, Music, performing and visual arts” (DCMS and DSIT, 2023).

2 The nine sub-sectors that fall under “Cultural Sector” are; “Arts, Film, TV, and music, Radio, Photography, Crafts, Museums and galleries, Library and archives, Cultural education, Operation of historical sites and similar visitor attractions” (DCMS and DSIT, 2023).

3 The nine sub-sectors that fall under “Digital Sector” are; “Manufacturing of electronics and computers, Wholesale of computers and electronics, Publishing, Software publishing, Film, TV, video, radio and music, Telecommunications, Computer programming, consultancy and related activities, Information service activities, Repair of computers and communication equipment” (DCMS and DSIT, 2023).

Recognising the impact of AI on artistic practice

Before discussing the role of artistic practice in the development of AI, it is important to acknowledge the unavoidable impact that AI is having on the cultural sector and creative industries. The proliferation of generative AI has disrupted prior narratives suggesting creative work is safe from automation (Mahdawi, 2017), and artists now face unanticipated questions on the value of their labour (Epstein et al., 2023; Inie et al., 2023). While proponents emphasise an artist's distinctly human "soul" and their unique ability to express human experience (National Endowment for the Arts, 2021; Anderson, 2023), existing literature posits that advanced technologies are confronting the potential devaluation of artistic skills (Ploin et al., 2022; Vimpari et al., 2023). Research also questions whether emerging AI technologies are having a profound effect on traditional creative processes. Concerns surrounding the impact of AI on problem-solving and adaptability (D&AD and Protein, 2023) are paired with recognition of shifts in creative workflows and artists' embodied experience (Ploin et al., 2022).

Issues also concern copyright material being leveraged in AI datasets, culminating in legal debate around intellectual property and the remuneration of artists who are the authors of original works used for input data (Samuelson, 2023; Geiger and Iaia, 2024). Ethical considerations also surround the biases embedded within datasets and models (Birhane et al., 2021), and the circular impact they have on the cultural landscape.

Shifting the conversation to the impact of artistic practice on AI

There are strong grounds to be concerned about the impact AI will have on the cultural sector and creative industries. However, having recognised these critical considerations, this paper draws attention to a more encouraging narrative. Drawing on a burgeoning body of literature, cross-referenced with case studies, we argue that, whilst the impact of AI on art is undeniable and needs to be addressed, artistic practice also has an important and unique impact on the development of AI. As such, we identify that artists are unique contributors to a cross-disciplinary ecosystem influencing the development of advanced technologies such as AI, with particular focus on the development of AI tools and techniques, legal and economic infrastructure, and socio-technical engagement with critical ethical questions associated with the technology.

Contribution to a cross-disciplinary ecosystem

Practice at the intersection of arts and technology is contingent on strong ecosystems spanning arts, academia, and

industry. The complexity of advanced technologies necessitates deep cross-disciplinary collaboration (Galleries, 2020). Artists bridge disciplinary silos, seen in work such as that of Libby Heaney (2017), who draws on her background in quantum information science and collaborates with games engineers and immersive technologists to create artworks that speak to the entanglement of virtual and personal experience. These forms of collaboration don't just afford interdisciplinary innovation within the arts, they also create spillover effects in other industries (Tom Fleming Creative Consultancy, 2015). The art-adjacent industries of gaming, blockchain, film, and architecture, for example, offer significant commercial, developmental, and civic-engagement opportunities for artists experimenting with advanced technologies (Galleries, 2020). This is evident in the US National Endowment for the Arts (2021) study on artists using technology as a medium, in which among the 66 artists informing the study, 34 entities including artist studios, non-profits, software companies, and other businesses were founded. Practicing across disciplines, artists working with advanced technologies including AI, transcend sector silos and open pathways for collaboration and innovation both within and beyond the arts.

Technical development of AI tools and techniques

Artists have a long history of cross-disciplinary collaboration and innovation leading to progressive technological development. The printing press, camera obscura, and early cinema techniques are often referenced as technological innovations accelerated by arts and creativity. The same is the case for AI where sculptors prototype forms using modelling software, visual artists modify code to remodel AI-generated images, and multi-disciplinary artists produce generative immersive realities (National Endowment for the Arts, 2021; Ploin et al., 2022). British choreographer Wayne McGregor's "Living Archive," for example, in collaboration with Google Arts & Culture, explores dance as code, and *vice versa*, feeding thousands of archival videos into an artificially intelligent tool for audiences to construct choreographic experiments (McGregor, 2019). Chung (2023), programs and builds drawing robots that mimic her gestures, safeguarding the artist's hand in machine creation. In Chung's words, "the technology we're building helps reshape how I paint, meditate, perform—and that changes the nature of the drawing entirely . . . Allowing that feedback loop really catalyses technical development, but also creative growth as well" (Chung, cited in Chow, 2023).

Social understanding of AI and critical technology discourse

Artist practice also affords a critical space for interrogation of and dialogue about the impact advanced technologies have in

society, what [Murphy and Villaespesa \(2020\)](#) call “critical technology discourse.” Art often results in AI being deployed in new and unexpected ways, enabling nuanced and evolving engagement with ethical questions ([Stark and Crawford, 2019](#)), and opening up space for user intervention, public scrutiny, and policy debate ([Hemment et al., 2023](#)). Furthermore, artists can use their practice to centre underrepresented voices surrounding technologies that are often designed *by* and *for* western audiences ([Benjamin, 2019](#); [Herman and Arora, 2023](#)). Artist [Agrawal \(2016\)](#), for example, exposes the overrepresentation of Western art in datasets by drawing on Indian art forms to reimagine generative AI with a more diverse, locally-grounded aesthetic. Addressing a different kind of underrepresentation in the design of technologies, [Ginsberg \(2024\)](#) questions human-centric design biases by collaborating with horticulturalists, pollinator experts, and a computer scientist to develop “Pollinator Pathmaker,” a living artwork algorithmically optimised for pollinator biodiversity, with an accompanying online tool “pollinator.art.” From another perspective, Artists [Herndon and Dryhurst \(2024\)](#) have experimented since 2017 with the concept of digital likeness and active solutions for artists to reclaim agency over their intellectual property and authorship. Alongside founder Jordan Meyer, Herndon and Dryhurst developed “Spawning” in 2023 to allow users to opt-out of their data used in training sets ([Serpentine Galleries, 2024](#); [Spawning, 2024](#)). With StabilityAI having integrated “Spawning” into their workflow training AI art models, this work exemplifies how artists are not passively being impacted by AI, but instead setting precedent in this incredibly complex space that is extending to the commercial development of advanced technologies ([Heikkilä, 2022](#)). Together, these artists evidence art as a facilitator of not only of critical engagement with AI but also the imagination and design of alternative social, environmental, economic, and legal technological futures ([Murphy and Villaespesa, 2020](#)).

UK policy and AI in the creative industries

This artistic practice with AI is taking place against the backdrop of a welcome and important recognition in policy of the value that the creative industries bring as drivers of technological development. As set out in the National AI Strategy, the UK aims to position itself over the next 10 years as the best place to live and work with AI ([UK Office for Artificial Intelligence, 2021](#)). UK policy institutions position the creative industries as a core sector to achieve this goal ([Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, 2023](#)). The term “CreaTech” has been used to describe the convergence of creative and tech industries and is recognised as generating advances in AI technology ([Council for Science and Technology, 2023](#)).

This recognition is reflected in the “Creative Industries Sector Vision” ([Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, 2023](#)), which identifies new technologies and the research and development (R&D) behind them as key to future growth. The first goal of the 2030 vision is to grow creative clusters in the UK, adding £50 billion more in gross value added, with immersive and virtual production a clear priority. One initiative, Digital Catapult, the UK’s innovation agency for advanced technology, focuses on building the creative sector’s capabilities in AI and immersive technology to extend the UKs advanced media production economy ([Innovate UK, 2021](#); [Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, 2023](#)). These economic initiatives of the Sector Vision demonstrate an accurate and important recognition of the value of the creative industries, especially when engaging with advanced technologies.

AI, artistic practice, and cultural policy

Underrepresentation of artists

The policy recognition of the creative industries as drivers of technological development reflects the value that creativity brings to technological development. However, across the policy reviewed for this paper there is a clear priority placed on industry as a driver of creative innovation, with a notable under-recognition of artists and non-commercial artistic practice as contributors to the same or similar innovation agendas.⁴ The underrepresentation of artists reveals a misalignment between current cultural policy promoting creative innovation and the creative development of AI in practice.

The work of artists discussed in this paper, and others, drive the creative innovation of AI models, tools, and datasets. Furthermore, the artworks are realised at the intersection of industries and disciplines that span the cultural sector, creative industries, and digital sector. These characteristics, also underscored in literature ([Galleries, 2020](#); [National Endowment for the Arts, 2021](#); [Ploin et al., 2022](#)), support the argument that artistic practice with AI has spill-over effects on innovation in art-adjacent industries ([Serpentine Galleries, 2020](#)). Returning to the policy recognition that “CreaTech” generates significant financial revenue for the UK, and that gaming, film, live performance, and immersive experiences drive innovation within both creative and non-creative contexts ([Council for Science and Technology, 2023](#);

4 A notable exception to this is the Arts Council England-commissioned report “The Impact of Arts & Culture on the wider Creative Economy,” which makes a strong case for the ecosystemic feedback loop between the cultural sector and creative industries ([Metro Dynamics, 2020](#)).

Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, 2023), there is significant evidence to suggest artistic practice contributes to the same impact.

However, cultural policy appears to overlook this contribution of artists to the same ecosystem of creative innovation it seeks to promote, despite practice and literature evidencing the contrary. This underrepresentation suggests a risk of cultural policy not only leaving behind key contributors to technological development, but also not fully capitalising on the value that artistic practice brings to the development of AI through nuanced critical engagement with the technology.

Increasing focus on artists and artistic practice in the language of cultural policy

Mitigating this risk requires a clear recognition in cultural policy of the value that art and artists bring to the development of AI, allowing artistic practice engaging with AI to be more formally embedded in policy and infrastructure designed to support innovation.

Standardised definitions provide the foundations for much policy, therefore, this recognition needs to start at a foundational level; with a reconsideration of the language being used to discuss the intersection of the cultural sector, creative industries, and advanced technologies. Primarily, accurately capturing the nature of artistic practice with AI requires semantics that move away from disciplinary silos to embrace ecosystems, and foreground process over output.

Articulating arts-led AI

The Standard Industrial Classifications (DCMS and DSIT, 2023) illustrate the semantic separation of art and technology in the language on which much cultural policy is based. Whilst there is a recognition of technology as a sub-sector of the “Creative Industries,” represented through “IT, Software, and Computer Services” there is no link between this sub-sector and the arts. Further conveying this separation, the definition of the “Digital Sector” recognises the sub-sector “Film, TV, Video, Radio and Music,” but does not recognise “Visual arts.” Similarly, whilst the “Cultural Sector” overlaps with the “Digital Sector” and “Creative Industries” in the sub-sector “Film, TV, Music and Radio,” both “Arts” (SIC codes 9001–9004) and “Museum activities” (SIC code 9102) do not overlap with the “Digital Sector.”

As the above literature, arts-led research, and case studies evidence, artists have a significant influence on the technical development of AI, and social engagement with the technology. However, taking into account the literature and case studies evidencing artists work with AI as cutting across the creative industries, cultural, and digital sector, the SIC context of “Artistic creation” as disconnected from the “Digital Sector” and the lack

of overlap between the “Cultural Sector” and “Digital Sector” around “Visual arts” does not reflect this reality. As a result, artists and artistic practice, do not have an accurate or even articulated place within the SIC codes on which much cultural policy regarding innovation is based. Semantically, this reveals a foundational under-representation of artists and artistic practice within the policy discussing or designed to support creative innovation with advanced technologies.

Furthermore, “Artistic creation” itself suggests a misplaced emphasis on output over process. Across literature there is an emphasis that “creation” at the intersection of arts and AI is based on deep inter-disciplinary interrogation (Serpentine Galleries, 2021), technical trial and error (D&AD and Protein, 2023), and long-term collaboration across individuals and sectors (National Endowment for the Arts, 2021). The act of making is therefore as much an act of creation as an embodied process spanning many years, and often full careers of navigating diverse fields and expertise (National Endowment for the Arts, 2021). As such, “Artistic creation” reductively connotes the “creation” of an end product, whilst “practice” more expansively suggests the process required for creation, and the individual artists’ practice honed over the course of a career or lifetime.

This misalignment is likely not the intention of policymakers, and policies such as the much-needed “Creative Industries Sector Vision” (Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, 2023). However, without specifically naming artists as important drivers of technological development in policy documents, the language on which such documents are based subtly yet formally excludes artists. As policy is, by design, authored to effect actionable change, inevitably this will result not only in an exclusion of artists from policy language and literature alone, but also from valuable opportunities and infrastructural support.

Concluding reflections

These are just two examples of where foundational language informing cultural policy appears misaligned with practice at the intersection of art and AI. Taking this into account, it is perhaps unsurprising that when discussing innovation in AI, the creative industries have been foregrounded whilst artistic practice has gone relatively overlooked.

In practice however, both literature and case studies suggest that artistic practice at the intersection of art and AI is a vital contributor to the same innovation objectives that policies such as the “Creative Industries Sector Vision” articulate.

In this context, we suggest cultural policy needs to continue the welcome and necessary investment in the creative industries. However, alongside this, we invite an interrogation of the current semantics being used to articulate the arts, cultural, and creative ecosystems in the context of AI, to align between arts and

technological development more closely. Being able to confidently articulate artistic practice as innovating AI tools and techniques, contributing to cross-disciplinary creative technology ecosystems, and informing critical technology discourse is a first step in developing cultural policy that recognises, prioritises, and invests in artists, and the cultural institutions that support them, as the agents of technological development they are.

Data availability statement

Publicly available datasets were analyzed in this study. This data can be found here: (DCMS and DSIT, 2023).

Author contributions

All authors listed have made a substantial, direct, and intellectual contribution to the work and approved it for publication.

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The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

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British TV and AI: explore and exploit

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artificial intelligence, AI, TV, film, British TV

Introduction

British TV came late to the AI race. Despite a strong heritage of world-leading innovation in both Artificial Intelligence and Television, the United Kingdom lagged behind the United States and China in the widespread adoption of recommendation algorithms. The TV industry only visibly engaged with the first wave of generative AI with the mass market product launch of Chat GPT on 30 November 2022. However, the UK is now focussing on the opportunity. Just as in reinforcement learning the optimal strategy for success combines exploration and exploitation - so British television itself is now in AI “explore and exploit” mode, seeking out and testing AI applications. The BBC iPlayer’s 2024 on-air promotion slogan even expresses this idea: “Love what you find - and find what you love.” British TV is also exploring the frontiers of AI creativity - in synthetic humans, AI agents, the use of LLMs and camera-less innovation. This use of generative AI is creating copyright risks - and creative opportunities. The philosophical and commercial dimensions of AI are strikingly disruptive, but it is too early to map future effects. This article provides an overview of the UK TV industry at a transition point that could set the creative and commercial parameters for a generation.

Approach

This article is framed from the perspective of producers and broadcasters, rather than government policy or parliamentary committees, which have not yet provided material support for the AI challenge in television. The research draws on the practices of UK broadcasters, production companies and UK-based social media companies, discovered through dozens of interviews and engagements over the years June 2023 to May 2024, in addition to wider industry research. Direct discussions included Banijay, BBC Studios, Brand Safety Summit, British Screen Forum, Broadcast AI Creative Summit, Case Centre, Channel 4, Chief Executives Organisation, CIMIX Conference (Vienna), Copenhagen Entertainment and Media Law Association, Directors UK, Edinburgh TV Festival, Ellie’s (Brussels), Fremantle, FT Innovative Lawyers Global Summit, Foundation Rafel Del Pino Future of Journalism event, GP Bullhound AI Investment Event, Kudos, Media Society, Meta, Oxford Generative AI Summit, Pathe, Reuben University (Estonia) AI event, Spirit Studios and Workerbee. For reasons of confidentiality, specific engagements are not directly referenced. None of the above companies have endorsed the author’s views expressed in this article.

The impact of AI: four stages of content delivery

All content - a film, a concert, a TV quiz - is developed in four simple phases: Development, Production, Distribution and Monetisation. Using this framework (Connock, 2023) to deconstruct the impact of AI on UK TV, three principles emerge.

First, AI has reached all four stages, from generative AI in ideation and storyboarding, to post-production tools, recommendation algorithms in distribution (Netflix, 2022) Machine Learning (ML) in bandwidth management, and analytics in monetisation.

Second, the nuance around the impact of AI lies in the sequencing. AI reached the latter stages first; specifically distribution. It is only in the last 18 months that AI has moved backwards in the metaphorical timeline from distribution to Development, driven by the launch of the quintessential Large Language Model GPT3 and its November 2022 tool, Chat GPT - followed of course by GPT-4o (March 2023), Google's multi-tier Gemini model range (DeepMind, 2024), Anthropic's Claude (Anthropic, 2024), Meta's Llama (Meta, 2024) and others. For a useful guide on how large language models work, see Murgia (2023).

Third, this iterative integration of AI into the TV production workflow (Khan, 2023) mirrors the explore/exploit dialectic in reinforcement learning, with each dynamic being balanced against the other to optimise performance against a commercial goal. The goal here is arguably to maintain the British TV industry as a commercial force, in the face of global competition, advertising downturns, cord-cutting, preferential social media usage amongst younger viewers, and direct threats to the BBC licence fee that underpins the entire UK TV ecosystem, alongside a currently misfiring commercial TV sector in which the independent broadcaster Channel 4 has reduced its commissioning rate [For a simple guide to reinforcement learning in commercial settings, see AWS (2024)].

We can dissect the impact of AI on UK TV production - in the reverse order in which it arrived.

The distribution and monetisation phases

Netflix's machine learning models (Netflix, 2022) have given it first mover advantage, then global dominance, in the TV/streaming world of recommendation algorithms for 15 years - while British TV has barely scratched the surface of its potential.

In 2007, Netflix switched from mailing DVDs to streaming, one of the great industrial pivots (Randolph, 2019). In 2006 it offered \$1 million in a public competition to design an algorithm (Whiting, 2009) although it never actually used the winning entry (Johnston, 2012). Blockbuster Video ignored (Mollman, 2023) the clear competitive threat (Christensen, 2015) having previously turned

down the chance to buy Netflix, for \$50 million. Netflix then built its market-leading offering through powerful research - publishing multiple articles on Large-Scale Recommender Systems (Menezes, 2023) and Heuristics in ML, for instance. Global AI leadership in this field translated for Netflix into user recommendation at scale, global streaming dominance and (21 June 2024) a market capitalisation of \$295.65 billion. Its main competitors for attention were not the other TV providers it had left in the dust - but the other experts in Reinforcement Learning in video, namely, YouTube (Goodrow, 2021) and TikTok (TikTok, 2024). Where Netflix has led the way in innovating the TV user experience, Amazon Prime Video, with the knowledge base of its corporate parent, has begun to follow.

British TV missed out on this growth - and, what is worse, it should not have done so.

A key player in the invention of television itself, the BBC innovated early streaming (BBC, 2024) in addition to AI technologies such as stacking, and downloading, and a recommendation engine through the My PDS personal programme selection tool (Sharp, 2021) Then in 2009, the UK regulator made a decision that, intentionally or not, created an epochal missed opportunity for the UK TV industry. The Project Kangaroo Streaming proposal, which aimed to combine the online offerings of BBC Worldwide, Channel 4 and ITV as a single platform in the new global "over-the-top" (OTT) streaming industry, was vetoed by the Competition Commission. "We have decided that this joint venture would be too much of a threat to competition in this developing market and has to be stopped" (Sweeney, 2009). The logic was incorrect, because the competition problem in streaming was not local, but global.

Thirteen years on, Britain now has multiple, globally sub-scale streaming services. While Netflix was a singular brand from the start, UK commercial leader ITV launched VOD products three times: first the clunky ITV Hub and ITV Player, then ITVX, which is slicker but has limited content. Channel 4 also launched three times - as 4oD, All4 and now (not rocket science) as Channel 4. The BBC innovated with iPlayer, and kept that branding, but is constrained by regulation, making it a relative also-ran in global streaming.

The UK still has innovation. The BBC takes a "supervised" learning approach to the recommendation, driven by public service. To prevent the user from going down a "rabbit hole" of sequential recommendations like YouTube serving up endless conspiracy videos, the broadcaster adds hand-crafted editorial guidance to algorithmic automation (Aythora, 2022).

The production (and post-production) phase

Towards the end of the second decade of the 21st century, ML tools - statistical pattern recognition/prediction - came to

digital production, through integration with Photoshop, Premiere, Unreal, Unity and many smaller players.

The BBC developed an “object-based media” project to enable stories to be told with fragmented assets in order. Its Springwatch teams used ML and Raspberry Pi cameras to identify wildlife (Dawes, 2020). ML-driven anomaly detectors identified interesting clips of nesting birds. Meanwhile, unofficially and without authorisation, the voice-synthesised BBC star David Attenborough became a popular AI trope, widely deployed from the title sequence of the podcast ghost series *Other World* to a single creator using him to narrate his life in real time (Stewart, 2023).

Studio software tools such as Descript reached TV from the creative space, as did Heygen and Eleven Labs for voice synthesis. AI dubbing provider Papercup was used by the World Poker Tour for translation at speed (Skalai, 2024). Flawless (a Hollywood company with UK origins) and other companies managed high-end translation including synthetic lip sync, with which studios began experimenting in earnest in 2024 (Schomer, 2024). Video creation tool Runway ML (based in New York) released its popular Gen-3 Alpha video creation tool in June 2024 (Franzen, 2024).

AI music creation software - Musicfy, Dreamtrack, Suno and Udio - became attractive to TV producers for cost reasons compared to composed or library music, but for sizzle reels rather than final products, because of rights concerns. In early 2024, post production specialist EditCloud presented a detailed workflow study of 20 tools in TV production. In media management/ingestion: Pro IO, Adobe Media Encoder, Rocket Uploader, Backup IT, WatchTower and Syncalia. In Content Detection: Iconic, Curio, Mimi, Twelve Labs and Avid. In editing: AutoPod, Premiere Autotranscribe, SimonSays and Blace, They found that AI tools could reduce post costs by approximately 30%; with the best being Syncalia, Iconic and Mimi. Given that post production can easily account for 30–40% of the budget of a TV production, this is promising (Hall, 2024).

Development

For all its glittering heritage in creating new intellectual property, British TV could do with a new source of creative adrenaline.

In 2024, the major UK broadcasters defaulted to older, third-party formats for major shows, rather than innovating. In a circle dance, ITV licensed the late 20th century Endemol (now Banijay) format *Celebrity Big Brother*, previously on Channel 4, which in turn poached the BBC's *Great British Bake-Off* (distributed by Comcast-owned Sky). The BBC licensed the ageing ITV format *Gladiators* for prime-time. These were not signs of an industry at the height of export-friendly innovation.

So could AI provide an answer? In 2023, TV broadcasters and producers began to engage with AI tools as development engines

- both for LLMs and visual creatives. Tools used included Aperture 4.0, Imagen, Lexica, Crayon and PhotoRoom. AI presentation tools have become common with development teams in pitching - industry-leader Canva, but also Sigma and again, the AI-integrated Adobe Creative suite. Challenging first movers Midjourney and Stable Diffusion (each with potentially compromised copyright) and Pika Labs, Sora from Open AI in 2024 augured content creation without cameras, for the first time, even in Beta. Images without shooting costs could be a creative transformation as big as the first photograph (1839) or television itself (1928). Or on a practical level, they could allow the budget-constrained but effective Channel 5 to create a realistic mid-evening TV journey along Britain's lost railways, featuring footage of non-existent trains and tracks. And could an interior visualisation software like Palazzo reinvent the tired genre of design makeover shows?

Also, for story creation itself, LLMs have reduced the timeline between ideation, writing, market research, design and pitching from months to hours. Iteratively, using an LLM like GPT4, one could create 20 ideas for a documentary, road test them against the historical performance of all previous documentaries, benchmark the script beats against past successes, and design the artwork and pitch document. Storied comedy producer Hat Trick capitalised on this idea by creating a specifically AI-driven development unit in 2023.

Creative originality, training data and AI agents

However, no producer in the UK has yet gone further to announce (in effect) their own tuned LLM, as the Financial Times did (April 2024) in a deal with Open AI. Many producers and buyers resist, on principle.

Casey Bloys of HBO (the buyer of *Game of Thrones*, which is largely produced in the UK) said in 2023 that he was not interested in AI scripts, and was in the business of “human connection.” And even on the technology side, there are sceptics of machine content. Kevin Scott, Chief Technology Officer at Microsoft said: “The thing that seems to be true about human beings is, we like to consume the things that we produce. We could right now. Instead of the Queen's Gambit on Netflix, have the Machine's Gambit, and have a whole Netflix show about computers that play each other at chess. And nobody wants to watch that.” [SIC].

As a statistical exercise, could a computer have come up with the Queen's Gambit outlier, given the lack of relevant training data? Bella Bajaria who co-commissioned the show at Netflix, said: “There's not an algorithm that would probably say, you know what's a great idea? A period show about a woman playing chess.” [SIC] (Littleton, 2023) Author Stephen King, behind many hit shows and films, said of AI writing: “I view this possibility with a certain dreadful fascination.” (Haysom, 2023) Others have argued that since the combination of AI

plus humans can beat both AI and humans playing chess individually, the same logic could apply to TV creativity.

Of course Silicon Valley has an answer to the creative conundrum of training data. Training data collectors like Appen and Scale AI - which provide the coal that is fed into the furnace of large language models—have been hiring poets, creative writing graduates and artists to train the models (Tangermann, 2023).

If one area of AI holds the most promise for TV producers looking to rejuvenate tired genres in 2024, it is agent-based AI models. For a useful primer, see for instance a recent lecture by Andrew Ng (Sequoia, 2024) at a Silicon Valley venture capital conference.

In October 2023, computer scientist Joon Sung Park presented a compelling vision of an (effectively) oven-ready, agent-driven reality show in which 25 synthetic humans inhabit a village, and autonomously negotiate their lives with only the most threadbare of instructions (Park, 2023). The characters would go to work and cocktail parties - or would flake out if they were too tired. Other companies such as Hume offer products like Evi, “the world’s first AI with emotional intelligence,” (Miles, 2024) which would be useful as a new interpretive data layer for *Married at First Sight* or *Love Island* formats. Delphi allows users to “configure your clone for your specific needs,” running multiple versions of themselves for work or love life, in a real-life *Black Mirror*-style storyline (Delphi, 2024). Open AI found itself in communications hot water when it launched an AI voice tool capable of facsimile emotional conversation in May 2024, with a voice similar to that of actress Scarlett Johansson (Pisani, 2024).

Finally, to confirm that the potential of the space can be turned into reality: in April 2024 the US series, *The Circle* (originated by the British company Studio Lambert) used an AI agent character for its sixth season (Horton, 2024).

The IP ownership battleground

The TV industry at large is far from convinced that using generative AI in the creative DNA is a positive thing. Hollywood executive Barry Diller told a podcast: “For the people currently engaged in the pursuit or dissemination of information and entertainment and everything else, it is in danger.” [SIC] (Diller, 2023).

In early 2024, Open AI’s CTO, Mira Murati, failed to clarify in a Wall Street Journal interview (Stern, 2024) whether the company’s Sora engine had been trained on YouTube content. For TV, there is a copyright or chain-of-title risk if training content is of unknown provenance. Film creatives bemoaned striking similarities between the outputs of Midjourney when given Batman prompts (Thompson, 2024) and their copyrighted movies. The New York Times took legal action against Open AI over its outputs (Grynbaum, 2023). Emad Mostaque, then CEO of Stable Diffusion until March 2024, said in an interview that in

a few years he would be able to create a new series of *Game of Thrones* from a single verbal prompt (Mostaque, 2022). Meanwhile its creator, George RR Martin, is reportedly targeting generative AI platforms with legal action for copyright infringement (Spangler, 2023). In the UK, efforts by the Intellectual Property Office have so far failed to secure a copyright agreement between AI companies and rights holders.

Copyright underwriting by large companies like Open AI and Adobe could allow producers to be confident in using their output on air, although TV lawyers interviewed were sceptical about relying on this. Meanwhile Open AI’s deal to pay media company Axel Springer (reportedly tens of millions of Euros) to train on its material (Cullen, 2023) just as Apple reportedly paid Shutterstock for access to its stock photos (Paul, 2024), opens up potential opportunities for UK TV rights holders with scale. The BBC has been reported to have held talks (without conclusion) about licensing some of its peerless libraries as AI training data (Thomas, 2024) although the merits of this idea are open to debate. As the LLMs run out of verbal training data on which to train, video data may increase in value (Sitharaman, 2024), especially authentically human data that pre-dates the AI era and therefore cannot itself be AI-tainted.

It is reductive to assume that the impact of AI on UK TV production will simply be time-saving tools, or the creation of facsimile video content. AI could go much further, and drive creativity in a purer form. AI could create massive copyright issues, but also massively drive up the value of existing IP. AI could feed British TV - or eat it.

Author’s note

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The author confirms being the sole contributor of this work and has approved it for publication.

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Conflict of interest

The author declares that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

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Assessing the impact of the S+T+ARTS framework. Main evidence and reflections to inform the community and policymakers for supporting artistic research

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Artistic research holds significant potential by addressing contemporary challenges at societal, environmental, and technological levels. The aim of this paper is to contribute to the understanding of the impact of artistic research by assessing a framework funded since 2016 by the European Commission called Science, Technology and Arts (=S+T+ARTS). The discussion assesses the impact of the S+T+ ARTS framework by focusing on its ability to bridge science, technology, and artistic practice, reaching significant impacts at different levels. Through a comprehensive evaluation methodology, the study examines various dimensions of impact, including social, economic, technological, political, and environmental aspects. Findings suggest a pronounced social impact, evidenced by enhanced networking, interdisciplinary collaboration, and engagement with vulnerable groups. While economic impacts are less tangible, the framework underscores the need for innovative indicators to capture the economic value of artistic research accurately. Overall, the study advocates for (i) continued support and exploration of artistic research frameworks to address contemporary societal challenges effectively and (ii) the development of ad-hoc methodologies to map the assessment of such initiatives.

KEYWORDS

STARTS framework, impact assessment, artistic research, policy recommendations, social impact

Introduction

Over the last three decades there has been a development of highly active artistic research contexts at a European and international level. Specific initiatives are changing the landscape of traditional research practice and are emphasising the dynamic character, potential and usefulness of artistic research¹ (Tytgat and Larsen, 2024). Nonetheless, the

1 For a discussion on the definition of artistic research see Klein 2010.

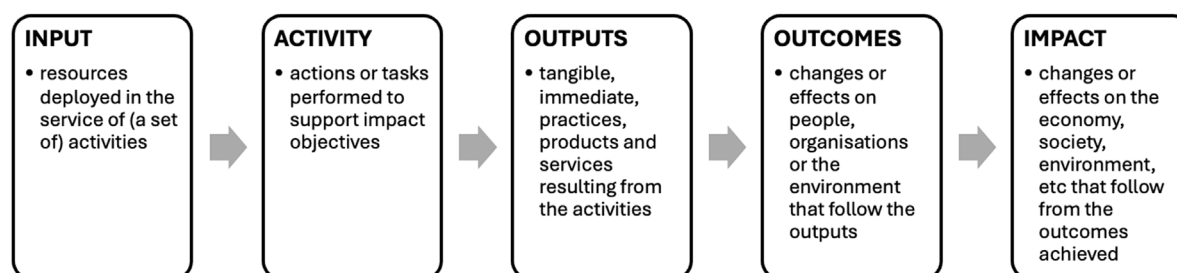


FIGURE 1

Impact assessment framework: the value-chain approach (elaboration on SIIT, 2014:6).

impact of artistic research remains underexplored and its potential untapped. Artistic research (De Assis, 2018; De Assis and D' Errico, 2019) differs from other types of research in that it requires planning, support, and administration diverse from other more traditional research areas. There is indeed an urgent need to promote, support and empower artistic research as it can be instrumental in addressing the complexities of our times at a climate, digital, social level and beyond.² Within this context, reducing the gap between scientific research and artistic practice is one of the objectives of the European Commission (EC) through the funding of the Science, Technology and Arts (=S+T+ARTS) framework,³ an initiative to foster alliances between science, technology and artistic practice.

Since 2016 the S+T+ARTS Prize has been awarded to the most pioneering collaborations and results in the field of creativity and innovation at the intersection of science and technology with the arts.⁴ Science, technology, and the arts form a nexus with an extraordinarily high potential for creative innovation. As reported on the S+T+ARTS website and on the open calls, the role of artists is no longer seen to be only about propagating scientific and technological knowledge and skills among the general public but rather as a kind of catalyst that can inspire and trigger innovative processes.

The innovative process implemented by the S+T+ARTS Prize⁵ has been very relevant to boost discussion and awareness of the role of the arts fostering scientific and technological outcomes. However, even if the importance of the

S+T+ARTS Prize is well known and intuitive, no concrete quantification of the impacts of the Prize have been calculated so far. This makes all the more urgent the need to analyse the impact of the S+T+ARTS framework. Accordingly, during the S+T+ARTS Prize 2021–2023,⁶ a specific task has been dedicated to designing a framework for the impact assessment (De Rosa et al., 2022) and to validate the methodology through its testing (Diakou et al., 2023). The research question driving the impact assessment has been the following: Which is the impact of an EU funding programme aimed at stimulating the connection between arts, science, and technology? Which are the main results and main barriers?⁷

Theoretical background

In a paper published in 2019, Bublitz et al. state: “we identify a purposeful benefit of aesthetics and art: it is a solution to a problem, specifically, the vehicle through which community engagement and transformation may occur” (Bublitz et al., 2019). In the case of the S+T+ARTS, the arts are intended as a tool to foster certain topics; however, there is an additional element to consider, namely technology. The combination of both science and research through the use and application of technologies makes a critical difference thanks to the unique contribution of the arts. But what is the impact of this powerful combination, specifically supported by the S+T+ARTS initiative?

In the specific case of artistic research, even if impacts can be difficult to measure, “the value and importance of arts activities should not be negated simply because they are difficult to express using conventional systems” (Reeves, 2002: 37). There are, indeed, problems in trying to measure the impacts of the arts. Among

² For the call for papers for this special issue see: <https://www.frontierspartnerships.org/research-topics/80/unlocking-artistic-research—how-to-reframe-and-transform-the-current-challenges-of-managing-and-supporting-artistic-research-by-discovering-and-imagining-new-forms-of-impact-and-value>

³ For the S+T+ARTS framework see <https://culture.ec.europa.eu/node/1186>. The website of the S+T+ARTS initiative can be accessed at <https://starts.eu/about/>

⁴ For an archive of all projects honored with the S+T+ARTS Prize and supported by the S+T+ARTS initiative see <https://archive.aec.at/startsprize/>

⁵ For the S+T+ARTS Prize see <https://ars.electronica.art/starts-prize/en/>

⁶ <https://cordis.europa.eu/project/id/956603>

⁷ The task has been carried out by T6 Ecosystems, a consortium partner in the S+T+ARTS Prize 2021–2023. The developed methodology has been applied during the 3 years of project lifetime and tested over the 6 winners and 30 honorary mentions that have been honoured with the S+T+ARTS Prize between 2021 and 2023.

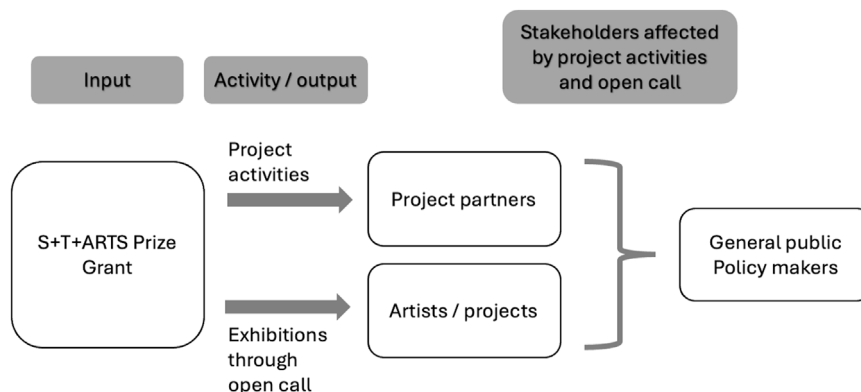


FIGURE 2

Impact assessment framework for the S+T+ARTS Prize.

others, measurements are often viewed as a validating experience even when aspects of artistic practice and research are often difficult to quantify (Moriarty, 1997; Williams, 1997). In this sense, the definition of a proper and balanced approach is crucial to be able to measure all dimensions. In the case of the S+T+ARTS Prize project, the scope of the evaluation framework for impact assessment was to measure the impact of the S+T+ARTS Prize, providing structured information on how the S+T+ARTS Prize impacts narratives and actions related to science, technology, and the arts.

The impact assessment framework for the S+T+ARTS Prize 2021–2023

To achieve the above-mentioned objectives, a flexible, adaptable, and iterative methodology has been developed to match the specificities of the S+T+ARTS ecosystem using a co-design approach engaging the project partners in the definition of dimensions and indicators to be assessed⁸. The International Association for Impact Assessment defines impact assessment as “the process of identifying the future consequences of a current or proposed action.” In other words, the “impact is the difference between what would happen with the action and what would happen without it” (IAIA, 2009: 1). Looking at the impact assessment of the S+T+ARTS Prize, the aim of the analysis was to explore the type and magnitude of difference that the S+T+ARTS

Prize makes and the types of stakeholders that it affects. To map the impact of the project, the adopted framework is based on the impact value chain approach (Figure 1).

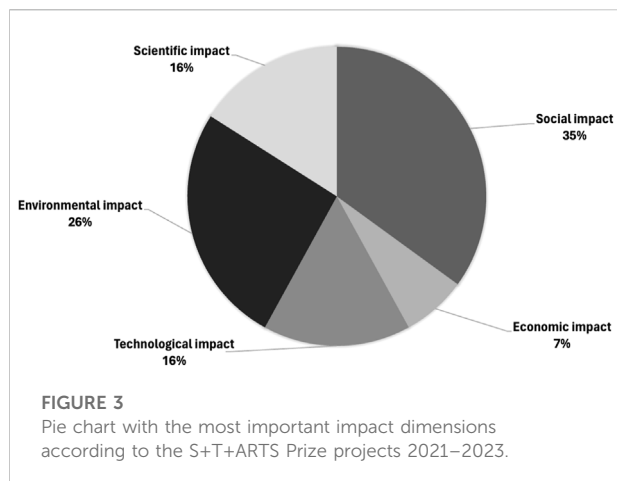
Following the impact value chain approach, the framework has been adapted to reflect the specificities of the S+T+ARTS Prize and of the S+T+ARTS ecosystem in general (Figure 2).

The impact assessment of the S+T+ARTS Prize 2021–2023 project

The S+T+ARTS impact assessment framework considers 5 areas of impact - social, economic, technological, political, and environmental - and reflects on different typologies of stakeholders. Each impact area corresponds to several dimensions and indicators that were translated into questions. Data was collected through a combination of desk research, questionnaires and interviews with the winners and honorary mentions, in order to ensure the gathering of both qualitative and quantitative data. Following the data collection, each project was analysed aggregating the interview transcription and the questionnaire with the notes from desk research. Each winner and honorary mention have been investigated following a case study approach, allowing us to identify the most relevant impacts for each project. Only after having completed the analysis of the individual case studies, have we been able to aggregate the main dimensions of impact mapping and to provide a broader comprehension of the impact of the S+T+ARTS Prize⁹.

⁸ The theoretical and methodological aspects of the framework have been inspired by previous work on European projects such as SEQUOIA (Passani et al., 2014), MAXICULTURE, IA4SI (Bellini et al., 2014; 2016; Passani et al., 2016), ACTION (Passani et al., 2020) and MediaFutures (Passani and De Rosa, 2021). The selection of dimensions and indicators has been led by an extensive literature review and several rounds of experimentation and refinement (De Rosa et al., 2022).

⁹ According to the privacy agreements with the teams, all data are presented here in an aggregated and anonymous manner so as to ensure the privacy of the participants.



According to the data analysis, the majority of the projects (35%) believe that the social dimension is the most important one in terms of impact, followed by the environmental dimension (26%) and less so by the scientific, technological (16% each) and economic dimensions (7%) (Figure 3). The emphasis on social impact emerged clearly in the interviews as participants expect that their projects will have an impact on societal and environmental challenges through raising awareness and educating, in addition to involvement and empowerment. The low importance of the economic impact of the S+T+ARTS Prize on the projects was also noted, as most participants do not view their outcomes as products to be commercially exploited. While this information must be considered in its self-assessment value, it is highly significant as it indicates what is perceived as the most relevant impact areas from the perspective of the participants themselves.

One of the most relevant social impact dimensions of the S+T+ARTS Prize on the projects is on bridging and bonding social capital, i.e. the capability of the teams to create connections and collaborations with different typologies of stakeholders, both within and outside their sector. Seventy percent of the interviewed teams observed a positive correlation between receiving the Prize and networking with stakeholders from the same sector, while a smaller percentage referred to networking with stakeholders from different sectors and in particular the civic, public, industry and business sector. The ability to create such collaborations was connected by the teams to the enhanced visibility and recognition offered by the S+T+ARTS Prize, specifically through participation in the Ars Electronica festival¹⁰.

¹⁰ At the time of data collection many teams were in the process of forming collaborations without concrete results yet; indeed, the impact of the S+T+ARTS Prize is expected to increase in the months following the end of the project.

Highly relevant to this is the interdisciplinarity that characterises all the projects and goes beyond work at the intersection of science, technology, and art. The discussion with the teams highlighted how receiving the S+T+ARTS Prize, an award that celebrates interdisciplinarity at its core, has an impact on the artists as it validates and enhances their work that is more fluid between sectors. Interdisciplinarity, especially in the way that it is promoted by the S+T+ARTS Prize, is essential for innovation and for pushing the boundaries of scientific and technological research.

Another important aspect that emerged is the impact on social inclusion and the role of citizens in the projects. While social inclusion was not understood in a uniform way by all projects, a significant number of the projects (9 projects, while an additional 3 teams would like to establish such strategies in the future) targeted vulnerable groups such as minorities, women, people with disabilities, people with different ethnic and cultural backgrounds, LGBTQ+ community, immigrants, etc.

The majority of the projects honoured by the S+T+ARTS Prize employed a range of strategies for citizen engagement. The nature and degree of involvement of citizens varied depending on the target of each project and its outcome. Some projects worked closely with local communities and involved them in the collection of information; other projects targeted the issues of data dignity, data sovereignty and data accessibility, while others engaged students and researchers through the dissemination of their scientific outcomes and the public through various modes of presenting their work. The overall goals of citizen engagement were to inform, involve, empower, and collaborate with the public. While the intention of the projects to have an impact on citizens is there, the lack of clear examples and quantitative data illustrating the impact on citizens indicates that more should be done in order to support these kinds of projects in developing a social inclusion strategy and a more structured way of gathering feedback from users.

The economic impact of the S+T+ARTS Prize on the projects and its subdimensions has been more difficult to explore and is often considered a more sensitive topic to discuss. The most relevant dimension that emerged clearly in the interviews, from the perspective of the projects is the impact on visibility and recognition. This would potentially translate into an economic impact since it could lead to more connections and opportunities. In fact, this has been the most recognisable impact of the S+T+ARTS Prize on the projects, observed at various degrees of intensity, but commented on by almost all the projects that we interviewed. Sixteen projects commented positively that the award of the S+T+ARTS Prize, either the Grand Prize or the Honorary Mention has had an impact on their visibility and recognition. The S+T+ARTS Prize functions as a “seal of approval” for the projects and offers recognition, validated by the EC, for projects that are at the intersection of science, technology, and art. Consequently, the Prize validates the strong interdisciplinary nature of the

projects and the ability of the creators to produce innovative work at the intersection of science, technology, and the arts. Participants noted that with the Prize it is easier to form collaborations with potential partners and institutions and to move forward their projects.

Another interesting aspect of the economic dimension is the impact on business and commercial exploitation. For the majority of the projects this was not a priority and for some, not even a possibility. A potential reason for this, lies in the open-source character of many projects and their objective of contributing to digital commons rather than private driven profits. In addition, there is the perception that commercial exploitation may compromise the integrity of the artist and the project. It is important to stress that the S+T+ARTS Prize does not entail specific activities that would help the development of this aspect, something that was commented on by the participants. While some teams would welcome the opportunity to explore this aspect further, especially as it could lead to further income and help with the sustainability of the projects and the continuation of the relevant research, more support would be needed from the S+T+ARTS ecosystem.

Environmental impact is at the core of interest in many of the S+T+ARTS Prize projects. However, sometimes in artistic projects the object addressed on an aesthetic-artistic level does not always reflect an ecological practice within the teams. Thus, the environmental impact of the S+T+ARTS Prize on the projects has been explored from the point of view of raising awareness to citizens and potentially leading to behavioural changes towards the establishment of sustainable practices. The majority of the projects deal with various iterations of environmental issues and target human-made destruction of ecosystems, energy crisis, biobased materials, recycling food systems, biodiversity, data warming and climate change. It was possible to observe that projects indeed targeted environmental challenges and aimed to inform and educate the public on these issues, leading to policy change. However, despite the fact that a number of projects showcased sustainable practices in terms of energy production, food systems, material production, etc., it is not possible to determine whether the honoured projects had an impact on the use of sustainable practices by citizens.

The technological impact of the S+T+ARTS Prize has been explored in view of the range of innovative technologies used by the projects honoured by the Prize. This is related to project conceptualization, as the S+T+ARTS Prize is a recognition programme of existing projects rather than an innovation programme to deliver technological developments. In other words, the award of the S+T+ARTS Prize did not facilitate the production of new scientific knowledge or innovative technologies but rather it recognized projects that are producing cutting-edge advancements in this regard. In order to explore this aspect from the perspective of the projects, we

identified the most innovative aspects in terms of technology employed by the projects, such as biotechnology, machine learning and blockchain and new algorithms. It should be noted however that in the interviews, the majority of the teams did not view the technological dimension as a significant impact area for their project. Rather, teams used innovative technologies in order to promote environmental, social, and political issues.

Conclusion

To conclude, even if the methodology and data collection used has shortcomings that should be addressed in future implementation, the analysis allowed us to better understand the limits and barriers of such a framework and provide some suggestions on actions to be undertaken to improve it. The results reported in this paper can be useful for institutions that intend to promote specific frameworks on artistic research; additionally, they provide insights on which is the potentiality of the projects analysed, and which are the difficulties encountered by the stakeholders engaged in artistic research.

The analysis of the data shows that the most readily observed and identifiable impact dimension is the social one. The award of the S+T+ARTS Prize has a stimulating effect on increasing the social capital of the teams and results in new connections and collaborations with various stakeholders both within and outside the participants' areas of expertise. The S+T+ARTS Prize, an award that celebrates interdisciplinarity at its core, has a great impact on the artists as it validates and enhances their work that is more fluid between sectors and their role in producing innovation. Within the social dimension we should also emphasise that many projects target underrepresented and vulnerable groups at risk of social exclusion. In addition, projects employ diverse strategies for social engagement and involve citizens at various stages of the projects from collecting information to being educated about various issues. The overwhelming majority of the projects target societal challenges including environmental and human rights issues. Indeed, the social dimension of the projects has been mentioned by the majority of the participants to the interviews as the most significant area of impact. Education and awareness on social issues ranging from social exclusion to data ethics and the effects of the environmental crisis on our society (e.g., energy and food crisis) are two of the most commonly mentioned goals brought up by the respondents, in addition to involvement and empowerment. Artistic research, especially within a supported framework, such as the one offered by the S+T+ARTS Prize is indeed a powerful tool to explore innovative ways to deal with the current societal challenges that the world is facing.

The economic impact of the S+T+ARTS Prize emerges as less relevant and as a dimension that is more complex to track and quantify. Indeed, we are dealing with an epistemological gap since on the one hand the EC and policymakers emphasise the need to map the economic impact of artistic practices while on the other artists and creatives are seemingly not interested or able in measuring the economic impact of their work. To this we should also add the fact that the impact of artistic research is difficult to be assessed through traditional economic indicators. The work carried out as part of the S+T+ARTS Prize, both within the context of the impact assessment as well as through policy work (De Rosa and Liebl, 2023) highlights the need to rethink the economic impact of the S+T+ARTS framework and the urgent necessity to explore new indicators that can better capture the potential economic results of the work carried out. The translation of aspects of economic impact that better reflect the essence of artistic research into concrete impacts for the EC and policymakers will ensure that frameworks such as the S+T+ARTS will continue to receive the financial support that is necessary for their growth.

Data availability statement

The datasets presented in this article are not readily available because Data are anonymously reported but the dataset contains personal data which is why it is not available for sharing. Requests to access the datasets should be directed to the corresponding author.

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Author contributions

All authors participated in the design, interpretation of the studies and analysis of the data and review of the manuscript. In particular, SiD worked on the definition of the methodological framework; StD focused on the data collection and performed the analysis. The authors worked together on data interpretations deriving main results and conclusions. All authors contributed to the article and approved the submitted version.

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Digital art *work* and AI: a new paradigm for work in the contemporary art sector in China

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This paper explores a paradigm shift in work culture in the contemporary art sector due to digital transition and the introduction of AI. New ways of working with AI and digital software are embedded and normalized in everyday Chinese artistic practices. This work includes new forms of creativity and efficiency, yet, simultaneously includes new types of digital labour. This paper conceptualizes this as “digital art *work*,” which draws attention to the often-overlooked aspects of artists’ work, particularly their everyday artistic practices that increasingly include digital software and AI. What is the role and position of the artist in an environment where digital software and AI are becoming more central in artistic creation? How do artists creatively (mis)use AI? What does this paradigm shift in work culture mean for the future of the artist’s role and the future of the contemporary art sector? This paper draws on 48 semi-structured interviews with visual artists and arts professionals, including painters, sculptors, mixed-media, and internet artists as well as contemporary art gallery owners, museum project directors, curators, and culture policymakers living and working in China during 2023. The findings show how Chinese artists are mastering AI and opening up new spaces for creativity and how the contemporary art sector in China has already transitioned to a new “digital way” in artistic creation. These findings can help to create policy around AI globally and provide solutions for the sustainability of the artist profession and the future of the contemporary art sector.

KEYWORDS

visual artists, digital artists, the creative industries, the contemporary art sector, digital work, AI, China

Introduction

This paper explores the paradigm shift in the nature of “creative” work in the contemporary art sector, which is taking place due to digital transition and the introduction of AI. This paper uncovers how artists use AI in combination with other digital software to create ideas, research, exhibition proposals, and as part of their digital art work. This includes investigation into the often-overlooked aspects of artists’ work by focusing on their everyday artistic practices that increasingly include digital software and AI. This allows a presentation of the human account in this very much technological determinist global discourse, in terms of how *we* can

create creativity and innovation and growth in the sector through these kinds of uses of AI. This paper considers how artists use AI, how they feel with using AI, and their thoughts about its use going forward for contemporary art sector development, policymaking, and management. This new knowledge can help with future policymaking and the management of AI globally and of ensuring sustainable and effective contemporary art sector development by showing how these artists are harnessing AI for creativity—showing opportunities of AI from artists' perspectives and showing the impacts of AI on the future of work in this sector.

There has been rapid digital transition in China, resulting in a mature and integrated digital ecosystem today, bringing opportunities for cultural development and digital access to culture. However, artists must keep up with this trend. The unique situation in China can demonstrate what is happening in the contemporary art sector globally as a result of rapid digital transformation, particularly with new uses of AI, and provides a case to show the opportunities and changes AI can have on contemporary visual artists' practices and the contemporary art sector. Artificial Intelligence (AI) is now a common tool for the new generation of contemporary visual artists in China. AI programs such as Stable Diffusion, DALL-E, MidJourney, and ChatGPT have spread rapidly in the contemporary art sector in China during 2023 due to the mature, advanced digital environment and a general appetite amongst artists for convenience and accuracy in their work practices. This opens-up the discussion of whether AI can be creative and empowering in work. This provides a novel angle amidst existing discourse that takes a predominantly critical standpoint towards AI concerning copyright, morality, and ethics (Tajalli, 2021; Appel et al., 2023) or AI as jeopardizing creativity (Bisoyi, 2022; Nolan, 2022). The aim in this paper is to connect these two sets of literature on precarious creative work that discusses "freelance," "precarious," or "passion but precarious" working conditions (Sigler, 2017; Serafini and Banks, 2020) and on digital aesthetics and techniques (Astle and Muir, 2002; Kucuk and Soydal, 2003; Yilmaz and Celic, 2011) in order to raise awareness on and increase the amount of literature that connects the two in order to show the impact of AI on working cultures.

Focusing on the contemporary art sector and visual artists in China can provide new perspectives on AI, by showing how AI can be positive for artists' work by enhancing their productivity, efficiency, and innovativeness. It can also show new ways of using AI while still maintaining human control and creativity. This unique situation/case can be used to show what is needed in terms of cultural management and policymaking for sustainable and effective culture sector development through this historical period of AI adoption.

As a result, this research expands a small set of literature that sees the positives of AI for artists' work (Mitchell et al., 2003; Edmonds et al., 2005) and fills a gap in the literature about this in relation to China. With much discussion about and use of AI from companies, businesses, and the tech sector, it is evident there is a need to hear from artists who are often vanguards with new technologies. Hence, artists can shed light on nascent bottom-up forms of creativity in using AI. This research shows artists as a significant and valuable voice who are able to speak directly to the changing and nuanced questions currently taking place globally—through discussions by those who are using data, machine learning (ML), and AI everyday in their work. For example, artists have historically deployed new technologies in unexpected and often prescient ways (Rieland, 2014; Shanken, 2022) and have been interpreted as vanguards of new ideas, techniques, and cultural practices (Francastel, 2000).

"Digital art work" is conceptualized in this paper as a way to understand the paradigm shift in work cultures in the contemporary art sector and, in particular, artists' digital work practices. This is a play on words, meaning both artists' artworks as well as their artistic practices that belie a particular politics of everyday digital labour. This term allows for a broader discussion and definition of art work, beyond only the final artworks' aesthetics and technical aspects and on "digital art" that discusses digital techniques or digital aesthetics (Astle and Muir, 2002; Kucuk and Soydal, 2003; Yilmaz and Celic, 2011) and digital techniques and digital aesthetics of AI art (Manovich, 2018; Contreras-Koterbay, 2019; Liang, 2022). Instead, this paper argues more discussion is required on the human, social issues of sustainability of the contemporary art sector, artists' role, and considerations of how artists creatively (mis)use AI. This is required because AI is not only influencing artworks but is also influencing artists' working conditions. However, the latter is not yet covered in the literature on AI and art or AI and the creative industries. Hence, more connection between AI and changes in working conditions is needed.

This study includes 48 interviews altogether, comprising 25 in-person interviews, 20 online interviews, 3 written interviews. Please refer to the [Supplementary Appendix](#) for a full list of all interviewees' positions, ages, and gender. There were 32 female interviewees and 16 male interviewees. This study includes 29 interviews with contemporary visual artists, including painters, video artists, multi-media artists, sculptors, internet artists, and photographers, who work within the contemporary art sector in China. This research used the following definition of "artist"—as a person who creates art (such as painting, sculpture, music, or writing) using conscious skill and creative imagination, having graduated from an art academy or university in art related major. This paper also refers to "creative workers" in order to

combine artists' and arts professional's work, to emphasize aspects of their daily work, and to show they are also exposed to labour demands. This paper focuses on independent artists and their studio work practices. The artists are aged between 20 and 61. This wide age range was chosen to gain a broader perspective on use of digital technologies and AI. These include internet and metaverse artists such as CHILLCHILL, Wang Xin, and Shi Zheng. There are also other young artists who are sculpture, video, and installation artists but who have very digital orientated work processes, such as Armida, Yan, and Maggie. Each interviewee is introduced in the Endnotes. All interviewees included in this paper have given written consent to share their name and biography.

The study also interviewed 19 arts professionals from across China, including curators, contemporary museum professionals, contemporary art gallery directors, contemporary art space project managers, and cultural policymakers. The interviewees are from a mixture of government, independent, and private organizations within the contemporary art sector. However, this second set of interviews with arts professionals are for the purposes of providing broader context and understanding on the overview of what is happening in the contemporary art sector and how the sector is being influenced by new digital technologies such as AI. The interviews were carried out during 2023, either in person or online. Participants are of different ages ranging from 27 to 59 years old. This wide age range was chosen to gain a broader perspective on use of digital technologies and AI in particular. The Results section includes some perspectives from contemporary curators discuss the topic of AI and new digital technologies in their exhibitions or who use AI in their exhibition design process, such as Wang Xiquan and Jenny.

This is coupled with a systematic review and analysis of government policy documents on national digitization strategy, national cultural development directives, contemporary art sector policies, (digital) cultural policy, AI policy, and directives for the integration of culture and technology. Analysis of interviews was based on these same theme of digital work culture, changing work practices in the contemporary art sector, how culture and technology have been integrated in artworks and creative workers' entire working practices, and how the "culture" of work in the sector overall is changing. Interview analysis was conducted to see how national government policy has impacted the sector in actuality.

The participants are all trained arts professionals or artists, having graduated from an art school, academy, or university. They define themselves as either artist, "cultural worker," digital artist, or painter. They include different types of artists like sculptors, painters, digital artists, video artists, new media artists, and mixed-media installation artists. In recruiting stage, they did not need to have any previous experience

with technologies. Subsequently, the sample includes a wide range of artists and cultural professionals to understand the broader perspectives on use of AI and nature of artists' work today.

AI adoption and regulation in China

In a relatively short period of time, China has become one of the world's most technologically advanced nations. Due to a streamlined and mature digital infrastructure, AI has spread rapidly and is now being used in many creative industry sectors including art, music, and film. This is being funded through large-scale collaborations with big brands and tech companies. AI has also developed rapidly due to government backing and the increasing value the government places in culture, technology, and innovation. Policy efforts on digital transformation in China have been progressive and forward-thinking, clearly showing its investment in the creative industries and the digital cultural economy. This is reflected in the government's long-term strategy for economic and national development (Montgomery and Keane, 2004). The 14th Five-Year Plan for Cultural Development states that "it is necessary to further develop and expand the cultural industry, and give full play to the role of culture in activating development momentum, and promoting the optimization and upgrading of economic structure" and, particularly, to promote the "integration of culture, science, and technology" (CHINESE GOVERNMENT, 2022). In addition, the Chinese government is now developing the digital creative industries for economic growth and national development goals (Zhang Jie, China Daily.com, 8th September 2022).

The creative industries, particularly the contemporary art sector, have been rapidly and radically combined with digital technology over the past 7 years. Related policies for the development of digital technology into the contemporary art sector were introduced in 2016. In 2023, a national digitization strategy was outlined towards 2025 to promote the integration of new digital technologies into various industries, including the contemporary art sector with "the integration of art and technology" (CHINESE GOVERNMENT, 2021). As a direct result of these policies, many artists are now creating digital artworks and using more digital processes. These methods are now preferred by many and have replaced the traditional artistic creation process. This means that AI is influencing artwork aesthetics and techniques *and* the working conditions of artists. The working conditions in the contemporary art sector in China today are characterized by self-employment along with small- and micro- art enterprises. Artists and arts professionals tend to have project-based careers and a high degree of mobility, they often have an irregular and unpredictable income, and they combine several jobs to earn a living. The fully online conditions during the COVID-19 pandemic accelerated developments in

digital technologies but has also normalized these digital working conditions. Hence, this unique situation can show other countries and regions what working conditions after rapid digital transition and the adoption of AI looks like in the contemporary art sector.

In particular, China is ahead of many countries in the adoption of AI. The Chinese Government began supporting the AI industry at the national level in 2016. For instance, the 13th Five-Year Plan (2016–2020) specified AI as key for achieving economic growth and the 14th Five-Year Plan (2021–2025) outlined a plan for continued state investment in AI. In 2017, the Chinese Government introduced a vision for the development of AI in the Next Generation Artificial Intelligence Development Plan (新一代人工智能发展规划) (NGAIDP). The Plan outlined China's strategy of using AI for socio-economic development and creating an AI industry that would position China as the world leader in AI by 2030, and to emerge as the global leader in defining ethical norms and standards for AI. China wanted to make AI "the main driving force for China's industrial upgrading and economic transformation" (CHINESE GOVERNMENT, 2017). The NGAIDP is the first national-level legislation that focuses on the development of AI as a unified strategy.

From 2020 until 2022, several AI laws have been published at various levels in China in response to these broader strategies. At the regional level, China's first provincial law on AI development took effect on 1 October 2020, with the publication of the *Shanghai Regulations on Promoting the Development of the AI Industry*, which sought to promote the AI industry at the municipal level in Shanghai. Also, the Shenzhen government passed a similar law on the Regulations on Promoting Artificial Intelligence Industry in Shenzhen, which took effect on 1 November 2022. At this time, Beijing also started outlining policies for specifically addressing generative AI systems. The *Internet Information Service Algorithmic Recommendation Management Provisions*, which set up a governance framework for regulating recommendation systems, came into effect on 1 March 2022. In addition, Beijing released more targeted rules for generative AI through the *Internet Service Deep Synthesis Management Provisions*, which came into effect on 10 January 2023, which applies particularly to deepfake outputs from AI technology. In 2023, China's central and local governments have issued AI-related policies, wherein the "artificial intelligence industry," "application of major artificial intelligence scenarios," "standard system," and a "technical security system" have become policy priorities (CHINESE GOVERNMENT, 2023a; CHINESE GOVERNMENT, 2023b).

In 2023, the "First National Artificial Intelligence Application Scenario Innovation Challenge" was officially launched (CHINESE GOVERNMENT, 2023b). This

competition is jointly sponsored by the Chinese Society of Artificial Intelligence and the New Generation Artificial Intelligence Development Research Center of the Ministry of Science and Technology, with the theme of "Scenario-driven Digital Intelligence Power," aiming to drive key core technologies of artificial intelligence with scenario innovation, focus on solving major application and industrialization problems of artificial intelligence, promote the deep integration of artificial intelligence and the real economy, and contribute to the transformation and upgrading of China's digital technology and the high-quality development of the economy (CHINESE GOVERNMENT, 2023b). These policies are guided by the report of the 20th National Congress of Xi Jinping in 2022, which outlined the implementation of the innovation-driven development strategy that aimed to strengthen the national strategic scientific and technological strength (Xinhua News Agency, 2022).

On 13 July 2023, the Chinese government published its finalized rules on generative artificial intelligence, the Interim Measures for the Management of Generative Artificial Intelligence Services (CHINESE GOVERNMENT, 2023a) which came into effect on 15 August 2023. The objective of the Interim Measures is to regulate generative AI, which is primarily designed to generate content and promote the use of AI for national economic development, ease of use, and to promote business and individuals' innovation. This makes it one of the first countries to regulate the technology to promote its use.

These changes in policy are happening as policymakers globally carefully study the introduction of generative AI tools such as ChatGPT and increasingly view their regulation as a policy priority. In other parts of the world, such as the European Union and the US, governments are slowing developments and applications of AI with discussions on ethics and morals surrounding AI, copyright, ownership, and the artist's role. Subsequently, regulations in the EU are outlined to prevent the risks of using AI, while the regulations in the US are for ensuring more accountability and responsible use of AI. As the *World Economic Forum* (2022) states, "the need to resolve issues around the Responsible Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) has become increasingly important for countries, citizens, and businesses over the last 8 years, with approximately 60 countries now having National AI Strategies and many have, or are creating, policies which allow for responsible use of this technology." That said, a survey by *Adobe* (2018) showed that three-quarters of visual artists in the United States, United Kingdom, Germany, and Japan would consider using AI as assistants, in areas such as image search, editing, and other "non-creative" tasks. As *Anantrasirichai and Bull* (2022) argue, this indicates a general acceptance of AI as a tool across the contemporary art sector globally.

Impacts of AI on art, the art industry, and work

This paper intervenes in literature on digital transformation in the contemporary art sector and trialing new technologies like AI in art. There is a lot of focus in the literature on digital techniques and digital aesthetics (Astle and Muir, 2002; Kucuk and Soydal, 2003; Yilmaz and Celic, 2011).⁹ In particular, some scholars discuss the artists relationship with AI and levels of control in this collaboration. In fact, some scholars understand AI as a favored collaborator in artistic creation. As Miller (2019) argues, “recent advancements in deep learning have reinvigorated interest at the intersection of art, creativity and machine learning.” This literature is concerned with whether it is possible to control these digital technologies. As Lopez (2023) argues, “AI has emerged as a desirable collaborator in artistic creation. Artists use AI as a creative tool and work with algorithms to set up specific rules [...] It is the artist who will train the AI and determine its environment and learning rules, which makes the AI dependent on the artist” (Lopez, 2023). Hence, there are some who say the artist can control AI by determining the environment, rules, and input data. There is also a small set of literature on the empowering nature of new digital technologies for artists’ work practices, although, this has not yet been applied to AI. For example, Edmonds et al. (2005) discuss how “the arrival of digital media and computational tools has opened up new possibilities for creative practice” and Mitchell et al. (2003) state that “the connection between technology and creative practice has yielded many economic benefits and cultural value,” arguing that technology can increase creatives’ productivity levels.

However, there are concerns about how digital image-making technologies are fundamentally changing understandings of art (Kittler, 1999; Kholeif, 2018; Lopez, 2023). These claims suggest that the “digital condition” induces a loss of trust in the image and a blurring of boundaries between artist and audience (Kittler, 1999). There is also a set of literature that discusses the changes in artworks (Kittler, 1999; Towse and Hanke, 2013; Douglas, 2015) due to digital technologies and how the fundamental meaning of and way of seeing art is changing due to new digital technologies such as AI. For example, Kholeif, (2018) argues that the viewer now sees artworks differently through digital technologies. Kholeif, (2018) argues that a new cultural and artistic landscape has taken shape since 2000, “the post-digital condition,” since when there is a new language for seeing, feeling, and experiencing art. Also, BRIDLE, (2014) argues “the new aesthetic refers to the increasing appearance of the visual language of digital technology and the internet in the physical world, and the blending of the virtual and physical.” There is a small set of literature about artists’ uses of AI in artworks (Mitchell et al., 2003; Edmonds et al., 2005; Miller, 2019; Lopez, 2023), which focuses on aesthetics and techniques. However, this requires discussion about how artists feel about working with AI and how they creatively (mis)use AI to maintain their control and authorship.

This paper also intervenes in another set of literature on the nature of work in the creative industries, which focuses on flexible, freelance, and “passion but precarious” working conditions (Serafini and Banks, 2020) and the totalizing nature of their work that leads to a blurring between work and life (Sigler, 2017). This relates to literature on the nature of creative vis-vis demanding artistic labour since the development of web 2.0 (Towse and Hanke, 2013; Douglas, 2015; Sigler, 2017), which hints at how the nature of work has become more about multi-tasking and pressured with online work. For example, Douglas, (2015) argues “technology and the internet inherently permeate the work of contemporary artists,” McHUGH, (2014) argues “you’re always on, always having to manage your online presence.” Kholeif (2018) mentions how today “artists are working in diverse contexts, from eBay auctions to augmented reality.” Troemel (2014) also argues “the divide between artist and viewer becomes negligible when users of social media are able to more powerfully define the context (and thus the meaning) of an artwork” and “artists on the internet need an audience to create for.” However, this set of literature on artists’ work has not yet been updated to include the changes in work conditions due to the introduction of AI.

Digital work as empowering

New digital skills are needed today, which require constant learning and often rapid and radical adaptation to new digital updates. This increase in “digital work” was accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic as, during this time, a lot more content and practices shifted online. However, it was already very much established in their practices beforehand. As Wang Yiquan¹ says, “In the past 2–3 years, I have learnt more about and used more digital technologies, including AI. Because of covid the physical path was not possible so there was more online.”

Digital technologies are difficult to operate and, hence, consume more work in order to learn and master. However, many artists in the current generation are unprepared because they have not studied these digital skills at art academy or university. Hence, many spend hours learning, testing, and trialing before they start their actual artistic creation. However, they seem to be of the mindset that you should

1. Wang Yiquan (b. 1987) is a curator and designer based in Shanghai. He is one of the founding partners of Acts and Pathways, which is a design company that he established in 2018 with designer Wu Jiayin. His research interests as a curator focus on the relationship between the city and art as well as the relationship between art and the economy. He has also contributed to a wide range of urban spatial designs and research projects in Shanghai, Beijing, and Hangzhou. Wang Yiquan received a BA Degree in Journalism from the Beijing International Studies University. He also studied Visual Communication Design at the Central Academy of Fine Arts in Beijing and completed an MA Degree in Narrative Environments at Central Saint Martins in London. Yiquan is originally from Beijing and now lives and works in Shanghai.

have a constant state of learning and be able to easily adapt to new technologies. Indeed, Shi Zheng² likes to have this feeling of newness with her projects and it has now become normal to learn a new technologies and systems for each new project. As Shi Zheng says,

“digital technology is definitely more convenient ... But using it I think is something that takes time to learn ... Technology change is actually always there, and because I use different technologies for each project, there will be a learning phase to constantly learn and use a system inside each work. It may add some freshness. I think for the project being done to maintain a state of learning, rather than a technology is used for a long time after the very skilled to produce. I may have such a habit.”

AI is used to help in this learning process. As Wang Xin³ says,

I have spent a lot of time self-learning those things [coding, AI] and self-taught myself how to use this as my tool to help my artworks. I have to update myself, and because I use it everyday it is easy to update. Always learning. Actually I enjoy. AI can help me to learn now. Like ChatGPT is really helpful to fix the coding part. I write coding and sometimes it's not right, so I copy and paste to ChatGPT and it fixes the code. Actually I use ChatGPT almost everyday to help me fix my code. Maybe before I spent several days to fix but now they can do it in several second. So it really helped to improve my progress.

- 2 Shi Zheng (b. 1990) is a contemporary visual artist based in Shanghai and New York. Shi's artworks include audio-visual installations, digital music, and live performance. Shi is interested in virtual simulation, “machine vision,” and the philosophy of technology. Alongside his individual artistic creations, Shi also collaborates with other artists in various fields. For instance, he works as part of an artist group called RMBit that was founded in 2013 by Shi and Nenghuo, Wang Zhipeng, and Weng Wei. This artist group focuses on the current context of social media. Additionally, Shi is part of the Audio-Visual performance group called Open Super Control (OSC). Shi's individual and group works have been exhibited at museums, art institutions, and media art festivals in China and internationally. Some of these institutions include TANK Shanghai, Sifang Art Museum, MOCA Yinchuan, Sound Art China, Beijing Biennial, FILE Electronic Language International Festival, Ars Electronica, Institute of Contemporary Arts London, and Castello di Rivara. Shi received a BA Degree from China Academy of Art and received an MFA Degree from the School of the Art Institute in Chicago.
- 3 Wang Xin (b. 1983) is an artist who is based in Shanghai. Her work focuses on the topics of the status of the artist, the functioning of the art market, and the use of AI for hypnosis therapy. In 2016, Xin had a solo show at the de Sarthe Gallery, Hong Kong, titled “Every Artist Should Have A Solo Show”. Some of her works include commentary about her own position and relation to the art world with the use of a sense of humor. Her second solo show, titled “The Must-See Art Show Where You Can Find 10,000 Artists”, exhibited at de Sarthe Gallery in Hong Kong, focuses on the functioning of the art world. Both exhibitions include interactive, site-specific installations. Wang is also a certified hypnotist and has explored using hypnosis in her art with the use of AI. Wang received a BFA Degree from China Academy of Art in 2007 and received an MFA Degree from the Art Institute of Chicago in 2011. Wang is from Yichang, Hubei, and currently lives and works in Shanghai.

Some artists express how they are empowered by using AI. Some feel AI gives them power, stimulation, creativity, enhances their mental and imaginative capabilities, and improving their accuracy and progress. Miao Xiaochun⁴ says, “the new technology gives me four hands.” They feel AI gives them more power, speed, and time. As Yan Xiaojing⁵ says, “digital is good for accuracy and allows me to compute large amount of information in little time.” Techniques or ideas that used to be impossible are now possible with new technology. Hence, artists say that they can think of doing whole new things and it expands their imagination.

Only two artists were worried about losing their jobs to AI, while the majority see AI and digital software as “tools,” “thinking systems,” “stimulants,” “another pair of hands” to enhance their performance. The majority are comfortable using AI for creating their ideas, images, and producing artworks and are not openly worried about losing creativity or their position as an artist.

Digital artistic creation processes

87.5% of participants use AI, regardless of their age or art medium and including both artists and arts professionals. The most popular AI software are MidJourney, DALL-E, Stable Diffusion, and ChatGPT. 18 said that they have used AI for testing ideas, 2 use AI for research, 4 use AI for idea creation, 3 use AI for image creation, 5 use it as a research tool, and 3 use it for text writing for the final piece (particularly video artists), and 7 have used AI in the final visual piece or exhibition. For example, some use DALL-E as it is easy to use but they notice it is not as powerful as MidJourney. Some use AI generated images for inspiration while others use them for

- 4 Miao Xiaochun (b. 1964) is a new media artist who is based in Beijing. Miao is known for his large-scale photographs and panoramas of modern Chinese cityscapes. His artworks include computer-generated installations including one notable artwork titled “The Last Judgement in Cyberspace”. This is a 3D monochrome reworking of Michelangelo's “The Last Judgment” from the Sistine Chapel, whereby Miao has replaced every figure with a virtual model of himself. He began exploring the connection between the real and the virtual in the 1990s. He received a BA Degree from Nanjing University in 1986. He received an MA Degree from the Central Academy of Fine Arts in Beijing in 1989 and received a second MA Degree from Kassel Academy of Fine Arts in Germany in 1999. He also teaches Art Photography and Digital Media at the Central Academy of Fine Arts in Beijing. He was born in Wuxi, Jiangsu Province, and now lives and works in Beijing.
- 5 Yan Xiaojing (b. 1978) is a contemporary mixed-media artist based in Shanghai, Nanjing, and Toronto. She is known for her sculpture, installation, and public artworks. Her current artwork focus on how nature transcends culture through references to the eternal and natural geological time. This research and exploration began with an artwork titled “Spirit Cloud,” which is a large oscillating cloud composed of individual freshwater pearls suspended on filaments of fishing wire. She received a BA Degree in Decorative Arts from Nanjing University of the Arts. She also received an MA Degree from George Brown College in Toronto in Jewelry Design and an MA Degree from Indiana University of Pennsylvania in Sculpture. She is originally from Nanjing but currently works in Shanghai, Nanjing, and Toronto.

their art creation process and others use them for the final artwork. Some use ChatGPT to create poems or scripts for final artworks, either by inputting their own question or an existing text into ChatGPT and waiting for it to generate text.

"I use AI and ChatGPT for research, to find out answers to my questions. It makes me feel less lonely in the creation process[...]I use machine learning for idea creation, and I use rendering and modelling for visualizing. And I use Blender and some mixed with Photoshop for generating the exhibition view." (Maggie)

AI has a clear purpose and role in artists' work processes, either to help with idea creation, research, helping to create scripts, or as a central part of the final artwork. Hence, these artists' work increasingly revolves around using a combination of AI, machine learning, and digital software from idea stage to factory production stage. AI is used as part of the creation process and in combination with other digital software. They have gone past the stage of testing AI; AI is very much integrated into their artistic creation process. AI is most commonly used in the initial stage of artistic creation, before using digital rendering, modelling, or game engine design software. As Blair⁶ says, "Today, they can make the whole piece from digital. Digital-born art. More young artists are doing that. It is very new."

As Wang Yiquan says, "because AI changes the image and the ecology of the image a lot and how we can make an image, the whole creation process has been subverted." AI has its own distinct position and role in this digital artistic creation process. As CHILLCHILL⁷ says, "I think AI has its own beauty, aesthetic and style, totally different than 3D software and rendering."

These artists apply this digital work process for the creation of artworks because they see it as efficient, cost-effective, and practical. As Armida⁸ says, "It's convenience, such as ChatGPT, it's really beneficial

to the creation of your work." Maggie⁹ says "more people are doing it digitally in China, just because the production side of it is more approachable. With factories. Cheaper, more efficient, quicker."

Artists can complete more work in a shorter amount of time with the aid of AI. This makes them feel they can achieve more, move forward quicker with ideas, and be more efficient and productive in their work. As Wang Yiquan says, "it moves my ideas forward." This brings work satisfaction because the digital way makes them feel more accomplished. CHILLCHILL states the practical reasons for moving from being a painter to internet artist:

"I switched to 3D animation, it gives me more motion, and painting takes too much time. If I use the computer I can do it quickly, so it's more convenient, so I switched to the digital way. Painting needs a big studio with a high roof, you need to live outside of the city, but I like to live inside the city, so like this studio, it has to be small, too small for painting."

This total turn to "the digital way" is germane to the culture and recent history of rapid digital transformation in China. The distinctiveness of China's technological development and its influences on the way artists work is shared by participants:

"In China now the digital things develop so rapidly and all the designing ways and techniques change in recent years so we need to study and create many new things with new rules and online tools." (Santy)¹⁰

"In China, it's about how perfect you can do things, and then we have the technology, which can do better, so why not let the tech do things. This is many people's mindset. But if you want to be creative, you can get trapped with what the dig tech can allow you to do." (Jenny)

6 Blair (b. 1996) is a member of staff in the Public Education Department at West Bund Museum in Shanghai, which is a privately funded contemporary art museum. She was born in Fujian but now currently lives and works in Shanghai. She received a BA Degree in Musicology from Shanghai Conservatory of Music and then received an MA Degree in Arts and Cultural Management from Pratt Institute in New York.

7 CHILLCHILL (b.1990) is a digital artist, internet artist, and 3D animator. He also works in the club scene to exhibit his artworks. His artworks have an digital aesthetic and feature a dystopian exploration of society today and in the future. One recurring theme in his work is the "share economy," which is represented in examples of Mobike and Alipay. He graduated from Sichuan Fine Art Institute after studying Oil Painting. Several key galleries and museums have exhibited his work, including Ota Fine Arts, Shanghai. He is originally from Beihai and currently lives in Shanghai.

8 Zhou Chengzhou (Armida) (周承舟; b. 1982) is a film director and photographer. His work is concerned with problems relating to the mental and spiritual wellbeing of individuals. Zhou's work also revolves around the concepts of industry, urbanization, and marginalization. He was born in Changde, Hunan. He studied literature and language and Peking University.

9 Maggie Menghan Chen (Maggie) (b. 1998, Beijing) is a sculptor and mixed-media artist. She lives and works in Beijing and London. She obtained her MA Degree in Fine Art at Chelsea College of Arts following her BA degree in Art History at New York University. Maggie Menghan Chen explores the growth and metamorphosis of life in her sculpture works. Chen creates surreal sculptures that are hybrids of real and non-real elements. A lot of her inspiration comes from flora and fauna. The ferocity of beasts work as metaphors for the human psyche. Chen also sees her work and delicacy of flowers represent the struggle between aggression and sensitivity in the mind.

10 Ting Sun (Santy) is an Associate Professor in the School of Art at Nantong University. She is also a researcher at the International Public Art Association and Shanghai Collaborative Center for Public Art. She graduated from Shanghai Academy of Fine Arts with a doctorate degree. Her research interests include urban public art and rural revitalization. Currently she studies at as a visiting scholar in the department of Computer Graphics Technology at Purdue University. Her research is committed to constructing a Chinese path of public art evaluation from the perspective of public participation, taking into account the development characteristics of public art and the transformation needs of urban-rural integration. Her public art work "Yuyangli Square" was selected in the "2021–2022 China Landscape Design Yearbook," and she has acted as a curator of the 4th China Design Exhibition and Public Art Exhibition in 2023, and moderator of the 5th International Public Art Forum in 2020.

As a result, the role of the artist is changing, as they collaborate now with a digital suite and are always changing or updating their skills. This means that, as Wang Yiquan says, “the lone-scholar-artist tradition in China is changing.” The scholar of one material is not favoured by this generation of artists, who are always learning new systems for every project.

Artists’ creative (mis)uses of AI and digital software

Some artists discuss how they creatively misuse AI. They are also using AI and other digital software in novel ways and not in the ways the technology was intended to be used. Importantly, all are using AI in combination with other digital software, including Blender, Unreal Engine, Unity, Miya, and Premier Pro. They are combining software, mixing mediums such as video and game, or purposefully misusing the software. Participants use words to describe this creative control they have found, using words such as “training,” “controlling,” “mixing,” “breaking” and “influencing.” They say they do this to get creative results. CHILLCHILL says “I don’t like to use the software in the correct way. I don’t want to use it correctly. I want to mess around and do something new. Definitely, this way can be creative.” Also, Shi Zheng says “I break the system to use it well. I use a different technologies for each artwork to get good results [...] I try to think of other ways to influence it [the AI].”

Some artists are combining software for creative effect. As CHILLCHILL says,

“I want to mix them together [the software] to have something fun out of it. I just want to play with it, and see what I can get from it. I started using ChatGPT this year, Mid Journey and AI stuff. I am mixing them together[...] I get more and more freedom because now I can add more things inside and it changed my work a lot, made more freedom. There is more possibility than still image. The creating part with AI and software is more fun to me, because I can combine image, video, music, and then it’s like the whole performance. I really get used to using dig technologies.”

Many are purposefully not using the software in the correct way for creative effect. Instead, they want to “mess” and “play” around and do something new. As Yan Zhou¹¹ says,

“right now I’m working on my new work using Unity software that I use a lot, back in 2012 its totally different because if you know about lots of video artists they are doing the shooting they are using the camera to do the shooting and putting the footage into the software like FinalCut or PremierPro. So what I do is kind of different. Because I use this software *a lot* so right now I am doing something really experimental—I am using this real-time, this is prof game design software—but I use them as a video editing software.”

Discussion

These artists consciously use AI while still being mindful to maintain control over their creation process. This allows them to find space for creativity, originality, and authorship. Creativity, originality, and authorship come from mixing AI with digital software, misusing these technologies, or mixing mediums. Hence, they have changed the type of or way of producing and ensuring creativity, which is now comes in the form of mixing, combining, and misusing. However, this is only possible with the mastery of this digital technology. Nevertheless, many see AI as a tool they can control. They find ways of controlling AI so that they can maintain their positions as artists.

New digital software is seamlessly integrated into the artistic creation process because there was already an established digital process in place in China. AI is the latest edition to their suite of digital technologies for creation. This is the case for many types of artists, not only internet or mixed-media artists. Painters, sculptors, and installation artists also now use the same “digital way” and so also become “digital artists” or at least have become accustomed to digital art *work*. This can expand the meaning and definition of “digital artist” and shows what working conditions are like in an digital advanced environment. Importantly these artists seem to have moved well beyond only testing AI, as it is now well established in their daily work lives.

The increasingly close collaboration with AI is changing the artists’ role in the creation process. There is less physical labour involved in terms of playing with and creating physical materials. Subsequently, these artists have become a director or manager, using a suite of digital software as their team. Even though this is creating efficiency and convenience as participants say, the findings show how the increasing presence and reliance on new digital technologies places new labour demands on these artists. They believe that they should have the ability to learn this new technology and feel that those who can do this will have an advantage today. This learning of new technologies and accruing new digital skills has been felt acutely and as largely normalized across industry sectors and in society in China due to recent rapid and radical adaptations to new digital technologies.

11 Yan Zhou (b. 1988) is a new media artist. He is originally from Beijing, China. He received his BFA from the China Central Academy of Fine Art in 2012 and his Post-Baccalaureate Certificate in Visual Communication from the School of Art Institute of Chicago in 2013. He is currently MFA candidate 2015 in Visual Communication. Yan Zhou is an interdisciplinary artist and designer. His works combine daily experiences with conceptual understanding. Yan works with various media including printmaking, painting, drawing, films, and interactive design.

Conclusion

Currently, AI is being spoken about internationally in isolation and about what it can(not) do and its negative impacts on creatives and industries. However, the example of China can show an international audience how it is also beneficial to understand how people are using AI in creative combination or mixture with other digital software or using it in the wrong way for creativity and innovation and understand how artists are themselves pushing and developing the technology for their own ends. This can also show how *humans* can control this technology, how *humans* can generate creativity and innovation in collaboration with AI, maintain the position of the human artist, and create growth in the sector through these kinds of uses of AI. In fact, AI can make artists more creative and empower them as it can help them to move forward with their ideas faster and more accurately. Unlike many other countries that are still testing and trialling AI, these Chinese artists have mastered the technology and have found a space for themselves to be creative, experimental, and still be an artist within the technology. Forward-looking government policies on the integration of culture and technology have shown in this paper to have a direct impact and influence on how and how much artists and other cultural workers are using AI and dig software in their practices. This is also important to share with an international audience.

This paper has provided new ways to illuminate and better understand the platform-mixing and creative (mis)uses of digital technologies, including AI, in artists' creative process. It has illuminated bottom-up initiatives and ways of using AI. Hence, these findings provide an alternative perspective to concerns that tech companies have control in developing the tech and are moral arbiters of how you can use the digital technologies (Ganesh and Moss, 2022; Ross et al., 2022) and concerns around the underlying digital systems used by artists that dictate how they create, store, and present work. In fact, these Chinese artists are breaking the ways the software was designed to create works that reflect their own authorship.

Furthermore, a different set of considerations have emerged through speaking with contemporary artists, compared with from the IT sector, academic sector, or business sector, because artists are working independent from the bottom-up. This has also provided the human side in this mainly technological/business/commercial/company-based global discussion. With this new knowledge, considerations can be made for the future of artists' jobs, roles, and skillsets amidst digital transition. This can be applied in the future to ensure sustainability of artists' practices, creativity, and jobs and to maintain value in the art sector going forward. Digital technologies can be used for development; however, there is a need to know the reality of creatives' work and their first-hand, in the moment, perspectives on these digital technologies, to be able to understand how the art sector can sustainably go forward in the future.

This paper has shown how AI is changing the contemporary art sector and how it might impact the direction and nature of the contemporary art sector in the future. The paper has specifically addressed independent artists and their studio work practices in this shift in the industry. AI is discussed as taking over human creativity ... but this paper shows it has changed working conditions in terms of making them more efficient, accurate, convenient, and allows them to move forward with their ideas more quickly. Hence, AI can serve as a facilitator for more efficient working conditions. In order to ensure sustainable jobs for artists and the development of the contemporary art sector, the following should be applied. We should set standards for best practices in using AI in art that can be applied in the future to ensure sustainability of artists' practices, creativity, and jobs and to maintain value in the art sector going forward. We need to understand and respect how artists are mixing AI with other software for creativity, mixing different mediums like game and video with art to make it creative but also to ensure their position is sustainable. If we want to respect and value this new medium long-term and for sustainable longevity use, then cultural managers and policymakers need to ensure the value of this new medium and recognize this medium as a carrier of culture in itself. There should be policy to ensure that artists' time can be used for artistic creation. The precariousness of continual learning and unpaid digital labour in learning new software should be regulated. There needs to be a clear cultural policy and management strategy to outline standards and protocol for regular training for independent artists.

This paper connected two sets of literature on precarious creative work (Sigler, 2017; Serafini and Banks, 2020) and on digital aesthetics and techniques (Astle and Muir, 2002; Kucuk and Soydal, 2003; Yilmaz and Celic, 2011; Manovich, 2018; Contreras-Koterbay, 2019; Liang, 2022) in order to raise awareness on and increase the amount of literature on the impact of AI on working cultures. As a result, this paper has been able to more concretely demonstrate how "digital art work" is much broader than previously conceived in the literature as only digital artworks, the digital aesthetics applied, and digital techniques of the artworks (Astle and Muir, 2002; Kucuk and Soydal, 2003; Yilmaz and Celic, 2011; Manovich, 2018; Contreras-Koterbay, 2019; Liang, 2022). This has been achieved by showing digitality in artists' everyday work practices rather than only final artworks. This paper has also helped update literature on the nature of work in the contemporary art sector and has also progressed this literature by exposing the shifts in work practices that have taken place due to the introduction of AI. There is now a digital working culture that includes more efficiency and innovation as well as new digital labour demands. Rather, existing scholarship has a lot to do with creative labour as "freelance," "precarious," or "passion but precarious" working conditions (Serafini and

Banks, 2020) and the totalizing nature of their work that leads to a blurring between work and life (Sigler, 2017). However, this paper has updated these conceptions of “creative work” and “creative workers” by showing the nature of digital work, the digital nature of contemporary visual artists’ artistic creation process, and contemporary visual artists’ feelings about AI and digital software. Moreover, this paper has provided a new perspective on this topic from China today rather than existing literature that is more commonly about the West and Global North. Hence, this paper has updated and expanded literature on digital techniques and aesthetics and the opportunities of AI to provide more efficiency at work by talking to contemporary visual artists.

Data availability statement

The datasets presented in this article are not readily available because they are secure and private. Requests to access the datasets should be directed to emmaduester@sjtu.edu.cn.

Ethics statement

The studies involving humans were approved by the USC-SJTU Institute of Cultural and Creative Industry, Shanghai Jiao Tong University Ethics Committee Board. The studies were conducted in accordance with the local legislation and institutional requirements. The participants provided verbal or written informed consent to participate in this study.

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Permission was also gained for use of specific quotes from participants that are used in this paper. Participants included in this paper have also agreed to be identified and have provided their names.

Author contributions

The author confirms being the sole contributor of this work and has approved it for publication.

Conflict of interest

The author declares that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

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Supplementary material

The Supplementary Material for this article can be found online at: <https://www.frontierspartnerships.org/articles/10.3389/ejcmp.2024.12470/full#supplementary-material>

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Cultural work, wellbeing, and AI

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Introduction

In museums, heritage, and non-profit cultural organisations, thought leadership on the ethical implications of AI is gathering speed. Notable initiatives include the Network of European Museum Organisations (NEMO)'s efforts to address the uptake of AI in museums ([Network of European Museum Organisations, 2024](#)) and the UK's Arts and Humanities Research Council's BRAID programme dedicated to integrating Arts and Humanities research into the "Responsible AI" ecosystem ([BRAID, 2024](#)). This is a fast-evolving area with new analysis and calls to action appearing with frequency. As yet however, little attention has been given to how AI is emotionally impacting lived experiences of cultural workers as organisations seek to operationalise it. This paper highlights the need to consider such impacts, as well as the general-purpose technologies AI builds upon, such as biotechnology and a connected ecosystem of devices, on cultural workers and their practices. The convergence of these technologies signals what futurist Amy Webb calls a technology "supercycle" with far-reaching implications ([Aiello, 2024](#)).

This paper does not present new empirical evidence but rather portends the need for more research on the relationship between wellbeing, AI, and work in cultural organisations. Based in the UK and the Netherlands, the authors are researcher-practitioners who explore the impact of digital technology on cultural workforces. We seek to critically anticipate the implications of AI on those working on the ground in cultural organisations. Our ideas and examples draw from the UK, Europe and the United States, but we hope they speak to experiences of cultural workers across the globe.

In what follows, a strategic foresight method known as the "Futures Triangle" ([Inayatullah, 2023](#)) will be deployed to consider the plausible future of AI-driven cultural work that might emerge between three pushing and pulling corners – the past, the present, and the future – each of which is shaping the adoption of AI in our cultural organisations. This framework helps raise awareness of the trends, drivers, and signals of which cultural organisations need to be aware to ensure an integration of AI that empowers workers to engage effectively while addressing the ethical dilemmas involved. This structure recognises the history that has shaped our current decisions, determines what to carry forward or leave behind, and confronts present challenges. We must consider the impact of our choices and how they will resonate into the future, ensuring they reflect the people and context of multiple possible futures.

Weight of the past

In Future Thinking, trends refer to long-term patterns that can be carried forward into the future. There are two trends that have impacted cultural work, wellbeing, and AI: digital transformation and decolonisation.

Trend 1: digital transformation

The recent history of digital transformation in museums, heritage and cultural organisations is convoluted. Many associate momentum to a 2017 review of English museums which argued for “dynamic data for dynamic collections” (Department of Culture, Media, and Sport, 2017: 64). The following year, the UK’s Department for Culture, Media, and Sport (DCMS) launched *Culture is Digital*, a report calling for “practitioners and organisations across the cultural and tech sectors” (Department of Culture, Media, and Sport, 2018: 17) to develop “digital thinking” (ibid: 9) stating that organisations felt “held back” by a lack of infrastructure, resources, digital skills and leadership training, resulting in “a fragmented approach” to technology (ibid: 5). Despite digital developments in many cultural organisations the story remained patchy, with funding tending to prioritise “shiny” short-term over long-term infrastructure projects, an ongoing deficit in digital literacy, cataloguing backlogs, and a predominance of non-interoperable systems and formats. This often led to reluctance, fear, and apathy when it came to instilling digital change up to and since the COVID-19 pandemic. As a respondent in a survey on AI in heritage organisations stated: even if AI has the potential “to revolutionise the heritage sector,” there remain “real problems that are affecting us, like skills shortages, funding shortages and volunteer shortages” (Oates, 2023). They continued: “the obsession with “digital” is unhelpful, especially when digital is so poorly defined that the adjective is arbitrarily used as a meaningless noun” (ibid). However, as John Stack, Director of Digital Innovation and Technology at The National Gallery, notes: “Unlike previous recent waves of technology (crypto currency, web3, NFTs, etc.) the AI revolution feels different – there’s a sense in which it seems likely to change many things, but we don’t fully understand the potential and implications” [Stack J. “AI Article”. Message to: Frost, S. 2024 Jan 9 (cited 2024 Sept 5)].

Trend 2: decolonisation

Often founded on colonial principles, cultural organisations carry legacies that have both hindered and guided their embrace of new technologies. Decolonisation initiatives have burgeoned in recent years with bodies such as UNESCO, International Council of Museums (ICOM), American Alliance of Museums, and Museums Association supporting the need to

“recognise the integral role of empire in museums - from their creation to the present day” (Museums Association, 2024). While actions for enhanced traceability and diligence in the acquisition of cultural objects has grown, there has been less vigilance regarding the integration of emerging technologies which invite new, equally problematic, forms of coded gaze into legacy institutions. Despite conversations amongst museum and heritage practitioners on the dangers of commercial technologies (Pratty, 2019), there have been few practical attempts to source long-term ethical alternatives. As Oonagh Murphy, editor of this Issue, points out: there is a need to “engage in a broader conversation about the power and impact” of digital tools and products (Murphy, 2024: 73). NEMO has implied that museums have the “potential” to be “partners in the development of ethical practices related to emerging technologies” (2024), but there is more work to be done to link decolonisation efforts with the integration of AI.

Push of the present

Drivers are broad long-term forces that are likely to have a significant impact on the future. Drawing on research exploring AI in the global workplace, we locate the following as shaping the signals to emerge in the future.

Driver 1: job displacement

Research suggests that AI will predominantly result in augmentation rather than automation (International Labour Organization, 2024: 6). Clerical work will be most exposed to automation because of generative AI, with 24% of tasks “highly exposed” (ibid). This is a gendered issue. As women tend to be overrepresented in the clerical field, women’s jobs may be “twice as likely to be exposed” as men’s (Muldoon et al., 2024: 53). Museum and heritage environments have long been recognised as “pink collar” workplaces (GEMM, 2019) whereby women undertake most administrative roles. In the USA, 58.6% of the workforce is female across archival, curatorial and museum technician roles (DataUSA, 2022) while a UK report on the arts, culture and heritage workforce found only 34% of women occupy managerial or director positions with the majority in junior roles (Policy and Evidence Centre for the Cultural and Creative Industries, 2024). Jobs in areas such as collections management could have large components of their roles augmented by AI. Large Language Models excel at “formal, standardised tasks with clear objectives and large amounts of text data” (Muldoon et al., 2024: 53). In cultural organisations, this form of digital data entry is typically done by women on relatively low pay (Frost, 2022). Generative AI is also valuable in content creation, meaning that marketing and social media roles may be affected.

Driver 2: demand for AI literacy

Discussions of AI workplace integration emphasise reskilling workforces to support its effective use. In the context of cultural organisations, stakeholders are recognising AI literacy as an opportunity to reshape digital work, introduce new efficiencies, whilst emphasise the value of employee agency to digitally experiment through AI methods. Industry specialist Jocelyn Burnham, who offers AI workshops for the cultural and creative sectors, recognises AI as a tool for experimenting with what new technologies might offer, rather than being anxious about how they might disrupt the status quo. AI prompts us to ask more critically engaged questions, to understand our own needs and the needs of audiences in different ways. Large Language Models (LLMs) are helping workforces augment their digital skills, enabling those who have not been able to use new technologies so easily in the past to do so, whilst helping staff learn in different ways [Burnham J. “AI and Cultural Organisations”. (Personal interview, 2024 Jan 17) Brighton; 2024 (unpublished)].

There is a flipside. The International Labour Organization notes that some parts of the world are at risk of an “AI divide” whereby “high income nations disproportionately benefit from AI advancements” (2024: 5). This could be the case in the cultural field also where AI training is inconsistent. As Angie Judge, CEO of Dexibit, notes: “AI will quickly create a world of the haves and have nots. I hope the museum sector will find itself on the right side of that equation” (Styx, 2024). For Stack, “best practice is still emerging and much of the work is “bottom up” with museum practitioners exploring the potential, rather than top down with managers and leaders directing this work”. He continues: “museums are starting to recognise the need for a policy document that is set for internal review every 6 months or so, while other internal museum policies often go years before review” [Stack J. “AI Article”. Message to: Frost, S. 2024 Jan 9 (cited 2024 Sept 5)]. Such need for agility in the creation of AI policy has been recognised by the UK government also: their *Generative AI Framework for HMG* describes itself as “necessarily incomplete and dynamic” (Gov.uk, 2024).

Driver 3: misinformation and bias

The most consequential driver for cultural organisations may be the inherent bias embedded within and potential misuse of LLM training data. Many have documented the ways AI datasets have been drawn through the rules and algorithms of those who trained them, leading to race and gender discrimination across multiple online platforms (Leavy et al., 2020; Buolamwini, 2023). Much of this software has been invested in by legacy tech companies and it is widely recognised that technological development is under the control of those “with strong imperatives to continue expanding their operations and increasing their profits” (Muldoon et al., 2024: 161). New government guidelines for the public sector emphasise the need, when working with AI, “to establish and communicate

how you will address ethical concerns from the start” (Gov.uk, 2024) but how can smaller, less powerful organisations reclaim power when limited by the options available to them? Helpfully, the European Commission’s recent foresight report focused on the future of Big Tech in Europe and its implications for research and innovation (R&I). Using a scenario-based approach, it offers recommendations to guide the EU’s R&I policy. Significantly, all four imagined scenarios indicate “varieties of high tech capitalism” with only one emphasising the prosperity of civil society over Big Tech (European Commission, 2024: 8). Cultural organisations can use such resources to understand the current landscape and strategically respond not only to present developments but anticipate alternative futures of information control.

There is an additionally troubling aspect regarding the increased risk of copyright infringement for cultural organisations who make income from their picture libraries through licensing for reproduction and commercial research. This issue gained attention in the UK through high-profile publications such as the House of Commons Culture, Media and Sport Committee report on Content Remuneration, which calls on government “to ensure that creators have proper mechanisms to enforce their content and receive fair compensation when their works are used by AI systems” (House of Commons Culture Media and Sport Committee, 2024). If this driver is not managed proactively, what might be its effects on income in years to come?

Driver 4: the emotional toll of digital work

The exponential growth of AI-related employment has surfaced questions regarding its hidden human costs (Muldoon et al., 2024; Gray and Suri, 2019; Catanzariti et al., 2021). Attention is being paid to how human labour plays a pivotal role in enabling AI technology, particularly generative AI, through the paid, piecework of collecting, processing, and labelling of datasets needed by models such as ChatGPT for training. Our research has observed the emotional toll of digitally driven labour in museums, heritage, and cultural organisations (Frost, 2021; 2022; Vargas, 2020). Daily tasks such as establishing suitable naming conventions, cleaning up and figuring out problems in the data, and dealing with acquisition backlogs, require persistence, care, clarity, and impartiality. Those who promote digital change experience personal, psychological costs and ethical dilemmas consistent with other types of cultural and creative work (see Banks, 2017; Belfiore, 2021). When it comes to AI, the concern of many digital staff is, as Steven Franklin, Social Media Manager at The Royal Institution explains, “if you’ve got technology that is inherently designed to increase individuals’ productivity then the demands of the job will probably go up with it. So, you’re going to be expecting more people to do more” [Franklin S. “AI and Cultural Work”. (Personal interview, 2024 Jan 12) Brighton; 2024 (unpublished)].

A recent study explored the “dark side effects of digital working” of 142 workers, specifically their levels of stress, overload, anxiety and

Fear of Missing Out on Information (Marsh et al., 2024). It found that “employees who are overloaded by information or worried about missing out on it in the digital workplace face risks to their wellbeing at work” (2024: 12) and stated that greater consideration of the digital workplace “is essential to not only employee productivity but also wellbeing in modern organisations” (ibid). Cultural workplaces similarly need to reflect on how AI will impact wellbeing, and how the information overload of working with new technology has emotional consequences for workers.

Driver 5: challenging systems of expertise

It is easy to suggest that AI poses a threat to those who have spent years honing their skills as cultural workers, drawing on data suggesting that those with higher qualifications are more exposed to AI (Department for Education, 2023: 18). We propose instead that cultural roles will be positively augmented by AI, creating opportunities for better discoverability and searchability in daily operations as well as in creative reuse and reimagination within the interpretation of collections and audience engagement. AI will need to be accommodated and understood within all job roles in the cultural workplace; it will become the responsibility - and the possibility - of all (and yes, this will require consistent resourcing of time, people, energy, and money – as does all digital maturity work).

More concerning for us is a wider existential issue: if AI, as has been argued by many in the creative industries, is devaluing creativity as a specifically human endeavour, will this deprioritise the importance of the institutions that care for it? We have heard outcries, in areas such as screenwriting, music production, video games and the visual arts regarding the use of generative AI and other digital technologies to replicate human creative outputs (SAG-AFTRA, 2024; Weiss, 2023; The Art Newspaper, 2023). As the quality of generative AI develops, will there not be a moment when even experts are unable to distinguish between AI and human generated cultural artefacts? What might this mean for history itself, for the historical record? Nick Bostrom’s Deep Utopia (Bostrum, 2024) offers one answer – he invites us to rethink the complexity of utopia and confront the unintended consequences of our pursuit for better representation and justice, challenging the binary thinking of utopian vs. dystopian outcomes. He argues that true progress instead requires moving beyond fixed notions of perfection to consider multifaceted possibilities and the risks of future realities.

Pull of the future

Signals represent small, local innovations or disruptions that have the potential to grow in scale and distribution (Howard, 2021). Below are five signals, posed as “What if?” Questions, that critically anticipate how cultural workplaces

might tackle the present and reimagine a future with AI. “What if” questions encourage creative thinking, challenge assumptions, and open alternative possibilities. For futurist Peter Schwartz, they are part of scenario planning, a strategic tool to prepare for uncertainty by imagining diverse future scenarios (Schwartz, 1991).

1. *What if we developed greater “coopetition” - cooperating with our competitors to achieve a common goal - as we integrate AI in our cultural workplaces?* Our sector must radically cooperate with other stakeholders on the ethics of AI - from corporations to governments, from other cultural organisations to grassroots bodies.
2. *What if we embedded agility in the development of AI literacy in our cultural workplaces?* The integration of AI in our cultural workplaces has required on-the-job learning. New technological developments mean greater demand for new digital literacies in our workplaces; it is imperative to embrace lifelong learning and the upskilling of workforces.
3. *What if we recognised the power dynamics inherent in the relationship between AI technology, climate change, and social justice, and acknowledged more openly how they shape decision-making in our cultural workplaces?* These are linked trends and thinking about them together can reshape methods and modes of decision-making and equity.
4. *What if we ensured that the emotional and psychological impacts of digital work were central to employment practices in our cultural workplaces?* By prioritising the wellbeing of cultural workers and audiences, and by recognising the human effort behind AI, cultural organisations will ensure that AI enhances both behind-the-scenes work and public interaction.
5. *What if we examined the processes enabling AI, considering their direct impact on cultural workers, using our role as cultural custodians to lead the global conversation on responsible AI in ways that reflect and protect lived experience in our cultural workplaces?* This would encourage us to evaluate the processes behind AI development and consider how cultural professionals can leverage their influence to guide responsible practices that safeguard the future of the cultural workforce.

What is needed now is more empirical research on how employee wellbeing and job quality in relation to AI innovation are being considered in museums, heritage and cultural organisations; more collaboration with other parts of the cultural and creative industries as we operationalise AI; and more acknowledgement - especially at the level of leadership and boards - of how AI operates and circulates within a dichotomy of power, systemic inequality, and cultural legacy. Ultimately, we need to learn to better interpret and navigate this complex landscape, ensuring that the integration of AI supports and enhances lived experiences of cultural workers rather than undermining them.

Author contributions

All authors participated in the design, interpretation, and analysis of the data and review of the manuscript; SF conducted interviews, LV supplied industry and adjacent sector resources, SF and LV wrote the manuscript. All authors contributed to the article and approved the submitted version.

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The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

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Adapting to the digital wave: tour guides' role perception and technological integration in the cultural ecosystem

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The COVID-19 pandemic has underscored the importance of digital technologies in the cultural heritage domain, particularly in the evolving landscape of the hospitality ecosystem. This ecosystem, prioritising personal interactions and improving life quality, demands a strategic change from cultural organisations to address the challenges of digitalisation and the shifting patterns of visitor engagement. Tour guides are central to this adaptation process since they play a pivotal role in the cultural sector. Thus, our research delves into how these guides perceive themselves and adapt to digital tools, impacting their ability to offer genuine cultural experiences. These experiences are fundamental in promoting sustainable tourism, reinforcing local identity, and nurturing community bonds. Our findings disclose a spectrum of different types of tour guides, each group characterised by distinct levels of digital skills and willingness to embrace technological change. Through this study, we aim to contribute to the theory of the digital cultural ecosystem by highlighting the significant role that culture and creativity play, supported by digital advancements, in formulating comprehensive and integrated strategies for cultural tourism management and the overall hospitality sector.

KEYWORDS

digital cultural ecosystem, cultural tourism, technology acceptance, cultural organisations' sustainability, tour guides

Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused an unprecedented emergency that has modified the consolidated habits and lifestyles of many individuals, organisations and whole sectors, especially cultural heritage management and cultural tourism. Due to travel restrictions and forced closures of museums and cultural organisations, cultural professionals and workers have suffered from unexpected loss of revenues and even jobs (Demartini et al., 2021). As long as the need for keeping social distancing persisted, digital technologies had and may still have a great positive impact in providing applications that support cultural visitors, either online or while on the move (Kourouthanassis et al., 2015). The COVID-19 experience has

boosted the use of digital technologies in cultural organisations (Agostino et al., 2021; Nasta and Pirolo, 2021) and even now, the positive impact of digitisation may also affect traditional services for cultural visitors and tourists, such as cultural tours. Indeed, technological advancements have broadly influenced museums and other historical and cultural heritage places, with countless instances of how digital solutions have been used to provide a more inclusive experience for visitors (Parry, 2013; Naramski, 2020). Continuing along this path, a larger and better use of digital technology may enhance cultural output development, distribution, and valorisation (Evrard and Krebs, 2018).

What has become unmistakably clear from the COVID-19 crisis is the permanent shift in museums' perceptions towards the digital realm, illuminating pre-existing challenges while fast-tracking ongoing transformations. Despite the economic downturn posing substantial barriers in terms of financial and human resources available for investment, an increasing number of institutions now recognize digitization's critical value. Between Autumn 2020 and Spring 2021, there was a notable surge in the number of museums initiating or planning enhancements to their digital infrastructure and resources (ICOM, 2021). In light of this shift, the support of governments and international organizations in aiding museums through their digital transformation processes has become crucial. This backing is essential not only for the immediate recovery and adaptation of these institutions but also for ensuring their long-term resilience and relevance in a rapidly evolving digital landscape.

These technologies enable audiences and cultural-creative objects to engage more efficiently and rapidly. Visitors and tourists may now not only access sources of information and knowledge about cultural items but also actively participate in developing their cultural experience, thanks to digitisation (Kramer et al., 2007; Elgammal et al., 2020). As a result, new production and consumption modes that stress audience engagement are required in the cultural sectors. Additionally, encouraging creative and innovative approaches, such as creating new tools and methods for optimising the consumption and valuing of cultural-creative products and tourism experiences, is critical. This updated scenario, shaped by the advancement of digital technologies, introduces fresh challenges for professionals in the cultural heritage sector. Their traditional technical expertise must now be integrated with new skills pertinent to the utilization of technological tools. Thus, these professionals and organisations need to redefine roles and capabilities. In fact, when treating technological innovation as an external shift and acknowledging the creation of new ways of conceiving cultural experiences, it becomes crucial to comprehend the new competencies required to excel in the sector. Consequently, it is critical to look at the attitudes of those working in the industry toward change, to see whether there is any resistance to change. If they do, this behaviour may hinder

the ability of cultural organisations to meet the opportunities of digitalization. Consequently, cultural organisations need to identify some levers and stratagems to envision their role and to instil the renewal enabled by digital technologies.

This creates the groundwork for a disintermediation that calls into question the function of intermediaries themselves, redefines the value of technical specialists, and presents cultural professionals with unprecedented problems. This is especially important in extremely traditional settings like museums and historical and cultural heritage institutions, where standard commercial models and management criteria are not always the most productive environments for promoting and/or facilitating changes. Scholars disputed the significance of sponsored cultural groups in encouraging creativity and innovation based on this notion (Selwood, 2009). Museums were traditionally thought to be stagnant and disinterested in change and progress. More lately, there has been a growing emphasis on making an economic effect and, most importantly, boosting audience involvement. As key components of cultural ecosystems, museums and other cultural organisations are central in fostering social innovations, such as nurturing creativity and innovation with the participation of several other actors in the ecosystem. Creativity and innovation thus "pertain to a number of things including changes in institutions' outlooks and management, if not the transformation of their profit-making capacity" (Selwood, 2009, p. 233). Individuals are a major source of creativity and innovation; therefore, such a shift argues for rethinking employees' roles in conventional cultural organisations (Pratt and Jeffcutt, 2009). A prolific stream of research has investigated technology adoption and diffusion in tourism and hospitality applying the technology acceptance models (El Archi and Benbba, 2023). Fewer attempts focused on cultural ecosystems and hospitality. Thus, this research aims to explore the attitude of professionals working as intermediaries in cultural ecosystems towards technological change and the impact of digital technologies on their perceptions of role redefinition.

With this study, we want to provide a twofold contribution: first, we contribute to the ongoing discussion about the future of cultural ecosystems by identifying the evolution of professional roles that are crucial in determining the effects of digitalisation on cultural ecosystems; second, we attempt to highlight what constitutes a "good" integration of cultural and creativity-based products, services, and processes in the cultural ecosystems with technological solutions to produce high-value innovations and cultural enhancement as part of social innovation.

We adopt a quantitative approach based on combining the technology acceptance model (TAM) and the sensemaking approach to assess the evolution of the role perceptions of pivotal actors in the cultural ecosystems, such as the touristic guides.

Theoretical background

Tour guides and technology adoption in the cultural ecosystems

Over the past decades, the literature has nurtured the idea that cultural organisations do not work in isolation but are rather embedded in networks (e.g., Scheff and Kotler, 1996) and cultural networks, rather than a single organisation, are more likely to produce innovation and generate value (Bagdadli, 2003; Scrofani and Ruggiero, 2013). Building on the network dynamics, a research stream has emerged that focus on cultural ecosystems and their role in favouring social innovation. Some researchers have compared and discussed the similarities and differences between biological ecosystems and societal ecosystems (Despeisse et al., 2012; Battistella et al., 2013). This exercise sheds light on the management of innovation and technology from different angles. Research in this stream aims to reveal the dynamics and patterns of ecosystems and organisational behaviour. The multi-actor network is not static, but dynamic as the network changes as well as the perceptions of the actors. The purpose of such ecosystem approach is to clarify the dynamic change mechanism of the multi-actor network and find the specific patterns of evolution and extinction. The understanding of this mechanism represents a prerequisite to be able to design and manage the ecosystem strategically.

Regarding cultural ecosystems, to the best of our knowledge, just a few attempts have been proposed to conceptualise what social innovation ecosystems entail and how they produce value for their actors and the society. Among these, Fernandez (2022) proposes a framework that represents the sectors and factors that must intercept for social innovation ecosystem to occur. Factors that are needed include cultural heritage, as the content of socially innovative services, and social needs, such as, for example, education, integration, access to culture, democracy and participation.

Digital resources have aroused particular interest in the cultural ecosystems as they are considered capable of attracting a wider audience (Kalay et al., 2007; Corradini and Campanella, 2013). The literature on innovation ecosystems has pointed out that digital technologies may favour interaction among actors, resources, and practices to facilitate an ecosystem's workability (Russo-Spena et al., 2020). Multimedia apps are becoming more important and popular among the communication tools museums utilize to assist visitors in exploring and understanding exhibitions. Screens of various sizes (typically touch screens), interactive installations and portable gadgets, near field communication (Angelaccio et al., 2012), Internet of Things (Chianese and Piccialli, 2014; Sestino et al., 2023), and virtual and augmented reality (Weber, 2014) are examples of these uses. Compared to traditional communication tools (e.g., captions, text panels, and guided tours), new technologies also allow the visitors to access information,

from both a quantitative and a qualitative point of view (Marty, 2007; Smith and Iversen, 2014). Video, music, and interactive tools can be presented in simple, rapid, customized, and effective ways in addition to text and images, commonly utilized in cultural contexts. Expressing it differently, digital innovation is critical in the cultural sectors, not only because of the inventive outputs, but also because it continuously presents new experiences (Peltoniemi, 2015). As a result, the employment of new technologies as an integrated part of creating cultural goods has steadily piqued interest in the literature on cultural economics and cultural heritage management (Marchegiani, 2017).

Despite these considerations, the organisational consequences of digitalising cultural ecosystems have received less attention. This is especially true regarding the influence of new technology on the skills, competencies, and abilities of positions in the cultural and creative sectors (Marchegiani and Rossi, 2016). Because innovation might result from an unusual recombination of components from the past (Messeni Petruzzelli and Savino, 2015), traditional knowledge must be coupled with information from different sources (Cannarella and Piccioni, 2011). Indeed, the pervasiveness of technology necessitates the development of new technologically relevant abilities by workers in the industry. From this standpoint, technology adoption and use has long piqued management and organisational attention (Orlikowski and Scott, 2008).

Recent research focused on the enactment process, which is concerned with how individuals engage with technology in their daily lives and what their situated usage of technology is (Orlikowski, 2000). Nonetheless, behavioural, social, and cognitive constraints make exploring and adopting new technology challenging at the organisational and individual levels. Identity is of special importance to them, both at an organisational and individual level (Gioia et al., 2000; Tripsas, 2009; Fishbein and Ajzen, 2011).

In the cultural ecosystems, tour guides have an essential role in connecting tourists to cultural objects and offering cultural brokerage, which includes presenting visitors with a familiar idiom (Cohen, 1985; Lin et al., 2017). They serve as a link between cultural institutions that own and administer cultural assets and the public. Therefore, tour guides play an important role in preserving and valorising cultural heritage, as they help visitors to have a complete and enjoyable experience. They are part of a network of relationships, institutions, and players that make up a functional organisational environment while not being incorporated into the cultural organisation (Sicca and Zan, 2005). In these networks, tour guides are considered industry specialists who can pique the public's interest in art and culture in general (Hwang and Lee, 2019). In fact, they are seen as possessors of art knowledge and the cultural worth of artifacts, but they can also communicate the hedonistic benefit of culture consumption and increase audiences' engagement levels (Hansen and Mossberg, 2017).

As a result, tour guides' adoption and use of technology should directly influence the digital valorisation of cultural assets. According to Bryon (2012), technological advancements lead to an increase in the need for tales. Consequently, tour guides' narrative abilities have become increasingly important. Their skills as translators and intercultural communicators have improved (Weiler and Black, 2014), and their communication capacity complements their jobs as experience brokers (Weiler and Walker, 2014). In this scenario, given their critical role in disseminating art and culture to the public, tour guides cannot stay immune to technological advancements, which present new opportunities for growth and obstacles (Weiler and Black, 2015).

Adoption of novel technology in any corporate environment is not always simple, and it can require a long journey. Models aimed at deploying the factors of technology adoption abound in the literature (Koul and Eydghi, 2017). Among them, the TAM, which was created by Fred Davis in 1989 and subsequently developed by Venkatesh and Davis (2000) into its second version known as TAM2, has been widely used in the cultural sector, is one of the mainstream approaches (Peres et al., 2011; Huang et al., 2013). Studies of technology adoption in the cultural field may be divided into two categories: the acceptance behaviour of personnel in hospitality and tourism firms and the acceptance behaviour of tourists and visitors. For the acceptance behaviour of employees in hospitality and tourism organisations, TAM is widely used to examine users' acceptance of various technologies, such as marketing decision support systems (Wober and Gretzel, 2000), computerized reservation systems (Lee et al., 2006), Internet marketing (El-Gohary, 2012), using innovative information and communication technologies (Cheng and Cho, 2011). Conversely, the objective of the TAM in tourists' and visitors' behaviours is to determine the effect of external variables on an individual's internal beliefs about the usefulness and ease of use of a technology, attitudes toward technology use, intentions to use, and then actual behaviours (Davis, 1989). In both cases, the major findings of these studies are focused on the relationship between sensemaking and TAM, and specifically on the investigation of the processes through which sensemaking acts as an external variable influencing TAM.

Tour guides and role perception: a sensemaking perspective

Sensemaking is a constructivist approach focusing on how individuals in organisations participate in different sorts of sensemaking designs as they wrestle with what they are doing inside their companies, and what is happening past it. The sensemaking approach is particularly relevant to the investigation of authoritative change and arising innovation in cultural organisations as it gives a focal point through which people accomplish an inside and out comprehension of how cultural professionals, through examples of deciphering,

arranging, and acting, figure out the changes occurring around them. Significantly, in considering organisations as sensemaking frameworks, individuals inside these systems are ceaselessly attempting to decipher arising changes comparable to that which is more recognizable, and to make them conceivable and predictable (Weick, 1995).

Because technological development is associated with continual change, ambiguity, and fragility (Hogan and Coote, 2014; Anzola-Román et al., 2018), its management may be viewed as a sensemaking interaction between individuals at various levels of hierarchy (Christiansen and Varnes, 2009). People are put to the test to develop psychological constructs that allow complicated data to be transformed into useful settings (Weick, 1995).

Our study focuses on individual sensemaking, which is often rooted in the literature on social cognition. This field of study examines diverse frameworks, such as schema, schemata, interpretative schemes, mental maps, and representations, that humans use to make sense of a particular circumstance (Maitlis and Christianson, 2014). These many types of frameworks are referred to as frames, which are explanatory structures that characterize entities by explaining their relationships with other things (Klein et al., 2007). In this context, sensemaking refers to the act of fitting data (e.g., details) into a frame (e.g., an explanation) and then fitting a frame around the data. Individuals use an iterative process of framing and reframing to filter and analyse facts, form a coherent narrative of what is occurring, and establish specific meanings in a given context (Fiss and Hirsch, 2005). According to Goffman's (1974) initial conceptualization of frames, frames are schemata of interpretations that allow actors to make sense of ambiguous and diverse signals; that is, frames influence how individual actors view the world and their own interests. Goffman (1974) explains that individuals have several frames from which to draw at any one time, and that when we encounter a new experience, we tend to interpret it consciously or subconsciously considering our current frameworks. Long-standing research in management cognition has proven that cognitive frames control managerial attention and so impact organisations' reactions to changing circumstances, resulting in cognitive reorientation and strategic adjustments (Thomas et al., 1993; Kaplan, 2008; Balogun et al., 2015). In the context of technological sensemaking, frames may be viewed as the understanding of a particular technical artifact that incorporates not just information about the technology but also local understandings of specific applications in certain contexts (Orlikowski and Gash, 1994; Mishra and Agarwal, 2010).

This contextualization is a crucial aspect of our analysis of technology sensemaking, since the meaning of technology can only be defined (and its relevance understood) in the context of its usage and its users - in our instance, the potential utility of technology for the cultural sector. Indeed, tour guides might see technology as an opportunity to reconfigure and empower their

roles, or they may be unable to recast their roles in the new technology-driven competitive environment, and they may feel threatened by technological progress (Kramer et al., 2007).

Hypotheses development

Our study adopted a sensemaking-based perspective on technology adoption (Seligman, 2006; Schiavone and MacVaugh, 2009).

The sensemaking process among tour guides significantly shapes their perception of technology's utility in their profession. This perception can be either positive or negative, depending on how they interpret and adapt to technological changes.

Tour guides who approach technological advancements positively tend to develop a constructive perception of technology's utility. Their positive sensemaking allows them to view technology as an enhancer of their role, enabling them to mediate cultural experiences better and interact with audiences. This positive perception of technology's utility often leads to a more innovative and adaptive professional identity, increasing their job satisfaction and their effectiveness in engaging with their audience.

In contrast, tour guides who perceive technological changes negatively undergo a different sensemaking process. This negative perception often arises from concerns about technology replacing traditional aspects of their role or diminishing their importance as cultural mediators. As a result, they tend to view technology as detrimental to the quality of cultural experiences. This negative perception of technology's utility can lead to resistance to technological integration, impacting their job satisfaction and possibly hindering their ability to offer enriching cultural experiences. Therefore, the following hypotheses are derived:

H1a The positive perception of the utility of technology on the cultural experience and on the role identity as redefined by technological innovation increases the level of satisfaction in using technology.

H1b The negative perception of the utility of technology on the cultural experience and on the role identity as redefined by technological innovation decreases the level of satisfaction in using technology.

Likewise, tour guides who embrace technology as a positive force in redefining their professional role tend to have a more favourable view of technology's utility and its contribution to enhancing cultural experiences. Their recognition of technology as a tool that strengthens their role, through embracing technological developments, leads to an evolved perception of technology's usefulness in enhancing the cultural experience.

Conversely, tour guides who view technology as a threat to their traditional role exhibit a more negative attitude towards its perceived utility in the cultural field. These guides often see technology as diminishing their role as cultural mediators.

Consequently, their perception of technology's usefulness in improving cultural experiences shifts negatively, reflecting their apprehension about the impact of technology on their professional identity and effectiveness. Therefore, the following hypotheses are derived:

H2a The positive perception of the utility of technology on the role identity as redefined by technological innovation increases the positive perception of the utility of technology on the cultural experience.

H2b The negative perception of the utility of technology on the role identity as redefined by technological innovation increases the negative perception of the utility of technology on the cultural experience.

As far as the perceived ease of use of technology is concerned, it is hypothesized that this factor moderates the relationship between how technology's utility is perceived in redefining role identity through technological innovation and the satisfaction levels of tour guides. Specifically, tour guides who do not perceive technology as a threat to their role are likely to experience greater satisfaction from adopting technologies, even if these technologies are not particularly user-friendly.

In contrast, tour guides who view technology as a challenge to their professional role might experience reduced satisfaction when required to use technology in their activities. This decrease in satisfaction occurs regardless of the complexity of the technology adopted, underlining the impact of their perception of technology as a threat on their overall job satisfaction. Therefore, the following hypotheses are derived:

H3a The positive perception of the utility of technology on the role identity as redefined by technological innovation increases the level of satisfaction in using technology when the perceived ease of use of technology decreases.

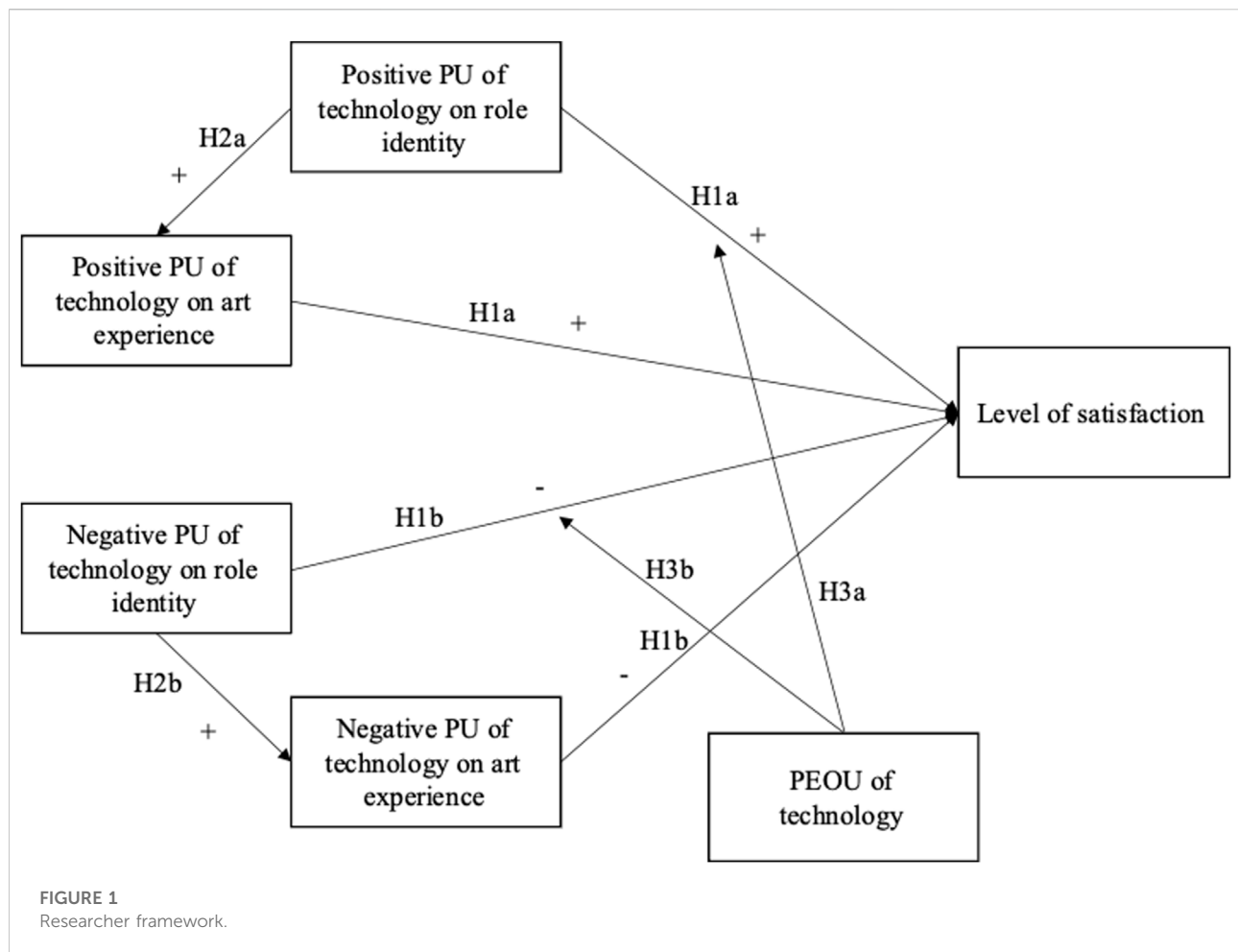
H3b The negative perception of the utility of technology on the role identity as redefined by technological innovation decreases the level of satisfaction in using technology when the perceived ease of use of technology increases.

The proposed conceptual model is presented in Figure 1.

Methodology

Research instrument

We developed a self-reported questionnaire with a first part that consisted of six control variables relating to the socio-demographics of respondents. The second section, instead, consisted of 23 items used for our theoretical constructs. To capture the concepts of positive and negative perceptions regarding the impact of technology on cultural experiences and tour guide role identity, we took inspiration from Davis (1989). We adapted these items to incorporate the sensemaking perspective as outlined by Akgun et al. (2014). Perceived ease of technology use was assessed in accordance with Davis (1989),



while the level of satisfaction was measured following the methodology of [Chung et al. \(2018\)](#). The complete list of these items has been reported in the [Appendix A](#).

During the planning and design phases of the survey, several strategies were used to correct for biases often associated with cross-sectional questionnaire methodologies. First, to prevent non-response bias ([Rogelberg and Stanton, 2007](#)), the survey was tested by six students enrolled in hospitality and art management master programmes at Roma Tre University (Italy) and six cultural heritage professionals. The objective was to verify that the survey was created clearly and effectively, was simple to complete, was of an appropriate length, and had no grammar and/or lexical errors or unclear questions. The survey remained unchanged since neither the students nor the professional proposed substantial adjustments. Wave analysis allowed us to adjust for non-response bias ([Armstrong and Overton, 1977](#)). Comparing early replies (January-March 2022) to late responses (June-August 2022) based on essential characteristics, namely, demographic data and dependent variables, the T-tests revealed no statistically significant changes, offering reassurance against non-response bias.

Data collection and analysis

We distributed the online questionnaire to 1,300 official Italian tourist guides through the contacts available online by Confguide, the national representation system in Italy of tourist guides, environmental guides and tour guides. We decided to focus on Italy because it is one of the most important countries for museums, art, and culture ([UNESCO, 2021](#)).

We collected 404 responses that were found to be an adequate sample size for structural equation model (SEM) analyses ([Kline, 2015](#)). We screened the data according to [Hair et al. \(2006\)](#), to identify any concerns with missing values, distribution of the data, and outliers using SPSS (version 26). We found no data issues.

To reduce social desirability bias and associated common method variance ([Podsakoff et al., 2003](#)), we emphasised in the survey's introduction part that participants' anonymity and researchers' confidentiality were ensured, as well as that respondents' participation was voluntary and uncompensated. In addition, in accordance with [Podsakoff et al. \(2003, p. 887\)](#), we distinguished between questions referring to independent

variables and ones pertaining to dependent variables. Lastly, a statistical approach, Harman's single factor test, was selected, and a main component factor analysis was conducted on all primary constructs. A common technique bias occurs when a single factor emerges from the factor analysis or when one general factor explains most of the covariance among the measurements (Podsakoff et al., 2003). First, we conducted a component analysis without rotation in SPSS; the result was a six-factor solution that explained 75.775% of the variation. The fact that the first component accounted just 28.079% of variation indicates that technique bias is not a significant concern in this study. As seen in Table 3, none of the intercorrelations had a value of 0.9 or above, with the greatest intercorrelation being just 0.417. Therefore, both tests reveal that common method variance is not a significant issue in this study.

We utilized SPSS to run descriptive statistics and reliability analysis on the acquired data, as well as to evaluate the demographic profile of the sample and the internal consistency of the constructs. Then, to assess the study model, we utilized SmartPLS 3.0 software for Partial Least Squares (PLS) analysis. Following the standard two-step analytical techniques for SEM, we first investigated the measurement model (validity and reliability of the measurements) and, subsequently, the structural model (Hair et al., 2013). To examine the importance of the path coefficients and loadings, a bootstrapping technique (5,000 resamples) was employed (Hair et al., 2013).

Results

Sample description

Most tour guides were women (78%). Most of those who responded were between the ages of 31 and 40 (38%) and 41 and 50 (31%) years old. With a minimum age of 21 and a maximum age of 77, the average age was 42.5 years. Regarding geographical distribution, 68% of tour guides worked only in Rome, 10% in another city in the Lazio area, and 22% in other Italian regions. Furthermore, 78% of respondents said they worked in both museums and archaeological sites, while 11% said they only worked in museums and another 11 percent said they only worked in archaeological sites. The participants in our study had a diploma (15%), a graduate degree, (53%) and a post-graduate degree (32%).

Measurement model

First, the model's convergent validity was evaluated (see Table 1). This was determined with the use of factor loadings, Composite Reliability (CR), and Average Variance Extracted (AVE). All item loadings in Table 2 surpassed the suggested

value of 0.6 (Chin et al., 2008). Composite reliability values, which represent the degree to which the construct indicators indicate the latent construct, exceeded the recommended value of 0.7, while average variance extracted, which reflects the total amount of variance in the indicators that can be attributed to the latent construct, exceeded the recommended value of 0.5 (Hair et al., 2013).

The following stage was to evaluate the discriminant validity, which refers to the extent to which the measurements are not a reflection of other variables; this was demonstrated by low correlations between the measure of interest and the measures of other constructs. Table 3 demonstrates that the square root of the AVE (diagonal values) of each construct is greater than its respective correlation coefficients, indicating acceptable discriminant validity (Fornell and Larcker, 1981).

Recent critique of the Fornell and Larcker (1981) criteria shows that they do not reliably detect the absence of discriminant validity in typical research settings (Henseler et al., 2015). Henseler et al. (2015) propose an alternate method, based on the multitrait-multimethod matrix, to evaluate discriminant validity: the heterotrait-monotrait (HTMT) ratio of correlations. The results of a test of discriminant validity using this new approach are reported in Table 5. For the first criteria, discriminant validity is compromised if the HTMT value exceeds the HTMT.85 value of 0.85 (Kline, 2011). However, as indicated in Table 4, all values exceeded HTMT.85.

Structural model

To evaluate the structural model, Hair et al. (2013) recommended examining the R², beta, and associated t-values using a resampling technique with 5,000 samples. In addition to these fundamental indicators, they advised that researchers additionally provide predictive relevance (Q²) and effect sizes (f²). We began by examining the relationships between the variables. The positive perceived utility of technology on both the cultural experience ($b = 0.205$; $p < 0.000$) and the role identity ($b = 0.18$; $p < 0.000$) positively affects the level of satisfaction. The negative perceived utility of technology on the cultural experience positively affects the level of satisfaction ($b = -0.076$; $p < 0.100$). On the contrary, the relationship between the perceived utility of technology on the role identity and the level of satisfaction is not statistically significant. Consequently, H1a is fully supported by our findings. H1b is partially supported. In addition, the positive perceived utility of technology on the role identity positively impacts on the positively perceived utility of technology on the cultural experience ($b = 0.349$; $p < 0.000$). Similarly, the negative perceived utility of technology on the role identity positively impacts on the negatively perceived utility of technology on the cultural experience ($b = 0.221$; $p < 0.000$). Consequently, H2a and H2b are supported by our findings.

TABLE 1 Convergent validity.

	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability	Average variance extracted (ave)
Negative perception of the utility of technology on cultural experience	0.878	0.916	0.731
Positive perception of the utility of technology on cultural experience	0.840	0.892	0.675
Negative perception of the utility of technology on role identity	0.778	0.869	0.690
Positive perception of the utility of technology on role identity	0.710	0.838	0.635
Perceived ease of use of technology	0.780	0.855	0.668
Level of satisfaction	0.746	0.733	0.500

The perceived utility of technology on the role identity and the cultural experience, both positive and negative, explains 15.9% of the variation in the level of satisfaction ($R^2 = 0.159$), whereas the positive perceived utility of technology on the role identity explains 12.2% ($R^2 = 0.122$) of the variance in the positive perceived utility of technology on the cultural experience and the negative perceived utility of technology on the role identity explains 14.9% ($R^2 = 0.149$) of the variance in the negative perceived utility of technology on the cultural experience. The R^2 values are greater than 0.10 as suggested by Falk and Miller (1992) as being indicative of a robust model.

We then evaluated effect sizes (f^2). In the results, the p -value indicates the correlations' importance but not the impact's magnitude. Consequently, readers struggle to comprehend data and findings. Therefore, it is necessary to present both substantive significance (f^2) and statistical significance (p). According to Hair et al. (2013), variations in the R^2 value should also be investigated. We utilised Cohen's (1988) recommendations to determine the effect size, which is 0.02 for minor effects, 0.15 for medium effects, and 0.35 for big impacts. Table 5 demonstrates that all associations had a moderate impact. In addition to R^2 and f^2 values, the predictive sample reuse approach (Q^2) may successfully demonstrate predictive relevance (Chin et al., 2008). Q^2 indicates, based on the blindfolding technique, how well data can be empirically recreated using the model and PLS parameters. In this study, Q^2 was determined utilizing redundancy methodologies that were cross-validated. A Q^2 value larger than 0 indicates that the model is predictively relevant, whereas a Q^2 value less than 0 indicates that the model is not predictively relevant. As seen in Figure 2, Q^2 for both endogenous variables indicates adequate predictive validity.

This study expected that perceived ease of use of technology will moderate the relationship between the perceived utility of technology on the role identity and the level of satisfaction. The moderation effect is evaluated using the PLS product-indicator method. According to Chin et al. (2003), PLS can provide more precise estimates of moderator effects by accounting for the error

that weakens the estimated correlations, hence enhancing the validity of hypotheses (Henseler and Fassott, 2010). Perceived utility of technology on the role identity (predictor) and perceived ease of use of technology (moderator) were compounded to generate an interaction construct (PU of technology $\times$ PEOU of technology) to predict the level of satisfaction. As shown in Table 5, the calculated standardized path coefficients for the moderator's influence on the level of satisfaction is statistically significant for both the positive perceived utility of technology on the role identity ($b = -0.124$; $p < 0.100$) and the negative perceived utility of technology on the role identity ($b = -0.116$; $p < 0.050$). This suggests that considering perceived ease of use of different technologies moderates the relationship between the perceived utility of technology on the comprehension of one's role identity and the level of satisfaction. The plot in Figure 3 shows a steeper and positive gradient for low perceived ease of use of technology as compared to high perceived ease of use. Thus, this demonstrates that the impact of positive perceived utility of technology on role identity in fostering the level of satisfaction is stronger when technology is much more difficult to use. The plot in Figure 4 shows a steeper and negative gradient for high perceived ease of use of technology as compared to low perceived ease of use. Consequently, this demonstrates that the impact of negative perceived utility of technology on role identity in reducing the level of satisfaction is stronger when technology is less complex. Therefore, H3a and H3b were likewise supported.

Discussion

Theoretical contributions

With the fast advancement of digital technology, tourism and hospitality academics and practitioners are increasingly challenged to understand better how to assess and improve the efficacy of digitisation to improve visitor experience and

TABLE 2 Factor loadings.

	Negative perception of the utility of technology on cultural experience	Positive perception of the utility of technology on cultural experience	Negative perception of the utility of technology on role identity	Positive perception of the utility of technology on role identity	Perceived ease of use of technology	Level of satisfaction
Future use in daily routine						0.758
Satisfaction in daily usage						0.885
Increase productivity						0.645
Future use in general						0.752
Interaction clear						0.632
Flexible interaction					0.738	
Technology does what it must do					0.785	
Learning easy					0.845	
Usage easy daily routine					0.872	
Role reinvented				0.721		
Role enlarged competencies				0.794		
Role enriched				0.868		
Role unnecessary			0.762			
Role downsized			0.823			
Role restricted			0.901			
More interactive		0.768				
More educational		0.790				
More exciting		0.850				
More fascinating		0.874				
More boring	0.816					
More superficial	0.847					
More distractive	0.851					
More unrealistic	0.903					

TABLE 3 Discriminant validity.

	Negative perception of the utility of technology on cultural experience	Positive perception of the utility of technology on cultural experience	Negative perception of the utility of technology on role identity	Positive perception of the utility of technology on role identity	Perceived ease of use of technology	Level of satisfaction
Negative perception of the utility of technology on cultural experience	0.855					
Positive perception of the utility of technology on cultural experience	-0.417	0.822				
Negative perception of the utility of technology on role identity	0.221	-0.096	0.831			
Positive perception of the utility of technology on role identity	-0.17	0.349	-0.221	0.797		
Perceived ease of use of technology	0.083	-0.017	0.05	-0.012	0.817	
Level of satisfaction	-0.18	0.304	-0.129	0.268	0.047	0.707

encourage good behaviours (Bogicevic et al., 2019). COVID-19 has accelerated this process by pushing organisations to rely on the available digital technology (Akhtar et al., 2021). The digital acceleration induced by COVID-19 allows researchers and professionals to see how cultural organisations have acted, giving significant illustrations of what is coming.

Although digitisation is becoming increasingly pervasive, it might be perceived as an unexpected event by those unfamiliar with it and must deal with new technologies in the workplace. For these reasons, there are areas of resistance to change in the traditional cultural sector. This study focuses on the tour guides' comprehension and interpretation of digital technology implementation within the cultural sector. Traditionally, the TAM has focused on the intentions and behaviours of people as they accept or reject new technologies. However, this study aims to determine whether this acceptance is contingent on a sensemaking process that encourages tour guides to accept the new challenges presented by a technology-driven scenario.

We contributed to the study on technology adoption from a sensemaking viewpoint by looking at how tour guides rate their satisfaction with their job identity as it has been changed by technological innovation. Sociomateriality is based on the notion

of sensemaking (Weick, 1995), and it allows for a more comprehensive understanding of the social construction of technology deployment, as well as the continuous usage and modification of technologies in the workplace (Leonardi and Barley, 2010). Sensemaking, defined as "people's efforts to comprehend unfamiliar, unexpected, or confusing experiences" (Maitlis and Christianson, 2014), is critical in organisations and has a significant influence on innovation and creativity (Hill and Levenhagen, 1995; Drazin et al., 1999). The research findings, which focus on the museum and historical and cultural heritage industries, show that conventional jobs such as tour guides may adopt alternative positions in dealing with the digital wave. Role-conservative tour guides are resistant to change, which affects their level of satisfaction with providing cultural experiences using new technologies. Indeed, the findings show that, while the negative perception of the utility of technology on role identity has no effect on level of satisfaction, the negative perception of the utility of technology on role identity influences the negative perception of the utility of technology on cultural experiences, which in turn influences the level of satisfaction. The utility of technology is irrelevant in determining

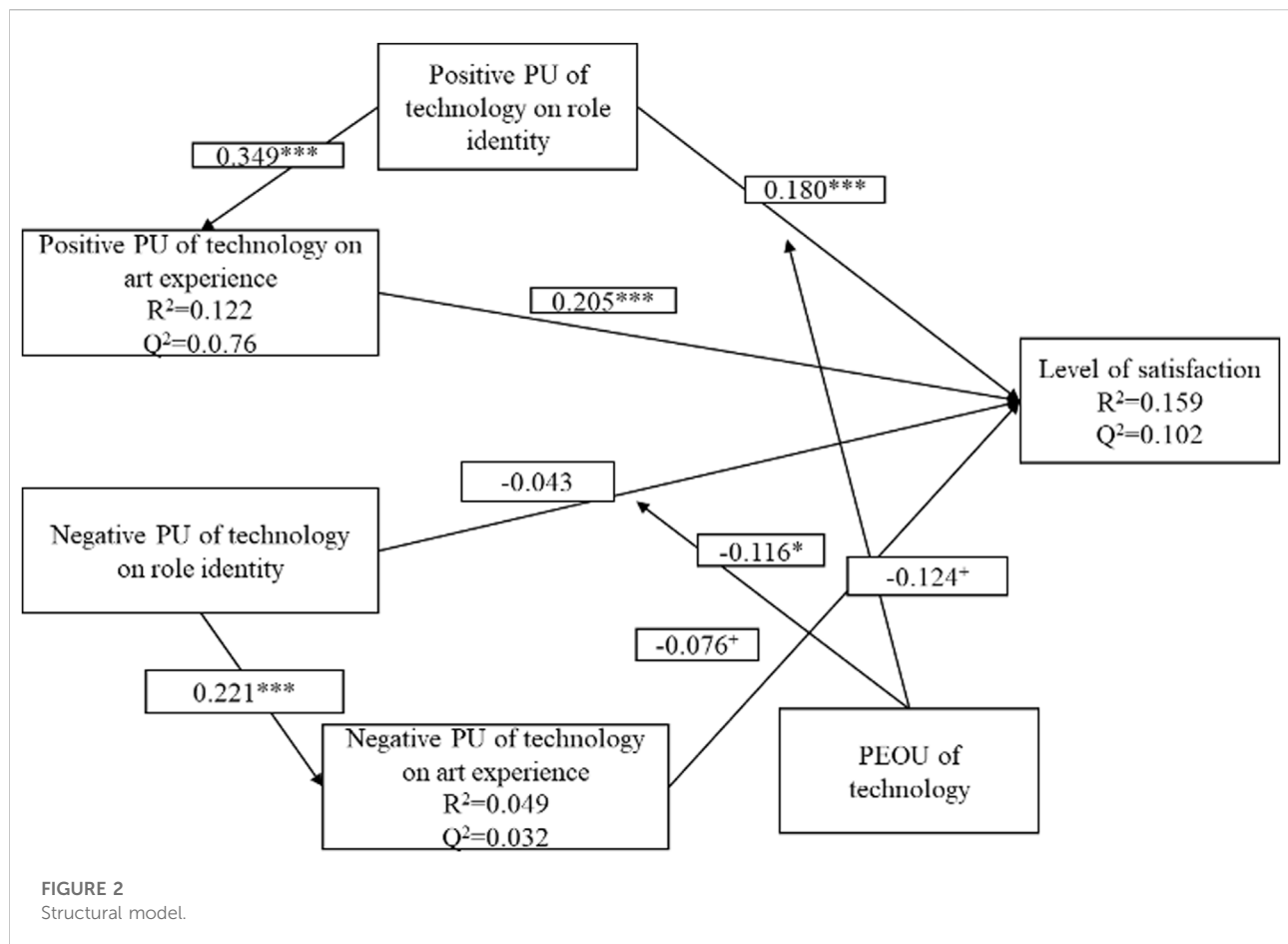
TABLE 4 Heterotrait-monotrait (HTMT).

	Negative perception of the utility of technology on cultural experience	Positive perception of the utility of technology on cultural experience	Negative perception of the utility of technology on role identity	Positive perception of the utility of technology on role identity	Perceived ease of use of technology	Level of satisfaction
Negative perception of the utility of technology on cultural experience						
Positive perception of the utility of technology on cultural experience	0.483					
Negative perception of the utility of technology on role identity	0.255	0.113				
Positive perception of the utility of technology on role identity	0.209	0.441	0.401			
Perceived ease of use of technology	0.089	0.027	0.055	0.023		
Level of satisfaction	0.191	0.324	0.146	0.318	0.047	

TABLE 5 Structural estimates (hypotheses testing).

Hypothesis	Description	Beta	T-value	F Square	Decision
H1a	Positive perception of the utility of technology on cultural experience -> Level of satisfaction	0.205***	3.723	0.137	Supported
H1b	Negative perception of the utility of technology on cultural experience -> Level of satisfaction	-0.076 ⁺	1.334	0.105	Supported
H1a	Positive perception of the utility of technology on role identity -> Level of satisfaction	0.18***	3.362	0.132	Supported
H1b	Negative perception of the utility of technology on role identity -> Level of satisfaction	-0.043	0.802	0.102	Not supported
H2a	Positive perception of the utility of technology on role identity -> Positive perception of the utility of technology on cultural experience	0.349***	7.350	0.139	Supported
H2b	Negative perception of the utility of technology on role identity -> Negative perception of the utility of technology on cultural experience	0.221***	4.288	0.151	Supported
H3a	Perceived ease of use of technology X Positive perception of the utility of technology on role identity -> Level of satisfaction	-0.124 ⁺	1.507	0.117	Supported
H3b	Perceived ease of use of technology X Negative perception of the utility of technology on role identity -> Level of satisfaction	-0.116 ⁺	1.896	0.115	Supported
	Perceived ease of use of technology -> Level of satisfaction	0.058 ⁺	1.370	0.104	Moderator

⁺*p* < 0.10; **p* < 0.05; ***p* < 0.01; ****p* < 0.001.



the redefinition of tour guides' roles in the cultural sector. However, it does make the cultural experience more unrealistic, superficial, distracting, and less interesting.

On the other hand, those who are more techno-fan report extremely positive outcomes from adopting digital technology, resulting in enhanced cultural experiences. Indeed, the perception of the utility of technology on role identity has a positive effect on tour guide satisfaction. Furthermore, the perception of the utility of technology in reshaping tour guides' role identities has a positive impact on the perception of the utility of technology on cultural experiences, which, in turn, increases tour guides' level of satisfaction while providing cultural experiences with new technologies. This means that some tour guides believe that technology not only helps them reinvent, enlarge, and enrich their roles in the industry but also makes cultural experiences more interactive, educational, exciting, and fascinating.

Additionally, this study seeks to broaden our understanding of the TAM by positing that the perceived ease of use of technology may act as a moderator when the perception of the utility of technology is examined through the lens of sensemaking principles. Indeed, the findings show that when technology is much more complex, the impact of positive

perception of the utility of technology on role identity in fostering the level of satisfaction is stronger. This is because those with a positive attitude toward technology and its impact on the redefinition of their role are more motivated to use complex technologies because they believe that this process will lead to an increase in their skills and a better redefinition of their own role in the industry. Similarly, when technology is much easier to use, the impact of a negative perception of the utility on role identity in reducing satisfaction is stronger. Those who feel threatened by technology in terms of role redefinition naturally tend not to use technology because they do not perceive the positive aspects. When forced to use them, however, they prefer the simpler ones, which in any case do not increase, but rather decrease, their level of satisfaction.

Managerial and practical implications

Building on the insights provided by this study, marketers and managers, especially within the cultural tourism sector, can derive significant value from understanding how digital technologies reshape consumer experiences and expectations. By recognizing the positive attitudes of professionals, such as tour

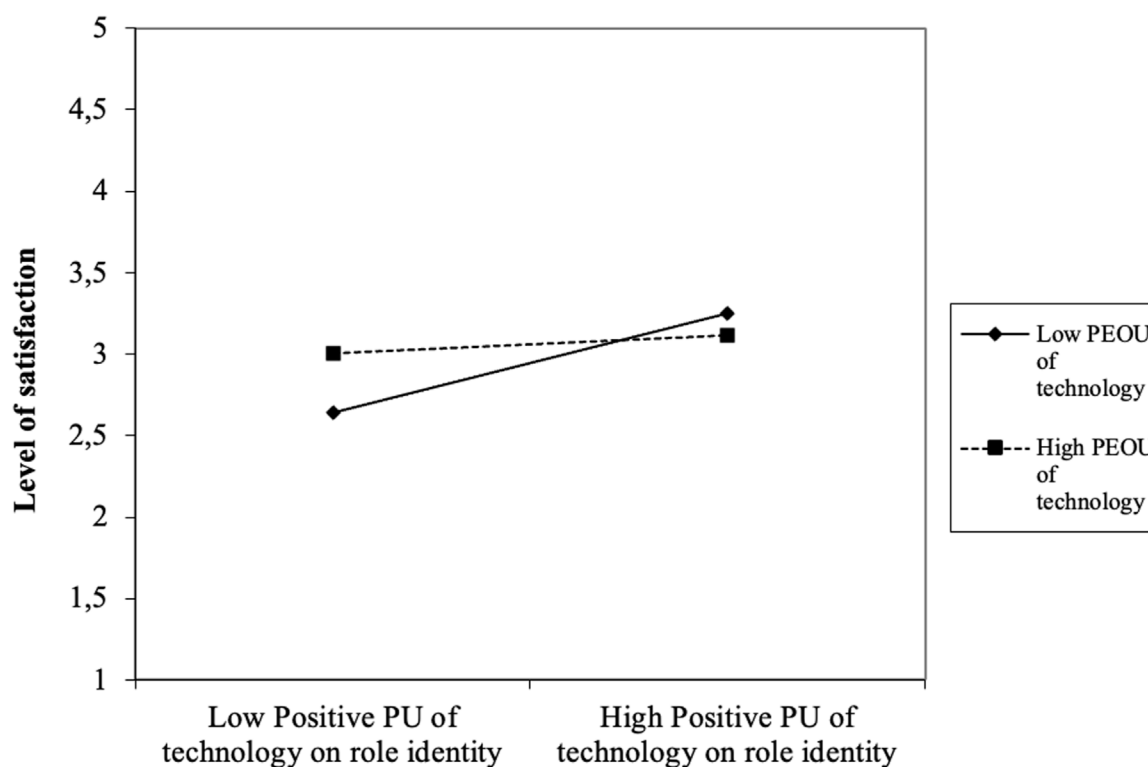


FIGURE 3
Moderation effect PEOU of technology x Positive PU of technology on role identity.

guides, towards technological advancements, marketers can better tailor their strategies to leverage these technologies for enhancing visitor engagement and satisfaction. This approach not only appeals to a broad consumer segment but also addresses the nuanced needs and preferences of specific tourist demographics seeking enriched cultural experiences.

The evidence presented in our research underscores the importance of investing in the technological upskilling of personnel within cultural organizations. Such investments can significantly improve the overall quality of the visitor experience, making these destinations more appealing to a diverse range of tourists. For marketers, this means an opportunity to differentiate their offerings and create more personalized, interactive, and memorable experiences that cater to various consumer segments, including those particularly interested in cultural and historical tourism.

Moreover, by integrating digital technologies into their marketing strategies, cultural organizations can extend their reach and more effectively communicate the value of their offerings to potential visitors. This includes the use of virtual reality tours, augmented reality applications, and interactive guides that enrich the visitor experience and provide a unique competitive edge. As digitalization continues to evolve, understanding its implications enables marketers and

managers to not only enhance the appeal of their cultural assets but also to drive broader organizational change, ensuring that their institutions remain relevant and engaging in a rapidly changing digital landscape.

Lastly, policymakers and cultural institution administrators may find our research useful in redefining conventional roles and models in the cultural context. Because digitalization is irreversible and is becoming increasingly ubiquitous, public and private actors should pay close attention to the implementation of change by taking more proactive roles as change agents.

Limitations and further research

While our research sheds light on the intricate role of satisfaction within the tourism sector, we acknowledge as a limitation our failure to incorporate the consideration of behavioural responses, such as the intention to use, which naturally align with the constructs of PEOU and PU. This oversight is significant given the intrinsic link between these constructs and user behaviour in the context of technology adoption and utilization. However, this acknowledgment aligns with the scholarly discourse on the significance of

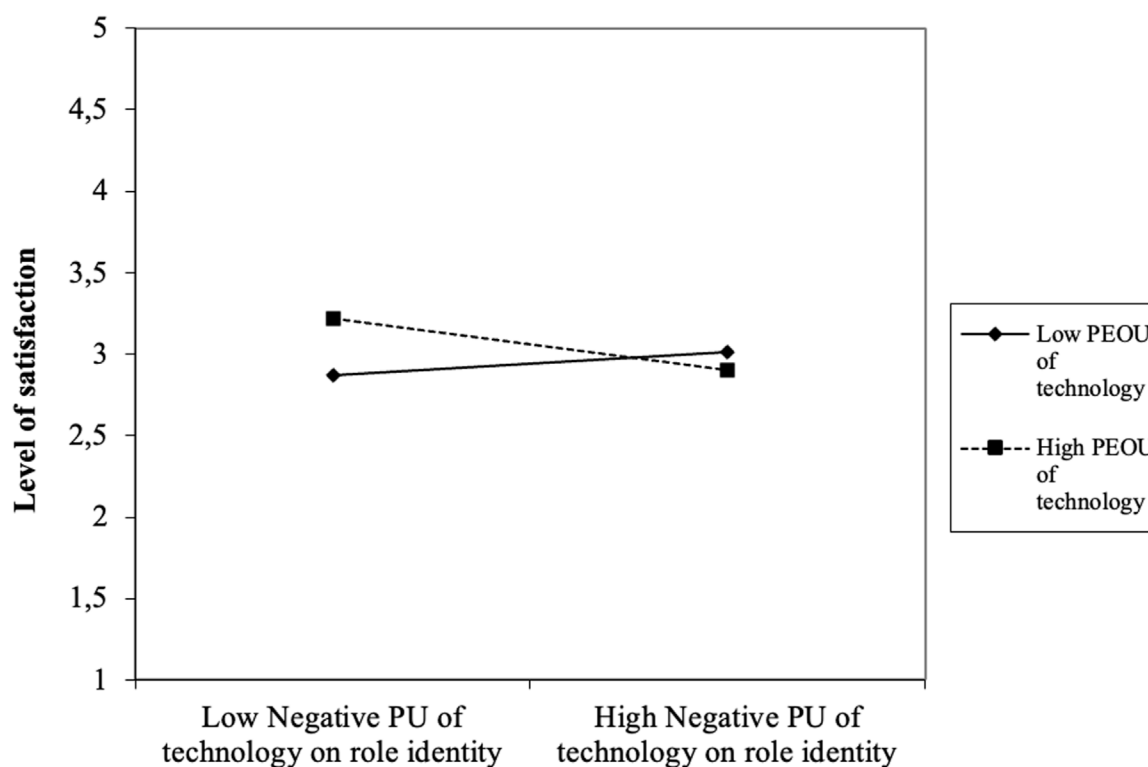


FIGURE 4
Moderation effect PEOU of technology x Negative PU of technology on role identity.

satisfaction within tourism research, as evidenced by other works such as those by [Pai et al. \(2020\)](#) and [Lee and Mills \(2007\)](#).

In extending the scope of our discussion on limitations, it is pertinent to highlight the cross-sectional nature of our methodology. This approach, while insightful, limits our ability to capture the dynamic evolution of attitudes and behaviours over time. Consequently, we advocate for future investigations to adopt longitudinal or experimental designs. Such methodologies would enable the direct observation of changes in tour guides' attitudes and behaviours throughout and following the visitor experience, thereby enriching our understanding of these dynamics.

Additionally, our study's geographical focus on Italy poses constraints on the universality of our findings. The unique cultural, museum, arts, and historical landscape of Italy may not mirror those of other countries with rich cultural offerings. This limitation opens avenues for future research to replicate and extend our study in diverse cultural settings, thereby testing the robustness and applicability of our proposed model across different global contexts.

Lastly, we continue to observe a trend indicating a diminishing negative attitude towards technology among tour guides over time. This shift is largely attributed to the arrival of new generations of tour guides who have been born into an era of technology and are

inherently more comfortable and familiar with digital tools. This change suggests that future studies should not only explore additional variables that elucidate the connections between tour guide satisfaction, the perceived utility of technology, and its ease of use but also consider the evolving perceptions of technology within this group. Investigating how these changing attitudes impact the adoption and satisfaction with technology in the tourism sector could offer valuable insights.

Data availability statement

The raw data supporting the conclusion of this article will be made available by the authors, without undue reservation.

Ethics statement

Due to the nature of this study, direct oversight by an institutional or national research ethics committee was not applicable. However, the research design and conduct were carefully considered to ensure they aligned with the ethical principles outlined in the 1964 Declaration of Helsinki and its later amendments, or comparable ethical standards. All

procedures performed were designed to ensure the utmost respect for participant rights and well-being, emphasizing informed consent, confidentiality, and the right to withdraw without penalty.

Author contributions

Although authors contributed equally, section theory is attributed to LM, results section is attributed to LN, discussion is attributed to LP. All authors contributed to the article and approved the submitted version.

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Appendix

A1. Items of the questionnaire.

Negative perception about the utility of technology on cultural experience.

Technological devices limit the visit to the owners of the devices.

Technological devices demotivate art enthusiasts.

Technological devices demotivate people who do not own a personal device.

Technological devices alienate visitors from the external context.

Positive perception about the utility of technology on cultural experience.

Technological devices increase the likelihood to visit a museum or an archaeological site.

Technological devices make the visit more stimulating.

Technological devices make the visit more involving.

Technological devices make the visit more educational.

Negative perception about the utility of technology on the tour guide role identity.

Technology downsized your professional role.

Technology restricted the tour guide's role as a mere support during the cultural experience.

Technology made the role of the tour guide unnecessary.

Positive perception about the utility of technology on the tour guide role identity.

Technology enlarged the spectre of your competencies.

Technology reinvented the role of the tour guide.

Technology enriched the role of the tour guide.

Perceived ease of use of technology.

My interaction with technological devices is clear and understandable.

I would find technological devices to be flexible to interact with.

I would find easy to several technological devices to do what I want to do.

Learning to operate with technological devices would be easy for me.

I would find technological devices easy to use in my daily routine.

Level of satisfaction.

Given my experience with technology, I would like to use it again in my daily activities.

I am satisfied by the usage of technology in my work.

Using technological devices increases my productivity.

I predict that I will continue to use technological devices in the future.



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Cultural and space-based factors influencing recreational conflicts in forests. The example of cyclists and other forest visitors in Freiburg (Germany)

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More and more people are visiting forests for recreational and leisure purposes. Against this backdrop, conflicts have become rampant mainly due to limited spaces and conflicting recreational expectations. Recreational conflicts have the tendency to diminish the satisfaction that a visitor derives from leisure activities in the forest. This is a challenge not only to forest management but also to tourism product development. The study investigates recreational conflicts in forests by conducting a nationwide online survey. Conflicts were described based on how intensively they are discussed in public, how emotionally they are treated, and based on the willingness of the respondents in finding solutions to the conflicts. In order to investigate the factors that contribute to conflict genesis, the example of conflicts between cyclists and other forest visitors was researched by an on-site survey in Freiburg (Germany). The results show that cultural factors influence conflict genesis. For example, the activity style of recreationists and their mode of experience play an important role in conflict genesis. Both are cultural factors, when following a value-based understanding of culture. However, not are recreational conflicts judged as highly emotional; instead, they seem to be an expected part of forest visits. The study concludes with recommendations for tourism product development and forest management.

KEYWORDS

activity style, mode of experience, resource specificity, goal interference, social value conflict

Introduction

Forests are increasingly important for leisure and recreational activities (Mann et al., 2010; Riccioli et al., 2019). This trend has intensified, especially in times of COVID (Derks et al., 2020; Kim et al., 2023). The rise of nature-oriented lifestyles is contributing to this as well (Hunziker et al., 2011; Hermes et al., 2021). Against this backdrop, the number of people visiting forests has increased (Türk et al., 2004; Wilkes-Allemann et al., 2022). The demand for forest space has grown and previously unused landscapes are being used for

leisure purposes (Dufft, 2019). This contributes to the genesis of recreational conflicts (Arnberger and Mann, 2008; Vaske, 2019).

Conflicts can be understood as an “indicator of social carrying capacity in recreation” (Tynon and Gómez, 2012, p. 532). This means that forest landscapes have a limited ability to absorb a growing number of recreationists, especially if they practice different kinds of activities or bring in different kinds of recreational aspirations. Slow and fast activities or visitors with the need for tranquil relaxation may cannibalize each other (Wilkes-Allemann et al., 2015a).

However, these conflicts often can't be described objectively (Vaske et al., 1995; Cessford, 2003). Subjective perceptions, values and expectations play an important role. Thus, there might be divergent opinions as to how forests should be used as recreational spaces. However, cultural drivers have received little attention in conflict research up to now (Watson et al., 1994; Vaske et al., 2000; Volz and Mann, 2006). By following the value-based concept of culture as defined by Hofstede (1980), this is where this paper makes its contributions.

Firstly, the paper looks at the main conflict issues in the forests. The spectrum of forest conflicts is broad and ranges from conflicts between forest visitors, to conflicts with forest management, or with nature conservation (Graefe and Thapa, 2004; Mann and Absher, 2008; Wilkes-Allemann et al., 2017). With the help of an online survey, which was undertaken nationwide in Germany, the main issues and characteristics of recreational conflicts in forests are identified. Secondly, the paper investigates the factors that influence conflict genesis. The focus is on cultural and space-based factors. The conflict between cyclists and other forest visitors is analysed more in depth because it is a recent phenomenon in Germany (Rousek, 2021; Könen, 2023).

The rest of the paper is structured as follows: firstly, a literature review is done, which sheds light on the core concepts of the study and on key drivers of recreation-based conflicts. This is followed by the methodology. The paper includes two studies, which were carried out on different geographical levels (national versus regional) and complement one another in terms of contents. Both studies are reported on methodologically. The results section contains the most important results of the two studies. The discussion section of the paper relates the results to existing research as reported in the literature review. The two research questions will be answered in the discussion part as well. The paper concludes with recommendations to inform policy decisions by management of forest resources.

Literature review

Research on conflicts is done in a wide variety of disciplines, including psychology (Böhm et al., 2020), sociology (Rahim, 2023) and politics (Wolak, 2022). With regard to recreational

conflicts, various groups of outdoor activities have been researched, e.g., skiers and snowboarders (Vaske et al., 2004) or skiers and snowmobiles (Knopp and Tyger, 1973; Jackson and Wong, 1982), hunters and non-hunters (Vaske et al., 1995), hikers and mountain bikers (Ramthun, 1995; Carothers et al., 2001), riders and backpackers (Stankey, 1973) or canoeists and motor boaters (Lucas, 1964; Adelman et al., 1982). However, it should be noted that most of these studies are rather old. New studies do not focus much on sources of conflicts, but on the governance of forest recreation and solutions for potential conflicts (Wilkes-Allemann et al., 2015a; Wilkes-Allemann et al., 2015b; Wilkes-Allemann et al., 2017). Nevertheless, it is clear that recreation-based conflicts are diverse and need to be understood in their character before solutions may be developed (Mann and Absher, 2007; Needham et al., 2008; Wong and Yu, 2012; Pröbstl-Haider et al., 2018).

Definition of recreational conflicts

To understand recreation-based conflict it is helpful to distinguish between two traditions of concepts (Graefe and Thapa, 2004; Vaske, 2019; Kleiner et al., 2022). According to the first tradition, recreation-based conflicts are based on conflicting goals. This is when one group is disturbed by the activities of another group (Jacob and Schreyer, 1980; Bury et al., 1983). For example, this might happen if two recreational groups meet each other and sense a “lack of courtesy” or even behaviour that gives reason to safety concerns (Carothers et al., 2001, p. 49). For this kind of conflict, social contact is necessary. This might be direct face-to-face contact. But also indirect social contact, such as someone perceives other people's traces of use in the forest and does not appreciate that (Jacob and Schreyer, 1980; Thapa and Graefe, 2003). Conceptually, this conflict is defined as an *interpersonal conflict* (Vaske et al., 2007; Vaske, 2019).

The second tradition does not require social contact for conflict genesis. At the heart of this view are ideas about what behaviour is socially acceptable (Vaske et al., 2000; Vaske et al., 2007; Vaske, 2019). These conflicts are based on expectations of the behaviour of others and the question of what appropriate behaviour is (Tynon and Gómez, 2012). In particular, it concerns ideas on how recreational infrastructures or spaces should be used (Wilkes-Allemann et al., 2015b). For this conflict, it is not necessary to directly experience deviant behaviour. Instead, hearing about it, might be enough. This group of conflicts is termed *social norm conflicts* (Vaske et al., 2000; Carothers et al., 2001; Tynon and Gómez, 2012).

Both traditions are intertwined in reality. Vaske et al. (2007) point out that interpersonal and norm-related conflicts are usually experienced simultaneously. This means more than one type of conflict might be sensed at the same time. For the definition of the term “conflict” it is therefore useful, to merge both traditions. In this vein, conflicts can be defined as “perceived

incompatibility of goals or values between two or more individuals” (Schachinger, 2020, p. 11).

Types of recreational conflicts

Recreational conflicts usually are idiosyncratic. That means that they cannot be compared easily and exhibit a unique character. Thus, conflicts may exhibit a different extent of symmetry. A symmetric conflict is perceived equally problematic by all parties involved. Asymmetry, on the other hand, means that groups involved do not perceive a situation similar conflictual (Vaske et al., 2000; Tynon and Gómez, 2012). For example, Kleiner et al. (2022) report that hikers feel more disturbed by mountain bikers than *vice versa*. The reasons for the different judgement vary widely and range from expectations (Fredman and Hörnsten, 2001; Budruk et al., 2002) to previous experiences and the recreationists abilities (Thapa and Graefe, 2003). In principle, it must be noted that conflicts are subjective and socially constructed: “It is important to recognize that conflict [...] is not an objective state but must be understood as an individual’s interpretation [...]” (Jacob and Schreyer, 1980, p. 369).

Secondly, conflicts may relate not only to recreationists performing different activities, but also to individuals who do the same sport or activity. Whereas the first constellation is termed out-group-conflict, the second one is an in-group-conflict (Thapa and Graefe, 2003; Tynon and Gómez, 2012; Kleiner et al., 2022). An example for this is the group of mountain bikers. Mountain biking may be divided into several subgroups like touring, down-hill or enduro. Usually, the motives and lifestyles of these sub-groups differ, thus giving rise to potential conflict (Mann and Absher, 2007). Similarly, the conflict between mountain biking and e-mountain biking is reported (Schachinger, 2020). Overall, however, recreation-based conflicts appear to be more a matter of out-group-, than in-group-relations (Kleiner et al., 2022).

A third aspect characterizing conflicts is intensity. Vaske et al. (2000) and Carothers et al. (2001) sketch a continuum of undesirable recreation behaviour, ranging from a lack in awareness to actively inconsiderate behaviour. Other studies record the extent of conflicts by measuring the satisfaction of recreationists, in particular, the satisfaction with meeting others while performing their leisure activity (Watson et al., 1991; Wong and Yu, 2012; Kleiner et al., 2022).

Space and culture as drivers of recreational conflicts

One factor that influences conflict genesis is recreational space (Jacob and Schreyer, 1980; Vaske, 2019). Recreational space includes recreational infrastructures such as hiking trails

as well as geographic features, such as slope, outlooks or vegetation. Recreationists might be dependent on these features in performing their leisure activities. Thus, a downhill MTB needs a slope or suitable mountain bike trails. Dependency on certain features, however, results in a limited ability to change the place. This means that experiencing the place according to one’s own expectations is even more important, since there are no alternatives. Place dependency, therefore, contributes to conflict sensitivity (Mann and Absher, 2007). However, it is not only the physical dependency on a place, but also an emotional or subjective preference for the place, which might trigger conflict.

In addition, norms and values might have an effect on how sensitive recreationists are to conflicts. Here, culture as a component of conflict genesis comes into play. Culture, in this context, is understood as shaped by values, which are shared by groups (Straub et al., 2002). In this vein, already Kluckhohn (1951) conceived culture as “patterned ways of thinking, feeling and reacting” (p. 86). Erez and Earley (1997) speak of culture as the “shared way a group of people view the world” (p. 23). The present study’s understanding of culture is based on Hofstede (1980), who defines culture as “the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one human group from another” (Hofstede, 1980, p. 260). Taken this together, outdoor recreation is understood as a culturally bound activity, in which recreationists attribute values to forest visits, which might vary according to their group-membership. They also might dispose of certain normative expectations what to do in forests or how to behave in forests, which might be group-specific. These differences in attitudes towards forests, in turn, might result in incompatible modes of forest visitation that, in the end, might lead to conflicts (Thapa and Graefe, 2003; Vaske et al., 2007; Vaske, 2019). In this regard, Thapa and Graefe (2003, p. 17) speak of a “clash of cultures” recreationists experience in recreational conflicts.

Spatial aspects

The single factor most frequently mentioned for conflict genesis is *resource specificity* (Thapa and Graefe, 2003; Wong and Yu, 2012; Schachinger, 2020). Resource specificity refers to the degree of dependence of an activity on a specific site (Jacob and Schreyer, 1980). It is measured, for example, by asking recreationists how important a place for a certain recreation activity is, how their relationship to the place is and how important visiting the place is for their everyday life (Wong and Yu, 2012). In many cases, a positive correlation was demonstrated between resource specificity and conflict. That means, recreationists with a high resource specificity, and thus a high dependence in a functional sense, hold a higher degree of sensitivity to conflicts (Mann and Absher, 2007).

Resource specificity, however, is not necessarily determined by the area’s natural or infrastructural features. Recreationists may depend on a place from an emotional point of view. Jacob

and Schreyer (1980) point out that recreationists who know an area very well, and who are very familiar with its physical features, will hardly find identical conditions elsewhere. The same applies to emotional bonds: if a person has developed a personal attachment to an area, or even draws identity contributions from it, another place can hardly serve as a substitute (Mann and Absher, 2007).

Both aspects correspond to the concepts of *place identity* and *place dependency* (Lewicka, 2011; Ramkissoon et al., 2012): While place identity describes an emotional attachment to a place, place dependency addresses functional aspects, in particular whether an area is suitable for a leisure activity (Vaske and Kobrin, 2001). Mann and Absher (2007) analysed the resource specificity of older adult hikers and found that this group of hikers had strong emotional bonds to certain hiking trails, mainly because they served as volunteers in maintaining the trails over decades.

Cultural aspects

The field of cultural drivers of conflicts is broad. They include personal traits of recreationists (McCrae and Costa, 2003; Tynon and Gómez, 2012; Schachinger, 2020), as well as aspects like their lifestyle tolerance, mode of experience and activity style (Watson et al., 1991; Vaske et al., 2000; Graefe and Thapa, 2004; Mann and Absher, 2007; Schachinger, 2020). Lifestyle tolerance relates to the extent to which recreationists accept diverging values, attitudes and norms—thus cultural aspects (Vaske et al., 2007; Vaske, 2019). Mode of experience sheds light on how intensively recreationists immerse themselves in their surroundings and activities (Watson et al., 1991). Recreationists may focus on nature and on their companion, while being outside. And they might immerse themselves into the activity itself. Where they put the emphasis, depends on what value they assign to nature experiences, to the outdoor activity and their social company. In one word, it's their way of thinking or world-view, and thus cultural aspects, that shape mode of activity. Finally, activity style is another driver of conflict. It targets the question of how important leisure activities are in everyday life. Some recreationists might organize their entire life around leisure activities. Their world-view is a leisured-centred one. Their preferred mode of conduct, and thus a cultural phenomenon, is their leisure activity (Mann and Absher, 2007).

Lifestyle tolerance is defined as a “tendency to accept or reject lifestyles that differ from one's own” (Wong and Yu, 2012, p. 350). Different lifestyles are based on diverging “goals, values and personal philosophies” (Jacob and Schreyer, 1980, p. 376). Recreationists with shared values are assigned to one's own group (Kelly, 2019; McCormack, 2017; O'Reilly and Chatman, 1986). Conflicts based on lifestyles occur when generalizations are made. This is the case, for example, when a certain group is categorized as “weird, morally inferior or inscrutable” (Jacob and Schreyer, 1980, p. 376). It is generally assumed that a higher level of lifestyle tolerance leads to fewer conflicts (Vaske, 2019). An interesting group, in this context, are

recreationists that engage in several leisure activities and thus belong to several groups. It could be assumed that they report fewer conflicts (Graefe and Thapa, 2004; Kleiner et al., 2022).

Lifestyle tolerance is usually measured by asking recreationists to judge the similarity of attitudes or values of others compared to their own (Needham et al., 2008). Also judgements on similarities in socio-demographic characteristics are used (Vaske et al., 2000). However, the most common approach to measure lifestyle tolerance are recreation motives. They are considered to be a proxy for values or attitudes (Mann and Absher, 2007). Two typical motive groups are physical exercise and mental relaxation (Iwasaki and Mannell, 2000). There are also motives that include social aspects, e.g., having experiences that you can tell your friends about (Mehmetoglu and Normann, 2013).

Mode of experience refers to the extent to which recreationists immerse themselves in their surroundings and activities (Thapa and Graefe, 2003). For example, it has been shown that visitors to wilderness areas exhibit a greater immersion in the natural environment than recreationists who are outside designated protected areas (Watson et al., 1991). Different degrees of immersion are usually measured by asking recreationists to judge the extent to which they focus on their activity, on nature and their companions (Vaske et al., 2000; Wong and Yu, 2012). It is assumed that recreationists with a focus on natural environments perceive disturbance less intensively (Schachinger, 2020). This is very close to research in environmental psychology. There, it is known that people perceive environments selectively and subjectively (Wells, 2002; Heft, 2022). In particular, people perceive those elements that correspond to their needs and abilities, and might overlook others (Tsaour et al., 2012; Tsaour et al., 2014).

Finally, *activity style* is defined as the degree to which people identify with their leisure activities (Jacob and Schreyer, 1980; Wong and Yu, 2012). According to Kelly (2019), leisure time is a time for self-actualization. Leisure offers us the opportunity to express ourselves to others (Ramthun, 1995; McCormack, 2017). Activity style is usually measured by asking recreationists how long the activity has been practiced, how important the activity is in everyday life and how experienced one is (Schachinger, 2020). It is assumed that a pronounced activity style leads to an increased conflict sensitivity (Vaske et al., 2000; Wong and Yu, 2012). However, Thapa and Graefe (2003) show the opposite effect: experienced skiers who are good at their sport deal with problematic situations more calmly.

Methodology

The paper contains two studies. Firstly, a nationwide online survey in Germany with the aim of identifying and describing the main conflicts. Secondly, a case-based study in Freiburg (Germany), which looked into the reasons why conflicts

occur. The national-wide study was carried out, because according to anecdotic evidence there are some major conflicts in forests, one of which is the conflict between hikers and bikers. The study aimed at investigating whether these well-known conflicts prevail or whether there is a broader field of relevant conflict issues. The study was carried out in a quantitative way to gain standardized information from as many respondents as possible to create relevant and informative data, which goes beyond a regional or local level.

Freiburg was chosen because in the nation-wide survey, the region received a high number of responses. Additionally, an expert group judged Freiburg as an interesting region to investigate on conflicts between different kinds of recreationists. The expert group consisted of representatives of associations in the field of outdoor sports and nature protection as well as of academics, working in the field of outdoor recreation. The study in Freiburg was conducted as a standardized on-site survey, because it aimed at testing the effects of a pre-defined set of conflict drivers. The Freiburg survey was longer than the nation-wide survey and aimed at in-depth analysis; the nation-wide survey, in turn, was short and provided a frame for further analysis.

The nationwide study captured responses from recreationists through a survey link which was distributed via clubs, associations, agencies and other institutions from forestry and timber industry, nature conservation, outdoor sports and tourism sectors all over Germany. The online survey was conducted using the SoSci Survey tool. The survey used several questions to elicit responses on the main issues of recreational conflicts. It also included questions on the motives for visiting the forest.

The variables were designed as follows: To identify the main conflicts, participants were asked to select conflicts they had already experienced from a list of 15 topics. The list was based on the work of [Hegetschweiler et al. \(2022\)](#), [Mann and Absher \(2008\)](#), [Volz and Mann \(2006\)](#) and [Diekmann et al. \(1999\)](#). It contained topics like littering, crowding or visual disturbances, i.e., by wind turbines or radio masts. The responses were recorded dichotomously by ticking the topics (1 = conflict was experienced, 2 = conflict was not experienced).

To characterize the conflicts, the questionnaire included statements on the conflicts' emotionality, their media coverage and past solution attempts. A total of seven items was formulated. The items were newly developed for the study. Participants were able to express their agreement on a five-point scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree). The items were subjected to an exploratory factor analysis.

The motives of forest visitors were recorded using a list of nine items ranging from statements such as "When I am in the forest, it is important to me to find peace and relaxation" to "When I am in the forest, it is important to me to do sport." The content of this list was based on the work by [Hegetschweiler et al. \(2022\)](#), [Koep et al. \(2019\)](#), [Volz and Mann \(2006\)](#) and [Zeidenitz](#)

[\(2005\)](#). For each item, participants were asked to indicate the importance of the motive on a five-point scale (1 = not important, 5 = very important). The items were integrated into variables by mean scores after a principal component analysis.

The second study was also a standardized survey, conducted in the limited geographical area of Freiburg i. Breisgau (Germany) and related to one specific conflict. This topic was "conflicts between cyclists and other forest visitors." The survey was carried out on-site in the south-east of Freiburg's city forest, where several paths for leisure activities (including cycle paths, hiking trails and walking paths) converge. The survey was carried out in 3 days in June 2023, at three time intervals (morning, noon, afternoon). It took about 30 min to answer the questions.

The questionnaire was divided into several sections; each of which contained several questions and items. Most prominently, drivers of conflicts were analysed. These drivers were mode of experience, resource specificity and activity style. Mode of experience was assessed by three statements, measuring the degree of the recreationists' immersion: "While I am doing my leisure activity, I concentrate a) on the activity, b) on the environment and nature, c) on my companion." Participants answered on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree; alternative option: don't know). These items were based on the work of [Schachinger \(2020\)](#) and [Watson et al. \(1991\)](#).

Resource specificity was assessed by four statements: "The area where I usually do my leisure activity a) means a lot to me, b) is the best place to do it," "A large part of my life is organized around the area where I usually do my leisure activity," "I identify strongly with the area where I usually do my leisure activity." Again, respondents used a 5-point Likert scale for their answers (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree; alternative option: don't know). The design of the statements was primarily based on the work of [Schachinger \(2020\)](#), [Wong and Yu \(2012\)](#) and [Williams and Vaske \(2003\)](#).

Activity style was surveyed using three questions, which centred on the centrality of leisure activities in the participants' lives: "A large part of my life revolves around my leisure activities," "I try to do my leisure activities with people who are at about the same level as me," "My leisure activity makes me happier than my work" (5-point Likert scale: 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree, alternative option: don't know). These items are primarily based on the work of [Xiong et al. \(2022\)](#), [Schachinger \(2020\)](#), [Koep et al. \(2019\)](#), [Vaske \(2019\)](#), [Thapa and Graefe \(2003\)](#) and [Vaske et al. \(2000\)](#).

Another main component of the questionnaire was the degree to which respondents had experienced the conflict. This was evaluated using two item batteries containing the following questions: "(How often) Have you already experienced the following situations in the forest? (Answer options: never, 1–2x, occasionally, often, almost always)." The question related to five items, which described conflictive

TABLE 1 Forest visitation motives.

Item	Mean	SD	Relaxation and being-away	Physical health	Novelty and company
To be in nature	4.78	0.479	.737	-.017	.067
To find peace and relaxation	4.48	0.725	.837	-.053	-.059
To distance from everyday life	4.51	0.742	.719	.207	.072
To do sports	3.68	1.118	-.026	.873	.103
To do something for my health	4.00	0.987	.179	.795	.204
To experience something	3.09	1.165	-.115	.371	.625
To be with other people	2.29	1.142	-.108	.269	.696
To be outside with my children	2.43	1.496	.062	.042	.642
To see new landscapes	3.44	1.106	.212	-.032	.723

"How important are the following aspects when you visit the forests?", $n = 1,507$. Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis. Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.

Rotation converged in four iterations. Cronbachs Alpha: 0.648/0.684/0.628.

behaviours of cyclists and other forest visitors (behaving rudely, showing no consideration, walking or riding on MTB trails/hiking trails, walking or riding off the trails, wilfully disturbing others). The items are based on the work of Kleiner et al. (2022), Vaske (2019), Tynon and Gómez (2012), Vaske et al. (2007), Cessford (2003), Carothers et al. (2001) and Vaske et al. (1995).

A regression analysis was done to identify factors that influence conflict genesis based on the data collected in the second study. In the regression, mode of experience, resource specificity and activity style were independent variables. The dependent variable was deduced from the answers on conflictive behaviour by calculating a sum score (cyclists/other forest visitors behave rudely, show no consideration, are on MTB trails/hiking trails, are off the beaten track, wilfully disturb others). The online survey and the visitor survey in Freiburg were both analysed using SPSS (version 29).

Results

The following chapter presents the results of the nationwide survey and the results of the case-based study in Freiburg. It focuses on characterising the main conflict issues experienced by recreationists in forests and the factors that influence these conflicts.

Nationwide survey on conflict characteristics

Between 28th November 2022 and 8th January 2023, 1,507 data sets were generated. About 51% of the respondents are between 40 and 59 years old. 30% are younger than 40, and less than 20% are 60 years or older. Two-thirds of the

respondents are females and one-third are males. According to the Federal Statistical Office, the current distribution in Germany is around 49.3% men and 50.7% women (Statistisches Bundesamt, 2023b). Of these, about 27% are between 40 and 59 years old (Statistisches Bundesamt, 2023a). The collected data, therefore, is not representative for Germany. With regard to their main leisure activity, most respondents stated that it was riding (36.8%), walking with/without a dog (21.7%), cycling/mountain biking (14.1%) or hiking (14%). Almost 95% have been practising their leisure activity for more than 3 years.

Visitation motives

Respondents agreed to most of the nine motives. Intensive agreement was stated to the motives of "to be in nature" (4.78), "to find distance from everyday life" (4.51) and "to find peace and relaxation" (4.48). The motives "to be with other people" and "to be outside with my children" received smaller agreement. Here the mean values are at 2.29 and 2.43 only (see Table 1). If these items are subjected to a principal component analysis (Varimax rotation), three main motives can be identified: "Relaxation & Being-Away," "Physical Health" and "Novelty & Companionship" (see Table 1). For all three main motives a mean score was calculated, which showed that most respondents visited the forest for relaxation (M 4.59, SD 0.51), the second motive was physical health (M 3.85, SD 0.92), last novelty (M 2.87, SD 0.88).

Conflict issues

As regards conflict issues, littering was experienced by 69.5% of respondents, followed by conflicts with other forest visitors (60.6%) and rule violation (53.6%). Conflicts due to crowding were reported by 36.3%. There was just a third who mentioned conflicts with forest management (33.9%). All other issues of conflicts in forests are listed in Table 2.

TABLE 2 Conflict issues in forests.

Conflict issue	Already experienced (%)
Litter	69.5
Conflicts with other forest visitors	60.6
Violation of rules	53.6
Dogs	43.4
Obstacles on paths (e.g., trees, branches)	39.3
High number of visitors	36.3
Activities off path	35.2
Conflicts with forest management	33.9
Messy paths	28.5
Vandalism	23.8
Hunting	21
Noise	17.5
Infrastructure deficiencies (e.g., at huts, signage)	14.4
Fire and barbecue sites	13.3
Visual disturbances, i.e., wind turbines, radio masts	8.7

“Below, you will find a list with potential conflicts in forests. Please indicate which of these conflicts correspond to the situation you experienced in forests” $n = 1,507$.

Conflict characteristics

Out of the list of conflict issues, participants chose their main conflict. They characterised their main conflict by stating how emotionally the conflict was, the presence of it in the media, and the extent to which they were willing to contribute to conflict solution. The results show that the respondents are willing to contribute to conflict solution. The mean value is at 3.70. It is reported that there have been attempts to solve the conflict in the past, however on a low scale (2.62). It is noteworthy that respondents attribute themselves a large rule competency—that is, they feel well informed on applicable rules (4.23). To other conflict parties, however, rule competency is attributed to a lower degree; “others are not well informed” is at a mean of 2.93. Looking at the emotional side, conflicts do not seem to be very emotional (3.28). Conflicts hardly are being reported in media (2.27). Detailed statistical information on these characteristics is available in [Table 3](#). The exploratory factor analysis across these items shows the following results. Firstly, one’s own knowledge on applicable rules and willingness to participate in conflict solution form a factor. Secondly, the assumed lack of knowledge on applicable rules in others and the extent to which the conflict is treated emotionally loads on another factor. However, Cronbachs Alpha for this factor is very low. Lastly, the three items on media coverage, public discourse and attempts at finding solutions in the past, form the third factor.

Case-based study on conflict drivers

Between 8th June 2023 and 10th June 2023, 224 data sets were collected. About half of the responses were generated by cyclists (59.5%). In this group, mountain bikers took the largest part. Hikers were another significant group of participants with 29% of responses. About half of the respondents (49.5%) are between 18 and 45 years old. The largest group is between 26 and 35 years old (23.8%). Older individuals over 65 made up for only 10% of the sample. Cyclists are on average younger than other forest visitors. Men are overrepresented among cyclists. The group of recreationists surveyed cannot be considered representative for the German population ([Statistisches Bundesamt, 2023a](#); [Statistisches Bundesamt, 2023b](#)).

In the following, respondents are characterized. Respondents show a high level of expertise in practicing their leisure activities. Over half of them rate themselves as very experienced. About 89.6% of the respondents practise their leisure activity at least once a week.

Respondents are satisfied with the Freiburg city forest as a place for their leisure activities (95.5%). For almost all of them, conflict-free leisure time is important (93.2%). If conflicts occur, more than a third do not take this too seriously (34.7%). However, 24% actively avoid direct confrontation or do not enter certain areas where conflicts might occur (12.4%).

Conflict intensity

Results on conflict intensity show that conflicts are not experienced as particularly severe (see [Table 4](#)). The most pronounced issue is “cyclists are on footpaths” with a mean value at 3.47. However, standard deviation is quite high for this item, indicating that answers vary. A similar item is “cyclists are off track” (2.63). Both items relate to cyclists’ usage of forest infrastructure, in this case pathway infrastructure. However, agreement to both items isn’t high. The statement “cyclists wilfully disturb others” is not shared by the respondents (1.61). Similar statements were analysed for conflicts with recreationists in general. Also here, statements like “recreationists behave rudely” (2.48) received a higher degree of agreement than “recreationists deliberately disturb others” (1.88). The items related to cyclists were aggregated to the variable “conflict intensity with cyclists” by calculating a sum score. The same was done with the items related to other recreationists, aggregating them into the variable “conflict intensity between recreationists.” Both variables served as the dependents in two following regression analyses. The mean values of both aggregated variables are at 11.82 (SD 3.93) and at 10.55 (SD 3.85). When comparing these mean values, a significant difference could be identified, although effect size is small ($t(212) = 4.213, p < 0.001, d = 0.289$).

Conflict drivers

As deduced from theory, mode of experience, resource specificity and activity style were considered potential conflict drivers. The

TABLE 3 Characteristics of reported conflicts in forests.

Item	Min.	Max.	M	SD	Public presence	Willingness to engage	Emotional conflict
The conflict is an issue discussed publicly	1	5	3.13	1.164	0.641	0.036	0.084
The conflict is reported in media	1	5	2.27	1.198	0.739	-0.027	0.061
There have been attempts to solve the conflict in the past	1	5	2.62	1.180	0.421	0.151	-0.108
I am willing to help solving the conflict	1	5	3.70	1.123	0.015	0.723	-0.014
I am well informed about applicable rules	1	5	4.23	0.886	0.061	0.388	0.006
The conflict is being treated emotionally	1	5	3.28	1.235	0.227	0.150	0.511
People involved in the conflict are not well informed about applicable rules	1	5	2.93	1.195	-0.140	-0.116	0.514

“Please characterize the conflict you are reporting on”/“Please indicate your agreement to the following statements” $n = 1,507$.

Extraction Method: Principal Axis Factoring. Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization. Rotation converged in four iterations.

Cronbachs Alpha: 0.625/0.429/0.366.

TABLE 4 Conflict intensity between cyclists and other recreationists in Freiburg.

Item	Min.	Max.	M	SD
Cyclists behave rudely	1	5	2.22	0.930
Cyclists show no consideration	1	5	2.34	0.947
Cyclists are on footpaths	1	5	3.47	1.029
Cyclists are off track	1	5	2.63	1.202
Cyclists wilfully disturb others	1	5	1.61	0.903
Recreationists behave rudely	1	5	2.48	1.058
Recreationists show no consideration	1	5	2.27	0.931
Recreationists are on MTB trails	1	5	2.17	1.023
Recreationists are off trails	1	5	2.38	0.977
Recreationists deliberately disturb others	1	5	1.88	0.931

“How often have you encountered the following situation?” $n = 224$.

variables’ items are listed in Table 5. The mean values range from 2.62 to 4.46. The item agreed most to is “The area means a lot to me” (4.46). This indicates a high place identity. The item “during the leisure activity I focus on nature and environment” received a high mean value as well (3.95). All items were subject to a principal component analysis. Three factors could be extracted, as expected. The factor “activity style” included three items, the factor “mode of experience” three items and the factor “resource specificity” four items. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin criterion for the factor analysis is at 0.746 and the Bartlett test was highly significant ($p < 0.001$). Total variance explained is at 59.2%. However, Cronbachs Alpha for the factor mode of experience is very low.

The calculation of medium values shows that respondents agreed strongest to the aggregate variable of resource specificity (M 14.98; SD 3.7), indicating that the Freiburg city forest cannot be substituted by another leisure area easily. The aggregate variable of mode of experience is nearly just as important (M 10.94; SD 1.99). The mean value for the aggregate variable of activity style, instead, is at 8.72 (SD 2.83) only. The variables served as independent variables in the following regression analyses. There were two regressions; one analysing the effects of mode of experience, resource specificity and activity style on the variable “conflict intensity with cyclists.” The second one looked at the effect of the drivers on the variable “conflict intensity between recreationists.”

The regression on conflicts with cyclists had no significant result. The regression model was insignificant ($F(3,213) = 1.415$, $p = 0.240$). The regression analysis on conflicts with other recreationists, instead, yields a significant model ($F(3,210) = 10.833$, $p < 0.001$). Results show that activity style has a positive effect on conflict intensity between recreationists ($\beta = 0.262$, $p < 0.001$). Mode of experience exerts a positive effect as well. However the regression coefficient is smaller ($\beta = 0.164$, $p = 0.016$) (see Figure 1). It is noteworthy that if the three items of mode of experience are included in the regression on conflict intensity between recreationists separately, the item “I concentrate on the activity” yields a significant positive effect ($\beta = 0.192$, $p = 0.006$). Immersion in the activity, therefore, accounts for conflict genesis. Nature immersion and focus on social company, in turn, did not yield significant effects. As regards resource specificity, there is no significant effect on conflict intensity between recreationists. Adjusted R² of the regression model is at 0.122. The prerequisites for the multiple regression analysis were checked. The Durbin-Watson statistic had a value of 2.135. There is no multicollinearity between the predictors ($VIF = 1.117$, 1.113,

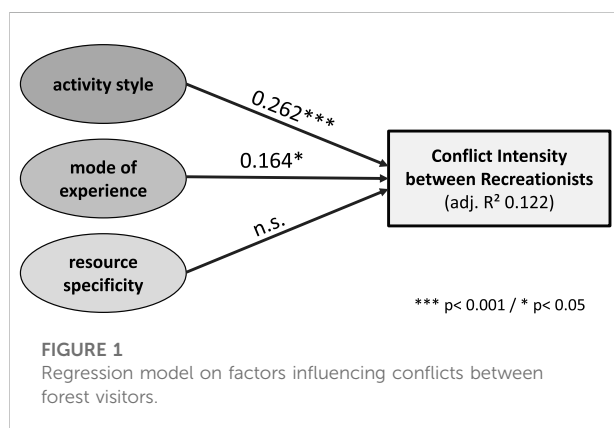
TABLE 5 Conflict drivers for cyclists and recreationists.

Item	Mean	SD	Activity style	Mode of experience	Resource specificity
Leisure activity (LA) is central to life	3.24	1.121	0.696	0.158	0.170
LA determines career	2.62	1.270	0.747	0.058	-0.034
LA determines friends	3.16	1.185	0.725	0.066	0.197
During LA focused on activity	3.64	1.079	0.266	0.521	0.032
During LA focused on nature	3.95	0.807	-0.082	0.732	0.263
During LA focused on company	3.46	0.962	0.111	0.749	-0.062
Area means a lot	4.46	0.780	0.168	-0.005	0.806
Area is central to life	3.40	1.175	0.232	0.046	0.797
Area is best place for LA	3.67	1.034	-0.126	0.136	0.778
Identification with area	3.80	1.130	0.162	0.083	0.843

"Please state how far you agree to the following statements" $n = 224$.

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis. Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.

Rotation converged in 5 iterations. Cronbachs Alpha: 0.592/0.395/0.816.



1.076). There is homoscedasticity of the residuals. Residuals follow normal distribution (Shapiro-Wilk test $p = 0.074$).

Discussion

The first research question aimed at identifying and characterizing the main recreational conflicts in forests. The second question addressed the potential drivers of conflicts. Both questions are discussed in the following by referring to the reported results and by relating them to relevant literature.

Concerning the main conflicts, the nation-wide survey showed that recreational conflicts in forests are diverse. Conflicts with other forest visitors and littering were the issues stated most frequently. High numbers of visitors are of concern to a third of the respondents. Although the survey was not representative to the German population, results show that

there is not only one single conflict in forests (i.e., hiking vs. biking) but a broader field of conflict issues.

Above that, the findings are consistent with similar findings by Volz and Mann (2006) which indicate that 43% of the respondents across various visitor groups (hikers, cyclists/mountain bikers, paragliders, horse riders and joggers/walkers) perceived litter as a nuisance. Nearly half of the visitors (45.1%) of the same study perceived crowding as having negative effects. Conflicts with other forest visitors, instead, are not reported as intensively as in the present study (Volz and Mann, 2006). Here, a statistical effect due to the characteristics of the sample might occur. However, growing numbers of forest visitors and their diverse recreation patterns might also explain the reported increase in conflicts between recreationists.

The first part of the research question one, thus, is answered as follows: conflicts in forest are diverse. The most important issues of conflicts in forests, as identified in this study, have been known before. However, one result is that conflicts with other forest visitors have increased. This could be due to the growing number of forest visitors compared to some years ago, or due to the diverse range of activities practiced in forests. Further research could shed light on this by looking at the relationships among visitor numbers, diversity of activities and reported recreational conflicts based on a representative sample of the German population.

It is noteworthy, that most respondents in Freiburg showed high degrees of satisfaction with their forest visit. Also, their conflict sensitivity is moderate. More than a third feels relaxed about existing conflicts. This is supported by the finding in the nation-wide survey that conflicts are not experienced as too emotional. This might justify the interpretation that

recreational conflicts in forests are a well-known phenomenon. Forest visitors know about them and might even expect them, but do not get emotional when encountering them. One could, therefore, term these conflicts as “expected every-day conflicts” which do not bother too much and do not curtail the quality of forest visits. This applies although respondents of the nationwide survey attributed themselves a high degree of knowledge on applicable rules, and to others a lower degree of rule competency instead. Media coverage was reported on low to a medium scale. Further research could use these insights to look into circumstances under which rule competency and/or media coverage might decrease emotionality or even enhance factual reasoning in conflict solving.

In the past, in- and out-group conflicts in various recreational activities have been researched on (Watson et al., 1991; Ramthun, 1995; Carothers et al., 2001; Cessford, 2003; Thapa and Graefe, 2003; Vaske et al., 2004; Vaske et al., 2007). Several studies conclude that there are significantly fewer conflicts within an activity group than between different groups (Vaske et al., 2000; Carothers et al., 2001; Mann and Absher, 2008; Kleiner et al., 2022). The present study does support these findings. Differences could be identified between conflicts caused by cyclists and those caused by other recreationists regarding conflict intensity. However, the present study did not differentiate between various groups of cyclists (like MTB and touring), nor between different kinds of other forest visitors. Further research could therefore do exactly this, and analyse whether, for example, in-group conflicts between different groups of cyclists are more intense than out-group conflicts between hikers and a certain group of cyclists, like Schachinger (2020) proposed.

Taking the results together, the second part of research question one can be answered as follows: Recreational conflicts in forests can be characterized as expected everyday conflicts that are not treated too emotionally. Most forest visitors are satisfied with their visits and deal with conflicts calmly. Conflict intensity across groups differs to some extent. Conflict asymmetry, as stated in the literature review, therefore, could be verified. Conflict parties think of themselves as well informed and are willing to engage in solutions. This pictures a constructive atmosphere, in which management initiatives could be received favourably.

Research question two related to three potential drivers of recreational conflicts: activity style, mode of experience and resource specificity. Activity style and mode of experience were described as culturally coined, since both of them are closely related to values and world-views. Thus, activity style refers to the importance of the recreational activity in one's everyday life and thus to recreation as an expression of an underlying value system. Mode of experience, instead, refers to how recreationists immerse themselves into their environment—be it with a focus on nature or on their activity. What focus prevails depends on the recreationists

attitudes—that is on their mind-set or way of thinking. Both were termed as constituents of the concept of culture. Resource-specificity, instead, was categorized as a space-related factor.

From the descriptives, respondents in Freiburg stated a medium degree of activity style. They are experienced in their leisure activities, the majority of the respondents practice them frequently. This result relates to Schachinger (2020), who surveyed 1,248 mountain bikers in German-speaking countries and found a pronounced activity style in this group. Regarding the impact of activity style on conflict intensity between recreationists, results show that it is the most influential driver. On an absolute level, the effect size is moderate. The result is consistent with other studies that assume that a pronounced level of activity style leads to increased conflict sensitivity (Vaske et al., 2000; Wong and Yu, 2012).

Mode of experience is another driver of conflict intensity, although the effect size is small. If the variable is split into its items, the respondents' immersion into their leisure activity yields a positive and significant effect on conflict intensity. Here again, an activity-related (immersion in activity) factor spurs conflict intensity, just as reported above for activity style. Besides this, it is worthy to note that, despite the fact that respondents reported a relatively high mean score for nature immersion while visiting forests, this item did not yield a significant effect on conflict intensity in the sample. This is consistent with similar findings by Schachinger (2020), who found no influence of nature immersion on conflict perception. The reason for this is undefined. Maybe nature-related recreationists visit other places, maybe they do not focus on others. This begs a closer analysis by future research.

Resource specificity as a space-related factor did not yield significant effects on conflict intensity. This applies although respondents rated their leisure area as highly important. Respondents in Freiburg highly agreed to the statement that the area was important to them or even that they identified with the area. In literature, resource specificity has been identified as a driver of conflicts. Mann and Absher (2007) showed that resource specificity is a decisive factor for walkers to perceive conflicts—especially infrastructure-related conflicts (e.g., on paths). The results of this study differ from this. This begs the question under which circumstances resource specificity may or may not have impacts on conflict intensity. Future research could look at different leisure activities, different geographical areas or different lifestyles of recreationists, which may moderate the effect of resource specificity.

Another cultural component, motives, were analysed to describe expectations and values associated with forest visits. Results of the nationwide survey show that a major part of respondents visits forests for relaxation motives and for being away. This is also consistent with studies by Mann and Absher (2007) and Mann (2009) where the most frequently named motive is nature/body. Although the effect of motives (as a

proxy to lifestyle tolerance) on conflicts was not analysed in this study, findings from literature suggest that the stronger a recreational motive, the lower the conflict perception (Mann and Absher, 2007). In this study, a high degree of nature as a visitation motive (“to be in nature”) could be identified. It, therefore, can be assumed that forest visitors with this motive do not perceive conflicts as intensively as others. This corresponds to the missing statistical effect of nature immersion on conflict intensity in mode of experience as discussed above.

In summary, the second research question can be answered as follows: Both mode of experience, and activity style have significant impacts on conflict intensity although R^2 of the regression model is moderate. Both drivers were described as culturally coined. Visitation motives as another cultural factor show that recreationists visit forests primarily for relaxation and being-away. Based on findings from literature and the missing effect of nature immersion on conflict intensity, the conclusion is drawn that nature-relatedness might contribute to a smaller conflict sensitivity.

It is against this background that recommendations are formulated. As seen in literature, major conflicts in forests arise due to conflicting goals or due to norm violations. Conflicts based on conflicting goals need direct interaction between recreationists, which norm-based conflicts do not. The first one was termed “interpersonal conflict,” the second one “social norm conflict” (Vaske et al., 2007). According to literature, social norm conflicts are best addressed by information of visitors, while interpersonal conflicts need product development (Tynon and Gomez, 2012). By this, forest management would need to embrace a two-faceted strategy.

Firstly, visitor information is central. Many times, however, forest communication does not reach the targeted visitor groups. Or communication is not targeted at any specific group at all, thus, being too general and hardly able to match the visitors’ information routines. This is underscored by the fact that the two drivers with significant effects on conflict intensity are cultural: mode of experience and activity style. Both drivers could profit from information and discourse. Activity style insofar as recreationists could be informed about other leisure activities and their importance to other forest visitors. In this way, cyclists and hikers could learn that they share more than they differ. For both parties their leisure activities could be important in everyday life. Both could agree to find most of their friends there. Discourse between the groups, therefore, could contribute to mutual understanding. The same applies to mode of experience. The immersion in the activity yielded a positive effect on conflict intensity. Thus, training foresight and mutual consideration could contribute to conflict prevention. Also, forest management could contribute by information as well as active on-site training programmes, i.e., training courses for different groups of recreationists. The same would apply to conflicts based on a lack in lifestyle tolerance. If nature-connectedness as a

cultural practice contributed to fewer conflicts, then forest management could invest in courses to strengthen nature-connectedness in forest visitors.

Interpersonal conflicts, instead, require product development. Thus, trails for cyclists and hikers could be separated. However, these measures are costly and in many regions trail density is already very high. Alternatively, trail concepts could dedicate existing trails to different user groups. Here, resource specificity comes into play. As seen in the literature, hikers developed an emotional bonding to trail systems which they had maintained for years. Drawing up a trail concept for different user groups, therefore, would have a communicative component, too. In summary, a cultural discourse on forests could help to redefine norms and expectations of forest recreation and ultimately prevent recreational conflicts.

This article has some methodological limitations. The distribution of the nationwide online survey via various associations and clubs could possibly have led to a bias in the responses. Riders, for example, were relatively well represented. In addition, the survey was done online, thus a lack of participation from older citizens or citizens without a reliable internet-access might apply. For the study in Freiburg, it should be noted that the survey was conducted on site. This may result in a bias due to the fact that individuals could not be interviewed, who do not visit forests any more (due to conflicts).

Conclusion

This article looked at main recreational conflicts. Littering, rule violation and conflicts with other visitors are the most frequently reported conflicts in forests. Although conflicts are diverse, respondents of a nation-wide survey in Germany do not rate them as very emotional. Instead, recreational conflicts in forests seem to be expected everyday conflicts. Respondents are willing to contribute to conflict solution, based on a good knowledge about applicable rules.

With regard to drivers of conflicts, results show that mode of experience, and activity style have a significant influence on conflict intensity. Both are cultural factors, since they are rooted in the recreationists’ values and world-views. The impact of both drivers on conflicts could be mitigated by visitor information, communication and training. Forest management could take an active part in this, also by inducing a new cultural discourse on how forest recreation could look like. The same applies to visitation motives as proxy for lifestyle tolerance. A number of recreationists visit forests for being in nature. Nature-connectedness as a cultural practice, thus, could help mitigate conflicts. Forest management could take an important role in enhancing nature-connectedness in forest visitors.

Resource specificity as a space-based factor did not have a significant effect on conflict intensity. This applies even though recreationists stated a high degree of emotional dependence on

their leisure area. If this was the case, a solution to this would be product development, which includes infrastructural measures for different user groups. Separated trails or trail concepts could help prevent conflicts. However, since certain groups might depend on trails emotionally, communication and deliberate discourses are important here as well.

Based on these findings, research gaps were identified which revolve around interrelations between the increased number of forest visitors, diversity of activities and conflict sensitivity. Above that, the effect of rule competency and media coverage on the emotionality of conflicts was identified as potential field of research. And the question whether in-group conflicts could be more severe than out-group conflicts, if different sub-groups of cyclists were analysed could be looked at. Lastly, it could be interesting to investigate into the role of nature-connectedness or nature immersion in conflict genesis.

Data availability statement

The raw data supporting the conclusion of this article will be made available by the authors, without undue reservation.

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Conflict of interest

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Management perspectives for ecomuseums effectiveness: a holistic approach to sociocultural development of local areas

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Considering their focus on participation and sustainable tourism promotion, ecomuseums can play a crucial role in the sociocultural development of local areas. Through three exploratory case studies of Italian ecomuseums located in the Emilia-Romagna region, this study shows the emergence of three different profiles of ecomuseum development strategies: they relate to the sustainable tourism, the cultural districts, and the holistic approach to sociocultural development. These kinds of strategic profiles not only emerge in opposition to each other but can also overlap and appear jointly within different situations of ecomuseums. The final aim of this work is to reflect on the applicability of management tools to support the implementation of these strategic aspects, especially in the current scenario, in which new perspectives are emerging about the role of communities in interpreting and enhancing their tangible and intangible cultural heritage in relation to sustainable tourism and local development linked to cultural and natural heritage preservation and promotion.

KEYWORDS

museum management, cultural heritage, sustainability, community involvement, COVID-19 pandemic

Introduction

The ecomuseum is a concept that originated in the early 1970s as part of the process of innovation in traditional museology, which was called “new museology” (Ross, 2004). The conceptualization of ecomuseum is due to de Varine (1978), but later, it was developed and further analyzed by other important scholars, such as Riviere (1985), Corsane et al. (2007), and Davis (2011).

It is a well-established notion, and its usefulness appears to be valid, as the concept of ecomuseum is closely interrelated with those of community engagement (Choi, 2017) and sustainable tourism (Bowers, 2016). Another concept that can present important points of contact with ecomuseum is the cultural district, which Santagata (2002) defined as an industrial district where culture and cultural heritage are the dominant factors. All these

concepts appear to be very topical today; indeed, in recent years, their centrality, both in the academic debate and in real life, has grown significantly. Moreover, recent academic studies have reported a growing diffusion of ecomuseums in Spain (Corral, 2019), North America (Sutter et al., 2016), and generally worldwide, with a particular increase in developing countries (Wuisang et al., 2018). Ecomuseums also represent an important reality in Italy, especially in some regions where they have received legislative regulations (Santo et al., 2017) aimed at strengthening their role in the development of local communities.

In light of these considerations, the debate on the role of ecomuseums has also seen interesting recent developments. At the same time, from the point of view of the diffusion of concrete ecomuseum experiences, the last few years have shown an important recovery: numerous academic studies, in this regard, recall the recent growth of the phenomenon (Belliggiano et al., 2021; Tsipra and Drinia, 2022). This element is interesting since after an almost constant growth in the diffusion of ecomuseums in the last decades of the past century, a slowdown of this trend was subsequently recognized (Maggi, 2006).

Therefore, various scholars have analyzed the role of ecomuseums in museum studies (Davis, 2008), their importance for the development of communities (Doğan, 2019; Pappalardo, 2020), particularly in rural areas (Ducros, 2017), the relationship between the development of ecomuseums and sustainable tourism (Bowers, 2016; Belliggiano et al., 2021), as well as that between this form of museum and the promotion of community participation in cultural heritage management and policy (Sokka et al., 2021). Furthermore, ecomuseums fit very well in the European Union (EU) framework for action on cultural heritage (European Commission, 2019), as well as in the current European policies that place culture and cultural heritage in the context of the European Green Deal (European Commission, 2022).

Nonetheless, to the best of our knowledge, the subject of how the development of ecomuseum strategies can be made more effective by the application of managerial tools still appears to be underdeveloped. Therefore, the present study tries to fill this research gap through the analysis of managerial profiles that can make the development of strategic profiles for an ecomuseum more effective.

The achievement of this objective has declined through the proposal of distinct case studies, according to the qualitative research method of multiple case studies (Stake, 2006). Consistent with this, three cases of Italian ecomuseums from the Emilia-Romagna region were subjected to analysis. The approach that has been used is exploratory (Yin, 2018), which means that the basic idea is the definition of a framework of hypotheses on possible managerial tools. The analysis of the case studies, which considers the evolution of the three ecomuseums

in recent years, also includes the COVID-19 pandemic period, which tested the ability of each ecomuseum to keep its communities united at a historical moment in which the sense of loneliness and disorientation of many people was significant. According to these hypotheses, which will be subjected to further study in future research, managerial tools, if implemented, could favor the effectiveness of strategy implementation in ecomuseums.

Theoretical framework

The ecomuseum has been described by many authors and scholars in several circumstances, as already reported in Badia and Deodato (2015). One of the most famous definitions is that of Riviere (1985: p. 182):

An ecomuseum is an instrument conceived, fashioned and operated jointly by a public authority and a local population. The public authority's involvement is through the experts, facilities and resources it provides; the local population's involvement depends on its aspirations, knowledge and individual approach. It is a mirror in which the local population views itself to discover its own image, in which it seeks an explanation of the territory to which it is attached and of the populations that have preceded it, seen either as circumscribed in time or in terms of the continuity of generations.

De Varine, who is credited with the invention of the term, has stressed some important elements of the concept of ecomuseum on several occasions. First, “the ‘eco’ prefix to ecomuseums means neither economy, nor ecology in the common sense, but essentially human or social ecology: the community and society in general, even mankind, are at the core of its existence, of its activity, of its process. Or at least they should be. . . This was the intuition of the “inventors” of the ecomuseum concept in the early 70s. . .” (de Varine, 2006: p. 60).

Again, De Varine noted how, in the years following its first definition, the ecomuseum has assumed two different paths in practice, partly opposite each other (de Varine, 2002). The original definition aims to highlight the link between the museum and the natural environment toward a concept similar to a museum park. Simultaneously, around the early 1980s, a concept derived from ecomuseum has been developing, notably because of the experience of Le Creusot in France, as a museum becoming an instrument of community development.

This path of distinction between different forms of ecomuseums on a global scale has widened over the years. Currently, therefore, types of museums that are also very different from each other are called “ecomuseums” (Davis, 2011). In this diverse picture of concrete cases and practical

realities, some common elements seem to emerge and essentially refer to the mission of the ecomuseum.

Maggi (2006): p. 63 noted that “almost all ecomuseums, even when using different denominations, have a particular mission: they try to promote sustainable development and citizenship through local heritage and participation. The most relevant obstacles they face seem to be the same almost everywhere: people involvement, effective leadership and the continuity of the initiatives.”

Cogo (2006): pp. 97–98 developed this concept by explaining the most important points of the ecomuseum mission:

- the safeguarding and valuing of local socio-cultural traditions; - the safeguarding/rediscovery of collective memory in terms of the intangible heritage comprising the identity of a population, and its mediation with contemporary society; - the study, research and dissemination of local naturalistic, historical and social topics; - the promotion of sustainable economic and tourist development, by using natural and historic resources, the social heritage and other local resources, via a network able to attract tourists and the additional exploitation of cultural resources; - the promotion of socially responsible business enterprise and the active participation in processes of sustainable growth.

Two main features seem to characterize the mission of an ecomuseum: the support for the advancement of sustainable tourism and the active promotion of civic participation in cultural heritage management development. The ecomuseum can be part of an implementation strategy of sustainable tourism—not without difficulties (Howard, 2002)—when it is able to promote its activities toward visitors and tourists (Belligiano et al., 2021), enhancing its specific connection with the local area through the promotion of values that reflect its identity (Bowers, 2016; Simeoni and De Crescenzo, 2018).

Sustainable tourism combines the paradigm of sustainability with economic development based on tourism (Hunter, 1997). Sustainable tourism is not aimed at unlimited growth but is consistent with the enhancement of existing resources. In its various forms, an ecomuseum project explicitly aims to initiate socioeconomic activities compatible with the logic of sustainability. Specifically, tourism is sustainable if it is developed as environmentally friendly, economically viable, and socially equitable for local communities; in other words, it refers to a level of land use that can be maintained in the long term, as it produces economic, social, and environmental benefits for the area in which it is implemented.

For example, at the economic level, the positive impacts of sustainable tourism can be identified in job creation on the site, in the redistribution of income, and in restraining the depopulation of rural areas. In addition, sustainable tourism can reduce some negative social effects of “traditional” tourism, such as its

seasonal nature, the weight of external tourism companies that do not have a direct impact on the territory, the instability of local revenues, and transport and infrastructure development oriented only to tourists and not to local people. From an environmental point of view, sustainable tourism is concerned with reducing, if not breaking down, the negative impacts of traditional mass tourism (e.g., depletion of natural resources and pollution).

In summary, sustainable tourism satisfies both the needs of the local community in terms of quality of life and the demand of tourists, protecting cultural and environmental resources, maintaining a certain degree of competitiveness, and promoting the phenomenon of solidarity tourism through a relevant role of the ecomuseums (Doğan, 2019).

Another relevant key feature of the ecomuseum mission is favoring citizen participation in paths of local development through the enhancement of cultural heritage. Participatory approaches appear particularly appropriate for cultural heritage management. Relevant international institutions have already claimed the importance of community engagement in cultural heritage management and development since the beginning of this century (UNESCO, 2002; Council of Europe, 2005; European Commission, 2019). Academics and professionals in cultural management suggested multistakeholder governance models (Bonet and Donato, 2011), even considering the opportunities of a collaborative governance approach (Jeon and Kim, 2021).

Participation can be considered a challenging task when establishing an ecomuseum. In fact, an ecomuseum can promote a greater sense of collective ownership, more community-led initiatives, and a process of appreciating, supervising, and safeguarding the interactions between people and the environment (Choi, 2017). These processes can assume particular relevance in disadvantaged or depopulated territories, such as rural areas (Ducros, 2017; Bindi et al., 2022).

With reference to the development of specific participatory practices in the context of ecomuseums, community (or parish) maps (Clifford and King, 1996; Parker, 2006) emerged as one of the most widely used tools for ecomuseums. Community maps are instruments through which residents can expose their own representations of cultural heritage in its broadest sense, including the landscape, knowledge, and traditions of the place. These processes are fundamental for reinforcing the sense of awareness and identity of a community (Guran and Michelutti, 2021).

The map of the community is also a place of memory, as it sheds light on what people want to pass on to future generations. Specifically, it normally consists of a cartographic representation (or any other composition inspired by that logic of representation) in which the community can identify itself. The basis of the abovementioned knowledge and understanding can still lead, secondarily, to the development and eventual rediscovery of gastronomic production and

handicraft traditions, which could even allow the promotion of the territory and its products through the active involvement of the local community.

Although these two aspects (i.e., the development of sustainable tourism and the promotion of citizen participation) appear to be the most typical features linked to the development strategies of an ecomuseum, a third possible characteristic element can be identified: the promotion of a cultural district linked to the territory of which the ecomuseum wants to be an expression.

The cultural district stems from the concept of an industrial district (Becattini, 2004), which is defined as a local production system characterized by a high concentration of industrial companies specializing in that industry sector. Therefore, the cultural districts can be seen in an industrial district in which culture and cultural heritage are the dominant factors (Santagata, 2002: p. 15):

The content of the goods produced in these districts is strictly connected to the local civilization and savoir vivre. Furthermore, the economic advancement of these products is naturally correlated with the local culture: the more their image and symbolic icon is identified with local customs and cultural behaviors, the more they seduce consumers (cultural lock-in) and the more their production is fostered. In this case, the importance of culture is all-inclusive, mobilizing the aesthetic, technological, anthropological and historical content of the district.

The perspective of the cultural district takes on value for an ecomuseum because it enhances the need for collaboration between stakeholders as an essential element for its development (Arnaboldi and Spiller, 2011). This represents an approach to local development, where cultural production and participation play a central role in local development through integration with other economic sectors of the local area. In this context, culture can become a constitutive element of economic and social growth, based on social and environmental sustainability, in its ability to promote the elements of human, social, symbolic, and cultural capital linked to the founding values of the territory concerned (Sacco et al., 2013). With reference to cultural districts, the literature has shown the complex dynamics of management and governance that can favor their development (Schieb-Bienfait et al., 2018), also because the cultural district sees the involvement of a plurality of subjects, both in the public sector and in the private sector, whose government may require the development of collaborative governance paths (Gugu and Dal Molin, 2016).

Although the subjects related to the development of the ecomuseums seem to have assumed a good rate of advancement (Liu and Lee, 2015), the presence of research works that analyze the possible role of management tools to support these processes effectively appears rather limited.

Considering this framework and the emerging research gap, this paper aims to develop the following research questions:

- 1) Which concrete ecomuseum development strategies emerge in the current context?
- 2) Which management tools should be adopted to increase the effectiveness of these ecomuseum development strategies?

Methodology

The research method employed multiple case studies (Stake, 2006). The basic idea for using this method relates to the purpose to obtain, thanks to replication, the possibility of enriching the proposed considerations in compliance with the necessary methodological rigor (Eisenhardt and Graebner, 2007): replication indeed leads to comparison, which allows the initial theoretical concepts and the relationships established between them to be developed in more detail (Yin, 2018).

For this multiple-case study, three cases were selected. The choice fell on three ecomuseums belonging to the same territorial context (Emilia-Romagna, Italy) to favor a basic homogeneity of context, which is a necessary element for obtaining at least partial replicability of the research, which is an essential reference in multiple case study research. At the same time, these ecomuseums presented certain profiles of differentiation, which justify the multiple approaches that will be examined in the next section.

The three cases are the Ecomuseum of Argenta (province of Ferrara), the Ecomuseum of Bagnacavallo (province of Ravenna), alternatively named as “marsh herb ecomuseum,” and the Ecomuseum of hill and wine of Castello di Serravalle (province of Bologna). The research in these three realities was conducted using the following research tools:

- Semi-structured interviews (Qu and Dumay, 2011) with the directors and/or the administrative staff of the ecomuseums. At least two interviews were conducted for each ecomuseum. Overall, eight interviews were conducted, and six subjects were involved. Each interview was conducted using a homogeneous methodology based on a series of open-ended questions. Every interview lasted between 60 and 90 min.
- Material analysis of additional documents, provided by the ecomuseum staff or available on the web, regarding the activities of the ecomuseums.
- Participant observation through one experience of direct participation by the researchers in the ecomuseum proposal for visitors/tourists. These visits were realized without the involvement of the directors of the three museums to live a more genuine experience, not developed *ad hoc* by the museum staff for the research perspective.

In the next section of the article, every case study will be presented, highlighting the following points:

- Introduction and brief history of the ecomuseum
- Governance and the role of the managing entity
- Most relevant activities
- Involvement and participation of the community
- Impact of COVID-19 on the activities of the ecomuseum
- Analysis of the economic fundamentals
- Special projects and future strategies
- Role of management tools in supporting strategic development and operational activities

However, these points represent only a trace of the following exposure and will not be analyzed exactly in this order but depending on how the different points have emerged during the semi-structured interviews.

Case studies

Ecomuseum of Argenta

The Ecomuseum of Argenta was founded in 1991 with its first component, the Museum of the Valleys, following the will of certain groups of associations in Argenta to enable projects of restoring the environment and the river around the oasis of Campotto, territories belonging to Po Delta Park. Then, between 1994 and 2002, the ecomuseum was extended with a second component, the Museum of Land Drainage, at the water pump of Saiarino, which is the heart of the hydraulic system of the government of the waters between the Apennines and the Adriatic Sea. Finally, in 1997, the ecomuseum was completed with the third component, the Civic Museum, conceived as a center for representing to visitors the history of the town of Argenta and its urban landscape. The Ecomuseum of Argenta is directly managed by the Municipality of Argenta, a city of 20,000 inhabitants, in the province of Ferrara. The director is an employee of the municipality. The ecomuseum has three other employees (one full-time and two part-time), as well as further cooperation with external professionals and a cooperative. The director has a good degree of autonomy in her management decisions.

The Ecomuseum of Argenta gained official recognition for its role by the Council of Europe and, on a regional scale, obtained the label “quality museum,” which means that it respects predetermined quality standards of museum management. This ecomuseum is based on integration throughout the territory between the local landscape and the three museum locations. The Ecomuseum of Argenta is hosted by a lagoon landscape inside the intensively cultivated Po valley close to the delta of this river. This landscape presents issues related to biodiversity, sustainable farming, and traditions of

manufacturing linked to the agrarian sector. In the specific case of Argenta, the ecomuseum assumes participatory functions for social and economic development by different actors in the local area. The Ecomuseum of Argenta can be defined as an internal agreement of the local community to take care of the territory. Therefore, the fundamental objectives that form the basis of the ecomuseum are mainly related to the sociocultural development of the territory and to increasing the level of awareness by the citizens of its values, history, and local traditions.

In this sense, participatory processes have been conducted by the instrument of the community maps in Campotto, Benvignante (hamlets of Argenta), and, in a more simplified way, other areas of the municipality of Argenta. Then, executive actions were implemented. For example, a space dedicated to the repopulation of native fish (such as pike, tench, and carp) was created, and new alliances were developed with companies, consortia, and associations of the agricultural and fishing industries.

Another interesting participatory project can be called “participatory archeology.” Following a recent discovery of an archaeological site of the Roman age in the area, the ecomuseum brought together associations and citizens with public initiatives, cycles of conferences, and courses with the high schools of Argenta, which continued despite the difficulties of the pandemic period. The result has been that the locals have begun to take an interest in the archaeological heritage of the area, to make reports, and to feel truly involved in these discoveries.

In parallel, the ecomuseum has enabled networking systems with restaurants for the revaluation of the gastronomy of the valley, with the reintroduction of the specialties of freshwater fish and the use of wild herbs in the kitchen. The economic boom of the 1960s and the extensive agrarian reform deleted these elements, favoring the consumption of sea fish and plant species that were alien to local traditions. Still, the ecomuseum is working for the rehabilitation of inland water navigation by electric boats with flat-bottom keel, which retools the historic “Batana” used both for monitoring fish and for natural excursions.

Among the initiatives and activities of the ecomuseum, an important role is played by the activities of restoration and enhancement of cultural and monumental heritage. In particular, Benvignante, a Renaissance village dominated by the residence of the Dukes of Este (this residence is part of the UNESCO recognition of the site of “Ferrara, City of the Renaissance and its Po Delta”), is at risk of dropping, along with the campaign and the rural village. After the earthquake of 2012 in this local area, which damaged Este’s residence, there was a first restructuring in 2011 and a second restructuring between 2014 and 2015. These actions were linked to the implementation of the community map. Another goal of Benvignante’s map is to build a basket of typical gastronomy

products, thus restoring knowledge, taste, and culinary innovation, with the identification of specific target markets. In the future, the residence will be equipped with kitchens and will be used for testing taste from gastronomic associations, agricultural and catering, and hospitality schools, with a link to the annual fair of the ecomuseums.

Other areas of the municipality of Argenta, which are located near the Valli di Comacchio and the Romagna, are characterized by biological fine dining with short production and distribution lines, such as the golden tomato; the cereal crops of wheat, barley, and spelt, derived organic flour and the incipient production of craft beer that emerged from Renaissance treatises of the Este period; and the typical “wines of the sands” and of the Bosco Eliceo. The artisan companies in the territory of the ecomuseum move in terms of knowledge and skills, specifically yarns, wool, and handcraft. This is the tradition of tailoring and knitwear factories, which were important in the years of the economic boom for women’s employment. These elements also emerge from the community map of Campotto, with the tradition of mulberry and silkworm breeding, silk yarn, and domestic wool, which engaged families and neighborhoods in partnership. Today, these skills have left silk but still emerge in other fields, such as diverse tailoring and wool.

A prominent role in the activities of the ecomuseum is occupied by networking activities with other institutions in neighboring territories. The most important initiative in this regard appears in the Constitution of the *Centro di Educazione Alla Sostenibilità* (Center of Education for Sustainability) (CEAS), which, in 2013, was set up as a network with other neighboring municipalities as part of a regional project for the promotion of institutional networks aimed at the development of sustainability in the territory. This center has assumed the name of CEAS “Valleys and Rivers” and is headquartered at the Ecomuseum of Argenta. The partners are identified, in addition to the Municipality of Argenta, in other neighboring municipalities (Mesola, Comacchio, Ostellato, and Portomaggiore). In addition to having importance from the point of view of establishing relations and exchanging experiences, the CEAS has also become a center of attraction for public funds, particularly from the Emilia-Romagna Region.

Finalizing the analysis of the main projects of the Ecomuseum, specific attention has also been given to educational projects, with constant attention to the relationship with the teachers and the schools in the area. In recent years, many initiatives have been developed aimed at creating itineraries for tourists and local inhabitants. The meaning of these itineraries is to make visitors discover the tangible and intangible heritage of the area. The main project concerns the Primaro route, from the name of a branch of the Po River—the longest river in Italy—which crosses the territory. The Primaro route traces a geographical route and connects it to all the naturalistic, historical, and economic emergencies along the route. Thus, while walking along the Primaro route, the story of Argenta is told from its origins to the present day.

The COVID-19 pandemic, although it has forced a slowdown in some cases, mainly due to the closures ordered for the museum venues, as established by national legislation in the most acute periods of the pandemic, has not had only negative impacts on this plenty of activities. The presence of outdoor nature trails has, in fact, been a reason for many people to rediscover itineraries when the rules on social distancing only allowed outdoor activities and prevented indoor activities. As for many other museums—somewhat around the world—the pandemic period was an important moment for ecomuseum managers to propose online activities and discover the opportunities provided by digital technologies. In this way, during the pandemic period, the Ecomuseum of Argenta played an important role in meeting the need for sociality in its community.

Moving on to a brief analysis of an economic nature, the Ecomuseum of Argenta has an annual budget of around €150,000. The largest part, for nearly €120,000 euros per year, is provided by contract between the ecomuseum and Municipality of Argenta, which is particularly directed to the payment of salaries to the employees of the structure. Even the rest of the funding is, for the most part, from public sources, but it is worth highlighting that the ecomuseum’s staff presents a particular to access to various funding lines on different public projects, partly regional, partly national, and partly from the EU.

With reference to management tools, there is a poor presence. This mainly depends on the circumstance that the ecomuseum is not autonomous from a management point of view but is comparable with an organizational unit of the Argenta municipality. However, the development of autonomous management tools compatible with this governance system, such as performance measurement systems or forms of non-financial reporting, has not been implemented due to the lack of specific economic-managerial skills and the scarcity of financial resources that can be specifically dedicated to these projects.

Ecomuseum of Bagnacavallo

The Ecomuseum of Bagnacavallo, also known as the Ecomuseum of Marsh Herbs, owes its foundation to the activity carried out by the Cultural Association “Civiltà Erbe Palustri” (Marsh Herbs Civilization). In June 1985, the founding nucleus of the future association began its activities. A young married couple, composed by Luigi Barangani and Maria Rosa Bagnari—who was the director of the ecomuseum for years—interested in recovering the artisan art that had once characterized the economy of their territory was the propulsive heart of this first nucleus. Thus began the first survey work within the country to recover original equipment, bundles of grass, artifacts, and leftovers to create a small exhibition. At the same time, the supporters of the initiative tried to identify people who still possessed the unaltered technical background of the manual arts in the use of marsh grasses and were available to collaborate on the first

informal idea of the reconstruction of classical production for the purpose of study and collection. As the first result of the research was carried out, the first edition of the Exhibition of the Marsh Herbs Civilization was held, with the first group of expert craftsmen at work, arousing great emotion throughout the community. With this initiative, the history of this ecomuseum began.

However, the history of the ecomuseum was born much earlier. In 1971, after Maria Rosa had married Luigi, when the young couple moved into their new home, Maria Rosa expressed the desire to beautify the small apartment with the window curtains that she had noticed in tatters in the bordering large house, previously Luigi's aunt's workshop. In this way, Maria Rosa, thanks to the teachings of her mother-in-law, learned to build curtains for windows using marsh grasses and rushes from the valley as per local tradition. The curtains displayed on the windows overlooking the main street began to attract attention for their beauty and originality to the point that several passers commissioned them.

Thanks to this origin, the Ecomuseum of Marsh Herbs has been characterized since its inception as a participatory project carried out by the people, by the population—first and foremost that of Villanova (a fraction of the Municipality of Bagnacavallo with 4,000 inhabitants). The sense of participation, which has always characterized the history of the ecomuseum, can be summarized in two phases.

The first phase can be considered the start of the ecomuseum story, which has not yet been defined in this way; it was aimed at making the community aware of itself and of its own history, culture, and tradition to avoid the loss of identity. The research and recovery of tradition was carried out among the people, with their help and active contribution to rediscovering and restoring a unique cultural heritage based on the values of aesthetics, a sustainable economy, and solidarity between generations. Reviving the processing of marsh grasses house by house, the grass once again invaded the country, causing amazement and emotion in the population and great interest in the institutions themselves. The completion of this first phase, therefore, led to the establishment of the ecomuseum in name and in fact.

The second participatory phase arose from the awareness that the importance of safeguarding the specificity and uniqueness of the recovered subject forced it to be disseminated and transmitted outside the limited boundaries of the municipality of Bagnacavallo, and even more than a fraction of it, such as Villanova. The logical thread that connected the history of the ecomuseum to the world of the valley and to the lands of the manual arts was the Lamone River, which has become a new horizon of interest. Thus, a new project was born: Lamone Bene Comune (LBC), literally “Lamone as a common good.” It was founded with the following objectives:

- To stimulate the participation of all the communities located along the Lamone River toward a single cultural horizon
- To raise awareness of territorial education for sustainability

- To enhance and promote the area around the river
- To safeguard the landscape and biodiversity of the lands and valleys of the Lamone

Currently, the collections acquired so far exceed 2,500 objects, which can be described as weaving products, textures, and artifacts made with wild herbs supplied by the nearby valley environment and by the various processing of soft woods.

The actions and products created by the ecomuseum are continuous negotiation tables, recovery of tradition (e.g., fires in March at the same time along the whole river, propitiatory crosses in the countryside, and potato crib with playing cards), creation of a vegetable garden of flowers, and forgotten smells.

The ecomuseum also promotes environmental protection issues, starting with the LBC project, which provides for the recovery and maintenance of the left embankment top of the Lamone River and its two continuations, one toward the sea and the other toward the hill, taking care of problems relating to the hydrogeological instability of Punta Alberete with the salinization processes that are advancing throughout the territory. The community development objectives are evident: the ecomuseum is aimed primarily at the local community, and it has the objective of stimulating community participation to promote the re-appropriation of the prior culture through projects of solidarity between generations. Finally, for both residents and tourists, there is a desire to raise awareness of territorial education in sustainability, safeguarding the landscape and biodiversity of the lands and valleys of the Lamone. In short, healthy use of the territory is promoted, even through responsible and sustainable tourism. In this, even the rediscovery of traditional cuisine linked to the territory, based on the conscious use of resources, is at the center of a rich activity of cooking workshops open to all.

From a tourist point of view, indeed, the promotion of responsible and sustainable tourism proposals involves tourists with alternative routes—compared to the traditional tourism of Romagna—based on the concept of slow tourism, exploiting already existing routes that connect the country's roads to embankment paths. In this context, the ecomuseum attracts interest above all of the cycle tourists, whose tourist activity particularly lends itself to lingering on the activities and itineraries proposed by the ecomuseum.

As in the previously analyzed case, the pandemic, which, in any case, implied the closure of the office in one of the most acute periods in 2021, has not blocked the activities. During the closing period, rich laboratory activity was carried out online. These projects were also brought back into attendance as soon as the rules allowed. In 2021, a summer school was also promoted entitled “Summer School of the Ancient Arts. Solidarity between generations so as not to lose wisdom and a sustainable economy.” This title is emblematic of the aim still pursued by the

ecomuseum, which makes use of a rich collaboration with the local associative fabric beyond the driving role of the association that manages it.

From a governance point of view, the ecomuseum is a cultural institute of the Municipality of Bagnacavallo, depending on the Direction of the Civic Museums of Bagnacavallo, and is managed by the founding body, the private association *Civiltà Erbe Palustri*. The municipality plays the role of orientation, direction, and control of the activities carried out by the ecomuseum in view of the tourist impact on the area. The association covers its managerial autonomy in organizing festivals, markets, environmental education projects, temporary installations, and the collection of evidence of the material culture of the local community.

Thanks to the attention of the public entity, there has always been collaboration with a public–private partnership for the use of public spaces. As already seen, the municipality has been interested in this activity since its beginning. The ecomuseum, between volunteers and collaborators, involves about 50 people, although these activities constitute their job only for the director and another collaborator.

The annual budget of the Cultural Association *Civiltà Erbe Palustri* is around 70,000–80,000 euros. This budget is sometimes supplemented by municipal public contributions, as well as by expenditure items of the municipality that affect interventions in the territory, even in the areas where the activity of the ecomuseum takes place. Often, public funds derived from competitive tenders, European and regional, have been intercepted for specific activities. Their own sources of revenue concern the museum store with ethnic artifacts from Romagna, a part coming from ticket office entrances and fees for the use of the convivial room for events and itinerant workshops linked to museum activity.

Despite the development of a set of activities fully consistent with the ecomuseum mission and its breadth, this second ecomuseum also does not have adequate development of management tools. This circumstance is also due to the lack of specific skills in the field of business administration within the association, even if the element that seems to emerge is also that their usefulness or necessity is not always perceived, with the potential detriment of even more incisive paths of growth and development of the ecomuseum.

Ecomuseum of hill and wine of Castello di Serravalle

The Ecomuseum of Hill and Wine has been running since May 2004. It was born with the aim of protecting and enhancing the cultural and natural heritage of Castello di Serravalle, a town belonging to the Municipality of Valsamoggia, inserted into the hilly landscape of the province of Bologna. The focus of this ecomuseum is on evidence of centuries-old human use of the land and the important buildings that express the relationship between landscape and man.

The owner of the venue and of the exhibitions is the Municipality of Valsamoggia, which comes from the merger of the municipalities of Castello di Serravalle (the owner entity of the Ecomuseum at its birth) with those of Bazzano, Crespellano, Monteveglio, and Savigno, which are all located in the territory of the province (here named the “metropolitan city”) of Bologna. The ecomuseum management has been entrusted to the public trust Foundation “Rocca dei Bentivoglio.” This foundation is under the direct control of the Municipality of Valsamoggia and manages the ecomuseum through a system of in-house provision. Some functional and operational tasks for the management of the ecomuseum are assigned to the non-profit cultural association “Terre di Jacopino,” whose associates participate in the management of the ecomuseum on a voluntary basis.

The ecomuseum has a main exhibition venue at a building called “Captain’s House,” which was built in 1,235 by Jacopino from San Lorenzo in Collina within the fortified village of Castello di Serravalle. The ecomuseum comprises nine systems of routes, which are the main themes of the relationship between man and land. Visitors can find educational panels for each system at the main exhibition venue with detailed text and images and symbolic objects with evocative aims: summary information and an essential exposure aim to bring the visitor outside in contact with the real aspects of the territory.

The ecomuseum proposes specific museum itineraries to its visitors focused on “nature and landscape: the gullies”; “architecture and land: the castle of Serravalle”; “man and landscape: work in the fields”; “humans and animals: zootechnics”; “the vine, the wine, and the landscape”; “the territory and its inhabitants: the first censuses”; “the post-war period and the reorganization of the territory”; “culture and folk tradition: folklore”; and “archeology and territory.”

In addition to the panels and objects for the nine itineraries, in the main exhibition venue of the ecomuseum, there is a room with archaeological findings of a Roman villa of the imperial age located just downstream of the fortified village. The most interesting artifact is a large terracotta that could hold more than 1,000 L of wine and inspire some local producers, such as the ancient Romans, to revive the wine in amphorae. In addition to educational programs for kindergartens and primary and secondary schools, the ecomuseum offers guided tours and tastings by appointment.

In recent years, the activity of the ecomuseum outside the main exhibition venue has been further developed, thanks to the support of the “Pro loco” (local tourism promotion association) of Castello di Serravalle. In fact, walks and excursions have been conceived to intertwine the places of the ecomuseum and the related themes. Paths regarding the German refugees in the area thus emerged, with walks in the various refuges, projects from which other enhancement projects were born, such as the walk on the occasion of the festival on the ancient vines or the walk to the ancient sources. This has helped bring these issues, even outside Castello di Serravalle, to nearby territories. In short, there has been work aimed primarily at establishing a dialogue between

the communities that form part of the rather extensive territory of the Municipality of Valsamoggia. This also appeared to be useful in overcoming the problems derived from the merger of the municipalities, which did not make everyone happy. Using the historical-cultural and landscape contents of continuity that exist between the territories has allowed for greater understanding and rapprochement.

The primary goal of the ecomuseum is to become a tool for the development of a form of culturally sustainable tourism in the territory. Some of the results have already been achieved, considering that after the birth of the ecomuseum, an economic appreciation of the buildings in the local area was observed in testimony to the revitalization of the area for tourism. Another important aim of the ecomuseum is the involvement of the population in creating a sense of awareness about the values of the territory. In particular, the engagement initiatives have been addressed to two specific targets: the segments of the older population and the younger population. For the elderly, initiatives were put in place with the aim of preserving the memory and the typical know-how of the rural world. To young people, instead, activities were promoted aimed at knowledge of their territory and the importance of taking care of it.

In agreement with these objectives, there have been meetings at the community center for the elderly and classes at the junior high school in the local area on the ancient crafts and the cycle of Parmesan cheese. There were three exhibitions to engage citizens with local origins, with the use of pictures taken from family albums and provided directly by the citizens themselves.

Other activities organized by the ecomuseum are addressed to the conservation of the peasant theatrical culture and to the use of dialect, supporting and disseminating performances of a recreational spontaneous group that animates the local carnivals and makes representations in dialect, especially staging “La Flepa,” a comic opera written by Giulio Cesare Croce, which has been orally transmitted for over three centuries and was reconstructed 20 years ago from the fragments that the elders of the valley recited by heart.

The COVID-19 pandemic was a crucial moment in this ecomuseum. In fact, before the pandemic, most of the operational activities were carried out by the historical staff of the “Terre di Jacopino” Association, whose average age was quite high. For this reason, since, as is known, the elderly people were those most at risk during the pandemic period, there was a need for the “Rocca dei Bentivoglio” Foundation to identify new initiatives and new activities that could be promoted in an alternative way by the ecomuseum compared to those traditionally promoted. This has led to the greater involvement of other local associations and the development of new online activities. Therefore, this represented, in a certain sense, a concrete way of implementing the aim that the ecomuseum itself had in its intentions: promoting intergenerational dialogue and favoring greater collaboration between the “historical” volunteers of the ecomuseum and the new resources activated by the foundation.

From the point of view of financial management, the annual budget available is approximately 10,000 euros. Although this budget is significantly lower than one of the above-presented cases, it appears interesting to note how, from the point of view of the percentage distribution of resources, this ecomuseum has a good degree of self-financing. In fact, the municipality contributes only about 30% of the budget, incurring the costs of managing the main exhibition venue and its offices. The remainder of the budget is covered by revenues raised by the association. They come for about another 30% from themed events in the village, 20% from the organization of tours, and 20% from sales of local products.

Similar to what was found in the other cases, this ecomuseum does not present the use of specific managerial tools. The small size of this reality leads to not detecting the usefulness or need for these tools, in addition to the fact that there is a lack of human and financial resources capable of implementing them.

Discussion

The aim of this section is to analyze what has emerged from the case studies, responding to the two research questions, which were about the kind of ecomuseum development strategies, and the management tools adopted to increase their effectiveness.

With reference to the first profile, the three cases were different, demonstrating variety and complexity that characterize the ecomuseums, even worldwide, but with relevant common features. The common elements mainly concern, on the one hand, the genesis, development, and participatory actions, which are implemented in all cases, and, on the other hand, the presence of a political will that is a decisive and stabilizing factor for the ecomuseum. Furthermore, it should be noted that the investigated development strategies properly mirror the main ongoing EU policies. On the one hand, cultural and natural heritage are envisaged as a shared resource, raising awareness of common history and values and reinforcing a sense of belonging to a common cultural and political space consistent with the 2019 European framework for action on cultural heritage based on the European Year of Cultural Heritage 2018 (European Commission, 2019). On the other hand, the analyzed cases put cultural and natural heritage at the heart of broader public policies consistently with the vision of the role of culture and cultural heritage in the European green deal (European Commission, 2022).

The divergent aspects relate to different management structures, different purposes, and different operating ways of realizing the activities, mainly attributable to the specificities of the territories. The different expressions of the development strategies of these three ecomuseums are not seen as conflicting. In fact, all three cases demonstrate specific attention to sustainable tourism projects, which have an impact on the cultural side of belonging and knowledge of the

area and its heritage. Therefore, the perspectives of sustainable tourism promotion and community involvement are present in all cases analyzed.

In all the cases, the ecomuseum project seems, however, to overlap this perspective in order to embrace a wider perspective of the “cultural district.” In the examined cases, the territorial element is, first, the common ground between the industrial district and the cultural district. The goal of a cultural district is to be a product of a particular territory based on territorial integration of the cultural offer. Specifically, the cultural district, on the one hand, implements a process of enhancing cultural resources of different types and, on the other hand, connects this process with the system of professions, services, and infrastructure connected with the same enhancement activities. According to this perspective, the process of developing cultural resources in the form of a district can have positive consequences in terms of employment, entrepreneurship, and innovation in various sectors.

In this context, an ecomuseum is part of a cultural district that is able to integrate with this productive and industrial system in the territory. These aspects seem to be present, as previously said, even with different degrees of relevance in the three cases analyzed.

A further expansion of the ecomuseum mission development seems to be present. In this case, a holistic approach to the sociocultural development of the local area is emerging (Badia and Deodato, 2015): the promotion of tourism in itself is beyond the scope of the ecomuseum, and even the development of entrepreneurship does not appear as central or primary factors. The ecomuseum task is primarily to improve the perceived quality of the territory, first from its residents. This can help to promote social development, and possibly economic growth, as well as—but not only—through sustainable tourism initiatives. A thorough knowledge and understanding of the natural and man-made components of the territory are the first fundamental elements of this perspective. Such knowledge and understanding, however, are only possible with the real involvement of the community—to be achieved both by local knowledge development initiatives at the local population and through its involvement with participatory

tools. For these reasons, the cases of Argenta and Bagnacavallo seem to be further along this path, whereas Castello di Serravalle is trying to start it.

The holistic approach to the sociocultural development of the local area can strengthen the community feeling that is the basis of every ecomuseum project. With its different ingredients, this perspective attempts to root a sense of responsibility and awareness of an area that becomes a place of culture and potentially socioeconomic development. After all, the goal of the ecomuseum is to improve the quality of life of the local community; the first step in this process should consist precisely of an awareness of the quality aspects of the territory, with its strengths and its critical issues, through an integrated and holistic perspective.

The following Table 1 synthesized the most relevant aspects emerging from the previous analysis and allows for a possible comparison among the three ecomuseums. In particular, the last line—about possible future challenges—contains some possible issues of development for the three institutions, which are the results of the authors’ perceptions after the conclusion of the case studies.

Another point of interest emerges from the comparison of the impacts that the COVID-19 pandemic had on the three ecomuseums. For all the cases analyzed, although the pandemic remains an event that has had a tragic impact on communities, from the point of view of ecomuseum management, it has been able to activate proactive response paths that have allowed certain improvements in management, especially based on the use of new technologies, both in dialogue with the community and between internal stakeholders.

With reference to the second profile, the role of the management tools, the cases present similar results (i.e., this kind of instrument is very little used). Fundamentally, three orders of motivation are behind this circumstance:

- Lack of skills
- Insufficient resources (financial and human)

TABLE 1 A comparison among the three case studies.

	Argenta	Bagnacavallo	Castello di Serravalle
Managing body	Municipality of Argenta (direct management) through its offices	Orientation and control by the Municipality of Bagnacavallo and management by the Association “Civiltà Erbe Palustri”	Municipality of Valsamoggia through its Foundation “Rocca dei Bentivoglio” + operational role of the Association “Terre di Jacopino”
Main goals	Socioeconomic development of the territory, rediscovery of ancient places and traditions, and community involvement	Sustainable and slow tourism, rediscovery of ancient places and traditions, and community involvement	Sustainable and slow tourism, enhancement of local food and wine, and intergenerational dialogue
COVID-19 pandemic impact	The ecomuseum has fostered the population’s desire for encounter and dialogue	The ecomuseum has maintained a constant dialogue with its reference public and has proposed many initiatives	The dimension of intergenerational dialogue within the ecomuseum has grown and has led to the development of new initiatives
Future challenges	To improve the online dialogue channels and to develop a stronger management structure	To preserve the legacy of its intangible heritage and to strengthen the managerial dimension	To reinforce the dialogue with other stakeholder of the territory and to develop new routes and itineraries outside the exhibition venue

Source: Authors’ elaboration.

- Incomplete perception of the usefulness or need for such tools

The first motivation is actually a problem, which often emerges in the context of museum studies and is present mainly in the cases of Argenta and Bagnacavallo. The second motivation represents an evident problem in organizational structures of a few dimensions, and it has emerged from the cases of Argenta and Castello di Serravalle. Finally, the third order of motivation can lead to problems when management is unable to understand the importance of these tools for the stronger development of its structure. As proposed by some academic literature, a possible solution to these problems relates to overcoming the dimensional limits of the governance structures of these ecomuseum realities. The problem of the size of the ecomuseums and their funding systems requires further development. The problem with the size scale concerns cultural institutions in general (Donato, 2013). The ecomuseum, by its nature, cannot be separated from being rooted in small realities characterized by low population density and difficult access to financial resources. Overcoming the reduced scale of ecomuseums would mean, in some cases, overcoming the proper meaning of the ecomuseum; therefore, this is not the correct way to go through. A correct solution in this regard would appear instead to develop (and in the experience of the Ecomuseum of Argenta is interesting) a system of networking and institutional partnerships with other ecomuseums or similar situations that would allow the increase of the critical mass and the political weight of the ecomuseum without distorting its original meaning. This idea is fully consistent with the studies that proposed a multilevel governance perspective for the management of cultural heritage (Bonet and Donato, 2011). A possible further development of these ideas could consist of analyzing the opportunities for full adoption of a perspective of collaborative governance in the ecomuseum context (Jeon and Kim, 2021).

Conclusion

Starting from the considerations set out in the previous section, this concluding section intends to carry out an analysis of the possibilities for the future development of this research, starting from the key concept that the proposed study was exploratory (i.e., aimed at validating the possibility of expanding the hypotheses here formulated in different contexts). First, the research was able to highlight only that in the cases, there was a scarce presence, or even the absence, of appropriate managerial tools suitable for supporting the development of ecomuseum strategies. The development of this study in new contexts of analysis could start from the observation of ecomuseum realities, if existing, in which such tools, such as performance measurement systems or non-financial reporting systems, have been developed.

Regarding this last aspect, the role of non-financial reporting, it primarily represents an accountability tool that appears to be

particularly appropriated in an ecomuseum context, as suggested in previous works (Magliacani, 2015). A full involvement of the community is represented not only by citizen adhesion to the activities proposed by the ecomuseum, but it is also fully realized when some form of transparent communication to the community of the activities carried out—and related to the use of public financial resources—is provided.

A further point for future research can be represented by the role played by the COVID-19 pandemic with reference to the topics developed in this work. Some authors have already produced preliminary studies that have highlighted how ecomuseums played a key role in supporting local communities in certain contexts, precisely during the pandemic period (Santo et al., 2021). These considerations seem to deserve further study, not only with a perspective aimed at what happened in the past but also to understand what lessons the pandemic period has produced in the ecomuseum sector, with reference to the ability of ecomuseums to know how to interpret and deal with moments of unexpected crisis.

In conclusion, this work also has some limitations. First, it considered a single geographical context (Emilia Romagna Region, Italy), so the results could be influenced by the specificities of the identified territorial context. Second, the work has considered only the perspective of the ecomuseum managers, but a potential development of the research could consider the point of view of the people involved in the ecomuseum activities.

Author's note

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Data availability statement

The original contributions presented in the study are included in the article/supplementary material, further inquiries can be directed to the corresponding author.

Author contributions

Conducted experiments: FB; participated in research conception and design: FB and FD; wrote and drafted the manuscript: FB; critical revision of the article: FB and FD;

performed data analysis: FB; contributed to writing the manuscript: FB and FD. All authors contributed to the article and approved the submitted version.

Conflict of interest

The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

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Revisiting the CCIs-tourism nexus: insights from Smart Specialisation Strategies

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In recent years, increasing attention has been paid to the importance of interrelationships between cultural and creative industries (CCIs) and tourism for cross-industry innovation and sustainable local development. The purpose of this study is to deepen the understanding of the role and relevance of the CCIs-tourism nexus for innovation-driven socio-economic transformation of territories through regional policy design and implementation in Smart Specialisation Strategies (RIS3). To this end, a thematic analysis has been conducted to explore the links between CCIs and tourism in RIS3 prioritization choices and whether and how it has been revisited from the previous programming period (2014–2020) to the current updates of strategies (2021–2027). The findings provide insights into the focus and evolution of this nexus to address the role of CCIs in enabling innovation-led regional development for the triple transition.

KEYWORDS

cultural and creative industries, tourism, Smart Specialisation Strategies, innovation, triple transition

Introduction

The last years have witnessed growing attention in European research and policies toward the relevance and variety of forms of innovation in cultural and creative industries (CCIs) and their catalytic role in promoting growth, wellbeing, sustainability and social cohesion (Sacco and Segre, 2009; European Commission, 2018; Sacco et al., 2018; Council of the European Union, 2022) and contributing to Sustainable Development Goals (Gustafsson and Lazzaro, 2021). The recent launch of the new Culture & Creativity¹ Knowledge and Innovation Community (KIC) by the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT) aims at strengthening and transforming cultural and creative sectors and industries and addressing current European socio-economic challenges related to employment, resilience, and smart growth, thereby leveraging the potential

1 <https://eit-culture-creativity.eu>

of CCIs for economic, technological and social innovation through a holistic and integrated approach (European Union, 2021). The newly established EIT KIC is set to harness the potential of Europe's cultural and creative sectors and industries to facilitate the green, digital and social transitions.

In this context, the CCIs-tourism nexus plays a leading role, given the relevance of cultural and creative production in the experience economy and cultural tourism (European Investment Fund, KEA European Affairs, 2021) and its contribution to the promotion of sustainable growth (OECD, 2022b) and local development (Borin et al., 2022).

This study focuses on the relationship between CCIs and tourism and its relevance for the triple green, digital and social transitions within the Research and Innovation Strategies for Smart Specialisation (RIS3), which represent an important instrument of the European Cohesion Policy. Under the 2014–2020 programming period, the development and implementation of RIS3 was introduced as an ex-ante conditionality for receiving financial support from European Structural and Investment Funds under Europe's 2020 strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. In the current programming period (2021–2027), RIS3 contribute to the Cohesion Policy's objective "A smarter Europe through innovation and support for economic transformation and modernization" and represent an enabling condition for Member States to be met throughout the cycle. Smart specialisation plays a pivotal role in strengthening and connecting regional innovation ecosystems and in consolidating CCIs policy across different areas, also through integrated approaches with tourism (OECD, 2022a). For this reason, it is worthwhile to investigate the interrelationship between CCIs and tourism in the prioritization choices of European regions and countries within RIS3 to provide insights into its role in innovation-led regional development agendas for the triple transitions. Specifically, this study presents the findings of a qualitative thematic analysis aimed at exploring how the CCIs-tourism nexus is represented in the RIS3 of a sample of European territories prioritizing CCIs, and whether and how it has been revisited from the previous programming period (2014–2020) to the current updates of strategies (2021–2027).

Theoretical and policy background

Synergies between CCIs and tourism for innovation-driven sustainable development

In the new European policies scenario, the integration between CCIs and tourism emerges as a critical area to fuel innovation for the triple transition (green, digital and social). It is emphasized that the impact of complementarities between these

sectors extends beyond the traditional contribution of cultural heritage and the creative economy to cultural tourism. Policymakers have started to recognize the role of cultural and creative sectors in supporting tourism diversification and innovation, place branding and marketing, more sustainable practices, local regeneration and communities' social cohesion (OECD, 2022b). The Transition Pathway for Tourism launched by the European Commission (2022b) highlights the links between the tourism ecosystem and cultural and creative industries not only for developing innovative tourism based on cultural heritage, traditions, arts and authentic cultural experiences, but also for the development of new markets and new sustainable and accessible forms of tourism services through the development of innovative approaches such as the creation of local digital twins, in line with the objectives of the European data space for cultural heritage. The Pathway also acknowledges the importance of the integration of cultural and tourism policies to improve the economic resilience of rural and remote regions and residents' wellbeing (European Commission, 2022b). The critical importance of the CCIs-tourism relationship is further highlighted in the current debate on cultural heritage for climate change with regard to opportunities to enhance the resilience of indigenous communities as well as to inspire action for climate change and to support behavioral change processes that favor the uptake and diffusion of greener social and economic practices (European Commission, 2022a; JPI Cultural Heritage and JPI Climate, 2022).

The CCIs-tourism nexus is a major source of multiple developmental effects also in the context of a state-of-the-art understanding of the relationship between culture and creativity and the many possible forms of economic and social value creation, highlighting CCIs' broader socioeconomic impact through several crossover interactions with other economic and social sectors (Sacco et al., 2018; Gustafsson and Lazzaro, 2021), in line with the New EU Agenda for Culture (European Commission, 2018) and the Work Plan for Culture 2023–2026 (Council of the European Union, 2022). This change may be conceptualized as a shift from Culture 1.0 to Culture 3.0 paradigm of value creation (Sacco et al., 2018), which identifies an 8-tiered classification of the indirect developmental effects of culture, notably in relation to innovation, wellbeing, sustainability, social cohesion, entrepreneurship, lifelong learning, soft power, local identity. Similarly, a significant shift has been noticed in the relationship between culture and tourism, leading to an upgrading of cultural tourism models built upon the as yet untapped potential of intangible heritage and creativity (World Tourism Organization, 2018), and upon a sharper focus on the authenticity of tourism experiences, more deeply connected to the everyday living culture of the destination, as well as constantly rejuvenated by the co-creation of contents and experiences (Richards, 2021). Also, within the context of a growing emphasis on post-pandemic tourism innovation

questioning established tourism development models, culture-led tourism ecosystems can play a critical role in driving actions and strategies for a transition towards more sustainable models of tourism development for cities and regions (Borin et al., 2022). In this perspective, the need has been highlighted to rethink how cultural and creative industries engage with other sectors, such as education, health and tourism, within broader multi-sectorial and multi-stakeholder ecosystems that can serve as driving forces for long-term sustainable development (Borin and Donato, 2022).

The CCIs-tourism nexus in Smart Specialisation Strategies (RIS3)

Developed around 2009 in the context of the innovation policy discussion of the Knowledge for Growth Expert Group established by the Research Commissioner Janez Potočnik (Foray et al., 2009), the concept of smart specialisation acknowledges the limits of relying only on horizontal policies, such as improving human capital and transfer of technologies, and the need for policymakers to experiment also with vertical, more targeted interventions that concentrate resources on a set of activities identified through an inclusive, bottom-up process (Foray, 2014). The underlying logic of smart specialisation introduced a paradigmatic change in regional innovation policy by emphasizing the principle of prioritization to build capabilities in specific fields, technologies, sub-systems that are likely to effectively transform regional economies. Also, a method to select such specialisation areas for intervention is defined, namely, the Entrepreneurial Discovery Process (EDP), as the main source of information regarding the domains to be prioritized through the mobilization and integration of entrepreneurial knowledge (Foray, 2014; Foray, 2015). Based on a collaborative governance approach, EDP is an interactive, mainly bottom-up process that engages actors from the quadruple helix to identify potential new activities and competitive advantages as well as challenges and priorities (Estensoro and Larrea, 2023).

Defined as place-based economic transformation agendas that focus policy support and investments on key national/regional priorities, challenges and needs for knowledge-based development, RIS3 support a broad view of innovation encompassing both technological and practice-based social innovation and are based on stakeholder engagement for identifying top priorities through an inclusive, interactive process centred on “entrepreneurial discovery” (Foray et al., 2012, p. 8). Priorities, as defined by the European Commission (2023), can be framed in terms of “knowledge fields or activities (not only science-based, but also social, cultural and creative ones), sub-systems within a sector or cutting across sectors and corresponding to specific market niches, clusters, technologies, or application of technologies to

specific challenges.” RIS3 entail evidence-driven decision-making for the prioritization of investments as well as monitoring and evaluation systems for revising and updating strategic choices (Foray et al., 2012, p. 8; Komninos et al., 2021). RIS3 play a key role in boosting regional innovation ecosystems by establishing the right strategic framework for focused investments on high value-added priorities and a shared vision of regional development (Conte and Ozbolat, 2016). The current debate emphasizes the contribution of RIS3 for orientating regional and national pathways towards Sustainable Development Goals. To this purpose, methodological guidelines have been provided by the Joint Research Centre of the European Commission to incorporate sustainable development goals into the design, implementation, and monitoring of the strategies (Miedzinski et al., 2021) and several regions have started experimenting with a challenge-driven EDP to embed sustainability challenges into their updated RIS3 (Miedzinski et al., 2022).

Literature and empirical investigation specifically focusing on CCIs and tourism interrelationships within RIS3 is still limited. Indeed, a research gap has been observed about smart specialisation, CCIs and tourism (Biagi et al., 2021; Meyer et al., 2022). At a general level, it has been noted that RIS3 tend to focus on science and high technology-related industries, neglecting industries such as tourism (Weidenfeld, 2018) and CCIs (Stanojev and Gustafsson, 2021; Meyer et al., 2022). This conclusion is supported by the findings of the mapping of innovation priorities between 2014 and 2020 by the Joint Research Centre (Sörvik and Kleibrink, 2015) showing that the most common priority in the main categories of “research and innovation capability” was manufacturing and industry (34.6%), whereas creative and cultural arts and entertainment and tourism, restaurants and recreation only accounted for 4.6% and 3.9%, respectively, of total priorities. More recently, the study on prioritization in smart specialisation strategies in Europe (European Commission, 2021) revealed that the topics Agrofood and Bioeconomy (21%), ICT and Industry 4.0 (15%), Health and Life Sciences (15%) are addressed most by priority areas, while Tourism, Cultural and Creative industries account for a relatively smaller share (9%).

In the previous programming period, cultural and creative industries and/or cultural heritage were included in the RIS3 of around 100 European regions, both within regional and national priorities (OECD, 2022a). The analysis conducted by Stanojev and Gustafsson (2021) on cultural heritage and circularity showed that culture is mentioned in 80 regions and 103 priorities representing 33% and 7% of the total regions and priorities included in the Eye@RIS3 database, respectively. Further, it found that only 10% of the EU regions prioritize cultural heritage. Focusing on tourism as a priority of smart specialisation policies, Biagi et al. (2021) found that 32% of European regions prioritize tourism in their RIS3, including both developed tourism destinations as well as territories

without tourism specialisation. However, these studies do not explicitly address the characterization of the linkages between CCIs and tourism. In a study of the interrelation between tourism, smart specialisation and territorial resilience, Bellini et al. (2017) identify five policy approaches, most of them entailing critical links with CCIs: 1) tourism modernization through ICT for enhanced destination management, including links to media and creative industries for specific applications (e.g., industrial design and audio-visual) and to cultural heritage digitization; 2) tourism for innovation culture, to promote place branding to capitalize regional identity, which entails the valorization of art, history and cultural elements for brand development and creative tourism; 3) tourism-generating innovation, highly focused on orientating tourism strategy toward value propositions related to emerging fields such as health and wellbeing; 4) tourism-pulled innovation, where the dimensions of the tourism market provide an opportunity to develop new products and services from other sectors, as exemplified by the links between cultural assets, tourism and sustainable constructions within the same priority; and 5) tourism moderation, aimed to reduce the negative aspects of tourism (i.e., seasonality, congestion, unbalanced resource consumption) in favor of other related activities. Meyer et al. (2022) stress CCIs' potential for sustainability and resilience of the tourism sector in the RIS3 policy nexus for the South Baltic Sea Region. Based on the analysis of several innovation cases, they show how the intervention of CCIs in tourism is strongly linked to social, environmental, economic, and institutional sustainability.

Methodology

This paper examines how the nexus between CCIs and tourism is represented within RIS3 in Europe in the current programming period (2021–2027) to provide insights into the relationship of culture and creativity with tourism in innovation-led regional development agendas. This analysis is part of a broader mapping of Cultural and Creative Sectors and Industries in RIS3 aimed to identify synergies between RIS3 and the EIT-KIC Culture and Creativity strategic intervention areas. The analysis of the potential links between RIS3 priorities and EIT-KICs' focus areas represents a key step for promoting any kind of collaboration between the EIT Community and regional/national stakeholders, including the EIT Regional Innovation Scheme (EIT RIS) that aims to disseminate EIT KICs know-how as well as widen the participation in EIT KICs in countries and regions with moderate or modest innovation capacity according to the European Innovation Scoreboard (Özbolat et al., 2019).

The study adopts a qualitative approach based on a mapping and thematic analysis of RIS3 to investigate the relevance of the CCIs-tourism nexus in the European landscape in terms of territories (regions/countries) with priorities linking CCIs and

tourism, the thematic foci/domains of the relevant priorities and the evolution of the nexus from the previous programming period. The material analyzed consists of the RIS3 documents of European regions/countries and the specific unit of analysis is identified in RIS3 priorities. Two parallel sources were used to identify the sample of territories and related RIS3 to be analyzed:

- The dedicated online database Eye@RIS3 providing comprehensive information on the public investment priorities for innovation.² The database is structured according to the Eurostat NUTS nomenclature and contains for each region/country information about priorities as described in their RIS3. It was fully upgraded in September 2018 for the previous programming period, while RIS3 in the current programming period are continuously being updated based on inputs from European regional and national authorities;
- The list of EU Member States that are eligible for the EIT Regional Innovation Scheme (Bulgaria, Croatia, Czechia, Estonia, Greece, Spain, Italy, Cyprus, Latvia, Lithuania, Hungary, Malta, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia, Slovakia), which were prioritized in the desk research for material collection since this scheme promotes synergies between EIT KICs and regions and countries through their RIS3 (Özbolat et al., 2019).

This approach to data collection allowed the identification of a sample of territories that align with the EIT KIC Culture and Creativity strategic needs as well as with previous research on RIS3 and CCIs based on data from the online tool Eye@RIS3 (i.e., Stanojev and Gustafsson, 2021).

Operationally, the Eye@RIS3 database (as of June 30, 2023) was downloaded and manually screened to identify European territories with relevant priorities based on priority description and related information on economic, scientific and policy domains. From this screening, 39 territories (regions/countries) prioritizing CCIs at the national or regional governance level were identified, based on a broad definition including core cultural and creative sectors but also the fashion industry and the high-end industries in line with a holistic view promoted by the European Commission et al. (2016). In parallel, the desk analysis of RIS3 documents of other 40 EIT RIS-eligible European regions/countries³ yielded 33 relevant territories that

² <https://s3platform.jrc.ec.europa.eu/web/guest/map>

³ In relation to EIT RIS-eligible European regions/countries, the analysis fully covered 12 States through their national or regional RIS3 (Bulgaria, Croatia, Czechia, Estonia, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Portugal, Slovenia, Slovakia) and partially covered 4 countries (Greece, Poland, Romania, Spain), i.e., not including all the strategies implemented by their regional entities. For Italy, the region Basilicata was not included, as its RIS3 was in the process of being updated.

include CCIs in their priorities. From this total of 72 territories, 43 territories (40 regions and 3 countries) were identified as relevant for this study, as they prioritize both CCIs and tourism in their RIS3, for a total of 55 priorities. Information about the territories and their RIS3 priorities was collected in a spreadsheet, including the National/Regional Innovation Scoreboard profile, year of publication of the updated strategy, name and description of CCIs and tourism-related priority areas, and changes from the previous programming period (2014–2020). Data analysis was performed through a categorization of relevant priorities based on the level of focus on the sectors under examination, notably territories that address CCIs/tourism within a cross-sectorial/cross-challenge priority area (e.g., circular economy), territories linking CCIs and tourism in the same priority area, and territories identifying dedicated priorities for innovation in CCIs and/or tourism. Further, a thematic analysis was carried out to identify the specific topics of relevant priorities. Thematic analysis calls for the iterative development of codes, consisting of words or short phrases that capture the essence/attribute of a text, for salient themes to emerge inductively from the texts (Neuendorf, 2019). In this way, the main themes of priorities were identified from their description through an inductive, manual coding implying an iterative process of code generation, refinement and collation for the definition, revision, and identification of topics. It is worth noting that priorities are differently defined by Member States/regions, with some indicating generic definitions and others being very specific regarding the identification of innovation areas/domains/trajectories, which were considered in the generation of codes. The main topics identified through this process have been then associated to the three areas related to the digital, green and social transitions, taking into account the connections across them. Finally, relevant cases of regions/countries prioritizing the CCIs-tourism nexus were analyzed more in-depth to provide insights into their strategies relating to the interplay of CCIs and tourism for regional innovation-led development.

Findings

The findings of the analysis are presented in relation to the three specific objectives of the study, notably mapping the landscape of territories prioritizing CCIs and tourism in their updated smart specialisation strategies, identifying the specific focus of the priority areas, and tracing the evolution of the CCIs-tourism nexus as represented in the priorities from the previous programming period.

The landscape of prioritizing territories

Based on the analysis of the description of priorities, 43 territories (40 regions and 3 countries) were identified that

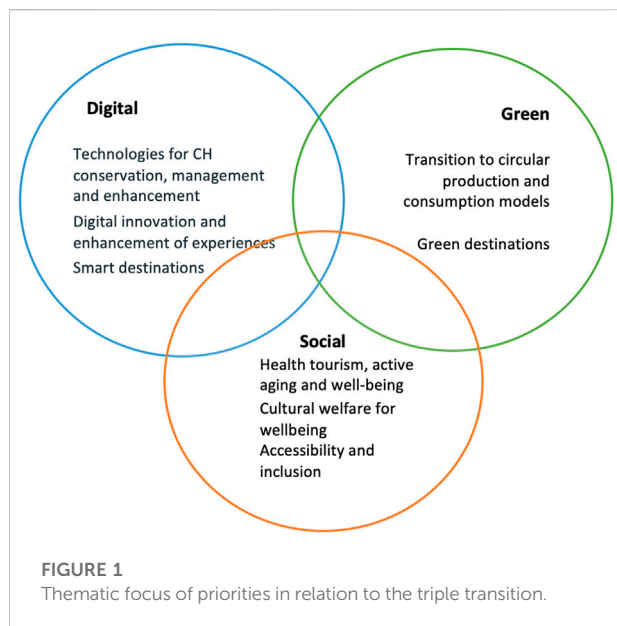
prioritize both CCIs and tourism in their RIS3, representing 60% of our pool. Considering only those encoded in the Eye@RIS database, the territories with both tourism-related and CCIs-related priorities account for 51% of the regions/countries with at least a priority dedicated to CCSI and for 43% of the total featured territories up to June 30th. Several regions participate in the interregional partnerships created along shared RIS3 priorities within the Smart Specialisation Platform to develop investment projects for industrial modernisation, notably **Cultural and Creative Regional Ecosystems**, which are focused on cultural and creative experiences involving the use of new technologies, and the Digitalisation and Safety for Tourism partnership aimed to enhance the competitiveness and smooth operation of tourism businesses.⁴

The relevant territories in our sample are characterized by a varied profile in terms of innovation performance as measured by the Regional Innovation Scoreboard/European Innovation Scoreboard (European Commission, 2023). Specifically, half of the territories are Moderate Innovators (51%); the remaining include Emerging Innovators (25.6%), Strong innovators (21%) and Innovation Leaders (2.4%). This provides a preliminary indication that selecting regions and countries that prioritize CCIs and tourism does not amount to restricting attention to a specific class of innovation performance.

Looking more in detail into our sample, the representation of CCIs and tourism in regional/national RIS3 is differently defined by territories and includes two separate priority areas for CCIs and tourism (26%); an integrated priority blending CCIs and tourism (33%); a cross-cutting priority including tourism and CCIs (11%); a CCIs-related priority which includes also tourism (14%); and vice versa, a tourism-focused priority that includes a reference to CCIs (16%).

Therefore, different approaches can be identified as to how regions/countries prioritize CCIs and tourism in their strategies for innovation-led development, based on the distinctive characteristics of their territories and the results of the EDP. In some cases, the strategies are characterized by a more focused approach on CCIs and tourism through two separate priority areas to concentrate investments and efforts in each priority area more intensely, as in the cases of Abruzzo, Alentejo, Algarve, Lisbon, Marche, Navarra, Norte and Veneto. For instance, the Abruzzo region identified “Fashion/design” and “Sustainable mobility and tourism” within its specialisation strategy, with the latter being added in the update of the previous strategy and stemming from the systematization of the priorities of the Logistics and Mobility Cluster, related to the issues of energy and climate, and those of the Tourism Cluster related to the integration of new technologies in the tourism sector and the development of sustainable tourism. In other territories, a more

⁴ <https://s3platform.jrc.ec.europa.eu/s3-industrial-modernisation-partnerships>



integrated approach is adopted through the interrelation of CCIs and tourism in the same priority. This approach features both regions that include linkages between these domains within a specialisation area focusing either on CCIs or tourism—as in the case of the Region Autonoma of Madeira which defined a tourism-related priority for developing the destination including the preservation and enhancement of the natural, historical, and cultural heritage—and those choosing to focus on a stronger, more systemic connection between CCIs and tourism in regional innovation. In the case of Emilia Romagna, for example, these are prioritized at the same level and interconnected with “Made in” products to support the promotion of the regional identity, the development of local value chains and the strengthening of social cohesion. It is worth noting that this region can be considered a best practice for the design of a Sustainable Smart Specialisation Strategy which incorporates Sustainable Development Goals in the EDP for the revision of the 2014–2020 strategy. Finally, a third approach emerges that leverages the innovative potential of these domains within broader, cross-cutting priorities, as in the case of Puglia’s “Digital, creative and inclusive communities,” which focuses on value chains that provide high value-added services for increasing social cohesion as well as digitization of the regional society, blending innovations in cultural, creative and tourism services with social innovations for the local communities.

The thematic focus of priorities

From the thematic analysis of the priority areas, several key topics emerge as the focus of smart strategies for innovation-led development. In particular, eight macro-themes of the relevant

priorities have been identified that can be related to digital, green and social transitions (Figure 1). It is worth noting that these themes are not totally mutually exclusive, as some regions focus on multiple trajectories across the three areas, also in the same priority. For instance, regions focusing on innovation for destination management often link smartness with decarbonization objectives with the purpose of developing smart and sustainable destinations.

Synergies between CCIs and tourism for the digital transition

The relationship between CCIs and tourism assumes a high relevance in addressing the challenges of the digital transition within the analyzed RIS3. The selected priority areas strongly focus on the role of technologies in stimulating innovation-led development in the CCIs and tourism sectors at the territorial level. The digital transition theme is addressed according to different approaches, from more focused ones related to the application of technologies to support the conservation, management and restoration of cultural heritage, to broader approaches focusing on the role of digitisation in the development of innovative solutions and contents according to an experience economy perspective, to destination-centered approaches aimed at the development of intelligent destinations and their promotion through innovative technologies (e.g., Virtual reality).

As an example of the first approach, technological innovation in cultural and creative industries is at the heart of the Italian region of Tuscany 2021–2027 RIS3. The whole strategy is structured around four regional Technological Priorities (Digital technologies; Technologies for advanced manufacturing; Advanced materials and nanotechnologies; Technologies for life and the environment) and five areas of application, among which a specific area is dedicated to Culture and Cultural Heritage. Within this dedicated priority area, innovation and digitization are addressed as essential, on the one hand, to enhance regional skills to support cultural and creative organizations in the strengthening of their competitive positioning; on the other hand, to enhance the existing cultural assets of Tuscany, facilitating access and use, conservation and participation, also by specific social groups. The 2021–2027 RIS3 of the Campania region in Italy also stands out for its effort to promote connections between the culture and the touristic sectors and the attention paid to new entrepreneurship in the CCIs in close interaction with the digital transition. For the 2021–2027 programming period, the RIS3 Campania identifies 8 innovation ecosystems (as an evolution of the 6 specialisation areas of the 2014–2020 strategy), among which one is dedicated to CCIs/tourism. The “Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Creative industries” priority is conceived of as an integration between the productive domains of cultural heritage and tourism and the creative industries. With respect to the previous programming

period, a stronger emphasis on the CCIs and their relation with tourism emerges. The dedicated priority was refocused to highlight the impact on the entire regional culture industry, which includes a range of activities varying from companies operating in the historical-artistic architectural heritage sector to the creative industries that take culture as an input, and to promote the growth and digitization of the regional economy and foster new entrepreneurship.

An experience-centered approach aimed at the development of innovative solutions and technologies (AR, VR, MR, AI, wearable sensors, robotics) for increased attractiveness and sustainability characterizes the RIS3 developed by Sardinia and Sicily in Italy, Dalarnas län in Sweden, and the Satakunta region in Finland. The latter is structured around nine knowledge and innovation clusters, among which the “experience economy” that includes tourism, cultural and creative services and events, and is meant to support the region’s growth with a specific aim to increase its attractiveness and the wellbeing of its residents by investing in the experience economy and the digitization of tourism and cultural services and events. “Sustainable Creative Experiences” is one of the priority areas identified by the Dalarna län region (Sweden), which integrates the regional strengths in the field of gaming and tourism. The region positions itself as one of the world leaders in game production as well as a fast-growing tourism destination. The strategy thus intends to develop Dalarnas as a destination for sustainable active, creative and cultural experiences for residents and visitors, blending tourism, sports, culture and creativity.

Finally, an approach focused on the development of smart destinations also emerges from the analysis as in the cases of Navarra, Slovenia and Veneto. The Italian Veneto region identified two dedicated priorities on culture and creativity and intelligent destinations. While the former focuses on technologies for cultural heritage, creativity and innovation for “made in” products, and design technologies for creative products, the latter aims at leveraging the potential of digital technologies for the touristic valorization of cultural heritage, the sustainable valorization of natural areas, the promotion of tourism demand and the development of innovative solutions based on the use of big data to improve the integrated management of the destination.

Synergies between CCIs and tourism for the green transition

The analysis highlights the relevance of the examined nexus in RIS3 to address environmental challenges through a focus on the development of circular models of production and consumption and the development of environmental sustainability in CCIs and tourism and green destinations. A key case in point is represented by the Abruzzo region (Italy), which has identified relevant priorities dedicated to fashion/design and sustainable mobility and tourism within its updated strategy. The rationale is to promote regional

strengths in the area of design, also in relation to fashion textile design, culture and tourism to support the transition to circularity through the development of eco-design, circular fashion, adaptive reuse of cultural heritage, and sustainable tourism, by means of the integration of logistics and mobility with tourism. In the RIS3 2021–2027 developed by the Italian Sardinia region, a dedicated priority has been indicated that focuses on “Tourism, culture and the environment,” leveraging technological innovation, business model innovation, environmental and social innovation within a holistic approach to valorize and promote the local territorial assets for touristic purposes, also in view of the need to reinforce investments on the sustainability and green transition of destination services. In Friuli-Venezia Giulia (Italy), the specialisation area “Cultural heritage, design, creative industries, tourism” is unpacked into five trajectories including entrepreneurship and technological innovation in CCIs, digital and sustainable innovations to build greener destinations. The latter focuses on the green transformation of the entire tourism value chain, also through the adoption of ecolabels and the development of sustainable tourism, to reduce impacts on the territories and their landscape.

Synergies between CCIs and tourism for the social transition

Long-term sustainability calls for an appropriate balance between the environmental, economic and socio-cultural aspects of tourism development. In this perspective, countries/regions’ strategies also demonstrate a primary interest in sustainability and social innovation through innovation in tourism and cultural and creative industries. The cultural and creative sectors are increasingly deployed as a tool for local development and regeneration, while also providing social benefits such as community wellbeing and cohesion.

In particular, the CCIs-tourism nexus intends to promote innovation for wellbeing and social cohesion (e.g., Azores, Kanta-Häme, South East Romania, Tuscany, Sardinia) through a focus on:

- Health tourism, active aging and wellbeing;
- Development of cultural welfare for health and wellbeing;
- Accessible and inclusive services, including education and training, in tourism and heritage.

As a key example, the RIS3 Azores 2022–2027 makes a close reference to the national Portugal 2030 Strategy, which integrates four thematic agendas:

1. People first: a better demographic balance, greater inclusion, less inequality;
2. Digitalization, innovation and capabilities as drivers of development;
3. Climate transition and resource sustainability;

4. An externally competitive and internally cohesive country.

An important aspect of the national strategy is the promotion of tourism related to health and wellbeing. Turismo de Portugal, the Portuguese Health District (HCP), the Investment and Foreign Trade Agency of Portugal (AICEP) and the Portuguese Association of Private Hospitalization (APHP) have signed protocols to highlight the importance of health in Tourism Strategy 2027. In Portugal, medical tourism's potential turnover is calculated at 100 million euros per year. In the hospital and medical tourism context, the Hospital International dos Açores (HIA) stands out, which planned to carry out a medical tourism project. In the field of wellness and health tourism (spa and thalassotherapy), the Azores stand out for their hydrogeological characteristics. Among the transversal areas, the region indicates a series of priorities linked to the population's quality of life and the main social challenges. These proposals mainly focus on topics such as contrast to poverty, the promotion of social integration and development, and of adequate educational programs, intergenerational integration, and the quality/sustainability of the inhabited space. In the Quality of life and social development priority, the following transformative activities are indicated:

- Health tourism, active aging and wellbeing;
- Slow tourism;
- Valuing work and balanced distribution of income;
- Education and training in the area of Tourism and heritage.

The Action Lines promote: the creation of tourist routes certified as "Accessible and inclusive tourism," "Health tourism" and "Wellbeing and tourism"; tourism and leisure practices that promote a better quality of life; tourism and leisure practices that mitigate the gentrification of urban centers; Senior tourism; Slow tourism destinations; entrepreneurship that boosts new segments of tourism (differentiated products and services) with a positive impact on the living conditions of the region, mitigating the effects of seasonality in the area; the strengthening of the acquisition of skills in the area of Tourism and Heritage, including scientific and technological skills in the field of endogenous natural and cultural resources. Another relevant example is represented by the South-East region of Romania, which indicates two specific objectives concerning sustainability and social inclusion:

- Strengthening the role of culture and sustainable tourism in economic development, social inclusion, and social innovation;
- Promoting integrated and inclusive social, economic, and environmental development, as well as culture, natural heritage, sustainable tourism, and security in urban areas.

The priority dedicated to tourism promotes the development of a tourism concept that combines health with recreational activities, based on healthy lifestyle (alternative therapies, healthy food, physical exercise). In particular, it is clearly indicated in the regional program that such objectives can only be achieved through an integrated strategic approach that combines initiatives for the renewal of urban areas, with those concerning environmental protection, development and green mobility, enhancing tourism potential and heritage, through a participatory approach with the involvement of the main local stakeholders.

Evolution of the CCIs-tourism nexus

Finally, the analysis explored whether and how territories have shifted the focus of their Smart Specialisation Strategies as to their consideration of, and emphasis upon, tourism and CCIs. To this end, a comparative analysis of the contents of the programs was conducted and allowed for a comprehensive examination of how regions and countries have shifted their strategic priorities.

An interesting trend identified in the analysis is the general strengthening of the role of CCIs, as several regions in the sample significantly updated their strategies by broadening/re-focusing their priorities and including CCIs dedicated priorities. For instance, the Campania region (IT) added a more robust focus on the Creative industries within the specialisation area "Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Creative Industries," which is defined by the integration of the productive domain of cultural heritage and tourism with the creative industries. This area has been renamed from the previous period to better incorporate the impact of the entire system of CCIs, from cultural heritage to companies producing goods/services closely related to artistic activities with a high creative content, and finally to creative industries that take culture as an input for their core business. Other regions introduced new priorities dedicated to CCIs, as in the cases of the Umbria (IT) priority "Made in Italy, design and creativity" and the Marche (IT) area dedicated to "Products and services for culture and education." Alentejo (PT) doubled the articulations of the integrated priority "Heritage, Cultural and Creative Industry and Services for Tourism," committing to the development of a full-fledged cultural and creative ecosystem. Such change-oriented momentum is also found in regions such as Catalonia (ES), whose vision has shifted towards establishing an integrated cultural system that drives digital and territorial growth and competitiveness. This strategic shift recognizes Cultural and Experience-based Industries as essential services alongside Tourism and Sports, further solidifying the 2014–2020 strategy in this direction. Catalonia's current perspective seeks a holistic social, economic, and environmental development, with culture and natural heritage, sustainable tourism, and non-urban security at its core. Culture is often pinned as a key driver of this process, as a catalyst for

community participation and territorial flourishing. In particular, this is evident in the SmartCatalonia strategy, the Catalan Government's initiative that expands the Smart City concept at the regional scale. The RIS3CAT (the Smart Specialisation Strategy of Catalonia region) extends beyond conventional research and innovation, acknowledging contemporary challenges such as global competition, ageing of populations, climate change, resource scarcity, and immigration. These challenges demand collective responses through social innovation, and culture holds the reins of Catalonia's cross-sectoral actions.

In contrast, it is interesting to highlight that in the Navarra region (ES), the focus on CCIs as a system has been changed in the definition of the already existing priority, and the chosen strategy has narrowed down "Creative and Digital Industries" to "Audiovisual industry," while strengthening "Sustainable tourism." Moreover, two regions, Attica (GR) and Pohjois-Savo (FI), follow an opposite trend, as their strategic priorities as described in Eye@RIS3 shift their center of gravity toward blue and green tourism, actually narrowing the scope of the CCIs within the new seven-year program compared to the previous one where culture was closely related to core tourism strategies.

Discussion

This study provides a preliminary analysis of the role of the CCIs-tourism nexus in smart specialisation, which needs to be extended through a comprehensive analysis of RIS3 in the whole of European regions and countries. It is worth highlighting that almost half of the territories (43%) featured in Eye@RIS3 at the time of the data collection include both tourism-related and CCI-related priorities in their strategies. This finding appears to contradict previous evidence on the marginal representation of tourism and CCIs in smart specialisation strategies during the previous programming period (Weidenfeld, 2018; Stanojev and Gustafsson, 2021; Meyer et al., 2022).

The thematic analysis highlighted how the prioritization of these domains builds upon a broad conceptualization of innovation, including digital, business, environmental and social dimensions, which is also in line with an evolved approach to the role of CCIs in supporting local growth through multiple crossover effects (Sacco et al., 2018) and the emergence of broader, multisectoral culture-led ecosystems (Borin et al., 2022). While digital innovation prominently characterizes the priorities identified by regions, there is an indication of an integrated approach that leverages the potential of innovation in these domains to pursue a balanced integration of smartness, environmental sustainability and social development of the regional territories/destinations. This is in line with the previous findings by Meyer et al. (2022), who stress CCIs' potential for sustainability and resilience of the tourism

sector in the RIS3 policy nexus as to social, environmental, economic and institutional sustainability.

This study also highlighted a remarkable trend such that many regions have shifted their focus toward CCIs and the broader cultural and creative sector as a priority within their Smart Specialisation Strategy. It recommends further research to explore the impact of these strategic shifts on regional development outcomes. The 2021–2027 programs in various regions have witnessed a strategic realignment, with a growing emphasis on CCIs as key drivers of regional development. This shift underscores the importance of the cultural and creative sectors in shaping the future trajectories of territories and represents a move towards more intelligent and sustainable development strategies.

Conclusion

This study explored the CCIs-tourism nexus in current European RIS3 to provide insights into its representation and role in innovation-led regional development agendas for the triple transition, building on the increased attention paid to CCIs and their interrelationships with tourism within the contemporary theoretical and policy frameworks.

The first limitation of this study is related to its sample, which does not include all the potential European RIS3 strategies. For instance, a previous study on prioritisation in Smart Specialisation in the EU (European Commission, 2021) identified 185 RIS3 strategies at national and/or regional levels across the EU that fulfilled the ex-ante conditionality. In this regard, it has to be noted that previous research on RIS3 mostly relies on the Eye@RIS3 database which was fully upgraded in September 2018 for the previous programming period. For the current programming period, the dedicated online database Eye@RIS3, which was used in this study as a source of data, has not been fully upgraded yet. This limitation of the sample will be addressed in a follow-up of the analysis including all European regions' and countries' strategies for smart specialisation. Further limitations may be related to the translation of texts; indeed, the desk research was complicated due to the lack, in several cases, of an English version of RIS3 documents. Also, the thematic analysis might also benefit from an automated text analysis approach in line with previous mappings (European Commission, 2021).

Despite its limits, the study provides useful theoretical and managerial implications. From the theoretical perspective, it provides a contribution to advancing previous limited research on the relevance and representation of tourism and CCIs in RIS3, substantiating the need for a broader conceptual lens that can adequately take into account the multidimensional nature of innovation and the related outcomes at the territorial level. Whereas a shift has been noticed from more conventional approaches to the interrelation between tourism, culture and creativity, its operational representation in regional strategies for innovation-led development must be taken into account, to better

articulate the paradigm shift found at the theoretical and policy level. The study addresses the challenge of incorporating CCIs into RIS3 to promote the emergence of creative-led ecosystems (Stanojev and Gustafsson, 2021), by providing insights into different choices and approaches by territories to the prioritization of the interrelationship with tourism. It could also support efforts aimed at advancing the conceptualization of innovation in culture and creative industries, which necessarily requires a broader, systemic lens to capture all its dimensions and contributions to the triple transition.

At an operational level, sharing best practices among regions and countries that have successfully incorporated culture and creativity into their strategies and the potentials of interrelation with tourism can contribute to more effective Smart Specialisation Strategies in the future, also in relation to their ongoing evolution towards Smart Sustainable Specialisation Strategies.

Data availability statement

The raw data supporting the conclusion of this article will be made available by the authors, without undue reservation.

Author contributions

AM: Conceptualization, methodology, data curation, analysis, writing, review and editing. GL, MT, and SU: Conceptualization, analysis, writing, review and editing. PS: Conceptualization,

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Conflict of interest

The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

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Rohingya influx and host community: A reflection on culture for leading socioeconomic and environmental changes in Bangladesh

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The paper analyses the socioeconomic and environmental changes in the Rohingya refugee camp in Bangladesh. Bangladesh is one of the largest refugee host countries in the world. Due to the refugee inflow, Rohingya and host communities have been experiencing tremendous socioeconomic and environmental changes that hinder their sustainable life. Factors that have resulted in the camp area are market instability, cultivable land decline, pollution, deforestation, water and sanitation crisis, law and order failure, and drug use. All these changes accompany the refugee and host people's discomfort and suffering. Moreover, some host people might feel unprivileged because they were not considered for relief schemes by donor agencies. A qualitative study was conducted to collect the data using the Case study and Key Informant Interview (KII) methods. Semi-structured interview schedules for the case study and open-ended interviews for the KIIs were used in this study. By illustrating the refugee and host's socioeconomic and environmental dynamics, we tried to explain the current situation of the camp area. We also tried to shed light on the experiences of both communities regarding inclusiveness and building a cohesive society.

KEYWORDS

Rohingya refugee, host community, socioeconomic development, environment, inclusive society

Introduction

Bangladesh is one of the largest refugee host countries in the world. It is home to more than 1.3 million Rohingya refugees and 166 million Bangladeshi people within 147,570 square kilometers ([World Bank, 2021, 02–26](#)). The state struggles to handle the large population, whereas tremendous pressures are on the land, food, water, sanitation, and environment. Simultaneously, after the independence in 1971, the

demographic structure in Bangladesh changed partly because of the migration of Rohingyas from the Rakhine state of Myanmar. These displaced people have given Bangladesh a grave situation. The presence of refugees, at times, may contribute to the massive changes in the hosts' social structure along with assorted troubles. For example, Tanzania experienced several significant changes and inconveniences after the arrival of refugees from Rwanda, Burundi, and the Democratic Republic of Congo (Whitaker, 1999, 5–18). Bangladesh might be facing similar issues.

Rohingyas started migrating to Bangladesh in the 1970s and 1980s. A notable migration took place in 1991 and 1992 when around 200,000 Rohingyas migrated to Bangladesh. Rohingyas who came to Bangladesh then have been living in two registered camps in Cox's Bazar for the last three decades. In 2017 and 2018, nearly 700,000 Rohingyas arrived in Bangladesh. Now more than one million Rohingyas have been living in Ukhia and Teknaf Upazilas (Subdistricts) where Rohingyas are double the local people (European Commission, 2017, 1–2). Rohingyas have been living in 34 camps covering huge cultivable land and forest. The Bangladeshis administer the camps with the help of international agencies, especially the United Nations. However, Bangladesh has never signed any international convention or treaty to shelter refugees. Bangladesh sheltered Rohingyas on humanitarian grounds (Bashar, 2012, 10–13). Local people also accepted Rohingyas and supported them with homes, food, clothes, land, water, and sanitation when international communities were not there (Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery-GFDRR, 2018, 15–25). This openness to Rohingyas has impacted host communities' socioeconomic and environmental resources, leading to discontent among them. The primary reaction comes from the labor market where Rohingyas sell their cheap labor affecting host peoples' employment. Refugees may benefit hosts in many ways if refugees can sell labor to local producers to expand consumer markets and justify increased foreign aid. Therefore, accepting refugees may sometimes be part of the government's broader development plan (Daley, 1991, 248–266). Nevertheless, some local people might have thought that refugee labor is a cost rather than a benefit. Bangladeshi host people think that the presence of Rohingyas adversely affects their life in many ways since they made the more significant section of the society unemployed with their cheap labor and extra working hours (Brac, 2017, 25–26). In Cox's Bazar city, most of the manual and automatic activities are accomplished by Rohingyas which annoys the host laborers because Rohingyas are selling labor cheaply. Simultaneously, necessary daily grocery item prices have increased, albeit some items, e.g., rice, pulse, and oil are available at low prices. Some Rohingyas sell their relief items to the local market although development agencies (United Nations Development Programme-UNDP, 2018, 56–68) narrated that selling relief materials is illegal. Some local farmers become frustrated by the drop in the prices of beans, maize, and rice as refugees sell

these items in the market (Whitaker, 1999, 5–18). Hospitals and health providers also face tremendous pressure, and sanitation has become a significant issue. Law and order decay because police and law enforcers do not have the resources to manage the large population. Sometimes, Rohingya groups get involved in militant and extremist activities in the camp area and kill and hurt fellow Rohingyas (Tamal, 2019, 1–2). It is also reported that a group of Rohingya youth instrumented with arms and deadly materials move around the camp and attack Rohingyas and locals if they find disagreements with them (Crimes in the Rohingya Camps, 2020, 4). Therefore, maintaining law and order is a significant challenge for security agencies in this area. The notable challenges, however, are related to the environment. Multiple environmental effects such as air and water pollution, landslides, cyclone, and flood, have already been experienced by the people in the camp area. The groundwater has already been depleted. Erosion of soil and terrain may cause landslides during the rainy season. Sewer sludge management and solid waste management are in critical condition. Local and Rohingya people directly or indirectly depend on nature for collecting firewood. Many host people living within the camps have already depended on government and international relief as they have nothing left to survive.

Very few empirical studies were conducted comprising the host and Rohingya communities' socioeconomic and environmental changes. This paper aims to conduct a comparative assessment of the camp area's socioeconomic and environmental changes to discern the communities' bilateral relationship and inclusiveness. The findings may help future researchers and policymakers bridge refugees and hosts to build an inclusive society.

The theoretical framework

Malinowski's cultural theory of needs is significant to understanding cultural integration. It emphasizes the cultural existence of society for meeting the individual's basic biological, psychological, and social needs (Malinowski, 1944, 67–74). Every society is integrated into different cultural domains whilst these domains are linked by contemporary societal forms and functions. By form, Malinowski meant the social institutions that have multiple functions and are integrated into one another to respond to a variety of needs of the societal people. He outlined these needs into two main ideas, basic needs, and cultural responses. By basic needs, he meant metabolism, reproduction, bodily comfort, safety, movement, growth, and health. Some institutions are responsible for responding to basic needs. Every culture has the function of satisfying these biological needs for survival. To Malinowski, humans have, first and foremost, to satisfy all the needs of their organisms (Kohler, 1946, 126–128). On the other hand, he addressed commissariat, kinship, shelter, protection, activities, training, and hygiene as the

cultural responses. The interaction between basic needs and cultural responses is significant to advance society and culture. The cultural responses to basic needs create new conditions, new needs, and new imperatives or determinants that are responsible for controlling human behavior. Therefore, any cultural integration of different cultural groups or people is needed to intake their basic needs and cultural response while maintaining their own identity. Every cultural group should be given chances to achieve their basic needs and cultural responses during integration. Malinowski advised host countries to set policies that would facilitate other groups' cultural needs and responses. It can promote tolerance, respect, and trust towards other cultures and help to develop an integrated society (Algan et al., 2012, 11–15). He asserted to design of the host states' institutions in a manner that can be able to accommodate cultural diversity. Cross-cultural contact generates behavioral changes that can dampen cultural differences and promote multiculturalism and social integration.

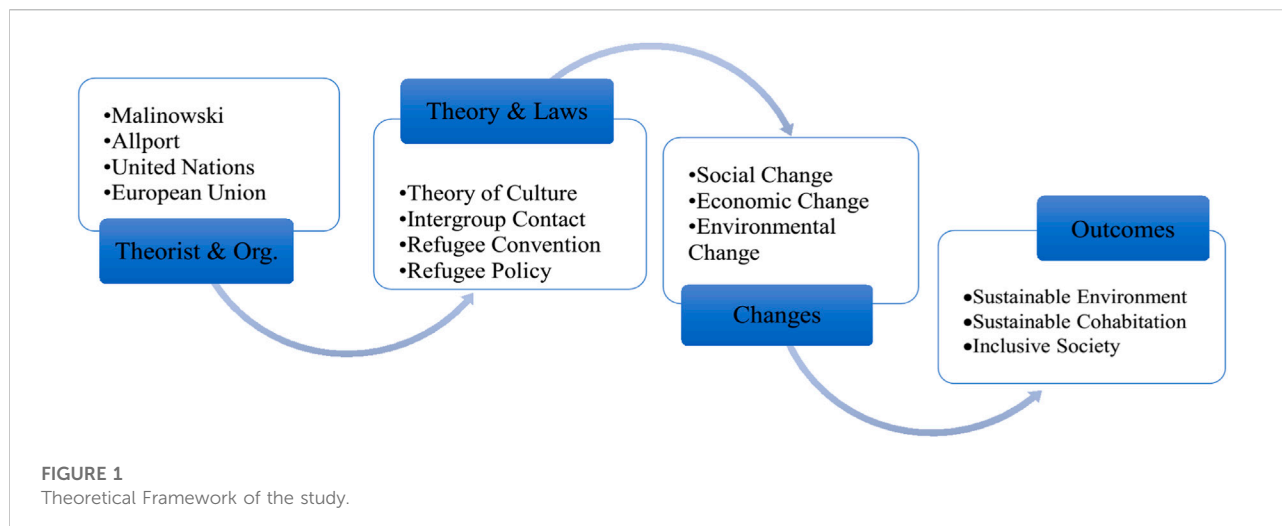
Several sociologists and anthropologists evaluated Malinowski's cultural theory of needs while they also criticized it. Oscar (2012, 95–125) argued that the relationship Malinowski exhibited between basic needs and cultural responses is satisfactory. Because any cultural theory must be based on the organic needs which can relate to more complex imperatives called spiritual, social, and economic perspectives of society. He disagreed with the categories of basic needs since it is not exclusively biological as Malinowski called it. Parsons and Shils (1951) commented that Malinowski was the first to re-establish a connection between man as a biological organism and man as a culture creator by his need theory. Kempny (1992, 45–56) argued that the concept of basic needs is the part of 'body of conditions', which must be fulfilled if the community is to survive and its culture to continue. He also commented that the theory of needs is Malinowski's weak point and highly criticized idea since he thought only singularly whilst there is a mutual interdependence between basic needs and culture.

Furthermore, the American Sociologist Williams (1947) first proposed that contact between members of different groups can reduce prejudice. Allport (1954) expanded this proposition from a socio-psychological perspective and emphasized that positive contact between members of two groups can reduce prejudice if contact happens under optimal conditions, i.e., cooperation, common goals, authority support for positive intergroup relations, and equal status within the contact situation. The effectiveness of intergroup contact to reduce prejudice is well established, as Pettigrew and Tropp (2006, 953–954) empirically observed in their meta-analysis of 515 studies. However, the meta-analysis showed that optimal conditions are facilitating but not necessary for contact to reduce prejudice. To develop integration among cultural groups, it is essential to contact the groups directly with one another (Hewstone and Swart, 2011, 375–376). By direct contact, Allport meant 'face-to-face encounters' among the members of different groups to reduce

intergroup hostility. It is noteworthy that recent advancements in intergroup contact theory have underlined that contact needs to be experienced as positive to reduce prejudice because negative contact could instead increase prejudice (Barlow et al., 2012, 1629–1643). Also, recent research has suggested that despite contact opportunities segregation might persist and people might avoid intergroup encounters (Ramiah et al., 2015, 100–124).

Malinowski's cultural theory of needs and Allport's intergroup contact theory are significant to understand the Rohingya and host communities' interaction and integration in Bangladesh. Malinowski emphasized the role of host institutions' functions to regulate the basic needs, e.g., socioeconomic issues of the Rohingya people along with the cultural responses. Likewise, Allport stressed the contact among communities to reduce prejudice and misunderstanding (Tropp and Thomas, 2005). Positive contact between Rohingya and their host is essential to eradicate the prejudice and distance that persist between the communities. Both groups have different needs and cultural responses and the host community's dissatisfaction with Rohingyas has intensified due to the socioeconomic crisis and environmental disaster. Therefore, the precondition of the integration between the communities is to ensure equal socioeconomic and cultural practices along with positive contact. The cultural theory of needs and intergroup contact theory can help us to understand the Rohingya and host communities' interaction and foster positive integration between the communities to build an inclusive society.

Moreover, the 1951 Convention about the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol placed considerable significance on the integration of refugees and enumerated social and economic rights for the assistance of refugees. The European Union issued refugee integration policies based on the recommendations of the UNHCR by signing The European Parliament (1986). It emphasized the four significant policies including the free movement of people, services, goods, and capital to create a single European market albeit they limited the movement of individuals from the Third Country Nationals (TNCs). The Treaty of Amsterdam of the European Union (1997) set the policies for immigration and asylum and prioritized it as the first pillar. Article 63 of the treaty ensured policies of minimum standards for the grant or withdrawal of refugee status and protection (Sigona, 2005, 118–120). In addition, Robinson (1998) narrated the concept of integration as chaotic and vague since it results from the combination of several forces. Although integration is individualized, contested, and contextual, it's not only a matter of host society and refugees, rather it involves many actors, agencies, logics, and nationalities. He mentioned that among these actors, NGOs can play a major role in shaping the national discourse on integration and refugee policies by acting as lobbyists, advocate, and implementing agents (Zetter et al., 2002, 98–105). Overall, institutional,



organizational, and intergovernmental policies are needed to integrate refugees and build an inclusive society. In building an inclusive society with Rohingya and the host community in Bangladesh, national and international institutions and NGOs should coordinate with the Bangladeshi government to set policies. The theoretical frame of this study is given below (Figure 1).

Methodology

We conducted exploratory research to understand the socioeconomic and environmental changes in the Rohingya camp area. Several qualitative methods, such as the Case study and the Key Informant Interview (KII), were used by following the non-linear path and Grounded Theory (Punch, 1998, 123–126). The non-probability purposive sampling method was used to draw samples. The sample selection was performed according to the purpose of the study from the three main target groups, e.g., Rohingyas, the hosts, and the service providers. The service providers are the Refugee Relief and Repatriation Commissioner (RRRC) officers, Camp in Charge (CiC) officers, Non-Government Organization (NGO) officers, and the police. Samples were asymmetrically distributed; thirty (30) Cases were selected from the hosts, whereas twenty (20) Cases were collected from the Rohingyas. Furthermore, ten (10) KIIs were interviewed among the service providers, e.g., two RRRC officers, three CiC officers, three NGO representatives, and two police officers. These KIIs were significant in understanding the change inside the camp. A detailed distribution of the samples is shown in the Table 1.

Data were collected following the Case study protocol with a semi-structured interview schedule which is characterized by the flexibility of approach to questioning and does not follow a pre-determined system of questions. For the KIIs, the open-ended or non-structured interview schedule is used which allows greater

freedom to ask, in case of need, supplementary questions or omit certain questions. In Case studies and KIIs, male and female respondents aged 18 to 50 were included. In this study, we did not record the respondents' names and personal information because we were not interested in exposing respondents' identities for security reasons.

Furthermore, the study was conducted in the Ukhia Upazila Rohingya camp and the nearby area. Ukhia refugee camp is well-known for the registered refugee camps and the habitat of the highest number of Rohingyas. According to the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS, 2020, 8–11), around 300,000 hosts and 700,000 Rohingyas live in Ukhia. Data from Rohingyas were collected from camps 9 and 11, whereas the service providers' data were collected at the CiC office of camps 9 and 11. The hosts' data were collected from the West and East Balukhali villages in Palongkhali union (Grassroot administrative unit), the nearest area to the camp. Before conducting the study, the researcher repeatedly visited the study area along with the three research assistants trained in the study's methods and concepts. After formulating data collection instruments, the researcher and three research assistants collected the data in the first and second weeks of June 2021. Finally, the recorded data were transcribed and analyzed into words.

TABLE 1 Sampling distribution among the stakeholders.

Stakeholders	Sampling method	Sampling distribution
Host community	Case study	Interviewees 01–30
Rohingya people	Case study	Interviewees 31–50
RRRC	KII	Interviewees 01–02
CiC	KII	Interviewees 03–05
NGO	KII	Interviewees 06–08
Police	KII	Interviewees 09–10
Total samples	Cases (50) + KII (10)	60

Results

In this section, we illustrated the findings of socioeconomic and environmental issues that were collected from the Rohingya refugees, the host community, and Rohingya camp service providers. The findings are the local market instability, cultivable land decrease, stealing and robbery, criminal activity, and intergroup marriage. We also used secondary sources where it was required. Both empirical and nonempirical data are elucidated below.

Local market instability

The local people said that the local market turns out unstable after the Rohingyas' arrival. The local market sells daily greenery and necessary items such as rice, fish, vegetables, dry fish (Shutki), and firewood. The prices have increased five times in the area after inflow. Earlier host people bought several fish at lower prices, e.g., Catla carp fish, Rohu Carp fish, and Mrigal fish for 300–350 BDT or 4 dollars per kilogram, but now prices have increased to around 500–600 BDT or 7 dollars. Furthermore, expensive fish, e.g., Hilsa, Shrimp, and Pomfret, are doubled their prices (Alam, 2018, 7–10). The prices of beef, chicken, and regular meats have increased three times. The daily grocery items, e.g., milk powder, chili powder, sugar, salt and garlic, onion, and turmeric, are hiked as the population becomes doubled and supplies are limited. In this situation, hosts and Rohingyas have to spend more money to buy staples. Every household experience a rising cost of living. An additional one million Rohingya people have created intense pressure on the supply chain and prices (Filipski et al., 2020, 8–10). The price rise has affected ordinary Rohingyas and host locals, albeit traders and producers are benefited from the Rohingya's presence. Notedly, rice, pulse, soap, toothpaste, and cooking oil prices do not increase because Rohingyas sell these articles to the local market. The UNHCR and Humanitarian organizations distribute relief items, e.g., cereals, food grains, and other pieces of stuff that are sometimes in surplus (Khuda, 2020, 8–11). Therefore, they sell these extras to the local market, even though selling relief products is prohibited and illegal. Likewise, the regular price of one sack of rice in the market is around 3000–3500 BDT or 40 dollars, still, Rohingya people sell it for 1200–1500 taka or 17.5 dollars. Contrary, locals have no permission to sell relief products in their shops which they collect from the Rohingyas because the police, Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB), and military forbid them. Rohingyas agreed that prices of goods have increased in the market, and it is always unstable. They also added that at the beginning, there was pressure in the local market since Rohingyas bought their necessary articles from the local market. However, now they are under a relief scheme and they do not need to buy from the market except green

vegetables, fish, and meats. Hosts complained that they are not allowed to set up shops or any permanent settlements near Rohingya camps for security concerns albeit Rohingyas are allowed to build shops or infrastructure. They found it a discriminatory attitude of the security personnel to them. The research team noticed a "Rohingya market" beside the camp where Rohingyas are the buyers and sellers. They sell relief articles in the market. The language between Rohingya and locals is identical; therefore, it is hard to identify "who is Rohingya and who is the host." From the investigation, we found that different structures and shops set up by the Rohingya are illegal and do not have licenses. Even they do not pay taxes to the government since they do not bear any legal documents. The hosts argued that security forces and law enforcement agencies do not forbid them because they fear the international media and journalists.

Moreover, the hosts opined that the labor market seemed much more unstable in Cox's Bazar district. The wage of the local laborers has dropped in half after the inflow (50%) because Rohingyas sell cheap labor in the hosting area. They leave the camp silently to seek short-term jobs in nearby cities, e.g., Ukhia, Teknaf, and Cox's Bazar. A significant number of the hosts are day laborers and work in the agricultural field. After the government's requisition of land and hill for camps, poor local laborers have become workless. The camps covered 60% of the cultivable land of the hosts and 40% of hills and government-reserved forests (Brac, 2017, 25–26). Earlier, poor laborers worked in agricultural lands and forest hills to earn around 500 taka or 6 dollars daily. It has depressed by 50% since the land is squeezed, and Rohingyas sell labor cheaply. Rohingyas work in hotels, motels, restaurants, shops, vehicles, and boats in Cox's Bazar city and Saint Martin Island (200 Rohingyas Caught Fleeing Bangladeshi Camps by Boat, 2019, 3). Several Rohingya mobile vendors were seen on Cox's Bazar Sea beach and Saint Martin Island during data collection. They escaped from the camp, and they are not even listed. This situation impacts the local people's income and living. Poverty incidence during the post-influx period is recorded higher in Ukhia and Teknaf than the national average of 24% (Making Rohingya Settle Down, 2021, 4). In the pre-influx period, impoverished people worked, gardened, collected firewood from the forest, and cultivated their land. However, they have been compelled to leave all those income-generating works due to building makeshift in this area because camps occupied all lands and forest hills. A Rohingya leader (Interviewee 31) expressed his opinion about the Rohingyas' escape from the camp and seeking work outside the camp:

"It is impossible to work outside the camp as we are not allowed, which is strictly fostered by the military, Border Guard, Bangladesh (BGB), and police. It's also true that some people may work in the city by escaping from the camp, but it's complicated."

Cultivable land and Rohingya camp

The host people said that cultivable land and agricultural production curved in the host area after the influx since lands are acquired for camps, government buildings, and NGO offices. In the past, there were forests and hills where people collected wood and leave for fire. There were rivers where people caught fish and sold it in the market. Fishing was the primary income source for livelihood. Around 28% of employment came from fishing activities, e.g., shrimp cultivation, dry fish preparation, and hatching (Responding to the Rohingya Emergency in Bangladesh, 2020, 4–7). There was a ban on fishing from August 2017 after the influx, and around 30,000–35,000 fishermen became jobless, seriously affecting their annual income. The yearly income of the local fishermen was 40,000 taka to 90,000 taka (\$470–1058) but suddenly dropped due to the ban. Moreover, host families are poor, and they depend on the cultivation of rice. Rice is a prominent grain for food. Numerous families produced extra rice to sell in the market to maintain their family expenses. Some families were also engaged in banana gardening. They could survive on the income that came from the banana garden. Many locals bred domestic animals, e.g., chickens, cows, and goats, and grazed cows and goats on the field. By selling these animals, they would collect their livelihood. Now they are compelled to pull up these activities due to a shortage of land in the post-influx period. Host communities' former cultivable land is at present the Rohingya camp (Xchange, 2018, 35–37). A tremendous loss occurred for the poor daily laborers who worked in the field of others, cut paddies, and sold labor to the rich and landlords. Agriculture has completely shut around the camp area. Hills and fields have moved under the camp, and the host people have stopped farming and cultivating.

Many locals stated that there are some lands around the camp unusable due to contamination and pollution, particularly by human waste and camp trash. No multi-purpose drainage system surrounds the base, and the garbage, dirt, and debris directly come to the abandoned land. On average, 2–3 acres of land are covered by camp waste, although RRRC officers disagreed about the land size (Sattar, 2021, 1–3). Furthermore, some cultivable land was provided to Rohingyas when they first arrived and started living in the yard and bare space of the host people, which is later occupied for building the Rohingya camp. A crowd of hosts complained against Rohingyas for grabbing their land, though we couldn't collect concrete documents. We talked to government officials, and they informed us that many applications about the locals' land grabbing are still under analysis. An NGO officer (KII 6) refused this allegation against Rohingya and said:

“Rohingyas have no scope to occupy the land of others as they live in the camp. Of course, most of the camp is built on the land of host people, private and reserved forest, which Rohingyas echoed too.”

The researchers found that the CIC office is another stakeholder that captured the hosts' land to build offices. Government and NGO offices are set on the land of the host people. During the establishment, government officers committed to recruiting at least two members from every host family for the camp job. However, they did not keep their promise and did not recruit any members from the hosts. The locals informed that many agitated hosts attempted to break down the government offices to evacuate their land, but government officials requested them to wait. The CIC office did not ignore it and assured that they recruited several local people in the office, and the process continued. Even many NOGs appointed host people in their offices. We met up with some host males and females working inside the camp and they denied the help of the RRRC and CIC office.

Stealing and robbery

Multiple stakeholders reported that stealing and robbery have increased in the camp area in the post-inflow period. The CIC office and Rohingyas informed that some local and Rohingya youth get united to conduct this activity at night when there is not enough security inside the camp. Host and Rohingya youth committed many occurrences in Ukha and Teknaf Upazilas (Uttom and Rozario, 2019, 5–6). Police and RRRC officers also echoed the same as they recorded several stealing and robbery cases whereas both Rohingya and locals were accused. Hosts stated that they frequently notice the occurrence of stealing mobile phones, household accessories, cows, goats, and chickens. Earlier, people grazed cows, buffalos, and goats on barren land at large, while currently, they have to continuously check whether it gets missed or someone takes them away. Rohingyas rejected the complaints against them and said they have no scope to steal animals from locals as they remain inside the camp albeit the CIC admitted that they have received a couple of complaints against Rohingyas. Multiple sources reported to the researchers that some Rohingya youth and children are used to stealing domestic animals and materials from the local people. It does not happen every day; only a small portion of Rohingyas may be involved in this activity.

The police reported that in recent years, some events of robberies took place in many villages, albeit the perpetrators were not identified. Local people said that the host and Rohingya youth might involve in robberies since Rohingyas and locals gradually get intimidated. The locals reiterated that some Rohingyas often visit the local houses and ask for multiple help and food, e.g., curries, vegetables, and dry foods, to locate the position of household items to steal in their flexible time. Hosts supposed that a few Rohingya women typically conduct these acts as they can visit the host family in the daytime. Sometimes the thief runs inside the camp and

disappears. Once someone gets into the base, it is not possible to trace them anymore. Beyond that, there is no punishment for this offense and the CIC and other authorities are reluctant about the issue. However, the Rohingya people ignored the accusation and also agreed that some might be involved in these activities with the local people. Hence, credit primarily goes to the host people. Both the communities requested the CIC, RRRC, and other authorities to be more active during the night and act against the perpetrators.

Criminal activity and social unrest

The host people confirmed that there is an increase in criminal activity compared to the past, mainly due to the presence of Rohingya criminals and extremist groups. Local people live in fear and panic as several Rohingya rival groups are involved in conflict with one another inside or outside the camp. The RRRC and security forces are also concerned as fractions among the rival Rohingya groups have increased. A police inspector (KII 9) stated:

“Rohingya criminal and extremist groups become active in the evening after office work. In the meantime, they committed several deadly incidents among themselves.”

He also asserted that extremist groups move inside and outside the camp near the hosts to create panic among the mass refugees and hosts. Rohingya people reported that if someone goes against the interest of extremist groups, they forcibly take them away and punish them according to their Islamic rules. At least ten extremist groups, e.g., Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA), Rohingya Solidarity Organization (RSO), Master Munna Gang (MMG), Islami Mahaj, Nabi Hussain Dacoit Gang (NHDG), and Pakistani Taliban (TTP), are actively operating inside and outside the camp (Rohingya Militants Active in Bangladeshi Refugee Camps, 2019, 3–4). Rohingya and hosts are panicked by the behavior of the criminal groups. A host (Interviewee 4) narrated the situation: “Whenever we stay outside the home for work, we become worried about our families as the houses surround Rohingya camps.” He also argued that it might not be true that all Rohingyas are involved in illegal activity and make mischief to the hosts’ families and property. However, criminality in this area has increased dramatically during the post-migration of Rohingyas. The conflict between locals and Rohingya has also increased. Sometimes disputes and contentions take place for a simple cause. Many conflicts occurred between two ethnic groups to cause “hassle” among children. A CIC officer (KII 3) said: “Tension has increased between Rohingya and Host, and they set forth intolerant.” The host people stated that Rohingyas are united and camp administration sometimes works in favor of migrants.

Refugees and hosts agreed that another serious crime that takes place in the camp and hosts’ area is the drug business. Most of the conflicts are because of this drug. Hosts illustrated that drug is a gigantic and profitable business in Ukhia and Teknaf Upazila. The dealers are both Host and Rohingya. Hosts and Rohingya youth are getting involved in different criminal activities and hiding in the camp. A host (Interviewee 10) stated:

“A few months ago, security forces rescued million dollars of gold from the camp earned by robbery from different areas of Bangladesh.”

He also said that locals use Rohingyas as a medium to traffic drugs, especially the “Yaba tablets” from Myanmar. Both Rohingya men and women are involved in transferring drugs from Myanmar to Bangladesh and supplying them to different areas of Bangladesh. It is said that Rohingya women can perform better than men in dealing drugs and Yaba. Some innocent Rohingya women do this job for money and security. The study found that locals and Rohingyas work together in Yaba and the drug trades. Even many Bengali youths are involved in emotional relations with Rohingya women and girls, abducting and forcing them into prostitution. Rohingya girls are trafficked to Cox’s Bazar city hotels, motels, and cottages in the beach area. Some local people get married to Rohingya girls and collect “Birth certificates” and “Passports” to exit Bangladesh to go abroad together. An RRRC officer (KII 1) said: “We investigated some cases of Rohingya trafficking while arresting many culprits.” while an NGO worker (KII 7) mentioned: “Rohingyas and locals formed a secret team to traffic women. Sometimes, Rohingya woman agrees to go abroad for a better life.” Bangladeshi security forces identified several cases of entering fake marriages by Bengali people with Rohingya girls so that collection of documents from government offices becomes easier. However, intercultural marriage is not a regular issue and the chances are not so high. A Rohingya man (Interviewee 35) living in the camp agreed and narrated: “Criminal activity, drug business, and intra-group conflict increased inside the camp.” But he ignored the involvement of women and girls in drugs and prostitution.

Local youth and intergroup marriage

The host people informed that they notice a behavioral change in youths in the post-influx period. They believed that it happens due to the breakdown of the social system and decaying morality among youths. Host youths are busy after the inflow as an alternative income source is created for businesses, e.g., supplying gas cylinders and installing shops. Similarly, some youths are engaged in illegal drug businesses, e.g., selling Yaba tablets. Myanmar-originated Yaba is not new for Bangladeshi people, but its availability and accessibility have

increased whilst Rohingya people started to import it. Host youths take this chance and become drug dealers and users (Crimes on the Rise in Cox's Bazar Camps, 2018, 4). Different agencies in the camp area ensured us that the supply of Yaba tablets has increased during the post-influx period, and many Rohingya gangs are involved in this business. Host youths also get involved in this business by making friends with Rohingya gangs and using drugs. Locals stay inside the camp while taking drugs. Local and Rohingya youths supply Yaba tablets to host people. Local senior citizens (Interviewee 15) said: "90% of the youth have become schizophrenic or crazy in getting drugs and Rohingya women. They left their long-cherished culture and tradition."

They also argued that some even get involved in trafficking drugs to big cities, e.g., Dhaka and Chittagong. An intracultural change takes place among the youth in the host area, and local parents and seniors cannot accept it. Many host people (Interviewees 17 & 18) mentioned: "They (the youth) do not follow the rules, regulations, customs of society nowadays though they were obedient before Rohingya arrivals." A portion of host people believed that youths get attracted to young Rohingya girls in many ways, and are involved in sexual activities and marriage. An NGO worker (KII 8) said: "From the beginning, I have been working in the camp, and I did not find any case like this, though I heard about it." The local police said that there are many cases recorded, and it is due to the exchange between the ethnic communities.

Ahmed (2019, 12–15) said that many outsiders come into camps and get married to Rohingya women, and take them away to Chittagong and Dhaka. Later they forcibly get involved in prostitution. Sometimes host people get into marriage with Rohingya women. Local people informed that many marriages were accomplished secretly between the communities. Some previously married locals get married to Rohingya women again because it is effortless and does not need any document or government registration. Local people believed that Rohingya-Bengali marriage may intensify in the future if protective measures are not taken. The host admitted that marriage between the ethnic groups creates a disturbance, instability, and domestic violence in host and Rohingya families. Sometimes, many married men divorce their wives because of Rohingya women and girls. Some Rohingya women conduct sexual activities for money and sometimes get married to foreigners and even migrate to developed countries. Host people sometimes mediate between outsiders and Rohingyas to traffic Rohingya women seeking migration. In such a way, several Rohingya women were trafficked from the camp and sold abroad (Ahmed, 2019, 12–15). All these situations have impacted the host and Rohingya families.

Host and Rohingya people anxiously appealed to the government and security forces to handle the drug dealers. They thought that the government should investigate and stop criminal activities. The unemployed Rohingya youth bring drugs from Myanmar and sell them to the camps and host area. On the

other hand, many jobless young hosts get involved in the drug business and marry Rohingya women who are tempted by money and resources. If this turpitude runs, the innocent host and Rohingya will suffer in the long run. A local (Interviewee 20) reported:

"A married host with two children involved in a relationship with a Rohingya woman and married her without the permission of his first wife. His family had huge domestic violence, and now he has to maintain both wives."

Most of the Rohingya people did not agree with the arguments of the locals about the Rohingya women's involvement in prostitution and seduction. In their view, if this occurs, the ratio is abysmal. Rohingya people cannot go outside the camps without the permission of the government office. Furthermore, there might have been some cases of marriage between the host and Rohingya, and it's exclusively by choice of individuals, not the community sentiments.

Life in the camp and its impact on the environment

The Host people said that the Rohingya camp plays a significant role in the life of the people in this area. The regular movement has become restricted for both Rohingyas and hosts, and no one can move freely. Individuals of both communities have mandatorily to bear identity cards during their stay outside. This situation creates discomfort in the local community. Both communities severely suffered from different issues, whilst psychological misery is beyond imagination. The overall situation has become a social, economic, cultural, and psychological pressure for the hosts and Rohingyas (Gebrehiwet et al., 2020, 3–5). In the post-inflow period, local people have experienced several accidents and deaths, which is the highest in the last 15 years. Roads are damaged for running big trucks and lorries to carry food and materials for the Rohingyas. Rohingya people drive different wheelers and cars to transfer materials and goods.

There are also major environmental issues as nature has lost its balance due to deforestation, pollution, and population density. The temperature has increased in the camp area compared to the nearest Upazilas. Hosts and Rohingyas face tremendous heat and climatic change around the camp area (Rahman, 2018, 113–125). Dust covers the whole area during summer, resulting in different respiratory diseases among locals and Rohingyas. Loss of biodiversity, forestland, and endangered wildlife are consequences of deforestation and pollution. A local (Interviewee 21) said:

"A thousand acres of forestland cleared for refugee camps. Every year the Rohingya and hosts people suffer and die

because of landslides, floods, and cyclones.” A CIC officer (KII 4) explained: “In the last three years, around 50-60 events of monsoon-triggered landslides, floods, and cyclones took place in the camp where more than 20 Rohingyas died.”

The hosts opined that local people have lost their nature-based resources and livelihood due to deforestation and forestland clearance. An RRRC officer informed us that the development agencies are implementing several projects for rapid forestation and alternative cooking technologies such as LPG Cylinders, Cookstoves, Biomass briquettes, and biogas. Groundwater shortage is a vital problem for the people, although it was not severe before the influx. Thousands of swallow tube wells have been set up in the area at different slopes in the camp, resulting in excessive water withdrawal from the shallow aquifer and drying up the groundwater. In the meantime, many tube wells have already dried up and pondered the groundwater crisis. The crisis becomes deep during the summer and winter seasons. The water service providers are examining the possibility of a deep-water level; of course, it has no green signal yet (Department of Environment, 2019, 55–62). Simultaneously, groundwater contamination is a significant concern to the experts in this area of the cause of leakage, seepage, and overflow. Thousands of non-functional latrines and tube wells contaminate water. The experts of the Environmental Department of Bangladesh examined that 70% of the groundwater in the camp area is polluted. Groundwater depletion and contamination are the critical impacts of the Rohingya influx (DoE 201 55-62). Many hosts and Rohingya people mentioned that the water level got down and numerous tube wells are dysfunctional. A Rohingya woman (Interviewee 36) said:

“We must bring water from a half kilometer away as all the tube wells around our house are unused and non-functional.”

Both Rohingya and hosts reported that surface water is also contaminated in the camp area. Ponds and small-scale streams are the sources of surface freshwater in this area. The authorities cannot manage the huge water demands of the Rohingya and host people. Both communities contaminate surface water through open defecation on the banks of ponds and streams. The sedimentation deposited in the stream is also the reason for the deteriorating water quality and surface water contamination. Furthermore, poor waste management in the camp area is affecting the environment. This area has no unified solid and liquid waste management and drainage system. Therefore, wastes are drained to the hosts’ surface water and maiden land. The main waste materials that pollute the environment are polythene, kitchen garbage, food packaging materials, batteries, and plastic bottles, contributing to climate change. Due to a shortage of firewood, numerous families use plastic as cooking fuel, damaging the environment. A Rohingya man was collecting

plastic bottles to use for cooking. A host woman was also gathering firewood from the camp area for cooking. Likewise, the experts said that the landslide is a dangerous and potentially severe natural threat to the host and Rohingya. Due to cutting hills for building makeshift, the terrain lost its natural setting, and the vegetation cover of the landscape has already been removed. Weak soil structure contributes to erosion, and topsoil and other loose soils are highly susceptible to being blown away in the rainy season and stormy winds. Erosion has already blocked the passage, and hilly streams and risky hill-cutting may cause landslides in the camp at any time. In the rainy season, soil’s minerals are drawn away and kept into the mud, which is the cause of slides in the camp area (DoE 201 65-70).

Moreover, the impact on the forest and environment is immense. Around 60% of the forest land was chopped for making makeshifts, and the rest was also deforested due to the firewood collection (Imtiaz, 2018, 10–15). The monthly firewood demand for a single Rohingya family is 151 kg, while the mean family size is around 7. The total monthly requirement of firewood collected by Rohingya from the nearest forest is 6,800 tons. The host people also consume similar firewood from the forest. Around 90 percent of forest land will be cleared within a 10 km buffer zone if firewood is collected at the current rate in 31 months. Moreover, Asian Elephants are becoming critically endangered due to this influx. According to the International Union for Conservation of Nature (The International Union for Conservation of Nature-IUCN, 2020, 38–41), 40 elephants have been trapped on the west side of the Rohingya camp near the Myanmar border. Furthermore, the impact on the ecosystem is immeasurable, especially on wildlife, vegetation, marine, and freshwater ecosystems.

Discussion and conclusion

The findings of the paper predominantly illustrated the socioeconomic and environmental changes in the camp area after the inflow. These changes have affected both communities whilst they also face several unwanted inconveniences, e.g., drugs, crimes, and extremist activities inside and outside the camp. The socioeconomic (basic needs) and cultural changes in the host area have impacted the host community’s contact with the Rohingyas. Overall, the presence of refugees generates positive and negative changes worldwide and Bangladesh is no exception. National and world communities have a consensus that the arrival of Rohingya refugees has strained the limited natural resources, local infrastructure, public services, local economy, and mass movements. Instead, it would be imprecise to state that refugee insertion is synonymous with the negative development of the host area. Rather we argue that the inefficacy of the state mechanism to deliver services, inadequate attention to the host people, extensive refugee-centric policies, discriminatory access to humanitarian reliefs,

and uncertainty about the future are considered a barrier to lagging behind the host area and the increase of resentment among the hosts. These points are also considered barriers to the inclusive relationship between Rohingya and their hosts. Refugee and host relations become jeopardized if the host's demand is overlooked or inadequately addressed by national and international agencies. To avoid making Rohingyas a scapegoat for the hosts' rising tensions and by considering the overlong refugee crisis, we would like to suggest initiating comprehensive, integrated, and all-inclusive humanitarian and development policies that will incorporate both communities. The policymakers should follow Malinowski's Cultural theory of needs which emphasised the basic biological, social, and psychological needs of individuals. Rohingya and locals should have indiscriminate biological, social, and psychological freedom with cultural openness. The cultural responses to the basic socioeconomic needs can create a new condition that may change both communities' behavior for integration. Moreover, policymakers should also follow Allport's intergroup contact theory implications to reduce prejudice and misunderstanding between Rohingya and the host community. Regular cultural exchange and contact can create cohesion, tolerance, and trust that can contribute to the integration and inclusivity between the communities. Apart from the theories, policy should be formulated by considering the Refugee Convention of 1951 which ensured the socio-economic and cultural rights of the refugees and believed that socio-economic assistance is the gateway to integration and inclusivity. We should also take into account the European Union policies of refugee integration. The EU policies secured the free movement of individuals of their members. Through the Amsterdam Treaty, the EU prioritized refugee immigration and asylum as their first pillar and corroborated refugee integration and protection. Furthermore, development agencies especially NGOs should play their role to set policies in the host country Bangladesh. Overall, integrated policies regarding relief and development programs in Bangladesh may contribute to releasing tension and building an intimate relationship between the Rohingya and the host community. Well-executed policies can guarantee socioeconomic and environmental sustainability and durable humanitarian assistance in Bangladesh that can contribute to building an inclusive society.

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Data availability statement

The original contributions presented in the study are included in the article/supplementary material, further inquiries can be directed to the corresponding authors.

Ethics statement

The studies involving human participants were reviewed and approved by Professor Dr. Abdullah Al Faruque, University of Chittagong Ethics Committee, Bangladesh. The patients/participants "Rohingya refugees" were provided written informed consent by the main investigator MM to participate in this study. In addition, the data were collected respecting the GDPR rules (<https://gdpr-info.eu/>) and stored accordingly.

Author contributions

All authors listed have made a substantial, direct, and intellectual contribution to the work and approved it for publication.

Conflict of interest

The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

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Achieving the SDGs through cultural tourism: evidence from practice in the TExTOUR project

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Tourism has become an important engine for development, especially in more remote areas. The potential of cultural tourism for sustainable tourism developing was explored in the H2020 funded TExTOUR project. A total of eight territories developed action plans based on their local heritage for sustainable tourism development. This article situates the actions created through the participatory TExTOUR approach are framed within larger global initiatives, to the Sustainable Development Agenda and the UNWTO pillars of the International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development, to show how TExTOUR has contributed to sustainable development through the means of cultural tourism. The results of this article show that local communities can contribute to global goals through cultural tourism strategies. In particular, these areas show that cultural tourism can support, safeguard and enhance heritage and promote positive economic growth through job creation.

KEYWORDS

cultural tourism, SDGs, sustainability, remote areas, participation

Introduction

Remote areas have often been seen as lagging behind urban areas in terms of creativity and innovative thinking (Bell and Jayne, 2010; Labianca and Navarro Valverde, 2019). At the same time, the appeal of intact and traditional cultural elements in more remote areas offers great opportunities for sustainable tourism development. This creates great opportunities but demands that the development takes into account all aspects of sustainability to ensure that this development is not based on profit-making over people. The original idea of cultural tourism underlines an approach to tourism that takes into account the place and the needs of the local people (Solima and Minguzzi, 2014). The World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO), defines cultural tourism as a type of tourism activity in which the visitor's main motivation is to learn about, discover, experience, and consume the tangible and intangible cultural attractions of a destination (UNWTO, 2017). Cultural tourism is now one of the largest and fastest-growing global tourism markets today, accounting for an estimated 39% of all general tourism activities (OECD, 2009; European Commission, 2019). Culture is an invaluable aspect of sustainability. In particular, recent literature considers it to be one of the fundamental pillars on which sustainable development should be based together with the economic, environmental and social pillars (Nurse, 2006; Dessein et al., 2015). The

interdependence between culture and sustainable development was acknowledged by the UN in 2015, when culture was recognised as an important aspect of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In the same year, tourism was added to three of the SDGs: SDG 8 (Decent work and economic growth), 12 (Responsible consumption and production) and 14 (Life below water) (UNTWO, 2015; McLoughlin et al., 2018). These were decisive factors in highlighting the significance of culture in tourism, as well as a key to promoting a sustainable approach to the development of cultural tourism.

This paper explores how local communities, working with a participatory methodology, can contribute to global sustainable goals through the implementation of sustainable, inclusive, and innovative cultural tourism strategies.

The outcome of this paper builds upon ongoing work in eight case studies, functioning as pilot areas in the H2020-funded TExTOUR project¹ (Social Innovation and TEchnologies for sustainable growth through participative cultural TOURism). The aim of the project is to create a framework to help remote and isolated regions develop sustainable, innovative, and smart cultural tourism through the use of a bottom-up, participatory methodology. The methodology was co-developed and implemented together with the local communities in eight pilot areas in eight countries across Europe and two beyond the borders of the European Union: Italy, Germany, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Portugal, Spain, Ukraine, Poland, Estonia, Cyprus and Lebanon. While the pilots are geographically diverse, they also come from different cultural, religious and linguistic backgrounds.

The overall objective of this study is to contribute to exploring how the TExTOUR participatory methodology has contributed to sustainable cultural tourism development. The actions developed within the participatory TExTOUR approach are framed within larger global initiatives linking them with the Agenda for Sustainable Development and UNWTO's Pillars, to show how TExTOUR has contributed to sustainable cultural tourism development.

How can tourism contribute to sustainability?

According to Richards and Hall (Richards et al., 2000), achieving sustainability in tourism involves the continuous improvement of the social, cultural, and economic wellbeing of communities, all of which must be seamlessly integrated with environmental stewardship. Therefore, addressing the needs of

local people is essential for cultural tourism to be sustainable. Engaging in participatory processes serves as the primary approach to gathering and collaboratively developing initiatives with the community. In remote contexts, participatory processes have been increasingly explored in recent decades. The importance of community participation in rural development has long been well-documented and researched. Researchers such as Uphoff (de Luca et al., 2020; Uphoff, 2020) argue that the active involvement of rural communities in decision-making processes and development initiatives leads to more sustainable and effective outcomes in remote areas. Berkes (Berkes, 2009; Westley, 2010) discusses how involving local communities in natural resources management can promote sustainable practices and biodiversity conservation. Von Haarena et al., suggest that any interventions should be carried out through discussions with landowners (von Haaren et al., 2014), informing and influencing local policy (Valencia-Sandoval et al., 2010). Participation in remote areas is seen as a means of empowering communities, improving the effectiveness of development initiatives, and addressing the unique challenges faced by isolated populations. Research in this area often highlights the importance of context-specific approaches that take into account the social, cultural, economic, and environmental characteristics of remote regions (de Vente et al., 2016).

As stated by Albornoz-Mendoza and Mainar-Causapé (2018), it is imperative that stakeholders understand and adhere to the principles of sustainable tourism in order to safeguard authentic tourist destinations for future generations. This means not only involving stakeholders in participatory processes but also ensuring their awareness of and dedication to the sustainability objectives of these processes. Facilitating a shared understanding of sustainability principles among the various stakeholders within the tourism industry is of paramount importance for advancing responsible and sustainable tourism practices. It is now widely recognised that the involvement of coherent segments of local communities and stakeholders in the planning of sustainable tourism has become essential for the promotion of sustainable development, especially in European projects such as the one examined in this study (Cole, 2006; Jukić et al., 2019).

Despite the long-standing presence of collaboration and participation in the tourism discourse (Bramwell and Lane, 2000), putting collaborative principles into practice has always posed challenges, as it is a time-consuming activity and involves managing different perspectives (Mustapha and Azman, 2013). In addition, participatory methods may require additional resources, the power imbalance between stakeholders may hinder open and honest participation, there may be different levels of knowledge and expertise, and stakeholders may be resistant to change (Mubita et al., 2017). Furthermore, effective communication is critical and consensus on design decisions can be difficult to achieve (Cargo and Mercer,

¹ This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No. 101004687.

2008). Finally, the scalability of participation on a large scale can present logistical challenges (Leurs, 1996).

Community participation is highly recommended and now considered essential to ensure that the benefits of tourism are aligned with the needs of the host communities and to promote and acceptance of tourism development (Cole, 2006). The ultimate aim of a participatory approach is to balance the power dynamics between all parties involved and to create a mutually beneficial situation for all people affected by tourism development (Ozcevik et al., 2010). The implementation of participatory models in the tourism sector is important for advancing the Agenda 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals. These goals specifically address sustainable consumption and production, inclusive and sustainable growth, sustainable cities, and communities, and the responsible use of marine resources.

Critically enough, the concept of sustainability within the tourism industry has often been criticised as vague (Sharpley, 2000; Mundt, 2011) and the means to understand and measure the potential sustainability of cultural tourism are varied (Cottrell et al., 2004; Ko, 2005).

The literature highlights the role that tourism can play in sustainable development. Drawing on a range of academic perspectives, this analysis highlights the multifaceted nature of tourism's contributions to economic, environmental, and socio-cultural sustainability. First, tourism can act as a catalyst for economic growth (Richards et al., 2000). Income generated by tourism activities can be reinvested in the local economy thereby promoting long-term economic stability and growth (WTO, 2004). Second, tourism revenues often support the conservation and preservation of natural and cultural assets (Gössling, 2006). Funds from tourism can be used to maintain a range of such as national parks, wildlife sanctuaries, and heritage sites, thereby facilitating the long-term protection of resources. Subsequently, cultural exchange through tourism promotes intercultural understanding and appreciation (Dahles and Bras, 1999). Responsible tourism practices promote the preservation of local traditions, languages, and customs, thereby safeguarding cultural diversity (Baltà Portolés, 2022).

On the side of community empowerment, sustainable tourism prioritizes community involvement and benefits (Buckley, 2012). By engaging local communities in decision-making processes and ensuring they share in tourism-related benefits, empowerment is achieved (Mowforth and Munt, 2016). Moreover, sustainable tourism practices encompass a range of measures aimed at reducing the environmental impact of tourism (Richards et al., 2000). These measures include responsible wildlife viewing, waste reduction, energy-efficient infrastructure, and eco-friendly transportation options (UNEP, 2022). Additionally, tourism provides educational opportunities that enhance awareness about conservation and cultural heritage (Macleod et al., 2010). Tourists gain a deeper understanding of

local ecosystems and cultures through guided tours, interpretive centres, and immersive experiences. Tourism can encourage responsible travel behaviours, including respect for local customs and the minimization of waste (Andereck and Nyaupane, 2011). Supporting businesses that prioritize sustainability is promoted as a means to minimize negative impacts. In addition, to cater to tourists, destinations often invest in improved infrastructure (Papatheodorou, 2021). This includes upgraded transportation networks, sanitation facilities, and healthcare services, benefiting both residents and visitors. Furthermore, tourism can provide an alternative income source for communities previously engaged in unsustainable practices (Bushell and Eagles, 2007). This shift reduces pressure on vulnerable ecosystems, fostering long-term environmental stability. Similarly, the pursuit of sustainable tourism drives the development and adoption of innovative technologies and practices (Buckley, 2012). Eco-friendly accommodations, green transportation options, and waste-reduction strategies exemplify this trend. Finally, on the governance side, Tourism can support the work of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) dedicated to environmental and cultural conservation (Cowie and Ison, 2017). Tourists may contribute financially or volunteer their time to support these organizations during their travels and governments and international bodies can establish regulatory frameworks and certification systems to promote sustainable tourism practices (WTO, 2004). These frameworks include eco-labels for accommodations and comprehensive protected area management plans. Conversely to all said so far, it is not to be forgotten how the literature highlights how tourism can also be the root of unsustainable development if not correctly address (Tosun, 1998; Lerpold et al., 2021; Barakazi, 2023).

Consequently, this article aspires to explore the specific role of cultural tourism and how it can contribute to a more globally sustainable world.

Conceptual framework

Sustainable development is defined by the UN as a development that “meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations” (United Nations General Assembly, 1987). At the core of sustainability lies the harmonization between economic growth, social inclusion, and environmental and cultural protection.

Sustainable development is a socio-economic and environmental paradigm that represents an ongoing, deliberate, and interconnected endeavour to achieve a harmonious coexistence between human societies, their economic and cultural activities, and the natural world. It recognizes the intrinsic linkages between economic growth, social equity, cultural thriving, and ecological stability, aiming to foster an enduring equilibrium among these dimensions.

Building on this complex idea, the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) launched a framework of common goals across the globe. The SDG agenda has shaped a shared understanding of sustainability that both functions as guidance for development as well as a measure to evaluate existing schemes.

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are a set of 17 global goals established by the United Nations in 2015 as part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. These goals are designed to address a wide range of social, economic, and environmental challenges facing the world and provide a shared blueprint for a more sustainable and equitable future. Each goal is accompanied by specific targets, typically 8–12 targets, and indicators to measure progress. The targets are either outcome targets (circumstances to be attained) or means of implementation targets.

These global goals are characterized by their universality, applying to all nations regardless of their income level, and their recognition of the interdependence of various development aspects. This interconnectivity is underscored in academic literature, which emphasizes the need to address economic, social, and environmental challenges in an integrated manner to achieve sustainable outcomes (Le Blanc, 2015; Nilsson et al., 2016).

The time-bound nature of the SDGs, with a target date of 2030, is consistent with the urgency underscored in academic research regarding pressing global challenges, including poverty (Alkire et al., 2013), inequality (Milanovic, 2016), climate change (Pachauri and Meyer, 2014), and biodiversity loss (IPBES, 2019).

Furthermore, the multi-stakeholder approach inherent in the SDGs aligns with academic discussions on the importance of partnerships and shared responsibility among governments, civil society, businesses, and academia in achieving sustainable development (Kanie and Biermann, 2017; Bäckstrand and Lövbrand, 2019).

From a tourism perspective, the UN's World Tourism Organisation (UNTWO) launched its guidance to establish a more sustainable approach to tourism. The UNTWO lists five Pillars of sustainable tourism that are all considered interlinked with a set of SDGs (UNWTO, 2018). By achieving these Pillars local territories are ensuring sustainable tourism as well as contributing to a more sustainable development globally, i.e., through the SDGs. The pillars provide a framework for promoting responsible and sustainable tourism practices globally.

Through each Pillar, UNTWO suggests and identifies areas for action and offers specific recommendations for governments, businesses, and individuals. UNWTO list the Pillars of sustainable tourism are the following:

- Pillar 1: Sustainable economic growth
- Pillar 2: Social inclusiveness, employment, and poverty reduction
- Pillar 3: Resource efficiency, environmental protection, and climate change
- Pillar 4: Cultural values, diversity, and heritage
- Pillar 5: Mutual understanding, peace, and security

At an EU level, funding has been launched in the last years under the umbrella of H2020 and Horizon Europe to better support sustainable tourism development, one of these was granted to the TExTOUR project. TExTOUR aims at co-designing pioneering and sustainable cultural tourism strategies to improve deprived areas in Europe and beyond.

Building on the development of a participatory methodology, the TExTOUR project aspires to produce replicable guidance for sustainable tourism development. The method that was developed within the project consists of a series of steps where the pilot areas co-plan and co-develop with their stakeholders and local communities a series of actions for sustainable tourism development in their areas. The progressive steps constituting the methodology include four workshops focusing on 1) the definitions of the goals and the values that are considered important for the development of sustainable tourism in the pilot area, 2) the co-creation of actions that will provide innovative sustainable tourism activities for the areas, 3) the development of a Business Model Canvas, adjusted to include reflections on sustainability, inclusion and technological and social innovation and 4) finally a workshop to define the KPIs and the target that the actions will have to achieve within a certain time-frame to assess and monitor their development. Within these workshops, the eight pilot areas developed several sustainable cultural tourism related actions each. In total, there were 24 actions created and developed. Those actions include ideas as heritage related routes, traditional culinary schools, vademecum for citizens and tourists, creative workshops for immigrants, artistic events, Protected Designation of Origin for local products, digitalization of heritage resources, and art residencies, among the others. This paper can contribute to the conversation on how cultural tourism can support the achievement of the SDGs, and the five pillars promoted during the International Year of Sustainable Tourism.

Materials and methods

Case study application

Firstly, a short presentation of the different pilots' characteristic may provide a clearer insight about the diversity of the contexts into which the co-development of the sustainable cultural tourism development actions happened. The first pilot, Crespi d'Adda in Italy is an industrial heritage site located in a peripheral area. Crespi d'Adda is a genuine, ideal and picturesque village, built by the Crespi Family in the 1800s and 1900s for the employees (and their families) of the textile factory that stands

right next to the village. Crespi d'Adda—described as an “exceptional example of the company town phenomenon, the most complete and best-preserved in Southern Europe”—received a spot on the UNESCO World Heritage List in 1995. The village is the perfect model of an architectural complex that illustrates a rather significant historical period: that of the birth of Italy's modern industry.

The second pilot, Narva, Estonia, refers again to a former industrial heritage site but it is located in an urban area and it faces the difficulties of a cross-border area with Russia. Narva pilot-case focuses on the post-industrial Kreenholm district, and includes also its socio-cultural and economic effects on the city and cross-border scale. Narva Kreenholm is a remarkable textile industry complex from mid-19th century, which did grow significantly during Soviet regime. The collapse of Soviet Union and global shift of textile industries generated large share of vacant spaces of Kreenholm district (about 30 ha), which is extensively part of high-value cultural heritage.

The third pilot, Umgebindeband, is a region across the borders of Germany, Poland and Czech Republic. The cross-border cultural landscape has historically developed in the late Middle Ages and was also characterized by modern industrialization represents a connecting element between the regions.

The fourth pilot represents as well the cross-border challenges as it focuses on the Ukrainian part of the Via Regia which is the oldest and longest road link between the East and the West of Europe connecting eight countries from Russia and Ukraine in the East to the Atlantic coast in the West.

The international and cross-border dimension, and its relation to the co-existence of different cultures and presence of religion, cultural or ethnic minorities, is yet at the core of the fifth pilot, Trebinje in Bosnia-Herzegovina. The city is a border city in Bosnia-Herzegovina, placed on less than 35 km from Dubrovnik (Croatia) and 80 km from Kotor (Montenegro).

The sixth pilot are the historic silver and lead post-mining facilities in Tarnowskie Góry in the Upper Silesia Region of Poland. Cultural tourism in Tarnowskie Góry and in Upper Silesia is promoted on the basis of post-industrial heritage, diversity of historical and cultural landscapes (heaps, post-mining water bodies, mine towers, etc.) and architecture, as well as regional traditions referring to mining customs (uniforms, rituals, dialect).

The seventh pilot is a cross-border area situated between north of Portugal and Spain based on archeological sites (pre-historic and historic sites) in the Côa Valley (Portugal) and Siega Verde (Spain).

The last pilot documents the cooperation of Anfeh (Lebanon) and Fikardou (Cyprus) through TExTOUR project, aiming at adjusting cultural tourism through the use of modern technologies in a way that improves its contribution to the maintenance and development of places and surroundings in both villages.

Secondly, a description of the participatory methodology that was undertaken by the pilots can provide a clearer context of the model used to co-create the actions that will be discussed in this paper. The TExTOUR methodology comprises of five steps that were undertaken by the pilots with their stakeholders and supported by the technical partners in the EU project. The first step required the participants to map the cultural heritage assets existing in their areas, providing an assessment of the level of under or over exploitations of them. The second activity requested the stakeholders and local communities to co-create a number of ideas of cultural tourism actions that could be applied in their context. With actions are intended any activities, processes, services, and products that enable the sustainable development of cultural tourism and that are co-created and co-implemented by stakeholders and local communities. The third step of the TExTOUR co-creative methodology implied the consult by the technical partners to the pilots to shortlist the number of actions created in the second workshop to make sure to remain only with actions that would be valid in terms of economic feasibility, partnerships created, environmental, social and cultural sustainability, and social and technological innovation. Once the actions were shortlisted they underwent the third step which related with the breakdown and analysis of the different aspects of them to confirm their feasibility, this was made with the use of a Business Model Canvas (BMC) appositely adapted for the project which provided, beyond the usual steps of a traditional BMC inputs related to sustainability, impact and social and technological innovation. As the actions completed this process, they entered the last step of the process which was related the selection of consistent KPIs and targets for them to ensure the possibility to monitor their advancements in the co-implementing phase. This process was applied uniformly in each of the pilots undertaking this initiative, although, as mentioned before, the pilots where very different among them both in terms of context and cultural heritage conditions and in terms of the initiators of such activities.

The actions created at the end of such participatory process were included in a set of strategic documents, as explained more in detail below, one for each pilot, which addressed a holistic vision for the territories and their development and resulted from the participatory process to develop sustainable, inclusive and innovative cultural tourism actions.

Research model

The actions coming from the pilot areas have been studied in relation to the Sustainable Development Goals and also to the Five Pillars promoted during the International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development. [Figure 1](#) gives a visual insight into the research flow. The decision to match the actions from the project with the SDGs and the Five Pillars builds on the idea to explore how collaborative-led actions can possibly be related to these and can foster reaching the goals and the pillars.



The research uses three data sets: the 24 TExTOUR actions (de Luca et al., 2022), the 169 targets of Sustainable Development found within the 17 SDGs (UN, 2015), and the Five Pillars as promoted during the Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development (UNWTO, 2018). The first part of the study draws, on the one hand, the links between the SDGs and the Five Pillars for Sustainable Tourism, as presented in the report developed by UNWTO in 2018 (UNWTO, 2018). On the other hand, it carries out a textual analysis of the actions implemented through the participatory process of each of the TExTOUR pilot areas. The 24 actions, defined in participatory cultural plans for each remote area, are analysed in terms of their potential to contribute to each of the 169 SDG targets.

It should be noted that the “Five Key Areas Promoted by the International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development,” from which the five pillars are derived, is not the most recent document, having been published in 2017. The cultural tourism industry, and tourism in general, has changed rapidly in recent years. For example, COVID-19 has changed the way many city dwellers look at more remote places and forms of tourism (Munjal, 2019; Pitkänen et al., 2020). On the one hand, this makes the discussion of cultural tourism as a means of sustainable development in remote areas even more relevant. On the other hand, it may call for an updated version of the Five Pillars.

Methodological framework

This research is based on a text analysis of the action plans presented above (*Research model* section). Each pilot action was read through individually and qualitatively analysed for its

potential to contribute to one of the SDG sub-targets. The analysis was carried out independently by two researchers, and then compared with each other. Inconsistent results were reviewed by a third researcher. The total number of subgoals per pilot was counted (Figure 2).

Each action contains the following information: 1) a description of the action; 2) the heritage resources affected or included in the heritage resources concerned or included in the action proposal; 3) categories of heritage-based tourism that would be implemented by the action; 4) objective and target of the action; 5) main stakeholders involved and their roles and contribution, breakdown of specific activities included in the action, ICT integration, beneficiaries of the action (community, tourists, specific social groups, etc.); 6) social innovation of the action, inclusion, partnerships established (PPPs, voluntary agreements, etc.); 7) sustainability of the action, impact of the action on the heritage resources concerned or included in the action proposal; 6) social innovation of the action, inclusiveness, partnerships established (PPPs, voluntary agreements, etc.); 7) sustainability of the action, impact of the action, selection of monitoring KPIs; 8) consistency check (consistency with higher level regulations or conditions of the site, i. e.g., UNESCO heritage status, regional regulations, national vision for the area, etc.); 9) resources, indicative costs and funding sources; and 10) channels for communication and dissemination of the action and dissemination of the action. The analysis involves checking a set of keywords/phrases from the different SDG targets in the action documents.

By finding the matches and by examining the links between local actions and global initiatives, the study could verify if and how the participatory TExTOUR cultural tourism actions contribute to sustainable development.

Results

In this section, the links between the TExTOUR pilot actions and specific targets of the seventeen Sustainable Development Goals are explored. Of the 17 SDGs, the TExTOUR cultural tourism actions could potentially contribute to the achievement of 8 of the goals (see green rows in Table 1): Goal 4. Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all; Goal 8. Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all; Goal 9. Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation; Goal 11. Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable; Goal 12. Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns; Goal 14. Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development; Goal 15. Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage

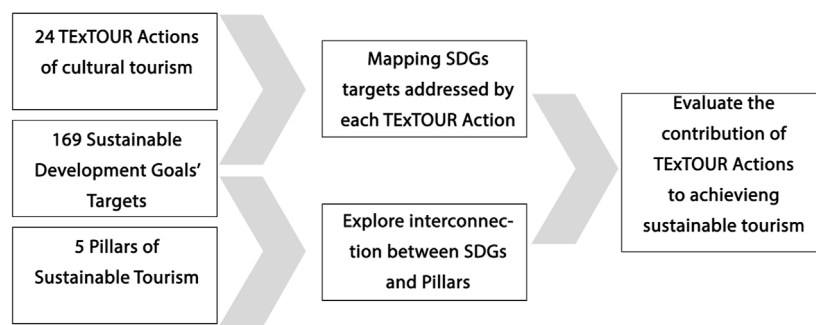


FIGURE 2
Flow chart of the research approach.

forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss; Goal 16. Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels; 16 of the 169 targets were addressed by the actions. 9 of the 17 SDGs were not at all addressed by the TExTOUR actions (marked in red in [Table 1](#)): Goal 1: End poverty in all its forms everywhere; Goal 2: End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture; Goal 3: Ensure healthy lives and promote wellbeing for all at all ages; Goal 5. Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls; Goal 6. Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all; Goal 7. Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable, and modern energy for all; and Goal 17. Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development.

The cultural tourism actions contributed the most towards achieving Goal 11 (Make cities inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable). Within Goal 11 there were in particular four targets that were addressed by two actions or more:

- 11.4 Strengthen efforts to protect and safeguard the world's cultural and natural heritage (12 actions)
- 11.a Support positive economic, social, and environmental links between urban, peri-urban, and rural areas by strengthening national and regional development planning (5 actions)
- 11.7 By 2030, provide universal access to safe, inclusive, and accessible, green, and public spaces, in particular for women and children, older persons and persons with disabilities (3 actions)

The second most addressed SDG was Goal 12 (Ensure responsible consumption and production). There was mainly one target that contributed to achieving this goal, addressed by two actions or more:

- 12.b Develop and implement tools to monitor sustainable development impacts for sustainable tourism that creates jobs and promotes local culture and products (8 actions)

The third most addressed SDG is Goal 8 (Promote sustained, inclusive, and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment, and decent work for all). There was mainly one target that was addressed by more than two actions:

- 8.9 By 2030, devise and implement policies to promote sustainable tourism that creates jobs and promotes local culture and products (5 actions)

Another five goals were addressed through the TExTOUR actions: Goal 4. Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all; Goal 9. Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation; Goal 15. Protect, restore, and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss; and Goal 16. Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable, and inclusive institutions at all levels. There were no more than two targets within these SDGs.

As mentioned above, a link between the SDGs and the Five Pillars has been identified ([UNTWO, 2017](#)). Consequently, the SDG targets addressed by the TExTOUR pilot actions are interlinked with the Five Pillars promoted by the International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development, as shown in the figure below. 13 of the 16 targets addressed by the TExTOUR pilot actions are linked to the five pillars (see [Figure 3](#)). However, three targets would not contribute to the pillars (target 9.3, target 9.1 and target 14a).

It was Pillars 3 and 4, which focused on *Resource efficiency, environmental protection, and climate change*; and *Cultural values, diversity and heritage* that were mostly enhanced

TABLE 1 Summary of pilot contribution to SDGs.

	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	P8	Sum
Goal 1. End poverty in all its forms everywhere	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Goal 2. End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Goal 3. Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Goal 4. Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	1
Goal 5. Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Goal 6. Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Goal 7. Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Goal 8. Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all	1	—	3	—	1	—	—	2	7
Goal 9. Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	2	3
Goal 10. Reduce inequality within and among countries	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Goal 11. Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable	7	3	3	1	1	3	2	1	21
Goal 12. Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns	4	—	—	3	3	—	—	—	10
Goal 13. Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Goal 14. Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	1
Goal 15. Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	1	2
Goal 16. Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels	1	—	—	2	—	—	—	—	3
Goal 17. Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—

through the TExTOUR actions. Moreover, there were just two actions that addressed the fifth Pillar focused on *Mutual understanding, peace, and security* via the SDGs. However, as shown in Figure 3, the least affected Pillar was *Social inclusiveness, employment, and poverty reduction*.

Discussion: relevance of co-created sustainable cultural tourism actions in achieving sustainable development

The outcome of this article suggests that cultural tourism developed with a participatory paradigm and when focused on inclusiveness, innovation and sustainability, can contribute to the fulfilment of SDGs and consequently of the five Pillars for Action defined by UNWTO. As shown in Figure 3 all five Pillars have been addressed by the TExTOUR Action plans although not all the SDGs targets have been met by the actions. It should be noted that SDG 11 “Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable” is the goal that has been contributed to the most by the 27 actions, specifically four targets were

implemented by the actions, 11.3; 11.4; 11.7; and 11.a. This could possibly be a result of the participatory methodology itself (Ottaviani et al., 2023), as it had stressed particularly the importance of inclusivity and social innovation which has resulted in many of the actions characterised by elements of inclusion, safety, resilience, and social sustainability. A participatory process supports increased trust among stakeholders, conflict reduction, and shared responsibility (Byrd, 2007).

Moreover, scholars like Westley et al. (Paris and Sisk, 2007) have argued that social innovation often emerges from the active participation of individuals and communities in problem-solving processes. This concept is rooted in theories of participatory development and community engagement.

In this way, inhabitants become the main actors and decision-makers in the planning, development, and management of resources needed for the tourism industry (Simpson, 2008). A sustainable cultural tourism must promote local needs and not only visitor's needs with a long-term perspective. It is generally known that there is a need to invest in more remote areas to attract and retain residents.

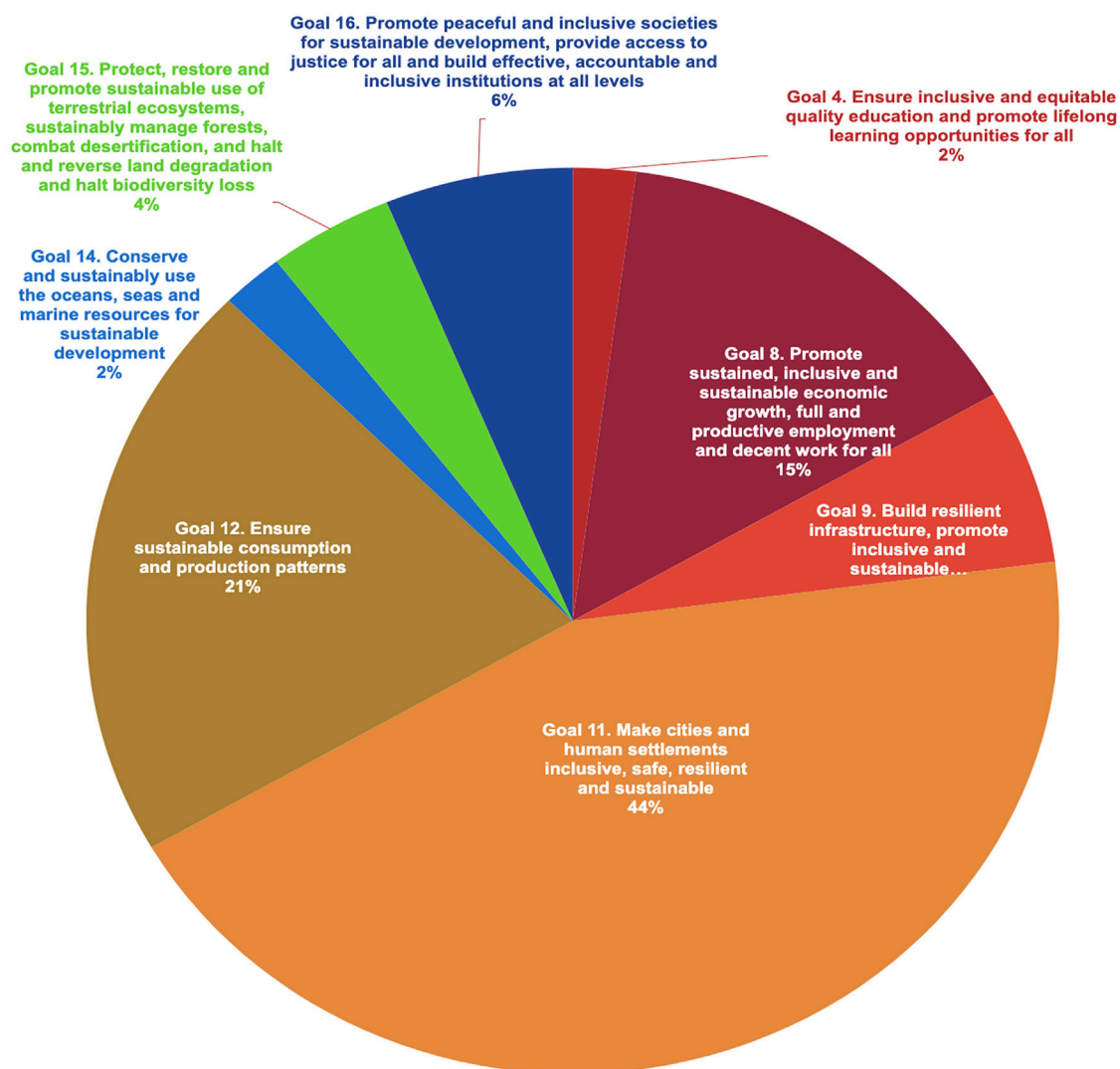


FIGURE 3

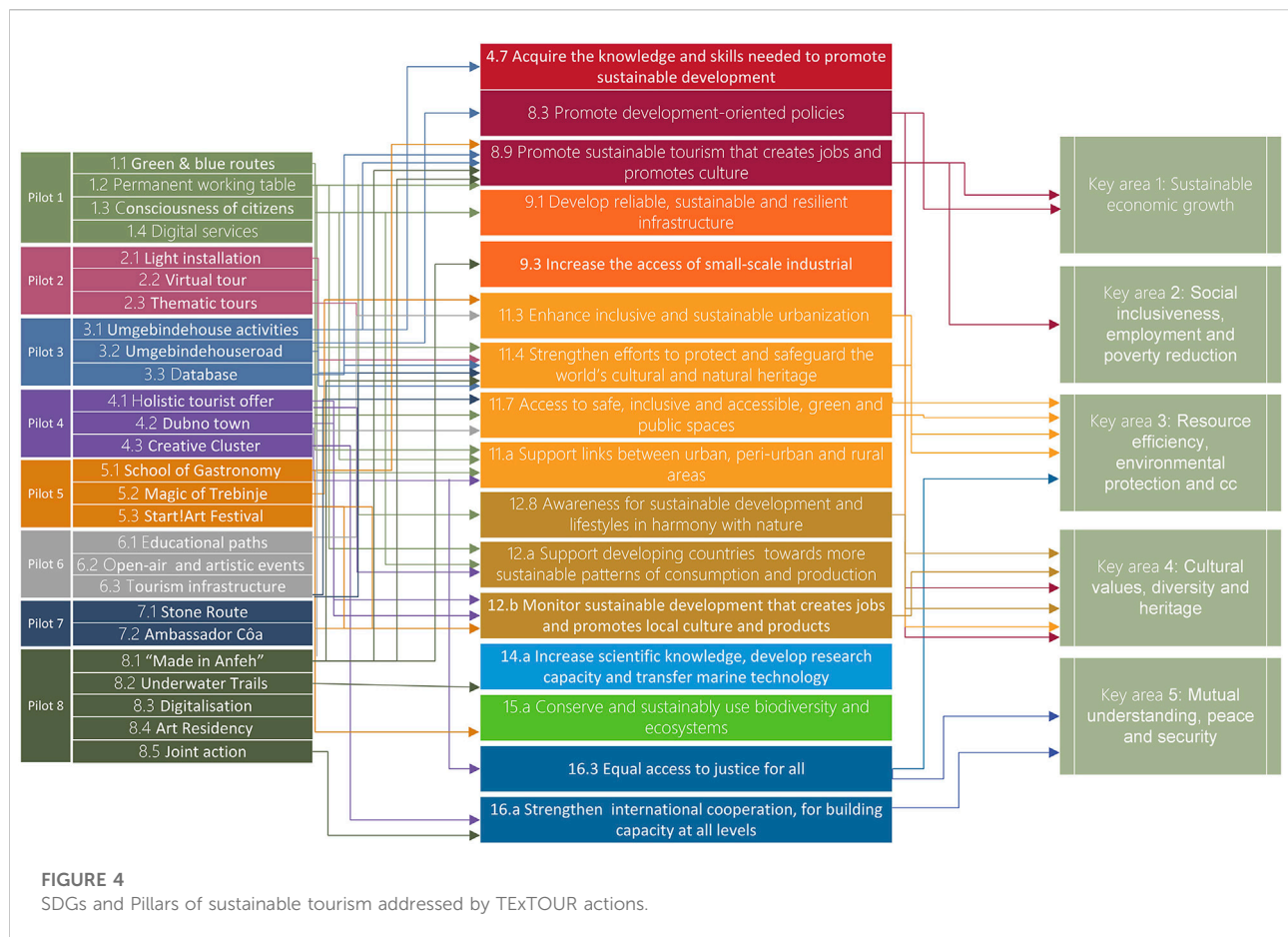
Distribution of SDG's targets addressed by TExTOUR actions.

Services and infrastructure are essential to achieve a renaissance beyond temporary tourism in remote and rural areas and to this aim (Åberg and Tondelli, 2021) the analysis of actions indicates that actions that promote long-term investments for infrastructure establishments would feed into more SDGs rather than pure tourism activities.

Similarly, SDG number 12 “Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns” results as the second most relevant goal, possibly highlighting how the cultural actions aim to set new habits for more sustainable and aware paths for consumption and production systems. That is likely the result of ensuring that the co-design process would include reflection and consciousness towards every impact that the actions would have, be it social, economic, cultural, or environmental. Academics have examined how participatory approaches in

environmental education can lead to greater awareness and action for sustainability (Sterling, 2010).

EU-funded projects such as TExTOUR promote and support improved opportunities for cooperation and, over time, contribute to long-term harmony (Sousa, 2013). In theory, cross-regional cooperation should promote a better social understanding across borders. Although there are a number of cross-national pilot projects as case studies, there were only two actions that fed into the Pillar on *Mutual understanding, peace, and security* as well as the SDGs connected to peace (Goal 16) and Global partnership (Goal 17). The given impact deriving from the actions may be more indirect, laying the ground for future opportunities in terms of strengthened cross-border collaboration. Although the study focused on tourism, participation is a universal solution from many perspectives.



For example, peace and conflict scholars often emphasise the role of participation as a means of building and sustaining peace (Lederach, 1997). Participation is seen as a tool for inclusiveness in decision-making processes. Inclusion of diverse voices and marginalized groups in political, social, and economic processes can help prevent conflicts that arise from exclusion and inequality (Lederach, 1997). This means that although the focus of this particular study was to see how cultural tourism development can contribute to improved livelihoods, the findings suggest that it can also identify issues of wider significance.

By leveraging unique cultural assets and heritage, remote areas can attract visitors, stimulate economic activities, and enhance the overall wellbeing of local communities (Munjal, 2019). The outcomes of the study suggest that a high number of actions feed into SDG 11.4—Strengthening efforts to protect and safeguard the world's cultural and natural heritage. As Nurse (Nurse, 2006) suggests it should be regarded as fundamental prerequisites for a thriving society. The promotion of sustainable development can serve as a facilitator for nurturing culture itself. Yet, to achieve the Pillar of Sustainable Tourism on cultural values, diversity, and heritage more emphasis should also be put on more targets within the sustainable consumption and

production patterns (SDG 12). Cultural tourism can make a substantial contribution to the SDGs by further encouraging responsible consumption and production patterns. By promoting sustainable practices and showcasing local traditions and craftsmanship, cultural tourism initiatives can inspire visitors to adopt more environmentally friendly behaviours and support local economies that go beyond direct tourism impact. This, in turn, contributes to sustainable economic growth and the preservation of natural resources (Figure 4).

Conclusion

This paper has explored how cultural tourism actions, developed through participatory processes, potentially contribute to reaching the Sustainable Development Goals and how these further fit within the Five Pillars promoted by the International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development. The results suggest that cultural tourism can contribute to global sustainable development in making *cities* more inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable, better ensure responsible consumption and production, and promote sustained, inclusive, and sustainable economic growth. With the help of remotely

located territories, this paper points towards that cultural tourism can be a valuable actor in promoting and enabling sustainable development in more rural and inaccessible areas.

The outcomes of this study suggest that cultural tourism has the potential to foster sustained, inclusive, and sustainable economic growth when developed by means of inclusive participation-led methodology. By promoting cultural exchange, supporting local artisans and entrepreneurs, and generating employment opportunities, cultural tourism initiatives can help create more equitable and prosperous societies. In conclusion, the study highlights the significant role that participatory cultural tourism initiatives can play in advancing sustainable development and aligning with the SDGs. By contributing to the creation of inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable cities, promoting responsible consumption and production, and fostering sustained economic growth, cultural tourism emerges as a valuable actor in sustainable development efforts.

Furthermore, the findings emphasize that cultural tourism can serve as a transformative force in rural and inaccessible areas, unlocking their potential and enabling sustainable development in these regions. The research shows how cultural tourism has the capacity to bring significant and positive changes to these areas. It can help revitalize and preserve cultural practices, encourage local entrepreneurship, and stimulate economic and social development. While rural and inaccessible areas often face challenges such as limited access to markets, economic isolation, and a decline in traditional livelihoods the research shows how cultural tourism can reveal previously untapped resources and opportunities in these remote regions. Moreover, cultural tourism can highlight the unique cultural assets and natural attractions of these areas, making them more appealing to tourists. This can lead to economic diversification and growth. Cultural tourism can contribute to sustainable development by creating jobs, generating income for local communities, promoting cultural preservation, and supporting environmental conservation efforts. It aims to benefit the local population while minimizing negative impacts on the environment and culture. The research has demonstrated the positive outcomes of cultural tourism in rural and inaccessible areas. These findings are interesting because they provide earlier evidence of the benefits of cultural tourism and can inform policy decisions, community initiatives, and investment strategies. In summary, the research

underscores the transformative potential of cultural tourism in remote and rural regions. It highlights how this form of tourism can stimulate economic growth, empower local communities, and contribute to the sustainable development of areas that might otherwise remain economically marginalized or isolated.

Data availability statement

The raw data supporting the conclusion of this article will be made available by the authors, without undue reservation.

Author contributions

CDL reviewed the article. DO and HA wrote the manuscript. All authors contributed to the article and approved the submitted version.

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Conflict of interest

The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

Author disclaimer

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Greening our future: cultural policy and the ecological imperative

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What is it exactly about the quest to “green” the performing arts that so fundamentally challenges the sector’s *modi operandi*? A sense of urgency around climate change and ecological degradation is informing profound changes in the way the arts field sees itself and slowly inducing a discussion on the sustainability of its working practices. However, despite the undeniable planetary emergency, the lumping together of environmental issues and cultural policy and management frameworks remains complex and controversial, especially if considered from the perspective of the European semi-peripheries. By exploring the preliminary results of a nation-wide inquiry among 140 performing arts regularly funded organisations based in Portugal, this paper discusses the implications of the overarching challenge of environmental sustainability for cultural policymaking and arts management, seeking to contribute to a more nuanced and context-sensitive understanding of the “green transition.”

KEYWORDS

arts management, green transition, sustainability, cultural policies, performing arts

Introduction

In a context where a sense of urgency around climate change, ecological degradation and biodiversity loss is growing each day, every sector of society is affected and challenged to act. In the performing arts, environmental sustainability concerns and related goals – once the purview of innovators only – are now triggering deep reflections (Janssens and Fraioli, 2022: 5) and are increasingly being incorporated in the arts discussion. Ecological distress is affecting artistic and curatorial decisions, as well as challenging production, touring and management models. Undeniably, “greening” the performing arts has become an expanding area of action and attention, with sector’s pioneers such as Creative Carbon Scotland¹ or Julie’s Bicycle² being joined by the most

1 <https://www.creativecarbonscotland.com/>

2 <https://juliesbicycle.com/>

relevant professional players of the field: IETM,³ the European Theatre Convention,⁴ On the Move,⁵ among others, have several initiatives under way, materialized by an array of projects and a constant proliferation of reports, toolkits and legislation⁶ designed to broaden environmental awareness and foster concrete action among arts institutions and practitioners.

Surely, mainstreaming environmental sustainability criteria across the arts and culture funding frameworks can be said to be well under way (Kruger and Feifs, 2023; Vries, 2021). However, while embedding ecological issues into cultural policy may be justifiable *vis-à-vis* the undeniable planetary emergency, it is not necessarily a consensual case in the performing arts field, and it is especially controversial when considered from the perspective of the European semi-peripheries. In Portugal as in other EU countries, the arts' "green transition" intersects with the field's long-standing shortcomings and sparks intense debates on social justice, and greenwashing/artwashing, fuelling the everlasting argument over arts' instrumentalization.

The ambiguous geographical and cultural position of Portugal (Ribeiro, 2009) - sitting geographically and culturally between Europe and the Atlantic and economically categorized as semi-peripheral - coupled with the country's tardy democratic turn and the late acknowledgment of its violent colonial action - makes it a remarkable observation point from which to analyse the frictions and contradictions deriving from the overarching challenge of sustainability. Clearly, the questions Portuguese artists and producers are facing are as deeply rooted in national shortcomings as they are global dilemmas; they are utterly practical and indisputably political: should small-scale, not-for-profit artistic and cultural activities based in semi-peripheral countries bear responsibility for the ecological crisis? Should cultural practitioners be held accountable to a problem some of them see as originating and reaching far beyond their power? Should they refrain from intensifying international touring, even in the face of well-known asymmetries inside the EU (Janssens and Fraioli, 2022)? Should ecological and environmental concerns be embedded in cultural policy, and if so, in which ways? Should funding of the arts and culture

decidedly change to accommodate sustainability-related objectives?

By exploring the results of a nation-wide qualitative inquiry among performing arts practitioners based in Portugal, we will investigate discourses around the perceived distribution of ecological responsibility in the arts, and the ways in which it intersects with cultural policy as well as with performing arts production and management practices. We will argue that this issue is crucial for the future of arts management, not only since it will likely impact the next generation of producers and cultural managers, "requir[ing] new ways of working" (Theatre Green Book, 2021: 15), but also insofar as it sharply points to the difficulties of parting with arts management expansionist and productivist processes (Rodrigues, 2024).

Methodology

This paper draws mainly upon the examination of a set of data deriving from a nation-wide study (Rodrigues et al., 2024) based on a qualitative survey carried out between January and April 2023 to performing arts organisations in the subsidized sector in Portugal, specifically, organisations receiving support from the Directorate-General for the Arts.⁷ The methodological choices of that study's coordinating team reflect a relational and inclusive approach to issues and problems, as well as a determination to conduct research in close proximity to the artistic community. This approach particularly values how the artistic community interprets the proposed themes and frames their contributions, reflections, and dilemmas. This is especially crucial given the complex nature of the research topic and the type of transformations it points towards. In fact, ecological transition has been identified as a transformation that requires "action-oriented co-produced knowledge intertwined with multiple forms of knowledge" and stakeholders (Tengö et al., 2014; Biggs et al., 2021, cited by Biggs et al., 2021).

In this regard, we primarily relied on a qualitative approach, complementing the statistical treatment of the collected data. The qualitative approach, with its flexibility and potential for in-depth inductive analysis, was deemed the most suitable for an exploratory study. Accordingly, procedures for coding the empirical material were employed, guided by Maxwell's (2005) recommendations on qualitative research design. Categories and sub-categories of analysis were constructed and continuously refined through interpretive exercises, subjected to bivariate analysis, and compared with emerging concepts from relevant literature.

Similarly, since one of the implications of this study is the potential to establish connections with the formulation and

³ <https://www.ietm.org/en>

⁴ <https://www.europeantheatre.eu/>

⁵ <https://on-the-move.org/>

⁶ To mention just a few relevant reports and initiatives: Julie's Bicycle: Culture: The Missing Link to Climate Action (2021); Voices of Culture, Culture and Sustainable Development Goals: Challenges and Opportunities - Brainstorming report (2021); United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG), Culture in the Sustainable Development Goals: A Guide For Local Action (2018); The Shift Project, *Décarbonons la Culture* (2021); European Commission, Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture, Stormy times - Nature and humans - Cultural courage for change - 11 messages for and from Europe (2022); European Commission, Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture, Kruger, T., Mohamedaly, A., Muller, V. et al., Greening the Creative Europe Programme - Final report (2023).

⁷ Henceforth, for sake of brevity, we will refer to the Directorate-General for the Arts by use of the official acronym DGARTES.

TABLE 1 Number of respondents per artistic area.

Artistic Area	Minimum number of responses	Number of valid responses	Proportion of the total valid responses	Difference
Theatre	30	43	31%	+13
Cross-disciplinary arts	23	43	31%	+20
Music	18	26	12%	+8
Dance	5	17	19%	+12
Contemporary Circus and Street Arts	1	4	3%	+3
Other(s)	-	7	5%	—
Total		140		

Source: Own elaboration.

adaptation of public policy measures, it was crucial to extensively value the process of listening to cultural agents. This was achieved through the use of numerous open-ended questions and repeated analysis in discussion groups, for instance, in order to steer clear of top-down approaches and the risk of alienating stakeholders (Freeth and Drimie, 2016). This active listening method notwithstanding, we should bear in mind the notion that, by participating in this study, and despite all effective assurances of response anonymization, cultural organisations were likely to be aware that this was a relatively pioneering study in the country, whose findings will be made public and widely disseminated. Hence, it's reasonable to understand their responses as at least partially stemming from an effort to “construct a positive public-facing” identity (Grove Ditlevsen, 2012).

The abovementioned survey consisted of 49 questions (68 if the sub-questions are considered), of which 18 were optional, 29 open-ended, 33 selection/choice, 2 Likert scale, 1 ranking and 3 of numerical response. Its questions were grouped into three blocks, namely: 1) *profile*, aimed at collecting data characterising both the organisations and the respondents; 2) *discourses and positions*, in which respondents were invited to reflect on the interconnection between the field of arts and culture and the issues of environmental sustainability; and 3) *practices and actions*, about the practical needs and expectations in terms of their own green transition, and that of the public institutions and cultural policies, especially those carried out by DGARTES.

The selected universe – all 594 DGARTES-funded⁸ organisations – can be credited as relevant since DGARTES is the most important governmental body and cultural policy agent in the Portuguese performing arts context and given that similar institutions exist in many European countries. Considering the type of survey that was to be implemented (considerably demanding since it was long and had several open-ended

questions), a minimum overall response rate of 20% was set, corresponding to 120 valid responses. This rate was effectively achieved and exceeded, standing at 24%, corresponding to a sample with a total of 140 valid responses. In addition, to ensure the comprehensiveness, representativeness and relevance of the data collected, minimum distribution criteria were established, which corresponded closely to the characteristics of the pre-defined population.⁹ These criteria can be considered fully met, as shown in the tables below, which display both the degree of compliance with the minimum criteria and the composition of the final sample.

Theatre and cross-disciplinary arts are the most represented areas - together they make up 62% of the responses (Table 1).

The responding arts organisations were based in more than 60 different cities throughout Portugal, and their headquarters and main activities are mainly concentrated in the Lisbon Metropolitan Area (35%), followed by the North (29%) and the Centre (24%), which, again, is consistent with the distribution at national level in the total universe considered (Tables 2, 3).

In terms of type of funding, the study aimed for at least 50% of organisations which were recipients of Sustained Support (Table 4). The Sustained Support Programme is divided in two funding modalities, a 2-year and a 4-year cycle, with the possibility of automatic renewal¹⁰ for the same period. It is, therefore, the most stable form of public funding in the Portuguese performing arts scene, which is relevant considering the overall precariousness of the sector. The rationale behind aiming to have at least half of the answers

⁹ As already mentioned, the pre-defined population were the 594 organisations which were receiving grants from DGARTES in the years 2021 and 2022.

¹⁰ In this context, automatic renewal means that the funded organisations can, upon evaluation, renew their 4-year funding without having to write and re-submit an application.

⁸ With reference to grants received in the years 2021 and 2022.

TABLE 2 Number of respondents per field of activity.

Main field of activity	Minimum number of responses	Minimum proportion of responses	Number of valid responses	Proportion of the total valid responses	Difference
Artistic creation/production (theatre and dance companies, groups of artists, etc.)	60	50%	82	59%	+22/+19%
Artistic programming (festivals, venues, etc.)	24	20%	53	38%	+29/+18%

Source: Own elaboration.

TABLE 3 Number of respondents per region.

Region	Minimum proportion of total valid responses	Number of valid responses	Proportion of the total valid responses	Difference
Área Metropolitana de Lisboa	35%	48	34%	−1%
Alentejo	5%	7	5%	0%
Algarve	2%	6	4%	+2%
Norte	25%	38	27%	+2%
Centro	15%	37	26%	+11%
Região Autónoma da Madeira	1 resp.	3	2%	+2 resp.
Região Autónoma dos Açores	1 resp.	1	1%	0 resp.
Total		140		

Source: Own elaboration.

TABLE 4 Number of respondents per type of funding.

Type of Funding/Grant Scheme	Minimum number of responses	Minimum proportion of responses	Number of valid responses	Proportion of the total valid responses	Difference
Sustained Support (Apoio Sustentado)	60	50%	82	59%	+22/+19%
Project-based Support (Apoio a Projetos)	Not defined		61	44%	N/A
Other	Not defined		34	24%	N/A

Source: Own elaboration.

coming from this type of organisations is manifold ranging from issues of scale/resources to ethical considerations. Firstly, we bore in mind the typical fragmentation of the sector, which is reflected in the survey statistics: the majority (80%) of respondents correspond to micro-organisations, employing less than 10 people. This reinforced our determination to at least target organisations which had Sustained Support, assuming that they would be better equipped to deal with sustainability issues, given their relatively more stable funding framework. Also, we had ethical concerns: we wished to avoid overburdening smaller

groups or solo artists and cultural professionals, which tend to work alone, have less resources and smaller or non-existent teams to help with a long survey. Finally, we thought that relying heavily on regularly funded organisations would better serve comparative research in the future, and facilitate benchmarking, seeing that one of the funding agencies largely held as a pioneer in this field, Arts Council England, had launched its Environmental Policy Programme exactly by involving the National Portfolio Organisations and major Museum partners (Taxopoulou, 2023: 19).

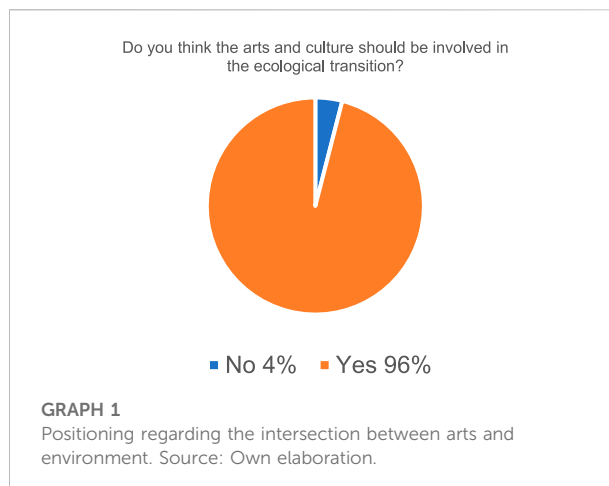
Overall, the sample considered in this study is, therefore, consistent with the universe of DGARTES-funded organisations in terms of distribution by artistic discipline, region, type of funding, and it represents a balanced split between venue-based arts organisations and project-based or independent collectives. The universe of respondents is also gender-balanced, with a slight preponderance of respondents who identify as women (51%). In terms of education/qualifications, the sample mirrors the high qualifications of the sector, with 90% of respondents having a graduate degree and 61% postgraduate level education. Given the centrality of DGARTES-funded organisations in the performing arts ecosystem, and the comprehensiveness of our sample, it can be said that this dataset carries public policy interest (Caust, 2017), and that it invites comparisons to be made across EU countries, as well as longitudinal research.

This sample was complemented with a range of five in-depth interviews to the same profile of respondents (artists, producers, and arts managers).¹¹ Both have been object of content analysis based on different codification procedures which we will detail throughout the discussion, for a more integrated approach.

Discussion

Environmental sustainability: attitudes, problems, and perplexities

One of the fundamental tasks of this exploratory survey was to unpack the interpretation of “sustainability” among arts practitioners. Given the breadth, ambiguity and polysemy of the concept of sustainability, we decided to classify the (open-ended) responses into three categories, seeking greater clarity about the respondents’ representations of this topic. We, therefore, divided the responses into *sustainability as environmental sustainability*, which included answers relating to moderation and balance in consumption, and emphasised the necessary relationship between humanity and the planet; *sustainability as social sustainability*, where the dimension of living conditions is evident and sustainability is unequivocally linked to the idea of a dignified life in terms of human and social rights; and finally, *sustainability as sustainable development*, which includes allusions to the need to change the political and socio-economic models that determine our development matrix. The depth and range of interpretations proposed by the respondents reveal a clear understanding not only of the latitude of the idea of sustainability itself but also a conviction



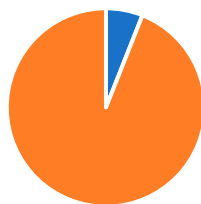
that it is unequivocally associated with living conditions, quality of life and social rights. A significant number of respondents also see the concept of sustainability as an ideal towards which aspirations for a social and economic paradigm shift converge. It is clear that there is a significant tendency not to subsume sustainability under environmental sustainability, recognising the profound interdependencies with other “sustainabilities” and how these interdependencies (when put into perspective) raise concerns.

We also wanted to understand how they made sense of the notion of sustainability if directly related to the arts. In order to do that, we analysed their answers to different questions through Kate Power’s triptych. Power (2021) describes three main connections: a) sustainability *through* the arts – where they highlight the narrative and communicative capacity of the arts and their potential to raise awareness and change behaviour; b) sustainability *in* the arts – where respondents give prominence to the need to know and reduce the environmental footprint of the arts and to incorporate environmental sustainability into cultural practices and policies; and c) sustainability *of* the arts – emphasising organisational sustainability, the sustainability of artistic careers, the sustainability of the artistic project in temporal and financial terms, the sustainability of the sector itself. Overall, in terms of the number of responses, we observed a certain predominance of arguments favouring sustainability in the arts over the other two categories, through the arts and of the arts, which would indicate that respondents attach greater importance to strictly environmental sustainability, and to how the arts can meet and reduce their own “ecological footprint.”

Another major objective of our survey was to find out about cultural professionals’ opinions and discourses around the perceived distribution of specifically ecological and environmental *responsibility* in the arts, and, concretely, the ways and the extent to which they deemed that sustainability should or shouldn’t be embedded into cultural policy and into the production and management of arts. As stated before, we were

11 Throughout this paper, respondents (R) to the survey and interviewees (IT) will be identified by a fixed number attributed to them during the process of anonymisation.

Do you think that the arts and culture, which arguably have a smaller ecological footprint than other sectors, should be included in any forthcoming sustainability measures?

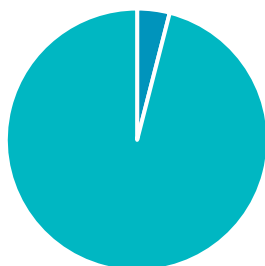


■ No 6% ■ Yes 94%

GRAPH 2

Positioning regarding the intersection between arts and environment. Source: Own elaboration.

Do you think the field of arts and culture can inspire change in the field of ecology and sustainability?



■ No 4% ■ Yes 96%

GRAPH 3

Role of art in inspiring change towards sustainability. Source: Own elaboration.

making use of the ambiguous position of Portugal to look at the frictions and contradictions deriving from the overarching challenge of sustainability. Some of those contradictions became noticeably evident in the first set of results that our study analysed, as we shall see. A part of the questions was designed to help us understand the viewpoints of cultural professionals regarding the intersection between the field of arts and ecological and environmental issues in general. We wanted to grasp whether the relevance of this relationship was *evident*, given the characteristics attributed to the ecological problem: its massive scale and extent in space and time, and above all, its “viscosity” (Morton, 2013), i.e., its capacity to “stick” to all objects and decisions we make and its ability to appear so monumental and close that they are almost perceived as unrealistic. Judging by the first outcomes of our inquiry, the magnitude and urgency of ecological issues is apparent to culture

professionals, who do not hesitate to connect their field of work with this overwhelming challenge.

An impressive 96% believe that the arts and culture should be involved in the ecological transition (Graph 1), a result that is almost the same when we slightly change the question to include the issue of “scale” (Graph 2).

These results speak volumes in terms of how they see the junction between arts and sustainability and reveal an enormous confidence in the power of arts in this realm (Graph 3).

Since power and responsibility are usually interrelated, it is understandable that a majority of respondents (87%) agree that responsibility for environmental and social sustainability should be taken on by all actors according to their sphere of action, scale and resources (Table 5).

It may seem striking that the respondents did not take the opportunity to hold DGARTES or the Ministry of Culture more directly accountable, thereby separating out responsibility at the individual (micro), organisational-institutional (meso) and governmental-systemic (macro) levels. However, in hindsight, we could perhaps have phrased the question differently. All the answer options in this question began with “everyone,” which may have contradicted the goal to find out who the respondents thought should take on more responsibility. The rationale behind that phrasing was the intention to acknowledge that, given the magnitude of the ecological transition, no-one individually can bear all responsibility. Instead, the question wished to point towards sectoral leadership, but apparently failed at that. Also, the second part of the first sentence, where a principle of “common sense” is introduced - stating that responsibility should be according to each actor’s “sphere of action, scale and resources” - could have been left out. These reflections can guide further research into the same or distinct artistic communities, and they are relevant here not only as a way of acknowledging the possibility of failure in the process of research - and thereby advocating a feminist, radically transparent research code of practice (Boncori, 2023) - but especially because they may reveal the extent to which this idea of “collective responsibility” is being propelled.

It is therefore important to read these results not only as symptoms of how “evident” and “urgent” the need for ecological transition is perceived to be, but also in the light of the Marxist critique of the climate change debate, which points out that this understanding of evidence/urgency is perhaps a bit too consistent with the identitarian mobilisation that is typical of cultural workers, and with the views of the professional class they are usually associated with, in sociological terms. A case in point of this critique is Mathew Huber, who poses that by failing to decisively connect climate change with capitalist production (i.e., industrial production) and classifying “environmental politics as a ‘new’ and non-class-centred social movement,” we have wrongly been led to believe that we are primarily

TABLE 5 Distribution of responsibility regarding sustainability.

Considering the various players in the arts and culture sector, who do you think should take on more responsibility in terms of environmental and social sustainability?	
Everyone must assume their responsibility, according to their sphere of action, scale and resources - 87%	87
Everyone, especially the Ministry of Culture - 4%	4
Everyone, especially the Directorate-General for the Arts - 1%	1
Everyone, especially public institutions - 6%	4
Everyone, especially public-funded organisations - 1%	1
None of the above - 4%	3
Everyone, especially the public-funded organisations which receive a sustained grant.	0
Everyone, especially programming venues.	0
Everyone, especially artists.	0

Source: Own elaboration.

TABLE 6 Arguments to embed environmental issues in the arts and culture.

Linking arts and culture with environmental issues makes sense because														
Arguments		Relative strength of the argument (frequency with which respondents mention it)		Correspondence - responses										
1	...it is a problem of individual responsibility/it speaks to a moral dimension.	18	1	23	25	28	29	34	41	48	61	62	65	84
			113	118	123	130	131	138						
2	...arts can/should contribute to changing mentalities/raising awareness in other sectors/among audiences.	22	13	19	27	35	36	38	42	43	60	67	69	71
			79	81	101	108	116	122	124	129	139	140		
3	...the sector has an environmental impact and must work to reduce it.	26	4	7	8	11	16	22	28	33	38	39	44	45
			53	57	64	66	67	70	73	101	104	107	112	114
			120	139										
4	...it is a problem/concern that cuts across all social activities.	36	5	13	18	19	24	29	30	31	46	47	48	55
			58	68	76	79	80	82	84	87	95	96	103	105
			108	109	110	117	123	125	126	127	133	135	136	140

Source: Own elaboration.

responsible for climate change, and have become anxious about our “carbon guilt” (Huber, 2022: 21): “[w]hen confronted with the question of responsibility – the question of who cooked the planet – the climate movement is highly confused. Usually the answer points to “all of us.” The story of climate responsibility we hear is one of millions of diffuse individual choices – adding up to a planetary impact” (Huber, 2022: 10). For Huber, this would explain the “popularity” of strategies based on the reduction of our carbon footprint and related compensation mechanisms, while failing to uncover the more important question, “who do we believe has the real power over society’s economic

resources?” (ibidem: 10). Indeed, our survey showed a clear tendency towards the rationale that involving the arts and culture in environmental efforts makes sense insofar *as it is a sector as any other* - ecological concerns cutting across all societal activities. This is despite the fact that the wording of more than one question in the survey mentioned the relative scale/dimension of the arts and culture sector’s ecological footprint, among other aspects that could be used to contextualise the answers. In fact, the respondents place a significant importance in the sector’s *own alleged impact* as a reason for its involvement in the ecological transition, as we can see in Tables 6, 7 below.

TABLE 7 Arguments to embed environmental issues in the arts and culture.

Arguments	Examples/Responses- statements
1 ...it is a problem of individual responsibility/it speaks to a moral dimension	R113: “It’s a question of morality. We should all contribute, even if [our carbon footprint] is not very relevant.”
2 ...arts can/should contribute to changing mentalities/raising awareness in other sectors/among audiences	R43: “Our area shapes behaviours and must lead this transformation.”
3 ...the sector has an environmental impact and must work to reduce it	R107: “I don’t think it’s an activity that has a small ecological footprint. Just think of the heating of the venues, the energy impact of all the equipment in a theatre, the amount of paper wasted on marketing, the water bottles, among other factors. The impact is much greater than one might think.”
4 ...it is a problem/concern that cuts across all social activities	R71: “All sectors must be equally concerned, since the struggle is the same.”

Source: Own elaboration.

To better understand the reasons invoked by the respondents, we asked them to justify their answers, using an open-ended field¹² where they could freely expand on their positions. Based on 111 valid statements, we did a first reading to familiarize ourselves with the range of arguments used, followed by a second reading seeking to identify the stronger, most recurrent lines of thinking. A second team-member repeated the exercise so that a team debate could be held to cross-verify our choices. After the four main arguments were identified and agreed upon, we proceeded to establish correspondences, registering their relative strength by quantifying the number of times they were mentioned. Tables 6, 7 (above) show the relative strength of the ideas that (3) the arts own environmental impact is not negligible, and efforts should be made to reduce them; and (4) the idea that there is no fundamental difference between the arts and culture sector and any other social activity, the environment cutting-across all spheres of human activity.

The reasoning behind the respondents’ statements may be interpreted as a sign that the performing arts are “irrevocably entering a process of ecological transition,” as Taxopoulou argues (2023:2), hence ready to admit that the gravity and the sheer dimension of the ecological situation are enough for the cultural sector to “declare emergency”¹³ and to be “determinate in taking centre stage in the sustainable transition” (Taxopoulou, 2023: 1) since, as Taxopoulou points out, a significant momentum seems to have been reached in many different geographies. Nevertheless, our interpretation points to additional perspectives, which do not undermine Taxopoulou’s claim, rather complexify it with a supplementary set of questionings.

A first hypothesis could point towards some degree of environmental illiteracy,¹⁴ and Portugal’s cultural sector fairly weak involvement in the debate around climate justice. This would mean that, prior to this survey, the respondents may have had few opportunities to engage in situations where they could discuss and learn about the implications of considering ecological and environmental issues in their sector, and thus become acquainted with the existent critique, or at least to become familiar with counter-arguments that relativise the importance of involving this sector, either by downplaying its carbon impact, or by putting the sector’s impact and efforts in a wider political and economic context, as suggested by Demos (2016), when he wonders whether artistic practices can challenge the neoliberal governance.

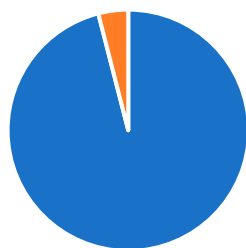
A second conjecture (which holds connections to the prior) could attest to the fact that a more ecosystemic, context-specific discussion of the sector’s involvement in the green transition is rather absent in the myriad debates and publications, with most of them elaborating on practical ways to engage in decarbonization strategies, adaptation and mitigation processes, urging cultural agents to develop awareness-raising activities, etc. – without first addressing “the elephant in the room”: why, indeed, should a sector as fragile (in multiple dimensions) as the arts and culture, in contexts where working in the arts is already very often a quest for survival, engage in this colossal challenge? And how can cultural professionals make sense of their stance in the face of other, more powerful social and economic sectors? How can the ethos of cultural organisations be “greened” without confronting the socio-economic background provided by neoliberal capitalism? Obviously, discussing the implications of considering profit-

¹² To increase accessibility and obtain a higher response-rate, these open-ended questions could be answered either in writing or by recording an audio file, up to 5 min in length.

¹³ <https://www.culturedeclares.org/>

¹⁴ This was also suggested in an independent analysis of the survey’s results, carried out in the context of the Post-Graduate Programme in Arts Management and Sustainability at the Faculty of Arts and Humanities in the University of Coimbra. A group of students were given the opportunity to comment on a partial set of research data, in the framework of a Knowledge Transfer Experiment, while following a dedicated Code of Ethics.

Several governments, following international recommendations, are considering including ecological sustainability issues into cultural policies. Do you agree?



■ Totally Agree/Agree/Partially Agree - 96%
 ■ Disagree/Totally Disagree - 4%

GRAPH 4
Sustainability and cultural policies. Source: Own elaboration.

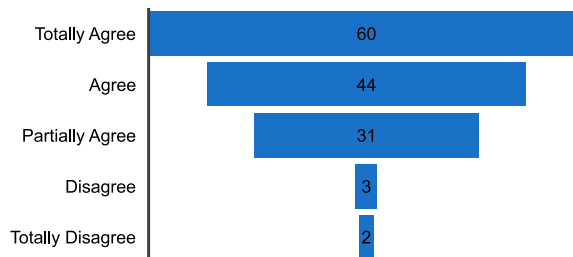
driven economic systems (Huber, 2022; Klein, 2015) and fossil capital (Malm, 2016) as the major variables in tackling climate change (and the associated classification of the ecological transition as fundamentally a “class struggle”) lie outside the scope of this paper, but it is useful to keep them in mind for sake of some of the discussions that we will be presenting later in this text, regarding dissent, ethics, and a critical juncture for arts management.

At this point, a note should be made about how extremely complex researching this issue proves to be. How can we inquire about such an “obvious urgency” without bordering on or legitimizing science and climate change dangerous denialist discourses? How can we make space for doubt, while *Rome is burning*? My position as a researcher is unequivocally committed to the goal of a more sustainable world, and this necessarily includes the arts and culture sector. However, my commitment involves problematizing issues, even when they further complicate an already challenging path. To close on this point, I will add that my commitment to radical transparency, as mentioned before, also implies a way of conducting research, and writing about it, that does not shy away of shedding light upon these contradictions and difficulties, which I argue are less part of the public discourses as they perhaps should be.

Between the urge to be sustainable, and the fear of heightened inequalities

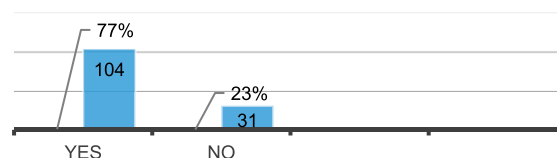
As we have seen, results from our survey are in line with the ideas that are consistently becoming part of both official and independent guidelines and reports on the subject. Those can be described as, on the one hand, the notion that the environmental concerns are inescapable and are already an objective element of

Several governments, following international recommendations, are considering including ecological sustainability issues into cultural policies. Do you agree?



GRAPH 5
Sustainability and cultural policies. Source: Own elaboration.

Several governments, following recommendations from international organisations, are considering including sustainability issues more strongly in the criteria for public funding in the field of arts and culture. Do you agree?



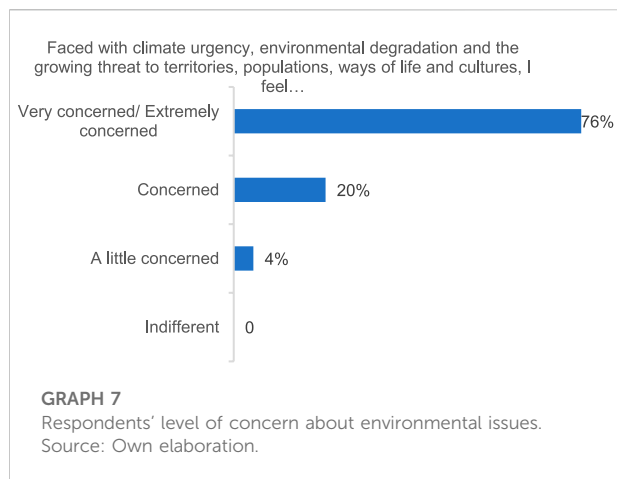
GRAPH 6
Sustainability and culture funding. Source: Own elaboration.

consideration in the sector - “most of our professional work and operations are already weighed against the principles of sustainability” (Lalvani, 2023: 8); and, on the other, the belief that those principles should guide our actions - “sustainability is the most urgent matter in today’s world and should therefore be at the core of our missions, projects and objectives” (ibidem). But is there a difference between acknowledging this in general, and making a concrete connection to cultural policy-making?

In our survey, when asked whether they agreed with the fact that several governments were “considering including sustainability issues more expressively in cultural policies,” an expressive majority (96%) responded positively (Graph 4).

The degree of agreement, however, varies (Graph 5), somehow already indicating that this apparent unequivocal consensus hides some nuances that deserve to be analysed more rigorously, and which seem to escape the official discourse of the sector’s publications on the matter.

The pattern was roughly repeated when the question more explicitly mentioned the possibility of sustainability issues being incorporated “in the criteria for public funding in the arts and culture field” - 77% expressed their agreement. But although the overall pattern of response remained the same, the degree of



agreement, one must notice, decreases significantly, almost 20% (Graph 6).

These nuances notwithstanding, the majority of the respondents, the survey showed, seem to welcome a greater incorporation of environmental sustainability issues in cultural policies. These attitudes are consistent with the respondents' level of preoccupation with climate urgency (Graph 7) – again, a significant majority 76% reported being “very” or “extremely” distressed; 96% either concerned or very/extremely concerned.

Given the high topicality of the issue at stake, one should definitely consider the effect of some degree of social desirability bias (Krumpal, 2013) as well as the wish to present a positive public-facing identity (Grove Ditlevsen, 2012) throughout the survey. Afterall, as Rodrigues put it in his now famous open letter to Jérôme Bel, who would want “to be that Donald Trump who stands against Greta Thunberg?” (Rodrigues, 2021). His metaphor strongly indicates how powerful the tendency for one to publicly acknowledge the gravity of the current ecological situation is – the term “planetary emergency” having entered mainstream public discourse. A closer examination, however, reveals the issue to be far more controversial than the quantitative results that we have analysed so far might suggest. If it weren't so, how then to account for the various conflicts that arise from a closer examination of the survey's results – and, specifically, from the content analysis of the written responses, in which the cultural practitioners involved in this study were invited to further explain their thoughts and attitudes towards the intersection between their field of work and the larger ecological imperative?

Indeed, when confronted with the potential transformations that “the green transition” can bring into the sector's working practices, many reveal fears of (a) instrumentalization and/or threats to artistic freedom and (b) tokenism. At the same time, the respondents consistently raise issues that are heavily context-

related, and which are arguably relevant for other semi-peripheral countries, namely issues related to (c) increased financial restraints and/or increased difficulties in accessing funding, (d) instability/fragility of cultural policy frameworks, (e) infrastructural inequalities and (f) fairness and historical (in) justice. Lastly, another set of responses conveys their suspicion of (g) the efficiency of sector-based and nation-based approaches as well as distrust in “one-size-fits-all” solutions, to a problem they characterize as a product of “global inequalities” requiring a break off with current social and economic models. These seven points were identified through the content analysis based on a prior codification exercise activated by a set of words related to conflict, stress or dissent. The analysis followed the process described before, by which key ideas are double-verified in a two-step codification exercise. The following Tables 8, 9 summarise a representative illustration of the type of statements that were found to be corresponding to different arguments, as well as their relative strength.

To try and make better sense of these points, we subsequently grouped them into three major categories, each pertaining to a different dimension/level of conflict: political/systemic/ethical; policy/government/national; and practical/resource/material. A simple visualization of how the points relate to the three categories (Table 10, below) exposes the significantly political aspect of the juncture between the arts and the ecological urgency.

Indeed, most of the respondents' perceived conflicts seem to be of a political/ethical nature, poignantly indicating the contextual situatedness of such a clearly global problem. The practical obstacles notwithstanding,¹⁵ Portuguese arts practitioners appear in this study to be acutely aware of the overarching political implications of “green transition” measures at sectoral level, and vigilant of the contradictions that such transformations entail when associated with Portugal's specific geographical and historical circumstances.

Until 1974, Portugal was a country blocked-in on itself - a fascist and colonialist dictatorship, that described itself as “proudly alone.” I am a dancer and choreographer of a generation that emerged when the country opened up to culture and arts from other countries and latitudes. I am the result of the direct exchange that was offered to me while being part of the audience, with artists and proposals that opened up my horizons, not only artistic but also social and cultural. (...) The circulation of art and artists in the European space is therefore (...) a question with a deeper

15 The obstacles that culture professionals identify in their process to become more sustainable will be the subject of a forthcoming paper in the context of the GREENARTS. Green Production - Performing Arts in Transition research project, which is being developed by CEIS20 – Centre for Interdisciplinary Research at the University of Coimbra, funded by FCT - 2022.01609.PTDC.

TABLE 8 Illustration of main points raised by the respondents.

Linking arts and culture with environmental issues makes sense but/if		
Arguments		Relative strength of the argument (frequency with which respondents mention it)
A	Instrumentalization and/or threats to artistic freedom	9
B	Tokenism	3
C	Financial restraints and/or difficulties in accessing funding	11
D	Instability/fragility of cultural policy frameworks	29
E	Infrastructural inequalities	5
F	Fairness and historical (in)justice	7
G	Distrust in adequacy of sector-based, nation-based and “one-size-fits-all” approaches	14

Source: Own elaboration.

TABLE 9 Illustration of main points raised by the respondents.

Arguments		Examples/Responses- Statements
A	Instrumentalization and threats to artistic freedom	R100: “I do not think it is legitimate in democratic systems to use public funding to instrumentalize cultural production”
		R23: “I fear a lot about what consequences this could have for us artists. I feel it could harm us professionally and put us in even more precarious situations and with less artistic freedom. . .”
B	Tokenism	R135: “It all seems to me like trendy agendas that are going to be made to win funding/grants”
		R101: “this is an appropriation of the term ‘culture’ to increase spending on ‘decorative’ and superficial matters”
C	Financial restraints and difficulties in accessing funding	R111: “there will have to be a transition period and extra financial support for cultural operators to be able to make changes”
		R2: “could constitute a further barrier to accessing public funding in certain situations”
D	Instability/fragility of cultural policy frameworks	R14: “If funding in Portugal continues to operate at such a low level, one might almost consider it ridiculous that choices can be made at this stage based on environmental sustainability criteria. Only with a stabilised cultural landscape and some financial stability should funding bodies start to be required to meet such criteria”
		R56: “The financial model of the cultural sector is generally so fragile, that introducing sustainability related criteria would be disastrous to some structures”
E	Infrastructural inequalities	R109: “It is not fair to encourage people to change from air to rail (especially in Portugal where rail links with the rest of Europe are practically non-existent)”
		R99: “I agree if the process is accompanied by an extraordinary effort to develop sustainable public mobility infrastructures throughout the country and at its intersection with international territory”
F	Fairness and historical (in)justice	IT2: “it is up to us to think about the quality of life of artists who live on the margins. Artists who do not have the privilege of receiving support, nor of accessing mobility. I believe that in order to move towards the issue of environmental sustainability, it is necessary to think about reparations and confronting racial, social and cultural inequalities, as well as facing the problem of institutional and structural racism”
G	Distrust in adequacy of sector-based, nation-based and ‘one-size-fits-all’ approaches	R99: “as long as we are similarly applying similar rules to public funding to other sectors of activity, namely tourism”
		R37: “The question is always the mould in which these policies are implemented. If they are mere copies of international models or if they contemplate the reality of the country”

Source: Own elaboration.

TABLE 10 Types of conflict.

Arguments		Type of conflict/friction		
		Political	Policy	Practical
A	Instrumentalization and threats to artistic freedom	●		
B	Tokenism	●		
C	Financial restraints and difficulties in accessing funding		●	●
D	Instability/fragility of cultural policy frameworks	●	●	
E	Infrastructural inequalities			●
F	Fairness and historical (in)justice	●		
G	Distrust in adequacy of sector-based, nation-based and 'one-size-fits-all' approaches	●	●	

Source: Own elaboration.

and wider social and cultural scope. (...) Will carbon savings in the circulation of arts be worth the cost of a Europe more vulnerable to extremist nationalisms? We have to look at the bigger picture that this whole issue implies. [IT3]

The fact that we are based in Portugal poses us quite a number of challenges, as a theatre company. The fact that our country is a very peripheral one, at the edge of the European continent ... The fact that the country's railway network is very small and very old, and that has not been renewed for at least 100 years, also makes it very difficult, in national terms, to avoid choosing the car to go on tour, for example, and to not use the airplane when it comes to international travel, because the Portuguese railway network is not combined with the European railway networks.¹⁶ [IT1]

Conclusion

In lieu of a conclusion: the complex contextual situatedness of the green transition

Although we have underlined the more political and ethical dimensions of the conflicts and fears voiced by cultural professionals throughout our inquiry, the fact remains that there is a richness of potential conflicts/fears arising in all three different levels: political, policy, and practical. This could be a powerful indication that - despite the massive discursive adherence to the sense of urgency around tackling climate change and environmental degradation - arts practitioners are very much aware that doing that presents

specific challenges *vis-à-vis* their social and professional context. Their statements potently illustrate the range of complexities and perplexities motivated by the green transition, as well as the need to be cautious with “one-size-fits-all” solutions which are typically propelled by rapidly expanding international political agendas. In addition, they clearly articulate the indisputable need to promote significant transformations towards a more eco-responsible arts sector with the challenge of overcoming various structural weaknesses that to this day still mark the possibilities for development of the arts field in some European countries, while also incorporating concerns with social justice and historic reparation of global inequalities. Critically, they help us understand the essential need to approach the entanglement of the arts and sustainability in a way that does not avoid the inherent complexity, nor the dissent that the issue entails, even if that might mean working through challenges and contradictions of gigantic proportions.

The analysis we were able to do within the scope of this paper is limited to an overall assessment of major frictions and contradictions that arise when arts practitioners are confronted with the ecological imperative. The way they are conveyed does not at all, we expect, frame them as being an absolute obstacle to the adoption of environmental-friendly actions. In fact, as we have also seen, the best part of our respondents was adamant about the need to progress towards a greener sector. Instead, these results are relevant as a powerful cautionary tale, in at least two ways.

One the one hand, the perspectives and experiences of Portugal-based art practitioners remind us that a proliferation of how-to handbooks, practical guidelines and toolkits, institutional reports and legislation might not be enough to foster concrete actions if certain structural (social and economic) difficulties and inequalities are not overcome – and that there is a need for the sector to further explore context-appropriate, social justice-oriented decarbonisation strategies. This entails remaining sceptical of globalising directives aimed at horizontal public policy-making, which can hardly produce

16 <https://www.thelocal.es/20230302/why-are-there-so-few-trains-between-spain-and-portugal>

the same results in different contexts. *Hard facts* such as different traditions of arts funding, and funding levels, stability of cultural policy frameworks, access to information, infrastructure, acquisitive power, etc., need to be better reflected in policies and publications. But *soft facts* play a role, too, and they become apparent in the struggle to either translate, adopt or reject fast-spreading keywords related to the “green” transition. In fact, in the Portuguese language, for example, there is no easy equivalent to the use of the word “green” in a sentence such as “greening the theatre.” But this is not (only) a grammatical or translation problem, but again one of context-sensitive embodiment. Anecdotal evidence of this is rich. An administrator of a top cultural institution recently approached me at a public gathering, quietly whispering about a just-discovered urgent internal need: in order to engage the staff, they needed to find the corresponding vocabulary in Portuguese that could help everybody make sense of the institution’s ecological efforts. As another culture professional put it, “As cultural agents, we need to analyse and reflect on (...) the discretionary application of sustainability models taken from toolboxes with clean, green graphics written in English. (...) The widespread use of English terms in the field of sustainability shows the assimilation of discourses colonised by a global English from emancipated minds that we reproduce without question.¹⁷” *Le parole sono importanti!*, words matter, as Nanni Moretti¹⁸ reminds us.

Another way in which the partial results we have discussed here may be relevant is the fact that the underlying *political* nature of the majority of the concerns they raise is a strong reminder that the ecological imperative will never be fully addressed through engaged isolated interventions. This is a strong endorsement of Taxopoulou’s claim for robust “climate governance” mechanisms, since her research clearly showed that “[t]here are certainly limits to what the sector can achieve through self-regulation. The transition requires wider, systemic change, all-encompassing regulatory and support frameworks and an unprecedented recalibration of public and private investment” (Taxopoulou, 2023: 37). This reference to “wider, systemic change” can be taken broadly, with regard to changes in terms of the current socio-economic model, but it obviously also encompasses the need for major changes in the very way the cultural sector has become accustomed to operating and, as such, calls for transformation in the field of cultural policy and, importantly, in arts management itself. In fact, although the need to respond to the demand of ecological

sustainability has been dubbed as the green *transition*, the changes it brings about are less a transition from one behaviour to another than a deeper transformation – one that points towards system change, especially given that the arts and culture sector has been operating on “survivalist mode” (Elfving, 2020), strongly conditioned by the growth-oriented capitalist paradigm (Dragisevic Sestic, 2021) and over reliant on expansionist and productivist processes (Rodrigues and Ventura, 2024).

Implications for arts management

A final short reflection that this paper wants to suggest is precisely about the degree of transformation that the decarbonisation and green/just transition strategies entail *for the field of arts management*. As many recently published reports maintain, the cultural sector will have to fundamentally be ready to reposition itself in this new reality, dismissing any attempts at “normality” and interrogating the sector’s modes of production and operation (The Shift Project, 2021). Likewise, the scope of transformation required in the arts and culture realm may (and perhaps should) lead to a fundamental transfiguration of cultural policies. Arts management will thus be required to contribute to innovation in cultural policy-making to future-proof them in a climate-changed, carbon-negative world. Whether that means simply adapting/updating current policies or introducing emergent/disruptive concepts and measures into cultural policy (Torrens, 2021) remains to be seen.

Just so, part of our research (Rodrigues, 2024) has been focusing on various elements that have pushed the field of cultural management to review its assumptions and *modi operandi*, arguing that the field is at a critical juncture that we must fully acknowledge and seize.

This critical juncture of arts management is characterised by a shift in the focus of arts managers’ concerns. Since they are finally freed from explaining what is it that they *do* (the historical process of emergence and social legitimisation of the profession being almost complete), they can now dedicate themselves to discussing *how they work*. Put differently, they can engage in finding and debating the ethical and critical foundations of their daily doings and confront some of arts management’s underlying premises and basic processes. Case in point, arts managers have been highly active in facilitating international networking, presentation and constant travel in an unsanctioned system of high mobility, hopping on and off of conferences, festivals, and many other kinds of professional gatherings.

The idea of mobility (...) has become the defining element of success. It doesn’t even matter what you’ve done concretely, you just list I don’t know how many residencies in three

17 Thanks to Ana Carvalhosa, producer and student of our Post-Graduate Programme in Arts Management and Sustainability, for the statement.

18 This is part of a scene of Nanni Moretti’s 1989 film *Palombella Rossa*, in which the author/actor almost hits a journalist while shouting: *Le parole sono importanti!* after she insistently questioned him using foreign words. I thank artist Paula Diogo for the reference.

countries, and put together a European network - it's getting to this level of abstraction. Your job is more and more about interconnecting, and less about what you actually do.¹⁹

Arts managers, being responsible for the distribution of works of art and artists, have been determining agents of internationalisation practices, actively participating in the plethora of festivals and platforms that offer visibility and “leverage” to a series of “rising stars,” following one another at a dizzying, consumerist pace. Arts managers have also been consistently working towards expanding their audience numbers, their reach, their budget, their sponsorship, and sometimes even their buildings.

The proximity of this professional field to this constant quest for power and continuous growth is now fundamentally challenged by the discussions around “scaling down” or “slowing down” as some of the strategies towards a greener future. Importantly, if one is to seriously consider the political and ethical concerns expressed by cultural practitioners in our survey, they suggest that arts managers should work on a critical examination of its own professional underpinnings, on the values and specific language it has developed and spread, and not only come up with practical or prescriptive solutions for decarbonising their operations. I posit that this is fundamentally a good thing. It allows us to look at this critical juncture as a turning point, rejecting the expansionist and productivist ethos that was for such a long time at the core of arts management, and push it towards a conceptual and practical reassessment of its assumptions and workings. It might just be that the ecological imperative invites arts managers to the table, engaging in the most important conversation of the years ahead.

Data availability statement

The raw data supporting the conclusions of this article will be made available by the authors, without undue reservation.

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Conflict of interest

The author declares that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

¹⁹ Author's interview to Rogério Nuno Costa (Rodrigues, 2024).

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Creating value from intangible cultural heritage—the role of innovation for sustainable tourism and regional rural development

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Based on evidence from two exploratory case studies, the article examines how intangible cultural heritage can promote sustainable rural development by creating value for rural communities. The studied communities in Bavaria, Germany, and Le Marche, Italy, are closely tied to traditional agricultural practices and their historical legacies. In the German case study, alpine pasture farming has sustained its cultural landscape and tourism for generations, while in the Italian case, the rural sharecropping legacy evolved into a culinary heritage project. Bad Hindelang (Germany) stands out as a mature destination with a long history of sustainable tourism, achieved through collaboration between farmers, conservationists, and the local community. The region balances tourism, conservation, and ecological farming through community participation and collective action. In contrast, Le Marche region (Italy) has only recently experienced increasing numbers of international tourists, but seems well-situated to exploit opportunities for cultural and culinary tourism development. The Marche Food and Wine Memories project has preserved the oral memories and the culinary heritage of former sharecroppers, yet economic value for the region has so far been limited. Post-COVID-19, the region may benefit from increased demand for tourism in culturally appealing, authentic and less crowded destinations. The article emphasises that intangible cultural heritage can enrich the quality of life of local residents and enhance visitors' experiential value. Innovative approaches like storytelling and participatory engagement make these cultural expressions accessible to wider audiences, including tourists, thus benefiting heritage communities in various ways. Both cases highlight the role of innovation, with Bad Hindelang's eco-model promoting ecological farming and Le Marche's project preserving sharecroppers' heritage through corporate heritage marketing. Collaboration among various stakeholders has

been a key to success in both cases. The article also illustrates the range of functions fulfilled by intangible cultural heritage, from restoring social dignity to maintaining landscape aesthetics and ecological integrity.

KEYWORDS

intangible cultural heritage, innovation, value creation, sustainable development, rural tourism, culinary tourism, alpine pasture farming, storytelling

Introduction

As highlighted by the Council of Europe's *Frame Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society* ("Faro Convention") cultural diversity and intangible cultural heritage are crucial for social cohesion, sustainable development and people's quality of life (Council of Europe, 2005). The convention presents a paradigmatic shift away from a static, public-sector driven concept of cultural heritage as "exceptional" towards non-static "commonplace heritage" with bottom-up management and a focus on heritage communities (Council of Europe, 2005; Cerquetti and Romagnoli, 2022). As part of a strategic foresight exercise, the International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and restoration of Cultural Property (ICCROM) stresses the future importance of cultural heritage, which "in all its diverse forms and interpretations, should serve to enhance the wellbeing of people and the sustainability of our planet" (Heritage et al., 2023, p. viii). Implicit in the above-mentioned conceptualisations is the notion of "use value," which has been criticised for the risk of commercialisation and commodification of culture. On the one hand, cultural values can be compromised and corrupted, e.g., due to overtourism and the "touristification" of sites (Vecco and Caust, 2019). On the other hand, use value may contribute to safeguarding and enhancing cultural heritage by attracting resources and increasing community awareness (Cerquetti and Romagnoli, 2022). Recent contributions have thus stressed the importance of valorisation and impact assessments to determine the economic and social value of culture (ESPON, 2020; Ioannou, 2021; SoPHIA, 2021).

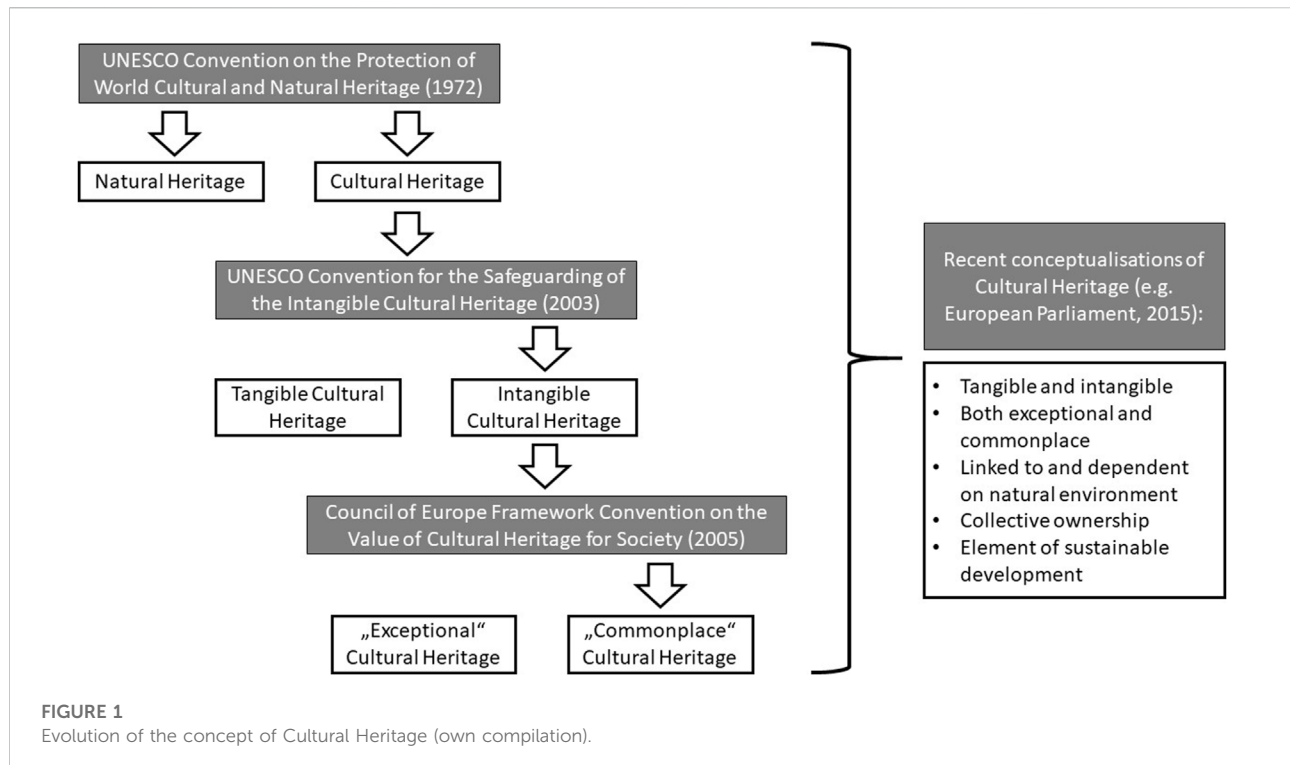
However, there is a need to examine in more detail whether and how innovative approaches to cultural heritage management promote sustainable development and enhance the quality of life of heritage communities. Income streams and jobs linked to tangible cultural heritage in the form of "exceptional" heritage sites such as those listed in the UNESCO World Heritage List are relatively straightforward to assess (ESPON, 2020). In contrast, it appears more difficult to determine the cultural, social and economic value of "commonplace," especially intangible cultural assets that are, nonetheless, very important for a shared cultural identity at the local level. Likewise, the contribution of culture and creative industries to urban renewal and rebranding cities is fairly well-understood (cf. Heritage and Copithorne, 2018; Borin and Juno-Delgado, 2018 for overviews). Less is known, however, about the current and potential role of intangible cultural heritage in

promoting value for rural regions. Against this backdrop, this contribution aims to investigate the impact of intangible cultural heritage on sustainable development and quality of life through the creation of value from tourism and other economic activities in rural communities. Based on case study evidence from two rural areas in Italy and Germany the article explores whether intangible cultural heritage linked to traditional agricultural practices creates benefits for rural communities and, hence, contributes to sustainable local development.

In the sections that follow, the conceptual framework and methodology are explained, followed by the presentation of the two case studies. We analyse and compare the two cases, looking at their contributions to safeguarding the concerned regions' intangible cultural heritage, economic and social impacts on rural communities and potentials for sustainable tourism and (agriculture-based) business development. The article concludes with a summary and discussion of the main findings, as well as some perspectives for other destinations in Europe and elsewhere.

Conceptual framework

Cultural heritage is an object of study within an increasingly transdisciplinary literature, involving scholars from diverse fields such as anthropology, history, geography, management science, sociology, tourism, and conservation. The existence of a common cultural heritage, collectively held by a group of people in a particular spatial context, was first acknowledged by the Venice Charter for the Conservation and Restoration of Monuments and Sites in 1964 (Vecco, 2010). A few years later, in 1972, the UNESCO Convention on the Protection of World Cultural and Natural Heritage stressed the universal importance of cultural heritage, which has to be responsibly managed and safeguarded for the sake of future generations. Natural and cultural heritage are clearly distinguished in this convention, while both are given equal importance. According to the UNESCO convention, cultural heritage refers to monuments, groups of buildings and sites, which are of "outstanding universal value" from the point of view of history, art, science, ethnology, or anthropology, or for their aesthetic properties (UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation), 1972). The Convention's isolated focus on *tangible* cultural heritage, however, was soon criticised as too narrow and restrictive, as it excluded the multitude of non-material expressions of culture,



which in many cultures and regions, especially outside of Europe, are often relatively more important than the material culture (Vecco, 2010). Consequently, another UNESCO convention was devoted to intangible cultural heritage in 2003 (UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation), 2022). In Article 2 of the 2003 convention, *intangible cultural heritage* is defined as:

“the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills—as well as the instruments, objects, artefacts and cultural spaces associated therewith—that communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals recognize as part of their cultural heritage. This intangible cultural heritage, transmitted from generation to generation, is constantly recreated by communities and groups in response to their environment, their interaction with nature and their history, and provides them with a sense of identity and continuity, thus promoting respect for cultural diversity and human creativity” (UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation), 2022, p. 5).

This definition indicates a close link between people’s intangible cultural heritage and their natural environment, promoting a sense of belonging and identity that is tied to a particular territory and natural landscape. It also builds a conceptual bridge to sustainable development and the Agenda 2030 of the United Nations (UN), even if the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) do not directly refer to cultural

heritage as a central pillar of sustainable development (Demartini et al., 2021). This link is explicitly made in the Faro Convention, which highlights the value and potential of cultural heritage as a resource for sustainable development and quality of life (Council of Europe, 2005; Cerquetti and Romagnoli, 2022). In the same vein, the European Parliament (2015) acknowledges that “culture and cultural heritage are shared resources and are common goods and values that cannot be subject to an exclusive use, and their full potential for sustainable human, social and economic development has yet to be fully recognised and properly exploited, both at the level of EU strategies and the UN post-2015 development goals.” The evolution of contemporary notions of cultural heritage is graphically summarised in Figure 1. The contributions in Cameron (2023), however, highlight some of the difficulties in developing and managing cultural heritage resources, including insufficient stakeholder participation, the traditional but artificial separation between culture and nature in heritage conservation and the distinction between tangible and intangible cultural heritage.

Conceptually linked to intangible cultural heritage is the notion of *heritage community* (Cerquetti and Romagnoli, 2022). According to the Faro Convention (Council of Europe, 2005, p. 6), a heritage community has “a variable geometry without reference to ethnicity or other rigid communities. Such a community may have a geographical foundation linked to a language or religion, or indeed shared humanist values or past historical links.” Consequently, heritage communities can be defined at various spatial scales, for instance at the level of a

village or town, an administrative district, a region or a nation. In Art. 2 of the Faro Convention, a heritage community is defined as consisting “of people who value specific aspects of cultural heritage which they wish, within the framework of public action, to sustain and transmit to future generations.” Citizens are thus regarded as protagonists and co-designers of cultural interventions rather than mere recipients of public interventions. This notion of heritage communities potentially contributes to sustainable innovation in tourism, as citizens’ willingness to preserve and transmit their culture could promote more authentic encounters and experiences, enhancing tourists’ awareness of and respect for the cultural heritage and the landscape in which it is embedded (Cerquetti and Romagnoli, 2022, p. 45).

As stated above, cultural heritage is expected to create value for heritage communities. It may, for instance, create jobs and contribute to skills development and economic growth through the promotion of tourism (European Parliament, 2015). The *concept of value*, however, deserves further clarification and must not be confused with the pluralised term *values*. According to the Cambridge Dictionary, values refer to “the principles that help you to decide what is right and wrong, and how to act in various situations.” As suggested by Borin and Juno-Delgado (2018), values can be regarded as important elements of “cultural ecosystems.” Such ecosystems are united by a regional identity and common cultural values that are shared by different stakeholders in a particular territory. In contrast, the notion of *value* implies something of worth, important or useful. In this study, value refers to all kinds of benefits that can be linked to the intangible cultural heritage of a defined territory. Apart from economic benefits, such as jobs and income, local stakeholders may also assign value to perceived social and cultural benefits (Borin and Juno-Delgado, 2018). For instance, social and cultural value can be assigned to networks and membership in associations, interpersonal trust, quality of life, cultural or creative enterprises, commonly-shared traditions and collective memories of the past. In line with the concept of sustainable development, it appears adequate to add ecological and environmental benefits as another important value dimension. Use value in this study may thus refer to the economic, social, cultural or environmental benefits to heritage communities that are derived from intangible cultural resources. In addition, experiential value may be created for visitors or customers who “consume” products or services linked to cultural heritage.

Methodology

Exploratory evidence from two case studies is presented to assess the contribution of intangible cultural heritage to sustainable development and quality of life of rural communities, as conceptualised in the framework explained

above as economic, social, cultural, environmental and experiential value. Case studies as a method of empirical enquiry are well-suited to investigate abstract concepts and contemporary phenomena in a real world context (Yin, 2003). Due to the inherent connection between intangible cultural heritage, heritage communities and their territory, case studies are particularly valuable to produce concrete, reliable and valid knowledge (Flyvbjerg, 2006). It should be stressed that case studies are neither a particular research method, nor are they an exclusive domain of qualitative research (Ragin, 1987). Hence, both objective, quantitative data (such as available statistics), as well as subjective, qualitative insights (e.g., from the researchers’ personal observations in the field, on-site discussions and online interviews with local stakeholders and experts) have been analysed in order to present the case study findings. Single-case studies are the most common form of case study inquiry. Nonetheless, dual or multiple-case studies are generally preferred over single-case designs (Yin, 2003; Stake, 2006). A two-case study design was chosen not just for comparative reasons, but more importantly to generate insights from diverse settings, looking at one example (Bad Hindelang, Germany) with a history of over 35 years and another more recent example which has evolved from an oral history project (Le Marche, Italy). The cases are located in rural regions of Italy and Germany and were selected due to their commonalities with regard to innovative forms of stakeholder engagement and development of culture-based products. They also serve to illustrate the varied ways how intangible cultural heritage can enhance the experiential value of visitors and customers in rural destinations.

As regards material cultural heritage, both Italy and Germany have a high density of monuments relative to other European nations (ESPON, 2020). Among the state parties that ratified the 1972 UNESCO World Heritage Convention, Italy currently has the largest (58 sites) and Germany the third largest (51 sites) number of inscriptions on the list of cultural and natural heritage sites. Together, the two countries represent almost a third of the EU’s population and roughly 16% of its surface area. In terms of per-capita GDP, Germany is above (117%) and Italy slightly below (96%) the EU average (EUROSTAT, 2023). Despite their absolute and relative wealth, both countries possess a considerable area of “inner peripheries,” i.e., territories with poor economic or demographic potential and/or poor access to services. To overcome regional disparities in such peripheries, the development of infrastructure and connectivity, social innovations, networks, exogenous linkages and territorial capital have been proposed (ESPON, 2017). Intangible cultural heritage appears as one possible type of “territorial capital” that could contribute to regional development in such peripheries. To scrutinise this proposition, the case studies investigate the role of intangible cultural heritage in two particular geographic settings, describing the heritage communities and assessing the various types of value that can be linked to such assets.

Several years after Italy (2007), Germany ratified the UNESCO convention on intangible cultural heritage in 2013.

In response to Article 16 of the convention, UNESCO maintains a Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity to “help demonstrate the diversity of this heritage and raise awareness about its importance.” The Register of Good Safeguarding Practices contains programmes, projects and activities that “best reflect the principles and the objectives of the Convention” (UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation), 2023). Including the latest (2022) additions, UNESCO lists 567 elements on the Representative List and 33 Good Safeguarding Practices. Among these are 17 elements related to Italy and seven to Germany. Another 76 elements are listed as requiring “urgent measures to keep them alive” (UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation), 2023). Apart from the global inventory, member states of the convention keep nationwide lists of intangible cultural heritage. Germany’s Nationwide Inventory of Intangible Cultural Heritage currently lists 144 elements: 128 cultural practices and expressions, and 16 examples of good safeguarding practices.

The first case examines the “High Alpine Agriculture in Bad Hindelang,” which is inscribed in Germany’s national register of intangible cultural heritage as an example of “good safeguarding practices” (German Commission for UNESCO, 2023). Mobile livestock management on pastures at varying altitudes is a sustainable form of land use typical for and widespread throughout the Alps (Bätzing, 2015; Bätzing, 2021). In Bad Hindelang, the cultural practices related to traditional land management have been well-preserved and are closely linked to tourism development in the region. The Italy case study explores the use value of the “Marche Food and Wine Memories” project. The project is a private-sector initiative, driven by a winery in connection with a start-up company in Offida, a village in Le Marche region. The project is based on the oral memories of the region’s last sharecropping farmers. Sharecropping is a system of land tenancy in which landowners allow landless farmers, the sharecroppers, to till the land in return for a share (usually 50%) of the crop produced on the land. While this practice had disappeared in most parts of Italy, it was still common in the Marche region until the second half of the 20th century (Cerquetti et al., 2022).

As typical for case studies, this article draws on a range of published and unpublished sources, data and materials, including project reports, scientific articles, monographs, websites, field visit notes and protocols, photo and video documentations, observations, and formal and informal qualitative interviews and group discussions with local residents, experts and other stakeholders. More specifically, research for the Bad Hindelang case study included on-site and online interviews with tourism stakeholders, experts and members of the local farmers’ association to gain insights into the evolution of the “eco-model” of sustainable farming and to assess its achievements to date. The Italian case study is based on narrative interviews conducted with 100 former sharecroppers in 17 villages of Le Marche region. This interview

technique was not intended to gather exact data or statistics but rather to encourage the interviewees, many of whom were illiterate, to communicate personal experiences in their own words (Atkinson, 2011). The interviews were recorded and filmed, resulting in more than 130 h of audio and video recordings. Triangulation from the multitude of materials and perspectives helps to cross-validate findings and enhances the internal validity of the case study findings.

Alpine pasture farming in Bad Hindelang, Germany

Case study setting

Bad Hindelang is a rural municipality in the southernmost administrative district (Landkreis) of the German State of Bavaria. In 2022, the municipality had a total population of 5,342, scattered over 6 villages and some smaller hamlets (Bayerisches Landesamt für Statistik, 2022). It has an area of 137 km², out of which around 80% are protected as landscape and nature conservation areas. The municipal area shares an international border with Tyrol in Austria and covers diverse landscapes and altitude levels, from the river valleys (around 800 m a.s.l.) to Hochvogel peak (2592 m a.s.l.) in the Northern Limestone Alps.

Tourism is the economic mainstay of Bad Hindelang. Due to its topography, many outdoor recreation activities from hiking and mountain-biking in the summer to skiing and other winter sports can be offered. Health tourism is another pillar of local tourism and has a long tradition in some of the villages. Hence, the municipality is an established tourism destination within the well-branded Bavarian holiday region of Allgäu. According to Max Hillmeier, the tourism director of Bad Hindelang, tourism contributes around 80% to the local economy in terms of value added and creates approx. 1,400 jobs (pers. comm.¹). Before the COVID-19 pandemic, around 200,000 guests generated about one million guest nights per year. In 2022, the municipality was almost back to pre-pandemic levels, with 198,000 guests and 985,000 guest nights (Markt Bad Hindelang and Bad Hindelang Tourismus, 2023).

Intangible cultural heritage in Bad Hindelang

The “High Alpine Agriculture in Bad Hindelang” was included in Germany’s National Register of intangible cultural heritage as a “Good Safeguarding Practice” in 2016. The inscription refers to the traditional practice of alpine pasture

1 Information derived from personal communications and interviews with local experts and stakeholders is marked with “pers. comm.”

farming, which is common across all countries of the European Alps. As agricultural land in the villages of the steep mountain valleys is naturally limited, this land is primarily used for arable farming and hay-making. Hay is stored as fodder for the winter, when the livestock is kept on the village farms. In the summer, livestock is grazed on upland pastures at varying altitudes to make optimal use of the vegetation. Upland pastures thus serve to extend the fodder base for the livestock, allowing farms to survive despite the limitation of farmland (Bätzing, 2021). While it is assumed that alpine pasture farming has been widely practiced for thousands of years, its connection with dairy farming in the Alps is a more recent phenomenon. In the Allgäu region, cheese-making was introduced in the early 19th century.

The German term *Alpe* (or *Alm*, plural: *Alpen*) does not just refer to the high-altitude grazing areas of the livestock (mostly cattle in Bad Hindelang), but also to the farm buildings and shelters erected on-site to accommodate the staff (“Äpler”) and their agricultural equipment during the annual grazing period from June to mid-September. There are 46 *Alpen* on the territory of Bad Hindelang, covering 56% of the municipality’s territory and forming the largest contiguous area of pasture lands in the Bavarian Alps. The land is owned by the State, the municipality, cooperatives, or by private individuals or companies. Notwithstanding the land ownership status, livestock management on the pastures typically involves collective practices. For instance, individual farmers may graze their livestock on land owned by a cooperative, or cooperatives collectively hire staff to jointly look after the animals of several farmers during the summer (Marktgemeinde Bad Hindelang, 2018). To preserve the cow’s milk on-site, cheese and butter are produced on so-called *Sennalpen* during the summer (Boeckler and Lindner, 2002; Eberl Medien, 2014; Bätzing, 2021). The term *Galtalpen* refers to a more frequent variety of alpine pastures, which are exclusively used for the summer grazing of young cattle, therefore involving less labour (German Commission for UNESCO, 2023).

Reacting to the dwindling number of farms and rapid loss of alpine pastures since the second half of the 20th century, the Bavarian State, along with conservationists, started to offer ecological compensation payments for farmers willing to shift to organic farming in the late 1980s. While the offer was made to all farming communities in the Allgäu region, only the farmers of Bad Hindelang initially took up the idea in 1988 (Lindner, 2000). In order to be eligible for the compensation scheme, the farmers formed an association for the conservation of nature, culture and landscape in 1992 (“Hindelang Natur & Kultur—Verein für Landschaftserhaltung e.V.”). Since then, Bad Hindelang farmers have been cultivating not just the high alpine pastures but also the small farms in the valleys according to strict principles of organic farming. This approach has become known as the so-called “eco-model Hindelang” (“Ökomodell Hindelang”).



FIGURE 2
Alpine cultural landscape in the Allgäu mountains, Germany
(source: authors’ photo).

The heritage community of Bad Hindelang

The practice of alpine pasture farming is still commonly found throughout the Alps and in other mountainous regions of the world (Bätzing, 2021). The focus here is limited to the special case of the heritage community of Bad Hindelang, whose success in safeguarding alpine pasture management was acknowledged by the German Commission for UNESCO with the inclusion in the national inventory of intangible cultural heritage. The actual bearers of this heritage are, primarily, the 61 active members of the farmers’ association “Hindelang Natur & Kultur e.V.” and their families. Due to the large spatial extent of alpine pastures, the shared cultural identity and the dependence on tourism, most residents are directly or indirectly involved in farming, tourism, or even both sectors. It thus seems appropriate to regard the total resident population as the heritage community of Bad Hindelang, which geographically coincides with the municipal area.

Value creation from intangible cultural heritage

Alpine pasture management in Bad Hindelang creates value for the heritage community in several regards. *Economic value* can be linked to agriculture and tourism. In Bad Hindelang, most farming members of the association complement their income from other business activities or wage employment of other household members, e.g., in tourism, craft or trade. Here as in other parts of the Bavarian Alps, agricultural support schemes enhance the profitability of the farms and secure their survival, as the income from selling dairy products, livestock and meat alone would not be sufficient for the farms to survive (Wanner et al.,



FIGURE 3

A *Sennalpe* (cheese-producing alpine farm) that also caters to hiking tourists in the Allgäu mountains, Germany (source: authors' photo).

2021). According to interviews conducted with two executive members of the farmers' association, it is only due to the ecological compensation payments that farms still operate in a profitable manner. While the decline of small farms could not be stopped completely since the formation of the association, it is taking place at a much slower pace as compared to other parts of Bavaria, as stressed by the current chair of the farmers' association. Meanwhile, the founding members of the

association have passed on their skills and knowledge to the next generation, safeguarding not just the traditional way of alpine pasture management with its ecological functions but also the cultural practices and regional identity attached to it (German Commission for UNESCO, 2023).

Apart from agriculture, the heritage community also derives direct economic benefits from tourism. Despite the fact that alpine pastures are not natural but "cultural landscapes," they are of high aesthetic quality and create *experiential value* for tourism (Figure 2). Fourteen of the 46 *Alpen* cater to outdoor tourists on-site, operating seasonal restaurants that sell drinks and home-made food (Marktgemeinde Bad Hindelang, 2018). High-quality food such as cheese and butter is produced and processed on the *Sennalpen* and sold directly to tourists on-site or to local shops, hotels and restaurants in Bad Hindelang (Figure 3). Ten *Alpen* are members of "Allgäuer Alpengenuss," a cooperative brand and association of 72 *Alpen* across the whole Allgäu region with a concession to sell regional food and drinks (Allgäuer Alpengenuss e.V., 2023; Figure 4). Some farmers offer lodging for tourists, either simple accommodation on the pastures, or holiday flats in their village homes.

Alpine pasture management fulfils important ecological functions, thus creating *environmental value* for the heritage community. Livestock grazing keeps the alpine pastures free from encroachment of shrubs and trees and considerably enhances biodiversity (Lorenz-Munkler, 2020). In addition, the farmers commit themselves to adhere to the principles of ecological farming under the guidelines of the association. These

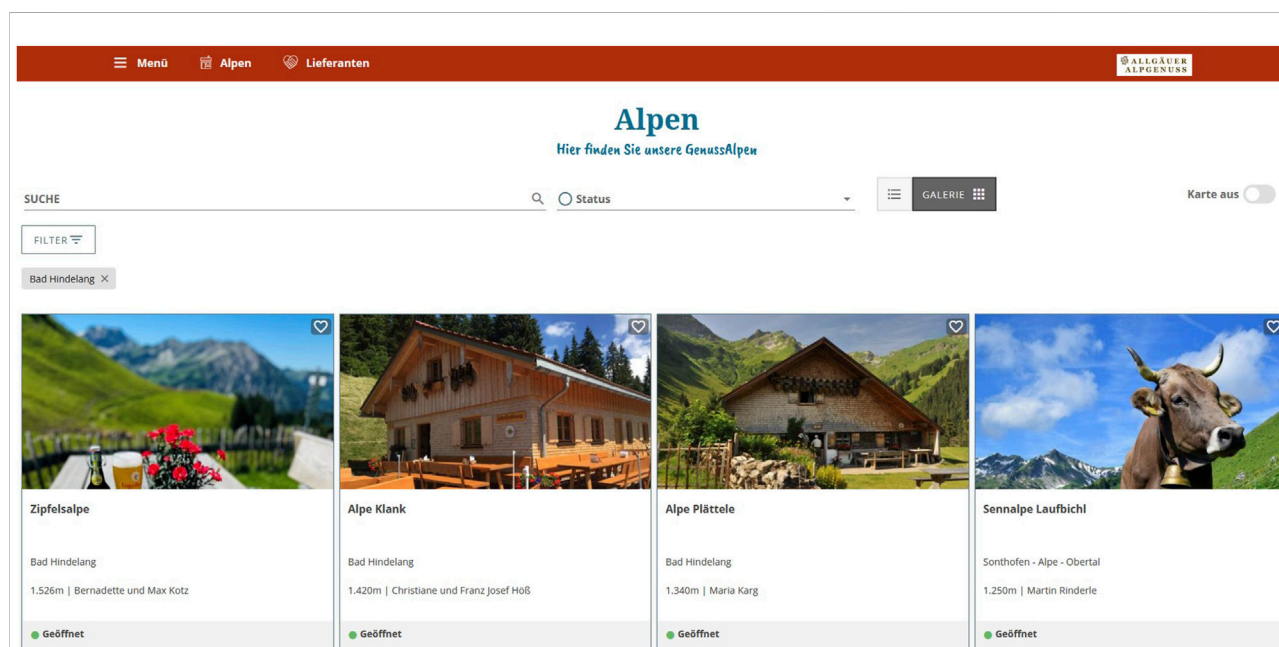


FIGURE 4

Screenshot from the website of "Alpengenuss", a cooperative regional brand of Alpine farmers in the Allgäu mountains to promote organically produced food (source: Allgäuer Alpengenuss e.V., 2023, <https://www.alpengenuss.de/>, last accessed 26 July 2023).

include restrictions with regard to stocking density, use of fertiliser and pesticides and fodder purchases. It is in recognition of the extra labour and the contribution to landscape protection that the farmers receive the ecological compensation payments from the state and the municipality.

It appears difficult to separate the *social and cultural value* related to alpine pasture farming, which has shaped the regional identity and lifestyle of the residents in Bad Hindelang and elsewhere in the Alps for centuries. Arguably, the intangible cultural heritage plays an important role in residents' daily lives. As of August 2023, the municipality lists 87 formally registered local associations (*Vereine*; Markt Bad Hindelang, 2023b). These associations cater to a range of communal purposes, activities and interests which require collective action. Some associations are related to agriculture, forestry, hunting, fisheries, mountain rescue and fire services. Others deal with tourism, sports, culture (music and theatre groups, organisation of festivals) and other aspects of social life, such as religious, educational or political organisations. Residents' voluntary engagement in such a large number of community-based organisations indicates a strong social cohesion, place identity and sense of belonging. As noted by the interviewed farmers, the eco-model has improved their social recognition in the community. Non-farming residents realise that the farmers' hard work preserves not just the ecological and aesthetic value of the alpine landscape but is also immensely important for tourism and the local quality of life (Lindner, 2000).

The cultural identity of the heritage community was highlighted in a strategic development process that the municipality launched in 2019. The community development strategy "Our Bad Hindelang 2030" was conceptualised as a multi-sectoral "living space concept" with an integrated tourism strategy. It shall guide any community projects and political decisions in the coming years, taking into account the various needs, concerns and interests of different economic sectors and stakeholder groups. The intensive public participation and consultation process started with a survey, in which 3,500 local residents and guests participated. Thereafter, 200 residents designed concrete strategies for the development of the community, in line with sustainability principles. This innovative process resulted in the establishment of a new community brand, which is based on people's commonly shared values. These values were circumscribed with attributes such as contemplative, original, headstrong and open-hearted, and summarised in the phrase "where the soul of the Alps is at home" (translated from German). Ecological sustainability, a strong sense of community, a "living" cultural heritage, quality and innovativeness were highlighted as important principles for future developments in the public participation process (Markt Bad Hindelang, 2023a).

Following the inception of the eco-model, tourism marketing since the 1990s has focused on promoting a low-impact, sustainable tourism that attracts families and rather demanding, nature-loving tourists that appreciate a high-quality tourism offer in a healthy, scenic mountain

environment (Lindner, 2000). Apart from general restrictions such as shortage of labour, tourism development has been relatively stable in the past decade, with a good average occupancy and a rapid recovery after the COVID-19 pandemic (Markt Bad Hindelang and Bad Hindelang Tourismus, 2023). The focus on environmental sustainability, cultural values and quality is also reflected in the new tourism development and marketing strategy that was developed on the basis of the living space concept. The eco-model and the sustainable tradition of alpine pasture management are highlighted as part of the local lifestyle that residents are willing to share with the guests (Markt Bad Hindelang and Bad Hindelang Tourismus, 2023). The guest card "Hindelang Plus" includes various benefits for overnight visitors such as free public transport, use of cable cars and ski lifts and a range of "local experiences." The latter offer authentic experiences accompanied by local guides, e.g., sunrise hikes, cooking classes or tree-planting with a forester.

Case study summary

As shown above, alpine pasture farming is part of a cultural ecosystem and lifestyle that is of significant economic, ecological, social and cultural value not just for farming households but for the whole heritage community of Bad Hindelang. This is expressed in the shared values derived from the past that give direction to current and future developments in the fields of agriculture, tourism and landscape protection. Mutual benefit is derived from an enhanced destination image and a competitive tourism offer with a unique appeal, based on the traditions, products and the lifestyle of the mountain farmers. The farmers' decision to collectively commit themselves to organic farming and maintaining the alpine pastures, as promoted by the eco-model Bad Hindelang, has proven sustainably successful in consolidating the number of farms and preserving the biodiversity and recreational value of the alpine landscape. The acknowledgement of the "High Alpine Agriculture in Bad Hindelang" in Germany's register of intangible cultural heritage also promoted its scientific documentation and preservation for future generations. Meanwhile, several books have portrayed the 46 *Alpen* and the hard work and life style of the farmers as well as the culinary heritage of the region (Eberl Medien, 2014; Marktgemeinde Bad Hindelang, 2018; Marktgemeinde Bad Hindelang, 2022).

Marche food and wine memories, Italy

Case study setting

The *Marche Food and Wine Memories* project is located in and around Offida, a rural municipality (commune) with

4,693 inhabitants in the south of Le Marche Region in central Italy. The municipal territory covers 49.6 km², most of which belong to the rural areas surrounding the historical town centre. They represent the typical landscape of Le Marche with rolling hills, vineyards, olive groves, wheat fields, farms and traditional rural houses. The village is situated approximately 20 km from the coastline of the Adriatic Sea and around 45 km from the mountains of Monti Sibillini National Park. Offida is located within the Tronto River basin at an elevation of roughly 293 m above sea level.

The village and rural surroundings suffered from a series of economic and social challenges in the last 30 years. The first one was de-industrialisation. Starting from the beginning of the 1990s, the closure process of local industries was essentially due to the termination of government subsidies in the southern Marche provided by the public “Cassa del Mezzogiorno” fund (Ridolfi, 2007). The de-industrialisation process intensified from 2008 to 2013 because of the European economic crisis. The main legacy of this combination of corporate “welfarism” and de-industrialisation is a lack of local entrepreneurial spirit and skills (Unione Europea, Regione Marche, 2014). The second challenge was de-population. Like other rural territories in Italy and other European countries, the inner peripheries of Le Marche have suffered from industrialisation and the competition of urban development (ISTAT, 2020). Cities are better connected and offer more opportunities in terms of jobs and services, which is especially appealing to the young generation. The depopulation trend intensified after 2016 and 2017 because of a series of earthquakes in central Italy, which also affected the southern Marche region. De-industrialisation and de-population put the rural areas of the southern Marche region into a fragile position. The combination of an economy largely consisting of family-run SMEs and micro-companies (especially in the agricultural sector), an aging population and the lack of a skilled workforce—due to the rural exodus and brain drain towards the northern regions of Italy and other countries—make it difficult to find local resources for reversing these negative trends.

More recently, tourism promises to leverage regional rural development in Le Marche. With an unprecedented 2.5 million arrivals and 11.3 million guest nights, 2022 was a historic year for tourism in Le Marche, surpassing even pre-pandemic levels. While the majority of visitors of Le Marche are Italian nationals from nearby regions, a noticeable and above-average increase of foreign visitors was recently observed with 399,173 arrivals (16% of total arrivals, up by 69% as compared to 2021) and 1.7 million guest nights (15% of total guest nights, up by 66% from 2021). The main nationalities contributing to this growth include Germany, the Netherlands, Switzerland, France, and Belgium. Rising numbers of tourists are also recently reported from Britain and Poland (Regione Marche, 2023; Regione Marche, Ufficio di Statistica, 2023).



FIGURE 5
Townscape of Offida, Italy (source: authors' photo).

Offida is part of the Italian association “I Borghi più belli d’Italia” (English: the most beautiful villages of Italy) that aims at promoting small rural towns of historical and artistic interest that are typically located “off the beaten track” of popular tourist itineraries (Figure 5). For all 20 Italian regions, the association’s website lists 313 villages, among which 29 are located in Le Marche. The member villages are described as “fascinating small Italian town[s], generally fortified and dating back to the period from the Middle Ages to the Renaissance,” usually rising around castles or noble palaces and often surrounded by defensive walls and towers (I Borghi più belli d’Italia, 2023).

Intangible cultural heritage of Le Marche

The community of Offida and the surrounding rural areas share the common legacy of the *Mezzadria* (sharecropping) system. The Italian term derives from Latin, meaning “divided in two-halves”. *Mezzadria* refers to a contractual arrangement between a landowner and a landless sharecropping family, whereby the landowner gave the sharecropper’s family some land for cultivation and a small house to live in, in exchange for a 50% share of the fruits of their work (especially half of their wheat harvest but also of any livestock, cheese, vegetables and eggs produced by the *Mezzadria* farm). In Italy, this arrangement started in Tuscany in the ninth century and had spread throughout central Italy until the 14th and 15th centuries (Anselmi, 1995). In the Marche region, *Mezzadria* was extensively practiced and ended only in the 1980s, following industrial development and the resulting exodus from the countryside. In 1982 the Italian parliament passed a law to transform the remaining sharecropping arrangements into rental contracts (Passaniti, 2017). However, the legacy of the

Mezzadria system has had an important socioeconomic and cultural impact in Le Marche in terms of shaping the agricultural landscape, rural architecture, work ethics, craftsmanship and culinary and wine traditions. To gain a full understanding of Le Marche region and its people, which are called *marchigiani* in Italian, understanding the Mezzadria system thus seems important.

As explained earlier, intangible cultural heritage is conceived as a dynamic, collective and “living” asset that will be transmitted across generations if it is perceived as valuable or part of people’s own identity. The *Marche Food and Wine Memories* project was initiated by the winery Ciu Ciu, with support from the cultural heritage start-up company i-strategies, both based in Offida. Ciu Ciu winery was founded in 1970 by a former sharecropper who had bought the land he had previously cultivated for a landowner. The project emerged from the desire to save the intangible cultural heritage that is part of the company owner’s family and territory. The family also had an interest to add value to its brand and products “by rediscovering the food and wine roots of our territory,” which are a distinctive aspect of local culture and regional identity (Cerquetti et al., 2022, p. 8). By collecting the oral memories of the last remaining witnesses of sharecropping, the project aims to safeguard and enhance the culinary heritage linked to food and wine in the southern Marche region. The project combines corporate heritage marketing with educational and cultural tourism activities.

Culinary heritage as a concept is usually defined under the umbrella term of food heritage. According to Bèssiere (1998, p. 279), food heritage refers to “agricultural products, ingredients, dishes and cooking artefacts. It also comprises the symbolic dimension of food (table manners, rituals), techniques, recipes, eating practices and food-related behaviours and beliefs.” Starting from the definition of culinary heritage as “elements and practices related to the preparation and consumption of food” (Timothy and Ron, 2013) the *Marche Food and Wine Memories* project has focused on four elements of the local culinary heritage:

- *Culinary heritage recipes*: Culinary heritage recipes refer, *strictu sensu*, to the cooking process of food in terms of ingredient lists to use, ways to prepare it, cooking accoutrements, instruments, practices, know-how and recipes;
- *Culinary heritage identity*: Culinary heritage identity belongs to the symbolic and emotional dimension of food. Food contributes to defining ourselves, our communities and our intersubjective relations with other groups. In this definition, the ethnic, national, political and local dimensions of food are included;
- *Culinary heritage habits*: Culinary heritage habits evoke eating traditions, regular eating practices, and the role cultural and social influences have on food traditions. It

also includes how people eat and why they choose a certain food instead of another one;

- *Culinary heritage sociability*: Culinary heritage sociability alludes to how food fluidifies, favours, includes or excludes, and, more generally, conditions social relations. It also allows us to understand why we choose to eat with certain people and why we prefer not to eat with others.

The heritage community of Offida

Following the definition provided by the Council of Europe (2005), a heritage community is distinguished by awareness of the cultural heritage and a sense of belonging. The heritage community of Offida, defined as the population of the rural town and its surrounding area, has preserved at least five different types of cultural activities, which have been transmitted over the generations²⁻⁵:

- *Rural art and culture festivals*: these local festivals usually have two formats. They can be historical reenactments of ancient rural practices like wheat threshing like the “Rievocazioni della Trebbiatura” (English: reenactments of threshing). The second festival format relates to modern representations of the rural heritage in the form of music festivals, theatre and art performances. A recent example of the latter is the “Appignano del Tronto Rural Art Festival.” Supported by the European Union, this festival is part of a pilot project to promote rural regeneration based on cultural and natural heritage.
- *Rural sagra*: Sagra are short open-air culinary festivals that usually take place in summer (July and August). Each sagra is dedicated to a specific type of local food, e.g., pasta, meat or fish. People can taste traditional preparations of this food during the sagra days (generally between two and five) in a sociable and relaxing atmosphere. Every village or neighbourhood organises their own sagra. The community of Offida organises the *sagra dei taccù*, the latter referring to the traditional pasta made from flour and water that was typically consumed by sharecropping families in the past.
- *Rural museums*: In the Marche region, there are numerous rural museums that collect and share information and objects about the region’s rural past and ancient

2 Cf. the webpage of the Ruritage project: <https://www.ruritage.eu/replicators/marche-region/>

3 Museum website: <https://www.feelsenigallia.it/da-vedere/musei/museo-storia-mezzadria-sergio-anselmi.html>, last accessed: 21 August 2023.

4 Museum website: <https://www.museionline.info/musei/museo-delle-tradizioni-popolari-di-offida>, last accessed: 21 August 2023.

5 Museo della Fisarmonica, <https://www.museodellafisarmonica.it>, last accessed: 21 August 2023.

practices. The most important museum relating to the cultural heritage of sharecropping is the “Museo di Storia della mezzadria Sergio Anselmi” based in Senigallia, Ancona province. In Offida, there is another rural museum, the “Museo delle tradizioni popolari.”

- *Rural craftsmanship courses*: Rural craftsmanship courses are organised by local non-profit and cultural associations to transfer traditional craftsmanship skills related to the sharecropping civilisation to the younger generation. In Offida, a popular course to create handmade wicker baskets is organised annually by the local “Associazione Culturale Offida Nova.”
- *Rural dances and music*: Rural Italy is rich in traditional music and dances. In the Marche region, the accordion (Italian: *fisarmonica*) is recognised as part of the local identity with an internationally recognised museum in Castelfidardo. The typical traditional dance *Saltarello* is spread through an informal network of local associations and transmitted via courses and dance festivals.

Value creation from intangible cultural heritage

The intangible cultural heritage promoted by the *Marche Food and Wine Memories* project has created significant *social value* for the heritage community of Offida and elsewhere in the countryside of the southern Marche region, which is still affected by the economic transformation processes of the recent past. Perhaps most importantly, the narrative interviews with the former sharecroppers have promoted social inclusion. Because almost all of the sharecroppers were illiterate, narrating their life stories orally was the only way for them to adequately express themselves. Becoming the protagonists of the interviews let them realise the relevance of their personal life stories. This challenged the sense of inferiority that they, as rural peasants, had always felt. Furthermore, the interviewees often experienced a new sense of dignity related to their rural past and felt happy to express their personal feelings during the interviews. The project also promoted intergenerational dialogue and social cohesion, especially when grandchildren of the former sharecroppers took part in the interviews. In many instances, young adults thus discovered their own family background for the first time. Getting to know their ancestors' life stories and interacting with their grandparents during the interviews resulted in an intense emotional experience. The project thus promotes people's regional identity and sense of belonging.

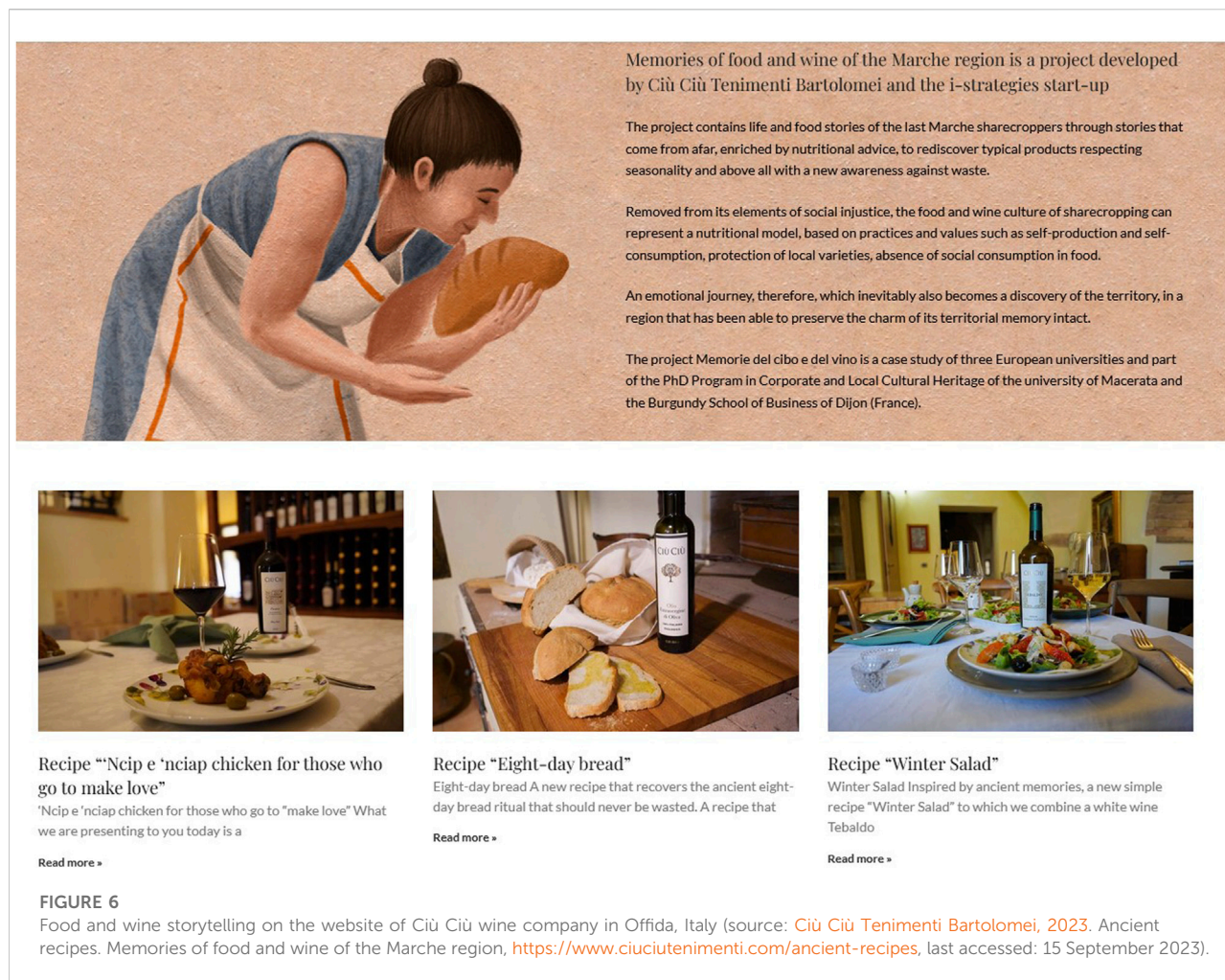
Apart from social value, the recorded interviews also have an intrinsic *cultural value*. The sharecroppers' oral memories are a rich source of information on ancient agricultural practices and life styles that have influenced the heritage community of the southern Marche region until today. The recorded interview material is safeguarding this heritage before people pass away

and their memories get lost forever. The key technique used for the dissemination of the sharecroppers' oral memories and cultural heritage marketing is storytelling. Hence, after transcription, stories linked to the local history, identity and traditions, values and feelings were selected for further use in storytelling online and onsite (Cerquetti et al., 2022). The interviews also present a unique historical archive of the regional heritage that can be made accessible to researchers and scholars. During the phase of interview recording, the sharecroppers' food and wine memories were shared on a Facebook page.⁶ The local community reacted through posts expressing interest, nostalgia and pride in their rural past. Especially people with a family background in sharecropping started reclaiming their rural identity, values and origins. As a result, the grandchildren of former sharecroppers frequently send messages asking to interview their grandparents.

One specific outcome of the project is the collection of traditional recipes based on the interview material. These were developed into “food stories,” which highlight anthropologically interesting aspects of the culinary heritage. A professional cook, inspired by the oral memories, recreated and adapted the sharecroppers' ancient family recipes, paying attention to authenticity and sustainability. The names of the recipes are not descriptive but evocative, named after the feelings that people used to have toward certain dishes (e.g., “Desired Saint Antonio sausage,” “Tedious tagliolini,” “Ncip e ‘nciap chicken for those who go to make love”). Using digital storytelling, 40 short videos were produced, of which 30 have already been published on the corporate website and social media pages of the Cìù Cìù wine company and thus made accessible to a wider audience in Italian and English (Figure 6). Each video is presented with a short description, the recipe and a matching wine recommendation (Cìù Cìù Tenimenti Bartolomei, 2023). As mentioned above, one initial aim of the project was the creation of *economic value* for the winery, which is difficult to quantify at present. The company's activities could serve as a benchmark for other companies in the region intending to invest in cultural heritage marketing. “[T]he local and corporate cultural heritage can be a marketing lever for ‘Made in’ companies, especially those operating in the food and wine sector.” In increasingly global markets, corporate heritage marketing in a specific territorial context could therefore create a competitive advantage for companies (Cerquetti et al., 2022, p. 8). In recognition of their engagement in cultural heritage promotion via the Marche Food and Wine Memories project, Cìù Cìù Winery was shortlisted in 2022 for Italy's Corporate Heritage Awards.⁷

⁶ <https://www.facebook.com/memoriedelciboedelvino/>

⁷ <https://www.corporateheritageawards.it/>



Economic value beyond the level of single companies could be derived in the future from cultural and culinary tourism. As compared to other Italian regions such as Lazio, Veneto or Tuscany with their long history as popular tourist destinations, Le Marche arguably still has potential for further growing tourism. The region has been described as “Italy in one region” or “Italy off the beaten path” and offers a wide range of cultural attractions and scenic landscapes. Tourism could contribute to regional rural development in Le Marche and thus help to overcome the economic challenges of the region that were described above. However, the rural countryside of Le Marche is currently lacking tourism-related infrastructure, promotional activities and effective place branding particularly for the international market.

In 2018, i-strategies started to organise guided and gamified tours to typical sharecroppers’ houses in the rural countryside of Acquaviva Picena, near Offida. Both tour formats use educational storytelling to explain the agricultural history of the Marche region through the voices and faces of those who were part of the territory’s heritage (Cerquetti et al., 2022). The gamified tour

format was developed through an EU-funded heritage marketing project⁸ and successfully tested with several international student groups on-site.⁹ The game, named *Pantafga* after a legendary creature in the local folklore, is organised as a team competition. After reading non-fiction stories based on the former sharecroppers’ memories who lived in the locality where the game takes place, the teams have to discuss and find the correct answers to questions related to the stories (Vagnarelli, 2022; Figure 7). The guided and gamified tours conclude with a tasting of local wines at the showroom of Ciù Ciù winery in Offida, or with another culinary experience. Positive feedback from these pilot activities underlines the *experiential value* for domestic and international visitors that could be utilised for the development

⁸ Heritage Marketing for competitiveness of Europe in the global market, <https://marher.eu/>, last accessed: 21 August 2023.

⁹ Cf. the videos produced during the activities on the i-strategy YouTube channel: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCJK6vFbllXxxELvkcE-Gnmng>, last accessed: 21 August 2023.



FIGURE 7

The agricultural landscape of Le Marche, Italy provides an attractive setting for visitors to explore and learn about the area's intangible heritage during a gamified tour (source: authors' photo).

of innovative package tours that involve authentic cultural heritage experiences for tourists (Cerquetti et al., 2022). Storytelling, the key method applied both in corporate heritage marketing and the pilot tourism activities, seems particularly promising to actively and emotionally engage tourists.

Case study summary

The *Marche Food and Wine Memories* project presents an unusual combination of heritage marketing and cultural tourism activities by leveraging the agricultural and culinary heritage in a specific rural territory. The project's outputs to date, including the audio and video material based on the oral memories of former sharecroppers and the production of 40 videos, have created considerable social and cultural value for the residents of the southern Marche region. Since 2018, around 600 visitors, about half of them international tourists and university students, experienced the intangible cultural heritage of the southern Marche region during a guided or gamified tour of the rural countryside near Offida.¹⁰ While this figure is not impressive, the innovative practices piloted by the project at the corporate and community level have the potential to be further scaled up.

At the corporate level, the project has started to demonstrate the potential of cultural heritage marketing. It is expected that it will create value for the company's own brand and products, but it also presents an innovative approach to safeguard and promote

the territorial heritage with support from the private sector. Arguably, cultural heritage cannot be sustainably developed and safeguarded with public sector funding alone. As regards the heritage community of Offida and the surrounding countryside, the project contributed to rural regeneration and social cohesion. Besides its focus on the intangible heritage through storytelling, the project also contributed to a regeneration of physical assets, such as reconstruction or renovation of abandoned farm buildings, such as the typical sharecroppers' houses. Moreover, the visits of tourists and students with interest in the Marche region's rural history and cultural identity could serve as a model for a regenerative, low impact and sustainable tourism development in the region. Social cohesion among the heritage community has been strengthened by sharing oral memories through storytelling, thus reversing negative feelings about a painful past. The former sharecroppers and their descendants can now reconsider their history with a new sense of dignity based on their culinary heritage, resulting in the promise of a more sustainable rural future.

Discussion of case study Results

The intangible cultural assets held by the heritage communities of Bad Hindelang (Germany) and Le Marche (Italy) are each quite distinct, demonstrating the broad scope and context-dependency of cultural heritage. Nonetheless, the two case studies also share a range of commonalities. Both are located in rural areas of the respective countries, both deal with traditional agricultural practices and both are closely connected to the territory's historical legacy. As regards the German case study, the sustained practice of alpine pasture farming has preserved the cultural landscape and its recreational value for tourism over several generations. In the Italian case, the archaic practice of sharecropping, which used to be linked to a poor class of rural peasants, has continued up until late in the 20th century before it finally disappeared. However, the rural peasant's culinary heritage was safeguarded and transmitted into the present through a cultural heritage project. The project could further promote culture-based tourism experiences, such as the pilot tours organised by the start-up company in cooperation with the wine company. Both case studies show how intangible heritage assets can contribute to sustainable rural development, if "use value" is created for local communities. Table 1 provides a summary of the main research findings.

As regards the economic valorisation of cultural heritage through tourism development, the two case studies represent opposite stages of the destination life cycle (Butler, 2011). Bad Hindelang, a popular resort for outdoor and health tourism in the Allgäu region of the Bavarian Alps, has reached maturity in the destination life cycle. With an early focus on sustainable tourism and innovation, the destination has mastered a constant rejuvenation even beyond the COVID-19 pandemic. The

¹⁰ Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, no tours could be conducted in 2020 and 2021.

TABLE 1 Overview of case study findings.

Variable	Bad Hindelang, Germany	Le Marche, Italy
Intangible cultural heritage assets	Farming and cultural practices related to alpine pasture management	Collection of oral memories of former Mezzadria sharecroppers; culinary heritage
Heritage community	Bad Hindelang municipality (six villages and alpine pastures)	Offida and surrounding rural areas of southern Marche region
Economic value	From farming and outdoor tourism (hiking, skiing, mountain-biking)	Corporate heritage marketing; potential for cultural tourism based on “Marche Food and Wine Memories”
Social value	Acknowledgement of farmers’ contribution to landscape protection; social cohesion (e.g., organisation of festivals relevant for tourism)	Social cohesion, social inclusion, intergenerational dialogue; appreciation of culinary traditions; educational value
Cultural value	Preservation of cultural traditions connected with alpine pasture management (e.g., “Viehscheid”)	Historical archive of Mezzadria legacy; preservation of culinary heritage (e.g., ancient recipes)
Environmental value	Preservation of biodiversity and cultural landscape	Preservation of rural dwellings (former sharecroppers’ homes)
Experiential value (for visitors)	Preservation of “idyllic” mountain scenery for outdoor tourism and sports; participation in rural festivals; encounters with locals through guided experiences; high-quality local food	Guided and gamified tours to explore the history and life stories of former sharecroppers in the rural countryside; high-quality local food and wine

Source: own compilation.

foundation for such a continued, successful tourism development was laid almost four decades ago through an innovative alliance of local farmers and conservationists that was forged via the eco-model. The survival of the small mountain farms has preserved the cultural landscape, the life-style and the cultural heritage associated with alpine pasture farming. All these elements are equally important for tourism. Since the inception of the eco-model, tourism in Bad Hindelang has developed sustainably—not antagonistically—alongside farming, nature conservation and protection of the cultural landscape. As elsewhere, land use conflicts between tourism, conservation and traditional economic activities such as farming, forestry and hunting continue to exist. It seems that the heritage community is able, however, to resolve such conflicts based on a joint agenda that was first initiated by the local farmers’ association and reaffirmed in 2019 during the participatory development process for a new strategic plan for the municipality. Today, tourism plays a dominant role in the local economy. With a focus on quality rather than merely quantitative growth this is not opposed to the objectives of alpine pasture farming and nature conservation. Visitors benefit from the recreational value of the alpine landscape and enjoy authentic cultural experiences and encounters with locals. A vivid illustration of this is the annual “Viehscheid,” as the traditional Alpine cattle drive at the end of the grazing period is called in Bad Hindelang. While the festive cattle descent and separation of herds in the villages has certainly become a major tourist attraction, it is deeply rooted in the local heritage and a major social event for the whole community. Without collective action and social cohesion, such institutions would not have survived or lost their authentic appeal and, hence, become less attractive for visitors.

The southern Marche region is yet to be discovered by domestic and international tourism as a destination, as compared to more popular tourist regions in central Italy,

such as Tuscany. Located between the contrasting landscapes of the Adriatic coast and the Sibillini mountains and surrounded by rolling farmland and vineyards, Offida and the southern Marche region are equally rich in cultural attractions. The region thus appears well-positioned for tourism development but is yet to leverage this potential. The Marche food and wine memories project has preserved the oral memories of the region’s last surviving Mezzadria (sharecropping) farmers—a heritage that otherwise would have been lost forever for coming generations. The social and cultural importance of the project for the heritage community is evident, as has been discussed above. However, economic value from the project has so far been very limited (cf. Cerquetti et al., 2022 for a detailed discussion). Feedback from domestic and international visitors who attended a guided or gamified tour organised by the start-up company was overwhelmingly positive. Such tours could be made available to a wider public, if suitable tourism industry partners are found, including tour operators specialising in novel cultural tourism offers. Arguably, in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, increasing demand for less known, less crowded and more authentic tourism destinations can be expected, offering an opportunity to scale up the activities pioneered by the project to expand the tourism offer of the southern Marche region (Cerquetti et al., 2022).

Conclusion and perspectives

Cultural diversity can enhance people’s quality of life and form a counterweight to an increasingly uniform “world society” shaped by just a few political superpowers and global companies. As demonstrated by the two case studies, it does not necessarily require “exceptional” forms of material culture, such as world-famous monuments, museums and paintings, to create value for heritage communities. Through innovative approaches that use

storytelling and engage stakeholders in a participatory manner, even less spectacular, “commonplace” expressions of the intangible culture could be made accessible to a wider public and benefit heritage communities in a variety of ways.

Innovation has played an important role in both case studies presented. When Bad Hindelang farmers teamed up with nature conservationists and adopted the ecological principles of the eco-model, they met with scepticism and disbelief by farmers from neighbouring villages. Only more recently have farming communities in other parts of the region followed suit, copying the approach of the eco-model. For the local farmers, the transition to ecological farming resulted in a more favourable income situation, thus explaining the survival and intergenerational transmission of alpine farms. But, as illustrated by one of the young-generation members of the association, the financial incentive of ecological compensation payments only partly explains this success:

“Many of the farmers in Bad Hindelang are idealists, for whom financial aspects often are not in the foreground. Instead, it is the joy, passion, and close connection to traditional agriculture, as it is still practiced in Bad Hindelang to this day. [...] Furthermore, it’s not only the farmers [...] who have a very close bond with their region, nature, and local culture, but also many of the citizens of Bad Hindelang, and naturally, the municipality of Bad Hindelang itself. This, along with the high appreciation shown to the farmers here, is what underpins the success of the eco-model: it is embraced and supported by all parties involved.”

As supported by this quote, a key factor of success for the eco-model Bad Hindelang was the collaboration between the farmers and the local community, including tourism stakeholders. The municipality has played a particularly important role in facilitating communication among all stakeholder groups and creating a common vision and common local identity as a basis for future development. Further expanding the eco-model and safeguarding the practice of alpine pasture farming across international boundaries throughout the Alpine region seems desirable to maintain biodiversity and resilience in fragile mountain landscapes. In the Alps, these are under increasing pressure not just from tourism and forest encroachment but also due to global climate change (Kotlarski et al., 2023).

In the Marche region, a wine company’s own family background sparked interest in preserving the oral memories of the last sharecroppers. While this land tenure arrangement had disappeared until the 1980s, its legacy has persisted in the region until today. Oral memories of the last sharecroppers resulted in the rediscovery of ancient recipes and inspired digital storytelling based on the local culinary heritage. Storytelling is also used during the guided and gamified tours in the rural places where those stories occurred, and this is successful to actively engage the tour participants. As highlighted by Cerquetti et al. (2022), the Marche Food and Wine Memories project has been successfully

preserving the cultural heritage of former sharecroppers so far but yet has to be fully adopted and exploited by the heritage community. Collaboration and networks across sectors as well as better communication between stakeholders is necessary, as underlined by the successful example of Bad Hindelang.

In Bad Hindelang, storytelling has also been practiced. Through short interviews in the latest guest magazine, prospective visitors get to know local people, such as an alpine farmer, a hotel owner, a mountain guide and a cook, even before their arrival. Recently, a picture book was published that intertwines traditional recipes from elderly village women with their life stories (Marktgemeinde Bad Hindelang, 2022). This approach is similar to the Marche food and wine memories, but a different format was chosen. Whereas the wine company in Italy uses digital storytelling, a printed book was the medium of choice in the Bad Hindelang case. In a globalised and increasingly digital world economy, storytelling appears as an adequate tool to create and promote a novel “ecosystem of hospitality” (Philipp et al., 2022). As demonstrated by both case studies, storytelling seems particularly promising for the valorisation of intangible heritage. However, further research in this area is needed, including an assessment of the effectiveness of storytelling in different contexts, in reaching different target groups and with different formats.

Concluding from the two case studies, intangible cultural heritage can contribute significantly to sustainable rural development and people’s quality of life due to creation of economic, social, cultural and environmental value. Such heritage assets are inevitably place-specific. They do not need to represent “spectacular” forms of cultural heritage with a universal value for humanity, such as the heritage assets protected under the 1972 UNESCO world heritage convention. Intangible cultural heritage, instead, serves other purposes. It can help to restore dignity to a heritage that a community does not feel comfortable about, as in the case of the Marche Food and Wine Memories project. It may also fulfil other important functions with benefits beyond the local level, such as maintaining a landscape’s aesthetic value and ecological integrity, as in the case of Alpine pasture farming. Both case studies illustrate that economic practices are always embedded in a particular ecological and social context and go well beyond just fulfilling material needs. Many other facets and variations of intangible heritage assets exist and could potentially create value for heritage communities worldwide, particularly in developing countries. Corporate heritage marketing, sustainable rural farming and tourism development were shown in this article as possible avenues for value creation. The Bad Hindelang example demonstrates the importance of cross-sectoral collaborations and involvement of different stakeholder groups, which has not yet occurred in the case of Le Marche. In any case, unearthing the treasure of intangible cultural heritage requires a thorough understanding of the locality and an empathetic, participatory approach.

Evidently, the case study approach chosen for this contribution comes with some limitations due to their illustrative character and the diverse range of aspects covered. A more rigorous, quantitative study

is recommended to reveal and monitor the specific value of cultural heritage in a particular geographical setting, e.g., number of jobs created, development of income or company turnover. However, it was the intention of this article to present and compare two good-practice cases in their real-world setting to highlight the role of innovation and creativity in developing intangible culture heritage assets for sustainable development, including opportunities for tourism and other businesses. These examples can be used as a starting point to search for and develop “commonplace” cultural assets in (potential) tourism destinations elsewhere.

Data availability statement

The original contributions presented in the study are included in the article/supplementary material, further inquiries can be directed to the corresponding author.

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Author contributions

MS has contributed the introduction, methodology, conceptual framework, case study on Bad Hindelang and the discussion of results. GV has contributed the case study on Offida, with complementary input from MS, and made additions to the other sections. Both authors contributed to the article and approved the submitted version.

Conflict of interest

Author GV was employed by the company i-Strateges scarl.

The remaining author declares that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

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Cultural policy and emotional clusters in the context of an organic crisis. Performing arts and emotions between top-down and bottom-up negotiations

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Navigating the complexities of nowadays cultural and political landscapes requires acknowledging the significant role emotions play in shaping cultural policy processes. This paper addresses this crucial issue by conducting a thorough examination of two distinct case studies: the EU Creative Europe programme, focusing on cultural participatory practices within the Audience Development (AD) priority, and the city context of Naples, during its “Season of the Commons” from 2012 to 2021. Through these case studies, this research delves into the intricate interplay between emotions, cultural policy, and political dynamics. Drawing from a multidisciplinary framework encompassing sociology, political science, and cultural studies, the analysis offers both theoretical insights and empirical evidence to define the concept of emotional clusters. These clusters represent a form of social adaptation in times of organic crisis, forming the foundation of novel and often unrecognized spaces of resistance that operate within the spectrum between hegemonic and counter-hegemonic realms. This work aims to critically reflect on the role of emotions in the tension between top-down cultural policymaking and bottom-up cultural practices by scrutinizing the connection between emotional clusters and the empirical evolution of cultural policy processes. In doing so, it aspires to provide empirical analysis of emotions as a means to comprehend contemporary decision-making procedures in cultural and policy/political dynamics, while suggesting coordinates for viewing cultural policies as a lively political matter.

KEYWORDS

cultural policy, cultural politics, political emotions, commons, performing arts

Introduction

In recent years, scholars in political theory and cultural studies have renewed their interest in the role that emotions play in their respective fields (Fisher, 2009; Ahmed, 2015; Castells, 2015; Nussbaum, 2015; Gielen and Lijster, 2017). Despite this interest, the empirical analysis of emotions in cultural policy and politics remains limited. Examining the global events of the past 15 years, along with the rise of illiberal neoliberalism (Fraser, 2013) reveals the significant role that emotions play in society today. They underpin left- and right-wing populism, new nationalisms, and radical movements (Laclau, 2005; Hardt and Negri, 2017), as well as various forms of cultural and civil engagement (Graeber, 2011; Della Porta, 2013; Lorey, 2013). Acting as binding agents, emotions have been crucial in protests advocating for pluralistic democracy and decentralised governance (Hardt and Negri, 2011; Mouffe, 2018). Therefore, understanding the role of emotions in decision-making processes within cultural policy and politics is urgently needed.

When I began my research, the central question was: “How do emotions function in the negotiation between top-down cultural policymaking and bottom-up cultural practices?” I focused on the period between 2012 and 2021 to understand the health of democracies in given contexts. From my analysis, this period seemed to be stuck in what the renowned political theorist Gramsci (2014) in his 1930s notebooks defined as an— a multifaceted crisis encompassing economic, cultural, political, social, and ideological dimensions. A crisis of hegemony that leads to the rejection of established political parties, economic policies, and value systems. However, it does not necessarily signal the collapse of the dominant order; rather, the old order seems to be moving towards an end while the new one cannot be born. In the midst of this turmoil, various contradictory symptoms emerge, reflecting both tangible political outcomes and intangible realms, such as emotions.

Building upon Gramsci’s notion of “organic crisis,” this article aims to examine the function of emotions in the tension between top-down cultural policymaking and the bottom-up cultural realm, thereby illustrating contemporary cultural and policy/political dynamics and decision-making procedures. By exploring two case studies, I will provide theoretical insights and outline methodological approaches, while examining the behaviours of cultural and policy actors engaged in promoting pluralistic cultural policies and politics. Ultimately, the goal is to offer a framework for an empirical analysis of emotions in this complex landscape and to understand the contextual changes stemming from the “organic crisis.”

Theoretical context: understanding emotions

There are various reasons to examine the role of emotions in contemporary society. For example, in his book “Capitalist

Realism” (2009), Mark Fisher showed that the shift from Fordism to post-Fordism was organisational as well as emotional. This shift marked a move from top-down control of production to a decentralised control system focused on targets, missions, objectives, and results. According to Fisher, in a post-Fordist society, workers are expected to display a form of affection and emotional commitment that over time has become a benchmark to assess their professional effectiveness and quality. In line with Fisher, various thinkers, including Mouffe (2005), Harvey (2007), and Gielen and De Bruyne, (2009), have shown how capitalism and neoliberalism have entered the personal sphere, shaping needs, mobilising desires, and influencing personal preferences. As a result, neoliberalism has emerged as the dominant paradigm for democratic development and the pursuit of personal happiness (Fisher *ibid.*), limiting our ability to envision alternative cultural, social or political paradigms. Since the 1970s, neoliberalism has evolved into a mindset centred on the efficacy of free-market capitalism, minimal government intervention, and the assertion of individual liberties and happiness (Harvey, 2007) where technical experts are entrusted with political matters, depoliticising the public realm and intensifying the profound rupture between civil and political society (Stavrakakis, 2012). This has largely created the grounds for the gradual affirmation of illiberal neoliberalism worldwide, which has combined neoliberal economic policies with illiberal practices, such as the erosion of democratic institutions and the concentration of power (Fraser, 2013; Harvey, 2016), again implying emotionally charged responses.

Accordingly, Bauman (2016) saw a transition from the declaration of a universal human right to the pursuit of individual happiness, which has underpinned the social fragmentation in advanced capitalist societies. Pursuing individual happiness necessitates confronting fear, which is exacerbated by right-wing populism that needs to identify public enemies as sources of societal unhappiness and therefore promotes varying intensities of “projective disgust” (Nussbaum, 2015). This concept hinges on perceiving the self as “quasi-human” by betraying our own human and animal nature and attributing unpleasant odours and dirtiness to any form of diversity. Such sentiments of disgust, over the years, as Nussbaum showed, rationalise segregation under the guise of an irrational aversion to any diversity.

Through these initial theoretical approaches, I would like to highlight that political theory frequently underestimates the pivotal role that negative and positive emotions play in our societies (Mouffe, 2018). Politics relies on passion, which in turn, mobilises desires and acts as a binding force. Positive emotions are essential for sustaining political struggles, such as the cultivation of enthusiasm arising from the proliferation of social, political, and cultural interactions within larger communities, and serve to maintain momentum even in the face of setbacks (Graeber, 2011). Accordingly, emotions

intervened in the civil and political realms because of their dimensions. First, emotions possess a relational dimension in cultural politics (Ahmed, 2015). They extend beyond the private sphere, linking and transforming individuals within social groups. By involving other feelings and effects, they are an integral part of any political project. Second, emotions have tangible consequences in daily life with far-reaching social and political implications. As Nussbaum and Bauman demonstrated, they influence critical issues such as segregation against migrants, black cultures, or the Palestinian community, while other emotions such as passion and compassion act as common societal catalysts. All these emotions often start operating in the personal sphere. Finally, to reinforce this latest concept, emotions transcend class distinctions and are enacted in everyday life. As David Harvey noted (2016), struggles over the quality of (daily) life converge on broader, cross-cutting issues rooted in everyday matters. These struggles prioritise common public interests, transcending class distinctions or professional roles. They often stem from personal experiences of inequality and displacement and carry significant implications in the social and political spheres.

The emotional clusters

Building on these critical primary insights, I will share an initial definition of the central concept of emotional clusters that I will elaborate on in this paper (Ciancio, 2022; Ciancio, 2023). Through my empirical research, these clusters have emerged as temporary, informal value-driven groupings in which personal issues converge with the aim of reacting critically to neoliberalism. They are inhabited by top-down and bottom-up actors who have expressed (openly or quietly) the urgency to engage in struggles over the quality of (daily) life, i.e., to put matters of common public interest at the centre of their actions. They have experimented with co-imagining/co-designing new policy/political deliberations in favour of a pluralistic democracy and they operate within the interplay between individual happiness and human rights.

Accordingly, culture emerges as a significant domain for understanding and experiencing the multidimensionality of emotions. After all, culture is a socially shared repertoire of signs (Laermans, 2002), in which the meaning of life arises from connections with others and their social interactions, rather than from individual pursuits (Boas, 1995; Gielen and Lijster, 2015). Drawing upon Gramsci's interpretation (1916; 2014), culture is the realm of "systemic crises" where "common sense" is built, where the values, signs, and symbols produced reflect the social and political achievements or defeats of a society. Consequently, we can discern its revolutionary potential, as Gramsci posited, where individuals are not merely bearers of identities and traditions but active agents of transformation. This is why emotional clusters have appeared throughout my journey as a

kind of social adaptation and meaningful spaces of cultural resistance and imagination in times of organic crisis.

Methodological approach

To grasp the emotional clusters at work in bottom-up/top-down negotiations, I gradually focused on the personal views of people in two main case studies during my fieldwork: the Creative Europe programme and its Audience Development (AD) priority and the Season of the Commons in Naples between 2012 and 2021. I examined daily life, personal dimensions, forms of emotional collectivisation, and individual and collective endeavours when entering and challenging the public sphere in favour of pluralistic democratic endeavours.

The abductive reasoning

I utilised an abductive approach (Tavory and Timmermans, 2014) that relies on qualitative data analysis, theme identification, and a flexible research structure (Dubois and Gadde, 2002), which is particularly relevant in situations where information is incomplete or uncertain as was the case in my field of inquiry. The abductive approach included, on the one hand, *inductive* reasoning (Bryman, 2016), i.e., progressing from the observation of a particular context, event, or case and placing this in a broader analytical context. On the other hand, *deductive* reasoning allowed me to recognise the existence of multiple plausible explanations for a set of observations. To be effective, this procedure included the following qualitative techniques:

Autoethnography

I began by situating myself within the context of the research. My personal and professional connections in the Naples context and my professional position as a curator and cultural manager in the Creative Europe context were vital from the beginning. Through the auto-ethnographic approach (Russell, 1994; Russell, 1999; Ellis and Bochner, 2000), I immersed myself in both contexts. I grappled with significant political and economic changes, and discovered the means to analyse the succession of events and the array of emotions shared with colleagues, partners, and friends. These emotions turned out to be not just personal experiences but part of a broader phenomenon (Custer, 2014), allowing me to explore the initial definition of emotional clusters.

Multi-sited approach

Reality, as Marcus (2016) highlighted, is constructed across diverse spaces that are distant from each other but interconnected through shared behaviours and methodologies. Adopting Marcus's approach, I considered the hyper-connected

nature of the global context, the mobility of stakeholders, and the diffusion of political and policy participatory practices across the two case studies. This revealed that the results of top-down and bottom-up interactions transcend their immediate contexts. They are part of a broader, mutually inspiring atmosphere. In summary, the multi-sited approach allowed me to overcome the comparative logic between the two cases by observing behaviours and emotions within broader contexts, starting from the inner dynamics of each case study.

The testing process

Throughout this empirical study, radical forms of participant observation, such as Convoking (Haiven and Khasnabish, 2014), allowed me to create contexts in which active participation in the research field was shared and discussed with the participants. This technique was implemented by taking advantage of my unique dual role in the field (as both a curator and researcher), laying the groundwork for testing the insights gained, examining the changes in the meanings of key concepts, and initiating a process of theory design.

Data collection and categorisation

The above procedures allowed me to collect and categorise the data into three main groups: contextual, processual, and emotional. The first group pertains to policy documents, studies, and papers in cultural policy between 2011 and 2015, organised in a general grid according to topics, time periods, and keywords. The second group refers to the results of testing the initial assumptions that emerged from conferences and meetings I organised or from new studies I participated in. Again, the keywords and the changes in their meanings were organised in a grid. The emotional data that were the most difficult to grasp, were the experiences that took place throughout the period, with greater intensity between 2018 and 2021, despite the pandemic. Personal exchanges, social networks, participation in specific activities, dinners, coffees, travels, festivals, and personal events were some of the places where I enriched my understanding of emotional approaches, feelings, displacements, and beliefs. All these aspects were collected and systematised through keywords and a description of feelings, contextualising the latter according to the geographical and cultural contexts and enriching the general grid design with the previous two categories.

The emotional biotope

The Emotional Biotope is a conceptual framework in which the literature review, the on-site analysis, and all the data gained systematically converge. This framework was created from the integration of two previous empirical models: the Civil Sequence (Gielen and Lijster, 2017), which provides an analytical lens to explore the formation of collective actions in a transnational civil

context; and the Creative Biotope, designed by the sociologist Gielen (2018), which is an ideal-typical abstraction of four domains: domestic, peers, market, and civil. I applied and challenged Gielen's Biotope over time and, at its centre, I anchored the three transitions of the Civil Sequence, such as 1) the transition from negative to positive emotions, 2) the communication of feelings, and 3) the process of socialisation, including the move from the private to the public sphere. In its final stage, the conceptual framework allowed me to bring together the micro, meso and macro levels in the two case studies, where the micro is one of the personal views, the meso refers to the cultural and political dynamics in a specific context, and the macro represents the transnational dimension of my field. The three levels were addressed in each of the Creative Biotope's four domains, allowing me to analyse the emotional status, the beliefs and their behaviours, and the choices embraced by the cultural, political and policy players in each context.

In its final form, within the Emotional Biotope, the *domestic domain* relates to the personal sphere where I have examined value-driven choices at the beginning of cultural adventures (2012–2014). The *peer domain* focuses on informal professional exchanges, providing insights into the fluid nature of interactions between top-down and bottom-up actors (2012–2015). The *market domain* is concerned with to market regulations, including public norms and financial incentives. Here, I explored the overlap between policy paradigms, cultural trends, forms of cultural pluralism, and monolithism (2014–2019). Finally, the *civil domain* addresses the analysis of civil actions in the public sphere, where I analysed conscious efforts aimed at fostering enduring pluralistic change (2015–2021).

Case studies

I will highlight some of the results stemming from the empirical research of the EU's Creative Europe programme and the case studies of the city of Naples. While considering the ongoing mutation of forms of cultural participation and civil engagement in these contexts, I will share *where* I have seen interactions between top-down and bottom-up approaches giving rise to these emotional clusters, *why* these emotional clusters have evolved into transversal alliances among selected players, and *how* these alliances have impacted cultural policy procedures and often the co-design of new policy scenarios.

The creative Europe programme

The Creative Europe Programme was launched in 2014 and is the primary EU funding scheme supporting cultural cooperation across Europe. During its initial 7-year period (2014–2021), it represented 0.15% of the entire EU budget for

28 countries. It was organised into two independent sub-programmes (Media and Culture) and the Cross-sectorial strand. Composed of several actions and transversal priorities, it has influenced European cultural cooperation by co-financing, among others, EU networks, platforms, and cooperation projects across various fields, such as performing arts, visual arts, music, architecture, cultural heritage, literature, cinema, and interdisciplinary cultural policy experiments.

In this context, my investigation began within the cultural cooperation project Be SpectACTive (BS),¹ which I co-curated and coordinated from 2014 to 2022. By connecting 19 partners, and implementing cultural participatory actions in 15 EU countries, BS provided my initial privileged entry point into the EU context. Gradually, I expanded my focus to encompass a broader multi-layered ecosystem composed of cultural players involved in cooperation projects, EU networks, or EU platforms. I explored diverse participatory practices under the general umbrella of the Audience Development (AD) and Audience Engagement (AE) priorities, ranging from innovative experiments in horizontal decision-making to more conservative top-down approaches, including forms that merged the previous two in various ways.

While navigating these cultural participatory experiments, I often observed participants facing pressure from political and economic discontinuities, operating within a context of competing logic embodying diverse policy paradigms within the EU policy space. This dynamic involved the interplay between neoliberal mindsets and democratic participatory aspirations, as well as the overlap of “cultural democratisation” and “cultural democracy” policy paradigms within the EU programme. Over time, as Bonet and Negrier (2018) have suggested, these models have been both cumulative and sometimes contradictory within EU cultural policy. The top-down approach, emphasising quantitative evaluation of participation, frequently overlapped or conflicted with a policy model focused on cultural rights, which prioritised qualitative evaluation aimed at overcoming hierarchical perspectives, as in the case of cultural democracy. These tendencies not only coexisted within the EU policy design, but also within individual cultural institutions and cooperation projects, often clashing due to the differing needs, aspirations, and goals of cultural and policy actors.

In short, these differing approaches appeared to be an integral part of the EU decision-making process, particularly within the EU Commission. According to policy documents and existing literature (Hartlapp et al., 2014; Kandyła, 2015; Bauman,

2019), the EU Commission is perceived as both a neoliberal technocratic entity influenced by powerful Member States and as an accessible body in policy formulations and sectoral consultations. Following Hartlapp et al.’s (ibid.) indications, these two aspects are both true and confirmed when examining individual perspectives rather than institutional preferences within the EU Commission. For instance, internal actors, such as policy officers or higher-ranking officials, may hold contrasting positions on the shaping of the European agenda. These varying perspectives have had visible impacts depending on which positions prevailed, on the development of cultural programmes, values, and criteria for assessing the performance of beneficiaries in the EU context.

Opinion formation: the circles of exchange

By applying the analytical lens of the emotional biotope to examine the decision-making procedures within the EU programme, I have observed various levels of intersection between cultural and policy actors, which I have categorised into three main circles of exchange. The first circle operates at the local level, where collaborations are tested between spectators/citizens, artists, and local cultural institutions and organisations. They are co-financed by the EU programme, aligning with the overarching priorities of AD and AE. The second circle encompasses the trans-local space, where cooperation strategies are strengthened between cultural organisations, institutions, and cultural players across the EU. In this context, cultural cooperation projects, EU networks, and platforms take centre stage. The third circle involves exchanges between the trans-local space and the EU policy dimension, representing a potential arena of “creative proximity” between cultural and policy players, as revealed in some interviews.

Given the participants’ high mobility rate and the extensive network of interactions facilitated by the EU programme, I observed how the same individuals (artistic directors, cultural managers, researchers, and sometimes artists) engaged in collaborative efforts both at the local and trans-local levels. These actors were actively involved in cultural consortia at the trans-local level, while also sharing and conveying content and issues within the third level of exchange, bridging the trans-local and EU policy contexts. Similarly, EU policy officers exhibited comparable mobility across these three circles. They actively participated in events, brainstorming sessions, festivals, and conferences, aiming to enhance their understanding of participatory experiences while also promoting the core values of the EU programme.

Through my analysis in the peers domain, “coffee tactics” (as they were called during my conversations), informal exchanges, and personal encounters emerged as contexts for initial informal,

¹ Be SpectACTive is a large-scale action research and production-oriented cooperation project within the EU programme from 2014 to 2021, producing new cultural initiatives such as co-programming actions, co-creation processes based on an extensive EU residency programme, co-producing new shows, and co-commissioning of new artworks with the local communities.

professional interactions between cultural and policy players operating within these three circles. In these settings, emotional groupings emerged to facilitate potential changes within the EU programme and to address the shortcomings of policy efforts. The term “proximity” occurred frequently in my interviews and was used by both policy and cultural players to describe a gradual “getting closer” in informal relationships. According to one EU network representative, these informal relationships fostered “trust” and “respect” that “you cannot get via hierarchical formal venues.” From the perspective of an EU policy officer, “proximity” meant learning from the implementation of cultural actions as well as moving beyond a sense of policy/political solitude. The term “facilitator” often accompanied “proximity” in interviews within the EU policy realm, indicating a role in mediating communication between cultural players and the complex EU apparatus. Some interviewees saw themselves as “lobbyists for the cultural sector” within the EU institution, gaining the opportunity to raise issues to higher levels within the Commission.

To some extent, this process of proximity was the foundation for the opinion-forming process of cultural and policy players and was influenced by various factors, such as 1) personal understanding of the meaning of democracy, art, and civil cooperation, and implying an emotional and value-driven personal tension; 2) the necessity, in some cases, to overcome this (policy/political) solitude and to find allies to enhance the EU programme in a more pluralistic way; 3) the trust-building process conquered over time among the parties involved due to their credibility, reliability, and competence in the field; 4) the passion for democratic ideals acting as a driving force and binding agent in the process of proximity. Notable concrete outcomes of “getting closer” included changes in terminology. During this 7-year period, there was a transition from the term “audience” to “spectator,” and eventually to “citizen,” and “people,” indicating the evolving understanding of cultural participatory practices and the prevalence of the cultural democracy paradigm even in the definition of AD and AE in Creative Europe calls.

Another aspect worth mentioning is the “research time” within the EU programme, a term I coined and which I primarily encountered in the civil domain. For many cultural and policy players, this concept emerged as a practical response to the need for dedicated time and space for research, on-site evaluation, and reassessment of cultural actions. This research time was often considered “time stolen” through the creation of spaces within EU cooperation processes, EU networks, and collaborations between cultural and policy players and researchers. These spaces facilitated the intersection of theoretical research with the artistic sphere through forms of action research or participatory action research. The outcomes of these temporary research initiatives included studies, publications, and toolkits to identify emerging cultural and artistic models. They also examined both limitations and opportunities, highlighting the implications of cultural

participatory practices on democratic procedures, governance models, and their inherent contradictions.

Decision making process: interconnected lobbying strategies

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, these three circles served as the foundation for various lobbying strategies. Despite differences in scale and geopolitical dynamics, each circle developed strategies to establish agency within its realm. At the local level in the market domain, I analysed the intense relationships with communities and local networks that positioned certain local players as influencers in decision-making processes or as contributors to local policy regulations. In a trans-local dimension, cooperative projects or informal grassroots groupings focused on urgent matters representing a wider community. Similarly, EU networks, with their broader membership functioned as key stakeholders in the EU policy space, and they advocated for key issues at the policy level with the Commission.

A multi-level system of lobbying strategies emerged within the EU programme, which revealed more effective outcomes when it continued within the EU institution. I termed this process an “interconnected lobbying strategy,” which started at the local level, progressed through to the trans-local level, and finally reached the EU Commission to influence higher levels of EU decision-making. Within the Commission, these lobbying strategies empowered EU parliamentarians, EU policy officers, or higher policy roles to negotiate and implement change. This resulted in concrete achievements, such as studies, new actions, and funding schemes (e.g., the Engage Audience study or new policy journeys on sustainable mobility and then on mental health and wellbeing). This process of inter-legitimation between the policy context and the cultural field unfolds gradually, with individual motivations, passions, and evolving opinions playing essential roles. Here, the emotional clusters represented the merging of shared aims, creating temporary spaces of exchange and facilitating the formation of temporary alliances between top-down and bottom-up players. As Harvey argued, it was evident that transversal alliances surpass class distinctions and, in this case, professional roles that were vital to focus on cross-cutting issues such as cultural accessibility, cultural rights, and freedom of expression.

Between 2014 and 2020, a series of events underscored the need for a more pluralistic democracy. These events included global movements, the migration emergency, terrorist attacks, Brexit, the rise of global populism, and the progressive affirmation of forms of privatisation of the public sphere. Emotional and value-driven transversal alliances intervened in specific spaces, such as the Annual Work Programmes, which outline strategies and priorities for implementation within the Commission’s Multiannual Framework. While changes to the

legal basis of Creative Europe were not implemented, annual priorities and policy actions were launched in response to evolving social and political contexts. Since 2016, specific policy instruments, such as preparatory actions, new priorities, and calls for participation have been more frequently used to enrich the Creative Europe programme (KEA, 2018). These initiatives provided new definitions, exemplified by the shift from marketing approaches to the cultural democracy paradigm in AD and AE strategies. The experimental nature of the Cross-Sectorial Strand also addressed issues, such as the commons, bottom-up policy actions, refugee emergencies, and sustainable mobility (e.g., the Perform Europe programme). In 2016, a call for the integration of refugees highlighted the programme's adaptability. At a time when nationalism and *sovranism* were on the rise across the EU, with some member states (e.g., Italy, Hungary, Poland) limiting mobility, a call was launched to integrate refugees into cultural practices despite a very small budget. This experiment created the preconditions for subsequent annual calls with more structured attention to cultural practices aiming to address the migration emergency.

In summary, a decision-making process emerged that involved, on the one hand, negotiations between established co-legislator bodies (Commission, Parliament, and Council) and, on the other hand, an empirical space established by the collaboration of cultural and policy players from their respective territories, performing within the few spaces left open by the programme. This small space attributed a certain "porosity" to the cultural policy cycle, meaning that the top-down and bottom-up realms did not interrupt the emergence of new instances, but rather facilitated the transformation and adaptation of policy schemes in favour of pluralistic democratic development. This process involved specific "struggles" that may have taken years to yield results, leading to failures, unmet expectations, conflicting relationships, and unexpected surprises.

However, in other cases, players faced difficulties in deciding whether to favour policy progressions. Interviews within the Commission revealed that this closer connection "...puts a lot of pressure to deliver and to satisfy the sector (...)." The risk, it was argued, is "...a snowball effect, because you can create expectations, but you cannot support those, so you really need to be careful..." This is due to several factors such as, political solitude, the difficulty in finding internal and external allies, and the consequent inability "to fully accomplish the sense of responsibility" as shared by some policy officers. Furthermore, the progression of lobby strategies found limitations when prioritising the fulfilment of first-hand policy regulations (local, national, and European), which offered immediate public and/or economic recognition to policy or cultural players and recognition of their careers. In other cases, players expressed fear of exclusion for taking a stand or found it easier to follow ready-made rules instead of promoting change. This perpetuated a set of signs and symbols that were part of Gramsci's hegemonic common sense without creating tensions

in its representation or among the expressions of organic crisis. Burnout, stress, and displacement were experienced by some players who failed to transform their initial feelings from negative to positive, socialise and share values, discomfort, and ideas, and imagine new cultural architectures. This can be summarised in a sentiment shared during an interview: "...you think that you can change the system from inside ... but in the end, it is the system that is going to change you." [SIC]

The season of the commons in Naples

With an entirely different set of coordinates, I will now delve into the Season of the Commons in Naples, examining the civil engagement efforts and decision-making mechanisms between top-down and bottom-up realms at the local level. Here, my analysis began by examining the innovations introduced by the occupation of a public space on behalf of the cultural community, particularly starting from the performing arts sector. My involvement in this context was unique and privileged, as I entered as both a researcher and someone familiar with the local setting. My first significant professional steps were taken in Naples, which is my city of origin.

In March 2012, a group of cultural activists occupied a remarkable three-storey, 16th-century building, known as the ex-Asilo Filangieri, of approximately 4,000 square metres, situated in the vibrant historical centre of Naples. This building, recently renovated to host the 2013 UNESCO Universal Forum of Culture, became the focus of a significant public debate over the alleged mismanagement of public funds and lack of transparency associated with the event. Various stakeholders came together to denounce the widespread illegality plaguing the cultural sector and other fields. Initially, the occupation served as a symbolic gesture supported by the "occupy" Italian movement, primarily in the cultural domain. The activists represented diverse individuals, including researchers, artists, cultural producers, and members of civil society, alongside seasoned activists, all drawn together by their enthusiasm for the discourse around the commons (hence confirming Harvey's earlier analysis of the transversality of the struggles, as in the case of Creative Europe). Over time, the ex-Asilo, renamed "l'Asilo" evolved into a genuine commons-based multicultural space dedicated to cultural creation and production within the city, operating on the principles of free use, horizontal decision-making and anti-fascist values.

In 2011, Luigi De Magistris was elected mayor of Naples, marking a pivotal moment. He represented a civil movement within local politics, in line with a broader trend where former judges and civil society representatives advocated for citizens' rights. De Magistris, unaffiliated with any major lobby or political party, garnered support from the extended middle class and social movements. According to political observers (Treccagnoli,

2016), he brought a certain left-wing populism to the city, which Mouffe theorised was a political strategy to subvert political hegemonies (Mouffe, 2018). Characterised since his election campaign as proud, stubborn, combative, charismatic, and individualistic, De Magistris raised the banner of anti-fascism and created a municipal “city-book” to recognise civil unions, a hot topic in the Italian political context at the time, as well as the LGBTQI+ community. Commons entered at the municipal level from the very beginning. During his first mandate, De Magistris nominated the first city councillor in Italy to oversee the commons, introduced amendments to the City Charter by introducing a legal category for commons following the Rodotà National Commission,² and, in 2013, established the Observatory of Common Goods.

At its inception the Season of the Commons appeared to be led by a tactical time, meaning that both city representatives and cultural activists, starting from value-driven choices, were unaware of where the efforts within the commons were bringing them. Following interviews with both groups, they portrayed this initial period as one in which the “horizon was kept open (...) because you don’t know where this could take you.” [SIC] [Interview with cultural activist, 2019] The debate around the commons gradually became the space for their interactions. For both groups, this meant that they had to achieve reciprocal recognition and validation behind the we/they relationship (understood as enemies), share value pillars, and find concrete empirical tools and protocols to regulate this interaction.

Looking at Naples through the lens of the emotional biotope’s market domain reveals an intricate overlap and interplay of influences (as is also evident in the case of Creative Europe). A rich history of grassroots activism has coexisted since the 1970s with a celebrated intellectual, cultural, and artistic scene (Dines, 2012) and with radical forms of *clientelism* whose impact we cannot underestimate at the local and national levels. The political scientist Allum and Allum (2008) defined clientelism as “a form of political participation in which politician-citizen linkages are based on a general exchange regarding non-specified, but personalized, services rendered in return for electoral support” (Allum and Allum, 2008: 341). He showed how clientelism evolved beyond this exchange, spreading its tendrils into various realms including culture. This enabled loyal individuals to secure positions of influence through informal networks, regardless of the ruling party’s political orientation. This phenomenon inevitably spilled over into the cultural sphere, where publicly funded institutions became attractive tools for political campaigns as they expanded and attracted larger audiences.

In Naples I identified a phenomenon I coined “emotional diaspora,” which arose because of political pressures stemming

from, regional political changes, among other changes, in 2012 (with the consolidation of a neoliberal political party) and national austerity measures following the 2008 global financial crisis. Interviews with various interlocutors revealed a scenario in which conflicts of interests and clientelism, coupled with limited economic resources, restricted opportunities for creative expression. This led to a *de facto* emotional and physical diaspora marked by feelings of disengagement, individualism, mistrust, heightened competition among peers, and widespread emotional struggles, including depression and burnout. One cultural activist argued, “what is the sense of doing theatre where you have the desert around you?” [SIC] to express the feeling of solitude and displacement in making art in a context where simple, sometimes rudimentary, yet effective consensus-building strategies were employed by the dominant political group in power at the regional and national levels during this period.

Between 2012 and 2014, the local cultural realm witnessed a form of “democratic freeze,” marked by the consolidation of the influence of the ruling group. The main manifestations of this included an extended spoils system within the main cultural institutions, the appointment of a “super-director” (Bandettini, 2010; Santopadre, 2015) in the city’s two most publicly funded cultural institutions (with evident conflicts of interest), and the influence of Berlusconi (former Italian prime Minister) delegates in cultural decision-making at the local level (Sannino, 2012). The symptoms of this democratic freeze included the dominance of a specific artistic “taste” (favouring commercial or conservative cultural representation), the arbitrary allocation of economic resources to loyal groups, limited spaces for cultural visibility, heightened competition among peers, and a lack of information-sharing within local public bodies, all of which hindered the cultural ecosystem’s growth and international connections. All of these were components of Gramsci’s common sense.

Opinion formation: from frozen democracy to civic use

The Season of the Commons entered these frozen democratic dynamics, rooted in the performing arts sector, where the struggles in favour of the commons started around cross-cutting issues (Harvey, 2016), such as struggles for public water, accessibility, and freedom of expression. With less economic and political power the Season of the Commons appeared to be a sound space for cultural and political experimentation. The commoners initially navigated the intricate space between the higher monolithic cultural expressions and the locally diverse cultural ecosystem, performing in a context deeply marked by a blend of socio-political trust and mistrust. This multifaceted scenario unfolded under the overlapping jurisdictions of State, EU, regional, and city policies, all operating within the local context. Within this complex framework, numerous cultural, policy, and political actors,

² Stefano Rodotà was a prominent figure at the national level and president of the Italian Commission for the Common Good.

between failures and successes and with all their contradictions, embraced unknown behaviours, tried to reshape the landscape and looked for new territories for their cultural survival. For cultural activists, this endeavour represented more than mere resistance. It affirmed their right “to exist and not merely resist.” [SIC] [Interview with cultural activist, 2018] The discourse on the commons provided a platform to transcend isolation and establish a firm footing in new territories. This sentiment resonates with a shared interpretation of the public domain, articulated by Councillor Piscopo in an interview, where he expressed that, “... if a good belongs to everybody, let’s make it public ...” [SIC] [Interview with Councillor for the Commons Carmine Piscopo, 2019]

Returning to the Emotional Biotope, the peer domain was crucial here. The extensive interaction between the mayor, the Councillor for the Commons, cultural activists, jurists, and the occupied spaces in the city collaborated to challenge existing local narratives. By validating each other, even in long, informal negotiations, they questioned the local, cultural, and political imbalances and searched for possible new cultural, policy, and political trajectories and spaces. For them, this meant learning to perform in the given market setting and exerting effort towards its reconfiguration between hegemony and counter-hegemonic struggles. In short, this collaborative sphere was the space to transform negative emotions (burnout, stress, solitude, frustration) into positive ones (enthusiasm, passion, compassion), and react to the prevailing sense of political solitude and discomfort.

As some of my interlocutors mentioned, “it has been the first time since the 70s and the 90s (where historical social movements in the city took the stage), that several and diverse political groups met and collaborated around the same project” [Interview with cultural activist, 2018]. Here, compared with the dynamics of Creative Europe, it was more visible that the emotional clusters took shape and started to work. One symptom of these emotional groupings is a sort of “intimacy” between the parties. “Intimacy” is a noteworthy dimension that I encountered in their interactions in public arenas and debates between the mayor, the Councillor of the Commons, and cultural activists. This is rare when compared to similar dynamics in other urban settings (Vesco, 2021). This relates to a level of closeness or familiarity in power relations, that suggests that the parties share a deeper understanding, trust, and cooperation. More specifically, this intimacy reflects a kind of flexibility and fluidity in their interactions while navigating issues of authority, influence, and control.

I would argue that intimacy and informality are symptoms that have supported the opinion-forming process among the parties. This has strongly contributed to the application of the notion of “civic use,” which was an initial solution in a tactical-time, and, over the years, became an innovative policy/political legal tool at the local level. With its origins in the Middle Ages and in the Roman Empire and its subsequent applications at the

beginning of the last century (1927–1928), civic use refers to a juridical framework that regulates and recognises the collective use of public assets, such as public spaces, city properties, and public gardens, etc. Therefore, starting from here, the long process of debates, theoretical analyses, and political fights between 2012 and 2015 brought the following results: 1) to validate the informal community in the public documents of the city (and not associations or other juridical forms) for the management of a public urban property defined as a public good; 2) to establish the co-responsibility of the public good (the building of l’Asilo) between the informal community and the public administration; 3) to guarantee that for this form of “co-management” an empirical protocol of functions was designed and adopted by the “commoners”: the Declaration of Civic and Collective Use in 2015.

As highlighted by activists and researchers working on the elaboration of juridical norms, the adoption of civic use created a radical shift moving the responsibility from “who” makes decisions to “how” those decisions are made (Micciarelli, 2014; Capone, 2016). It is in this shift that we can understand the notion of “emerging commons” where commons are defined “not only by their nature and function, but also by their governing, shared between the public sector and the people” (Micciarelli, 2017, 15). In fact, the communal resolutions stemming from this journey referred to the city’s public assets (under the risk of privatisation) when they were managed, considering civic use as the spaces “perceived by the citizenry as the context of civic development” [SIC] (Comune di Napoli, 2015), where citizens take on the responsibility of being active actors in the management of essential services “in a non-exclusive way” (Comune di Napoli *ibid.*). In a sense, the juridical experiment was “a creative effort (...)” and “...the aim was not to seek the protection of the law, but to ‘hack’ legality, i.e., to use the disruptive energy of the process to carve the rules and change institutions.” [SIC] (De Tullio, 2018, activist and researcher at l’Asilo).

Decision making: the urban system of emerging commons

In this context, the emotional clusters were an expression of the political realism of the policy, cultural, and political actors in the city. The top-down and bottom-up actors were operating on an initial common ground determined by the conviction that both neoliberalism and new forms of authoritarianism were reducing the quality of life for many. However, even if they shared a value-framework, cultural activists and policy players had to respond to different political and tactical needs. For example, it is the public administration’s responsibility to maintain consensus in the city context, to guarantee access for all citizens to the city’s infrastructure and services, to regulate citizens’ lives through a set of policies, and to negotiate with

regional and national governments to manage city life. On the other hand, it is the nature of social movements to disrupt a narrative and bring different points of view into the public debate. Public protests, occupations, and various symbolic actions intervene to publicly denounce illegal aspects of the public sphere, to highlight opinions, to express values, or to experiment with political forms even in favour of the common interest of the community. In theory, both realms act in favour of the common public interest, and, in the case of Naples, they converge in terms of means, i.e., elaborating shared policy and legal tools.

The Season of the Commons not only responded to national and global pressures, but also provided fertile ground for policy, political, and cultural players to collectively envision responses in a complex political landscape shaped by diverse regional, national, and global influences. This was evident first in my conversations with cultural activists and policy stakeholders. They frequently emphasised their role in “playing into the contradictions” or striving to “make the contradictions visible,” echoing sentiments expressed by Councillor for Commons Piscopo and activist Andrea de Goyzueta. These statements underscored the coexistence of divergent political intentions within the same territory, ranging from clientelism to advocacy for the commons, from top-down pressures originating at the national or regional level, to expansive bottom-up movements within the fragmented local community.

In addition, they pointed to a new dynamism in the shaping of the city and the joint envisioning of new public and collective institutions. For example, Viola Carofalo, the former spokesperson for the Neapolitan grassroots political party *Potere al Popolo* (Power to the People), affirmed this approach and the collaborative efforts between the top-down and bottom-up actors stating, “imagine, in the past, I would never have voted. The social mechanisms have changed, but what remains is the irreverence, which is the hallmark of a revolutionary (...). It’s the adaptability of movements to their context (...). If we had employed today’s political tools in the 1970s, we would have been considered enemies of the movement.” [SIC] [Interview with Viola Carofalo, activist, 2019]

Also, the interviewees agreed that the proliferation of bottom-up political and policy experiments in the city could not have achieved such widespread acceptance and longevity without the collaborative efforts of the city’s public administration and the diverse groups that make up the grassroots movements. It is also important to note that public demonstrations, debates, and assemblies in city squares require authorisation and legal permission to conduct specific political activities in public spaces. According to many activists, the municipality did not obstruct these efforts, rather, Mayor De Magistris and his councillors often actively engaged as interlocutors, raising questions, expressing doubts, and demonstrating openness to dissent. Publicly confirming this stance, Mayor De Magistris stated, “While my colleagues in

Italy use batons to evacuate occupied places, we are creating communal resolutions to give juridical dimension and recognition to those who care for the public spaces of the city from a collective perspective.” (De Magistris: “*C’è gente che se puzza ‘e famme, la rivoluzione la facciamo per strada*”, 2017, author’s translation). It is noteworthy that *informal community*, *mutualism*, *process*, *civic use*, *commons*, and *conflict* were terms used frequently by both parties, carrying specific and similar meanings that reflect a shared mindset and value framework among allies engaged in common struggles, even across different arenas and amidst occasional conflict.

Accordingly, as in the case of Creative Europe, albeit with different political behaviours, the Neapolitan Season of the Commons saw both top-down and bottom-up actors performing in their respective territories. However, given the context in which they were performing, the forms of informality and intimacy mentioned above were more evident in these transversal alliances, attributing a kind of fluidity to the roles and behaviours of the actors. For example, the “revolutionary” mayor (a self-proclaimed title) built his political journey beyond his traditional institutional space. This coexisted with the cultural activists’ “institutional” approach, where they were deeply involved in legal norms and the co-designing of public policies. This dynamic unveiled an unknown interplay where the mayor’s “explosive” nature, rooted in left-wing populism, was “moderated” and “radicalised” by cultural and political activists working alongside the Councillor for the Commons, looking for norms to create the legacy of the efforts embraced. This situation reflected the crisis of representative democracy, which was local, European, and global, and required the need to reconsider the roles in the public realm and the function of the public administration. Thus, new spaces of negotiation and legal instruments were required to build a political journey in the local context, informed by global debates and challenges that were reshaping cultural and political scenarios.

Amidst failures, unfulfilled promises, successes, and political and juridical efforts, the collaboration between the parties led to the creation of procedures and more than 10 city resolutions that established an urban system of the commons within the city. This extended the norm of civic use to previous local political occupations following the first city resolution in 2015 (Comune di Napoli, 2015; Comune di Napoli 2021). Initially, this urban system, consisted of seven occupied spaces, which are referred to as “freed spaces,” all of which were managed with empirical protocols such as the Declaration of Civic and Collective Use. These protocols defined the duties and responsibilities of the parties involved, taking into account the asymmetries between the municipality and the activists. This process resulted in the development of a common vocabulary that was incorporated into the city’s municipal resolutions between 2014 and 2021. In these resolutions, the realm of the commons was defined as a “context of civic development” (Comune di Napoli, 2015).

Results

In both cases, emotional clusters emerged as a form of social adaptation in the midst of fragmentation and overlapping tendencies and policies in the frame of policy/political negotiations (Fisher, 2009; Gielen and De Bruyne, 2009; Haiven, 2017; Bonet and Negrier, 2018). Consciously or unconsciously, these emotional clusters have responded to the need for pluralistic democratic cultural architectures (Mouffe, 2018) and find spaces to introduce critical changes by placing matters of common interest at the centre of their actions, starting from cross-cutting issues, such as commons, cultural rights, and cultural accessibility. In doing so, these emotional clusters played a pivotal role in attributing an empirical progression to the cultural policy and political cycle by starting from struggles related to the quality of (daily) life. In the case of Creative Europe, the policy cycle unfolded through distinct phases: problem definition, policy implementation, development, and evaluation. My analysis focused primarily on the development phase, where emotional clusters acted as catalysts for cultural and policy experiments. They influenced the mobility of key stakeholders, strategic lobbying efforts, and iterative adjustments over time. These interactions embodied soft power strategies in a highly bureaucratised context, including building trust, fostering transversal collaboration, partnership-building, and community building, while also shaping preferences and influencing behaviour. Over time, the emotional clusters carved out temporary common territories transversally across EU decision-making, enhancing critical reflection on the political implications inherent in the policy process and, in some ways, transforming it.

On the other hand, the policy model that emerged from the Neapolitan case revealed a deeply ingrained empirical approach, marked by its bottom-up nature. It seemed to forego the evaluation phase (which was crucial in the EU case), instead favouring extensive peer exchanges between different groups, both top-down and bottom-up, at all stages of the policy cycle, which formed the foundation of the commons policy and political process. This democratic participatory approach took shape through an in-depth analysis conducted in public squares, assemblies, and informal exchanges. Accordingly, the policy/political cycle was tested in the public realm and assessed through attempts to find new equilibria in the shaping of the city through the city's norms. Unlike conventional policy cycles, the Neapolitan case prioritised social and political interactions. It experienced conflicts and disagreements within the transversal alliances, which were also the foundation for conducting policy/political battles with existing hegemonies.

These emotional clusters surfaced as an initial unconscious answer to the diffuse crisis of representative democracies (Mouffe, 2005; Della Porta, 2013; Bauman, 2019). Civil society, in its more transversal configuration (Harvey, 2016), felt the need to experiment with diverse democratic forms to tame the neoliberal impact on culture, social fabric, and nature (Fisher, 2009; Graeber,

2013; Gielen and Docx, 2018). Consequently, this imposed new emerging policy/political narratives, even with less power, within the market domain. Hence, emotional clusters served as initial spaces of resistance within the cultural policy cycle, where cultural, policy and political players needed each other to enable the change. They have often operated in a state of interdependence, meaning that they recognised the reciprocal need to enter and conquer spaces in the decision-making processes and to legitimise each other. This has required a certain fluidity in power relations, with significant changes in roles and responsibilities. In light of this, I suggest looking at the notions of “proximity” in the case of Creative Europe or “intimacy” in the case of Naples. According to the cultural and political coordinates of the two case studies, proximity and intimacy appeared to be expressions of very different cultural, policy and political contexts. However, they were both the result of the chemistry of personal beliefs, and the conscious decision to embrace value-driven action when pluralism in cultural policy/political processes was under attack. This is how key players have acted between the given coordinates of the market and the efforts embraced for its reconfiguration. Here, the emotional clusters have, at best, expressed their nature as relational and transformative political agents (Gramsci, 1916; Ahamed, 2015), allowing civil and political society to find a temporary balance, collaborating to facilitate transformative change, e.g., elaborating norms, sharing keywords and using them in policy/political negotiations, advocacy and lobbying strategies. This meant that civil society did not reproduce social and political hegemony. On the contrary, it addressed political issues, creating tension in the hegemonic representation.

Under the umbrella of attempts at pluralism, the emotional clusters have frequently passed through network constructions and value-driven constellations of practices that allowed players to move between different policy paradigms and cultural and economic realms (e.g., trans-local interactions or the urban system of the commons). Thus, when matters of common public interest were at stake, the transversality of alliances found the instruments to collectivise cultural and political approaches, multiply their effects, and impact social and political narratives. In short, it seems that, in times of organic crisis, the public sphere is a battleground, highly populated by a crowd of divergent agents, performing in a schizophrenic manner to respond to competing norms, policy and political regimes, and forms of cultural repression. This is often where conflict is addressed in a variety of ways, including soft power tactics, public protests or advocacy campaigns. For this reason, the emotional clusters appeared meaningful in my research as they represented the “why” and the “how” cultural, policy and political players acted by following Gramsci's (Gramsci, 2014) “war of positions” described in his 1930 notebooks (2014), i.e., by operating in different territories and adopting a hybrid political approach by merging activism, law, cultural processes, and culturally meaningful participatory logics in their actions.

Therefore, considering the two case studies and the function of emotions in their processes, I suggest that the two policy

approaches absolve a potential complementary function in a policy process when conceived as a political tool. The system of the commons has taught us that between its fragility and strength when it acts in network formation and implies “non-exclusive use” (as the norm of civic use has required), it is the context for understanding social mood and feeling, where a local community could grow, and where different societies inhabiting our cities could find ways to interact. When culture is the terrain, this private/public (=semi-public) arena is a place to experiment, learn and fail, and it is at the origin of cultural policy processes. Many projects and EU networks have expressed the need to multiply these (semi-public) spaces within their contexts to protect the artistic/cultural experience and to allow the artistic creation to be an aesthetic, political, and civil experience. I would argue that today more semi-public spaces (De Munck and Gielen 2022), which are grey areas comprised of public property, civil initiatives, and artistic interventions, are needed where we can learn about the health of Europe and its social, political, and cultural needs.

Looking at the Creative Europe policy process, I suggest that the empirical policy skeleton could inspire the planning of policy/political efforts to make the city. National cultural policy processes, cities, and EU programmes need a concrete, long-term context in which structurally top-down and bottom-up actors can project themselves into the future, and integrate (in a cooperative way) their different functions beyond populist announcements and upcoming elections that could overturn their efforts. They need a bottom-up empirical approach merged with a top-down policy/political process in a proper “shared policy” (Dragičević Šešić, 2006) between public, private, and civil society. From here, central problems and societal challenges can be examined and economic resources can be allocated to specific actions coming from negotiations and joint analysis. Merging empirical and established tools means finding policy and political instruments that can help to create the policy/political narratives that are the foundation of democratic societies today. To some extent, this means allowing processes in which history is not only written by the “winners,” who are often the ones creating the hegemonic narratives.

Conclusion

As we look back on a period of history that may seem distant yet remains strikingly relevant in the midst of our contemporary upheavals, it has become clear that history is not a monochromatic canvas, but rather a rich tapestry woven from an infinite array of experiences and narratives. My intention was never to impose rigid value systems that divide the world into simplistic binaries of good and evil. Instead, my aim was to share the dynamic evolution of spaces of resistance and imagination across cultural, social, and political landscapes. These spaces, fluid and interconnected, which emerged in 2011, serve as dynamic arenas where diverse stakeholders have converged,

even if they do not consider themselves activists. They have engaged in an ongoing process of negotiation to reimagine their futures in a pluralistic manner. Over the last 15 years, these negotiations have gradually moved from the realm of culture to the domain of cultural policy. Furthermore, they have given rise to innovative experiments deeply rooted in cultural politics, where cultural politics is understood as the interplay between culture and power in shaping societal norms and political ideologies.

My aim was to examine these unknown and impalpable spaces of resistance from our present position and to understand why they have emerged. It has become increasingly clear that the way in which this goal has been achieved can provide us with insights into the health of our democracies. Broadly speaking, the emergence of emotional clusters, as adaptive responses to navigate the Gramscian organic crisis, offers a nuanced lens through which to dissect the complexities of current democratic decision-making. It seems that the more the public sphere is occupied by multiple overlapping forces, including varying intensities of illiberal neoliberalism, the more impalpable aggregates will try to find their own way to exist and resist. Emotional clusters have emerged from my research as one of the theoretical proposals for navigating the organic crisis that has been examined in recent years, especially when matters of common public interest are the goal. However, further research is urgently needed to grasp today’s coordinates by entering into the intricate interplay of global dynamics, local policy developments, and personal feelings and affections, including the transformative role of positive and negative emotions.

It is my hope that this research will enrich our understanding of the cultural policy process, offering insights into the intricacy of power dynamics and emotions across different cultural landscapes. For this reason, I hope that the methodology chosen is reliable and provides a guide to accessing the multi-sited field of inquiry with a political exploration of the emotions connected to it. Finally, I advocate for a holistic understanding of the cultural policy process as a vibrant and political arena, especially in times of crisis, war, genocide, social burnout, and territorial invasion. It needs a multidimensional approach, including the political function of emotions. A realm that needs to be conceived according to its empirical development, where we shape the symbols and narratives that populate our collective imagination.

Data availability statement

The raw data supporting the conclusions of this article will be made available by the authors, without undue reservation.

Ethics statement

This study adheres to the highest standards of ethical research practices in the social sciences. The empirical analysis

conducted in this research is based on participatory research and autoethnographic methods, ensuring that no animals were involved at any stage of the study. Ethics approval or specific consent procedures were not required for this study. The study design and implementation were guided by principles of respect, beneficence, and justice, ensuring that the research was conducted in a manner that respects the dignity and rights of all participants. By adhering to these ethical guidelines, this research contributes to the field of management and cultural policy with a commitment to ethical rigor, integrity, and respect for human participants. Participatory research methodologies employed in this study emphasize collaboration and co-creation with participants. All participants were fully informed about the nature, purpose, and potential impacts of the research. The confidentiality of participants were strictly maintained, and data were handled with the utmost care to protect their privacy. The autoethnographic approach utilized in this study reflects the researcher's introspective examination of personal experiences within a cultural context. This method aligns with ethical standards by prioritizing transparency, reflexivity, and critical self-awareness. The researcher has strived to present an honest and nuanced account, recognizing the potential influence of personal bias and subjectivity. Ethical considerations have been meticulously addressed to ensure the integrity and authenticity of the autoethnographic narrative.

Author contributions

GC is the only author participating in the design, interpretation of the study, and analysis of the data. She conducted the primary research, including data collection and testing processes. GC also designed the theoretical frameworks, the conceptualization of the manuscript, literature review and revisions on the manuscript drafts. As single author GC reviewed and approved the final version for submission.

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Conflict of interest

The author declares that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

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Measuring cultural diversity: policy and methodological issues

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Cultural policies of the past decades in Europe and especially in France, have placed the objective of diversity at the heart of their field of action. However, no cultural diversity indicator is published, which would make it possible to evaluate the results of a policy in favour of diversity in audiovisual or music industries. However, we find in the scientific literature works that provide such measurement indicators. This article details the construction of these indicators and shows how they could be usefully mobilised in the service of new regulations in favour of cultural diversity on cultural online services.

KEYWORDS

cultural policy, diversity, music industry, audiovisual industry, streaming services

Introduction

Since 1989, the “Television Without Frontiers” directive, intended to promote the circulation of audiovisual works within Europe, simultaneously strengthens the legitimacy of national broadcasting quota policies against countries outside Europe from a protectionist perspective. The objective was to act as “a means of promoting production, independent production and distribution” in the audiovisual industry. The revised version of the Television Without Frontiers adopted by the Council of Europe in 2007 cites the “preservation of cultural diversity” as one of its main objectives, while being absent from the original.¹ In a broader context, the 117 member countries of GATT—ancestor of the WTO—adopted, with difficulty, in 1994 a compromise on the audiovisual issue, which over the years had become a major point of opposition between Europe, France in particular, and the United States. At the end of this compromise, the audiovisual sector was not excluded from the field of international negotiations, but the Europeans obtained the “Cultural exception” that is to say not to make a commitment to liberalisation in this sector and to preserve their support and quota mechanisms.

At the end of the 1990s, without explicitly claiming it, the European Commission gradually abandoned, in official speeches and reports, the term “cultural exception,” with defensive and protectionist connotations, in favour of the concept of “Cultural Diversity,” and will try to reconcile industrial and cultural objectives. For example, in 1998 came a report from the European Commission’s High-Level Group on Audiovisual Policy. This

1 European Parliament, *Directive 2007/65/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council*, 2007.
Available at: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/dir/2007/65/oj>.

report, entitled “The Digital Age: European Audiovisual Policy,” in a protectionist view, highlights the potential threat of market fragmentation brought on by an increase in the number of television channels and warns that it will become more difficult for “European producers to compete with American imports.” At the same time, it says that “Europe must maintain its cultural and linguistic diversity and uphold its core values also in the digital age” and that “there are tremendous opportunities opening up and Europe must seize them or others will simply do so in our place.” In its Communication on the Future of European Regulatory Audiovisual Policy, the European Commission stresses that “regulatory policy in the sector has to safeguard certain public interests,” and cultural diversity tops the list.²

Finally, the revised version of the EU’s AVMS directive of 2010 adopted in November 2018 makes a direct link between the promotion of European works and the promotion of cultural diversity: “[on-demand audiovisual media services] should, where practicable, promote the production and distribution of European works and thus contribute actively to the promotion of cultural diversity”.³ The concept of cultural diversity has therefore been translated into European regulation policies. Additionally, the political ambition to promote cultural diversity to some extent serves to justify applying established regulatory practices to new markets (such as on-demand audiovisual services).

Cultural diversity has therefore become an object of particular attention of many political leaders in Europe and especially in France, and an essential objective of any cultural policy. Although cultural diversity is a political goal, it remains an unclear terminology and struggles to receive elements of objectification that could give rise to an evaluation. Similar to all public policies, those in favour of the diversity of cultural content⁴ should indeed be able to be evaluated. For this, whether experimental (or quasi-experimental) methods, or other impact evaluation methods, several steps are necessary: identifying objectives, implementing the means to achieve them and finally, setting up indicators to measure the results of the policy obtained in relation to the stated objectives (Nicolas and Gergaud, 2016).

Measurement indicators are therefore essential to any process of regulation, and to the evaluation of this regulation. Public policies concerning unemployment, inflation, taxation, etc., in

order to understand the results of the means implemented, are based on indicators (inflation rate, unemployment rate, compulsory deduction rate...), which are certainly imperfect, questionable and disputed, but nevertheless are available.

There is nothing like this when it comes to cultural diversity policies. In France, since the creation of the Ministry in charge of Cultural Affairs in 1959, diversity is however, with democratisation, always considered as one of the two main objectives of cultural policies, in order to struggle against the possible supply standardisation (Poirrier, 2016). Multiple performance indicators are displayed by public authorities, sometimes very specific and not very macroeconomic: the integration rate of graduates from cultural education, attendance at subsidised places, the proportion of children having received an artistic education, etc.⁵ However, nothing appears on diversity. No “diversity rate” is published which would allow comparisons to be made between countries, or to follow the evolution of this indicator over time. Facing the absence of clear reference indicators, how can we judge whether a policy is a success or a failure? How to verify that a quota policy, for example, really has the effect of improving cultural diversity?

However, indicators for measuring cultural diversity could exist. The ambition of this article is to detail the construction of these indicators and to show how they could be subject to appropriation by public authorities in Europe, to carry out policies in favour of cultural diversity in both audiovisual and music sectors. The mobilisation of these indicators could indeed facilitate the implementation of new forms of regulation adapted to a delinearised world. We find in the scientific literature works which, with different methodologies, provide indicators for measuring cultural diversity. After presenting these works (*Measuring cultural diversity: the contribution of academic works* section), we identify the three steps which from a normative point of view, seem to be essential to us for the construction of measurement indicators (*Building diversity measurement indicators: a three-step approach* section). The rise of recommendation systems calls for adapting this approach to online cultural services (*The central role of recommendation for cultural diversity* section). Finally, we specify how the available indicators can be used to support new regulations in favour of cultural diversity (*Mobilising available indicators to serve a new regulation of cultural diversity* section).

Measuring cultural diversity: the contribution of academic works

In the socio-economics literature on measurement issues of cultural diversity in cinema, audiovisual, recorded music and books,

2 European Commission, *Communication from the Commission to the Council, the European Parliament, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions - The Future of European Regulatory Audiovisual Policy*, 2003. Available at: <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/42254032-40a3-41d7-b7b8-79f4834d60b3/language-en>.

3 European Parliament, *Directive (EU) 2018/1808 of the European Parliament and of the Council*, 2018. Available at: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/dir/2018/1808/oj>.

4 This article does not address the question of the diversity of people and the representation of women and visible minorities in cultural sectors, but only the question of the diversity of supply and demand for cultural content.

5 French Ministry of Economy and Finances, expenditure performance, Culture mission. Available at: https://www.budget.gouv.fr/performance-depense?annee=118&type_budget=all&mission=33409.

TABLE 1 Literature review.

Publication	Sample	Criteria	Measurement tools by dimension
Live performance industry			
Pietrzyk (2017)	Offer of shows in each hall of a panel of 93 large halls in France. Demand is illustrated by box office receipts from the same venues	Shows, production structures, genres of show	Variety: Number of occurrences of each category. Balance: Percentage shares of each category
Publishing industry			
Donnat (2018)	Demand for books illustrated by sales from GFK databases between 2007 and 2016	Titles, authors, literary genre, publishers	Variety: Number of occurrences of each category. Balance: Percentage shares of each category. Disparity: Proportion of new entrants in the sample
Benhamou and Peltier (2007)	Supply of books published between 1990 and 2003. Demand for books is illustrated by the sales figures for each book considered in the supply	Titles, languages, literary genres, authors, nationality of the work	Variety: Number of occurrences of each category. Balance: Percentage shares of each category, Herfindahl-Hirschman concentration index. Disparity: Linguistic distances
Recorded music industry			
ARCOM (2022)	Listener demand, illustrated by the top 100 most listened songs per week on three online services, between November 2017 and January 2020. Also illustrated by the Top 200 most listened-to songs on radio per week, between November 2017 and January 2020	Languages of expression, musical aesthetics, distributors, titles, artists	Variety: Number of occurrences of each category. Balance: Percentage shares of each category, Herfindahl-Hirschman concentration index
Bourreau et al. (2022)	Demand from listeners, illustrated by the Top 100 most listened songs per week, between 1990 and 2015 on 4 services, in 10 different countries (France, United States, etc.)	Musical aesthetics	Disparity: Euclidean distances between the acoustic metadata of the tracks of the same top
Anderson et al. (2020)	Listener demand, illustrated by the listening history of 100 million different Spotify users during the month of July 2019	Musical aesthetics	Disparity: Generalist-specialist score (GS score)
Bourreau et al. (2011)	Demand from listeners, illustrated by weekly figures for physical sales of recorded music in France, between 2003 and 2008 (GFK database). Supply is approximated by new entries in sales registers on the same sample	Titles, artists, distributors	Variety: Number of occurrences of each category. Balance: Percentage shares of each category, Herfindahl-Hirschman concentration index. Disparity: Rate of renewal in the sample, rate of similarity of the sample, number and concentration of artists and distributors
Alexander (1996)	Demand from listeners, approached by the weekly Billboard Top 40 in the United States between 1955 and 1988	Distributors, musical aesthetics	Balance: Herfindahl-Hirschman index. Disparity: Entropy index of the sample
Lopes (1992)	Demand from listeners approached by the annual Billboard Top 100 in the United States between 1969 and 1990	Titles, albums, artists, distributors	Variety: Number of occurrences of each category. Balance: Percentage share of each category. Disparity: Number and share of new entries in the sample
Peterson and Berger (1975)	Demand from listeners, approached by the weekly Top 10 songs in the United States between 1948 and 1973	Albums, distributors	Variety: Number of occurrences of each category. Balance: Percentage share of each category
Audiovisual industry			
Farchy and Ranaivoson (2011)	Offer of programs from six TV channels in 3 countries in November 2009	Type of programs	Variety: Number of occurrences of each category. Balance: Percentage shares of each category, Shannon's concentration index, Hill's variety/balance index. Disparity: Euclidean distances between features. Diversity: Synthetic Stirling index
Van der Wurff and Van Cuilenburg (2001)	Offer of programs from the 9 TV channels in the Netherlands between 1988 and 1999. Demand for programs illustrated by the audience figures for these 9 channels over the same period	Genre of programs	Variety: Number of occurrences of each category. Balance: Herfindahl-Hirschman concentration index

(Continued on following page)

TABLE 1 (Continued) Literature review.

Publication	Sample	Criteria	Measurement tools by dimension
Napoli (1997)	Offer of programs on three major US TV groups in November and December 1995	Type of programs	Variety: Number of occurrences of each category. Balance: Herfindahl-Hirschman concentration index
Film industry			
Coate et al. (2017)	Offer of films in theatres in Australia in 2013 and 2014. Demand for films is illustrated by the number of screenings over the same period	Nationality of productions	Variety: Number of occurrences of each category. Balance: Herfindahl-Hirschman concentration index
Park (2015)	Offer of films in theatres in Australia between 1999 and 2009. Demand for films illustrated by box office receipts over the same period	Nationality of productions	Variety: Number of occurrences of each category. Balance: Percentage share of each category, Simpson's index. Disparity: Cultural distance between countries
Lévy-Hartmann (2011)	Offer of films illustrated by the cinema and videogram releases of 5,650 films between 1998 and 2004. Demand for films is illustrated by the number of copies of videograms and cinema tickets sold over the same period	Structure of production, language of expression, nationality of production	Variety: Number of occurrences of each category. Balance: Percentage shares of each category, Berger-Parker concentration index, Herfindahl-Hirschman concentration index, McIntosh equilibrium index. Disparity: Euclidean distances between features. Diversity: Synthetic Stirling index
Moreau and Peltier (2004)	Offer of films in 6 territories between 1990 and 2000. Demand is approximated by the number of admissions per head for each film	Titles, nationality of production	Variety: Number of occurrences of each category. Balance: Herfindahl-Hirschman concentration index

we have found around twenty articles available in French and English. These papers allow us to build a framework of analysis about how cultural diversity has been previously addressed. Even if the methodological choices, although decisive, are not always discussed or made explicit, Table 1 details the methodologies adopted and constitutes an attempt to make them comparable within the same framework of analysis.

In the audiovisual sector, works mostly focus on measuring the diversity of the television or cinema supply (Napoli, 1997; Farchy and Ranaivoson, 2011) or on a mix between supply and demand (Van der Wurff and Van Cuilenburg, 2001; Moreau and Peltier, 2004; Lévy-Hartmann, 2011) as in the publishing market (Benhamou and Peltier, 2007). In recorded music, most measures focus on the diversity of demand, approached by the Top charts (weekly, annual, etc.) (Peterson and Berger, 1975; Lopes, 1992; Alexander, 1996; Anderson et al., 2020; Bourreau et al., 2022), and fewer papers tend to focus on the diversity of supply (Bourreau et al., 2011).

Considering the choice of diversity criteria, the genre of the program is favoured in the audiovisual sector (Napoli, 1997; Van der Wurff and Van Cuilenburg, 2001; Farchy and Ranaivoson, 2011) and in cinema, the most chosen criterion corresponds to the nationality of the productions (Moreau and Peltier, 2004; Lévy-Hartmann, 2011). In music, more diverse criteria are utilised (distributors, musical aesthetics, artists, etc.) as in the book sector (authors, publishers, genres, language, etc.).

Most works pay homage to Stirling's typology in terms of "diversity dimensions" (Stirling, 2007), but do not always explain why they retain this or that dimension. The most recent works choose to explore in particular the dimension of disparity, which is more difficult to grasp than the other (Bideau and Tallec, 2022; Bourreau, Moreau, and Wikström, 2022). The implementation of

acoustic metadata attached to songs has made it possible to objectify the difference of "acousticity" separating the songs. Some works use this metadata (see *infra*) to measure the disparity on the Top 100 most listened tracks out of five music services between 1990 and 2015.

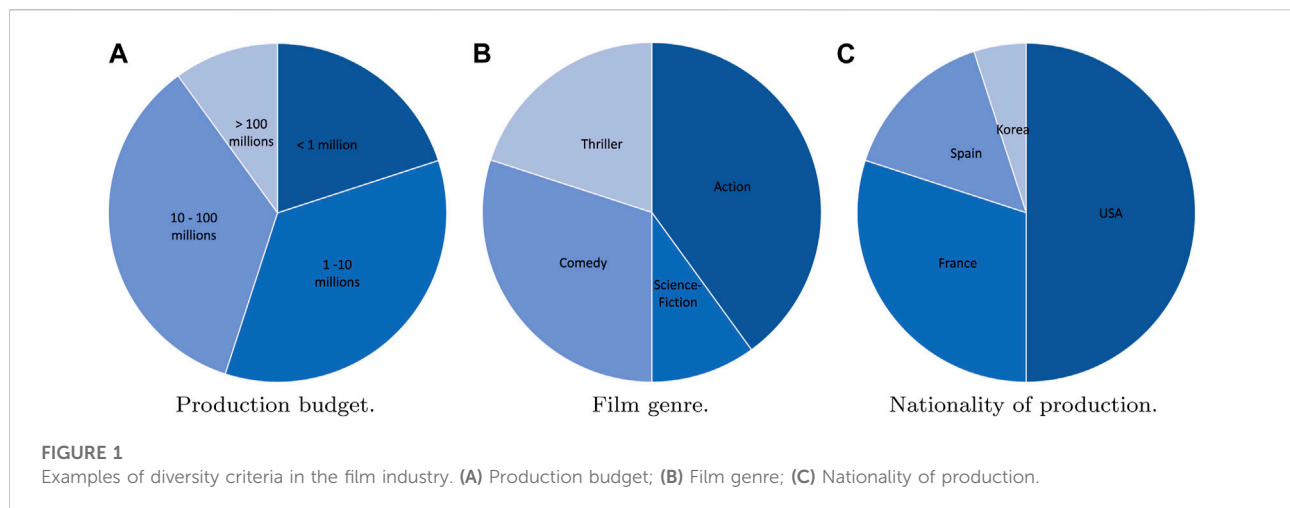
Table 1 shows that at each of the necessary steps, the methodological choices adopted could be more discussed. For example, the choice of sample, never explained under the prism of the availability of relevant data, is sometimes relegated to a simple footnote.

Building diversity measurement indicators: a three-step approach

The study of this previous literature, despite not being explicitly classified into the same methodology, led us to identify a common analysis framework that consists of three key stages to any cultural diversity measurement: the sample selection, the choice of the criterion and the application of the measurement with associated indicators. The following section is therefore dedicated to the presentation of the methodology we propose and the explanation of its importance to perform any cultural diversity measurement, and to provide precise information to the regulator.

Samples selection

First comes the question of the choice of the sample on which a measurement of diversity is carried out. Are we trying to analyse the diversity of the supply, of the demand? In physical places? On online



services? In which sector? Considering which companies? The choice depends on the questions to be answered, as well as the data available over a given period. The diversity of supply, for example, to which the attention of the public authorities has focused, may in no way correspond to the diversity of uses, given the concentration of demand on “star” productions (Rosen, 1981). Home access to Portuguese films or Finnish documentaries, which is technically possible, does not prevent the public from focusing on the few blockbusters they have heard of. To promote the diversity of demand, incentive measures can be taken, but no public policy has ever ventured to define obligations in terms of demand. Indeed, the diversity of demand cannot be decreed, but is forged in the long run through an ambitious policy of education, transmission and taming of multiple forms of imagination. This diversity of demand is well documented in the field of cultural sociology, particularly in connection with the notion of “omnivorousness” (Peterson and Berger, 1975; Coulangeon, 2003).

Relevant criteria

Once the sample has been chosen, it must be broken down into categories based on the selected criteria. This step, while being central in the diversity analysis, as this choice can lead to several outcomes (sometimes contradictory), remains confusing. Many papers, as shown in the previous section (*Measuring cultural diversity: the contribution of academic works* section) chose to consider several diversity criteria at once, but this choice may be discussed regarding the policy objective: what are the relevant diversity criteria for evaluating the results of a policy? Should priority be given to the nationality of productions, as required by the European audiovisual regulator, to the diversity of languages as required by the French regulator for radio, to the diversity of budgets, to the diversity of aesthetics, to novelties, to emerging talents, to freelancers, etc.?

Figures 1, 2 provide, by way of example, criteria that can be applied to various samples in the cinema sector (nationality of production, film genre, budget), and in recorded music sector (music genre, language of expression, diversity of firms). Both the Figures show that many criteria can be applied to the same cultural industry, and their result may be different. For example, Figure 1, in the audiovisual sector, shows us that the criteria used in the audiovisual sector may be: the film genre, the nationality of production or the size of the production (given by its budget). However, while the researcher or the evaluator of the policy may have the choice to consider this or that criterion, the policymaker has already chosen: the AVMS directive is, for example, only centred around the nationality of production across Europe. Hence, to evaluate such a policy, the criterion that must be chosen is the nationality criterion.

The abundance of available data on online services now makes it possible to measure cultural diversity according to criteria that could previously be considered too subjective, such as the “music genre” of a track. Thus, acoustic metadata is now used by a part of the literature to be able to approach the musical aesthetics of a piece. On Spotify, this metadata is available under the name “Audio features,” and provides a measurement of 13 indicators characterising the sounds of a song in an equivalent manner across the entire service (Figure 3). These metrics provide a good estimate of the perception of music, while being less controversial than the “classic” typologies of musical genres (Rap, Jazz, Rock, etc.) (Askin and Mauskapf, 2017). Some works are therefore now approaching the diversity of musical genres thanks to this type of metadata (Bourreau et al., 2022).

The triple dimension of diversity

A final methodological choice relates to the diversity dimensions. Studies in the economics of culture, taking up

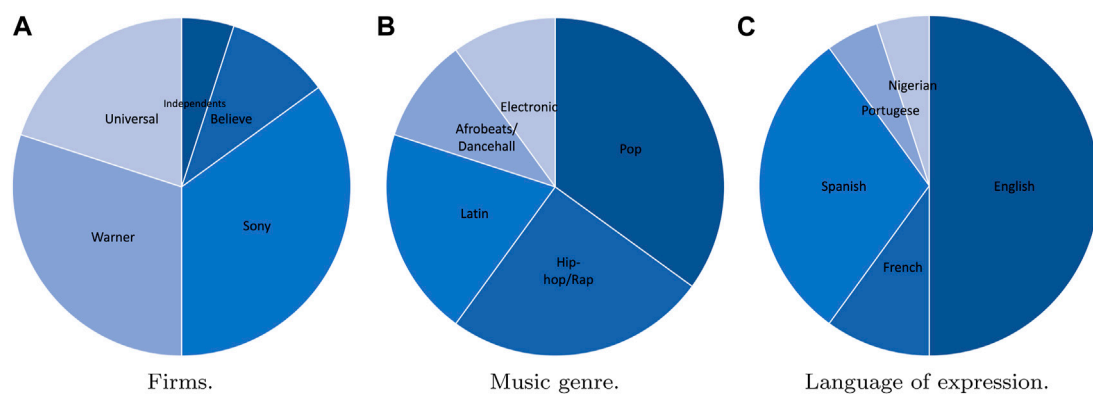


FIGURE 2
Examples of diversity criteria in the recorded music industry. (A) Firms; (B) Music genre; (C) Language of expression.

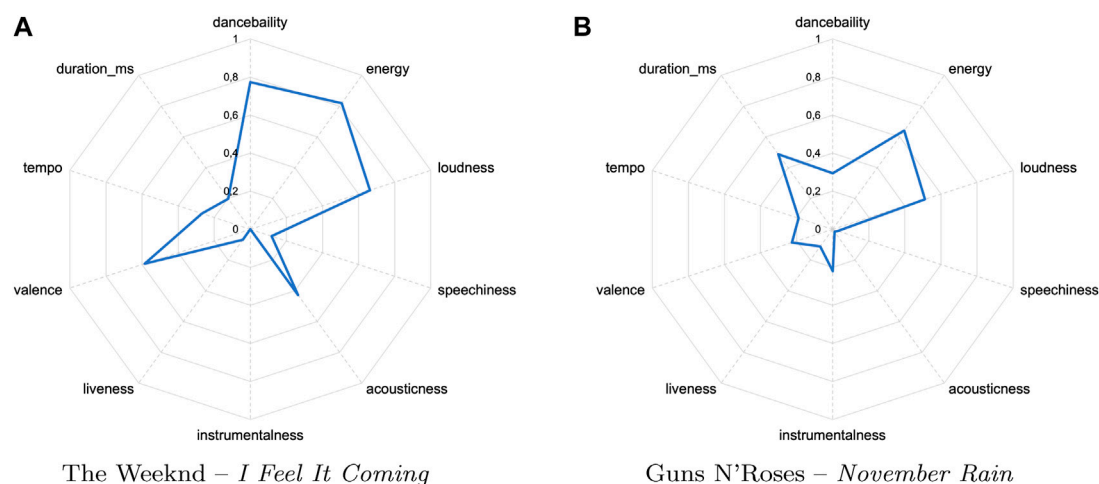


FIGURE 3
Examples of audio features associated with two tracks on Spotify.

results from the literature on biodiversity, technological diversity, or the constitution of financial portfolios, and in particular the work of [Stirling \(1998\)](#), [Stirling \(2007\)](#), have proposed to understand diversity through three dimensions: variety, balance and disparity.

Variety

Variety corresponds to the number of categories within the sample, regarding the criterion selected (for example, the number of languages or the number of distributors present in each sample).

Balance

Balance indicates in what proportion the sample is distributed between the different categories. [Steiner \(1952\)](#) already emphasised the phenomenon of duplication when providers, for example, two

radio stations, offer the same type of program. Duplication can be defined by an increase in the choice supplied which concerns an existing category that is already well-represented or even over-represented in the supply. Balance consists in measuring the concentration of each sample: a very concentrated sample is characterised by a small number of actors sharing a large part of the total, conversely, a poorly concentrated sample includes a large number of actors sharing a small share of the total (i.e., a fairer distribution of the sample). Several concentration indicators exist; the Herfindahl-Hirschman index (HHI) is the most widely used in economics; indeed, it represents market shares well, while being less sensitive to the number of categories than other indexes (this last point often resting on the quality of the available data) ([Benhamou and Peltier, 2007](#)). A low index (between 0 and 1,000) indicates that the sample is not very concentrated, a medium index (between

TABLE 2 Dimensions of diversity and examples of associated indicators.

Dimensions of diversity	Examples of indicators
Variety	Number of occurrences of each category
Balance	Share of each category in the sample
	Herfindahl-Hirschman concentration index
	McIntosh concentration index
	Shannon concentration index
Disparity	Euclidean distance between categories
	Proportion of new categories in the sample
	GS-Score
Synthesis indicator	Stirling index

1,000 and 2,000) corresponds to an average concentration and a high index (more than 2,000) indicates a high concentration of the sample.

Disparity

Disparity, finally, specifies the extent to which a category is distant from the others. As Jean-Luc Godard noted at the time of the cable TV boom, the forty additional channels in France, did not bring one more Griffith film to the screens; hundreds of television channels, thousands of digital offers, can coexist and still broadcast similar content. This multidimensional approach makes it possible to understand that diversity is not solely a function of variety (i.e., of the number of categories represented). Disparity is the degree of difference between each category within the sample. The disparity dimension is identified by the literature as being the most difficult to grasp. Regarding the language criterion, an exploration of linguistic work on language families could make it possible to estimate the degree of difference between two languages of expression. For the criterion of musical genres (see *supra*), the advantage of using acoustic metadata is that of an easier measurement of disparity, because each track is directly comparable to another according to the value of each one's metadata.

The three-step approach is essential to any scientific activity in the measurement of diversity: selection of the sample to be processed, choice of the diversity criterion and the preferred diversity dimensions. These methodological choices must not be made implicitly, but on the contrary made explicit, including when they are simply constrained by the available data. Once the sample has been chosen and the diversity criteria selected, it is possible to distinguish these three dimensions, and to propose measurement indicators for each. Stirling has also proposed a synthetic indicator corresponding to the three dimensions simultaneously (Table 2).

Once the methodological choices adopted have been perfectly defined, objective measures of diversity can be available.

The central role of recommendation for cultural diversity

At the turn of the 21st century, cultural globalisation is changing in nature; the rise of online platforms offers a new face to the international circulation of content and to diversity issues in both audiovisual and music sectors. New players, streaming platforms, are now at the centre of the activity of the sector by supporting the marketing of dematerialised on-demand content; streaming via subscription represents 58% of the French recorded music market in the first half of 2022, with a turnover of 211 million euros (out of a total of 364 million euros). At the end of 2022, the European streaming market represented 68% of music listening, with a total of 524 million users.⁶ The world leader in music streaming, Spotify, globally present in the distribution of musical works also offers non-musical audio content (podcasts, audiobooks, etc.). In audiovisual, 66% of French Internet users are subscribed to a streaming service in 2022,⁷ and VOD streaming represents 30% of audiovisual revenues in Europe in 2021.⁸

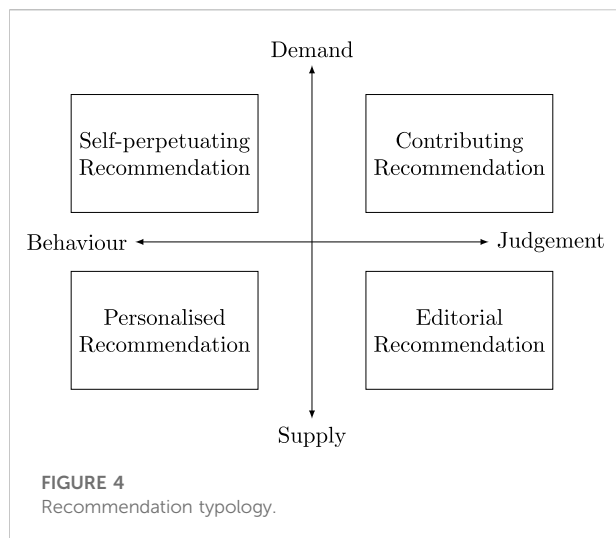
Recommendation and highlighting

One of the consequences of the digital distribution transformation is the proliferation of online content. The abundance of cultural products has in turn spurred new interface design standards. Any on-demand service implies a hierarchy in the presentation of content to users. McKelvey and Hunt (2019) have rightly pointed out that the discovery of content by the user relies heavily on the design and management of choice in platform interfaces. Placement of content does not happen by chance. Among the determinants that explain the place of content on the interface, recommender systems play a major role. Recommendation refers to the set of measures aimed at directing the user towards a particular content or group of contents. Recommendation plays a prescribing role in online services that is much more important than that previously exercised by the usual forms of prescribing that have always existed in the cultural industries (Belleflamme and Peitz, 2018).

6 GESAC—European Grouping of Societies of Authors and Composer, *Study on the place and role of authors and composers in the European music streaming market*, 2022. Available at: <https://authorsocieties.eu/content/uploads/2022/09/music-streaming-study-28-9-2022.pdf>.

7 ARCOM, 2022 *Barometer of the consumption of digital cultural goods*, 2022. Available at: <https://www.arcom.fr/nos-ressources/etudes-et-donnees/mediatheque/barometre-2022-de-la-consommation-des-biens-culturels-dematerialises>.

8 European Audiovisual Observatory, *Top players in the European AV industry*, 2023. Available at: <https://rm.coe.int/top-players-in-the-european-av-industry-2022-edition-l-ene/1680a9cb32>.



The generic term “recommendation” actually refers to a plurality of systems that raise very different diversity issues. The typology of Farchy et al. (2017), distinguishes four highlighting devices (Figure 4). First, contributory recommendation corresponds to the creation and the sharing of recommendations by users (or third parties). Self-perpetuated recommendation corresponds to the “tops” available on the service. Editorial recommendation refers to content that is highlighted by the platform, for various reasons, for all users, regardless of their individual preferences. Lastly, with the rise of cultural services accessible online, and the volume of content available, the possibility of exploiting a large quantity of usage data on Internet users’ behaviour has led to the emergence of personalised recommendation, associated with the potential of automated algorithmic processing.

Most online services like Netflix or Spotify use a mix of these different forms of recommendation (Farchy et al., 2014). The new online music curators thus combine human editorial work and consumer usage data to create a sort of “augmented editorial power” thanks to big data (Bonini and Gandini, 2019). Aguiar and Waldfogel (2021) show that Spotify editorial playlists play an important role in the success of the titles placed there. Mariuzzo and Ormosi (2020) insist on the fact that the music majors, unlike independents, are much more present on the “star” playlists, put forward by Spotify and which accumulate the most audience, which gives the titles of these majors more chances of being visible and listened to.

Recommendation and cultural diversity approaches

By highlighting certain content more than others, recommendation systems influence cultural diversity. But in which direction and how to measure it? Two changes must be considered.

First of all, for services with large catalogues, the mere presence of a title in their catalogue does not necessarily imply that the user can discover it, the relevant sample for measuring cultural diversity is no longer the whole of the supply—the vast catalogues of Netflix or Prime Video each bring together around 5,000 titles in France and that of Spotify more than 100 million tracks worldwide⁹—but a selection of content that is particularly visible to users, i.e., playlists for music services, or home pages for audiovisual services.

On the other hand, on a service that makes extensive use of personalised recommendation, the analysis of diversity would require two methodological steps; in addition to a classical static analysis of diversity at time *t*, diversity can be analysed dynamically in order to isolate the effect of personalised recommendation algorithms on diversity, by comparing, using pre-established measurement indicators, the situation before and after the personalisation carried out by the service. The question would not be “How diverse the catalogue is?” but “How diverse are the contents displayed on one specific user’s screen after a recommendation?”. Understanding how recommendation algorithms influence the way in which Internet users are exposed to diversity is indeed a field that could be more explored with all the data available. For scholars, empirical work on case studies would make it possible to measure, without preconceived ideas, the results of recommendation systems on diversity. This analysis makes it possible to specify the existence or non-existence, depending on the services, of “filter bubbles.” The hypothesis of the user being locked into a filter bubble is largely associated with biases linked to the increasingly fine-grained and increasingly in-depth personalisation of the results offered, whether by search engines, social networks, or cultural services. Considering the offer supplied by online cultural services, the thesis of algorithmic biases and confinement in the same category of content, to the detriment of cultural diversity, although recurrent, has never been fully tested in empirical work (Farchy and Tallec, 2023). Establishing appropriate forms of regulation, however, requires detailed, case-by-case analyses in order to confirm or alleviate the fears expressed by the filter bubble hypothesis.

Recommendation and quotas policy in favour of cultural diversity

The recommendation strategies set up by streaming services impact public policies that are in favour of the promotion of diversity. Faced with the major upheavals of the recommendation, public policies nevertheless continue, in

⁹ Spotify, *About Spotify*. Available at: <https://investors.spotify.com/about/>.

order to promote cultural diversity, to mobilise regulatory tools such as quotas, put in place back in the era of an offline world.

Since 1989 in the audiovisual sector, the Council of Europe and the European Commission have attempted to impose broadcasting quotas for European productions. While their initial purpose (as announced in the treaties) was linked to a form of industrial protectionism, quotas have increasingly been claimed as tools for promoting cultural diversity. The criterion of nationality of audiovisual productions (i.e., that of the nationality of production companies) is the only diversity criterion that was retained to establish these quotas. However, “European” content is neither a cultural category nor an economic category but only a “political” category.

Unlike the audiovisual sector, the question of quotas in the music industry is not subject to Community regulations. The French national choice is an exception within the European Union. The criteria used by the French public authorities in the music industry are those of the language of expression and the release date of the titles. France chose to impose quotas for French-language works on private radio stations as early as 1986: the law of 30 September (modified on 1 August 2000) provides that “the substantial proportion of musical works of French expression or interpreted in a regional language in use in France must reach a minimum of 40% of songs of French expression, of which at least half come from new talents or new productions.”

With the rise of online services, in the audiovisual field, the political ambition to modify the rules of the market by directing users towards certain types of content -European ones—through “highlighting” processes, has materialised in the AVMS Directive in 2018: it now requires that nearly one-third of their catalogues contain European works. Nothing like that is contemplated at this point in the music industry but some professionals are already calling for a similar type of regulation by setting up quotas.

Yet, promotion quotas are relics of a bygone, broadcast television or radio-dominated era, and are thus unsuited to on-demand services. In a non-linear situation where users have the ability to decide the time at which they view or listen to content, it seems irrelevant to impose the players to ensure a presence rate of European content in their catalogues if this content is not highlighted by recommendation. The role played by recommendation systems leads to question the relevance of old means of regulation, that of quotas, in a radically different ecosystem.

Mobilising available indicators to serve a new regulation of cultural diversity

Beyond the incantatory discourse on the supposed benefits of cultural diversity, public authorities, when they do not rely on any statistical indicator, tend to display vague objectives.

The ambiguous objectives of policies in favour of cultural diversity

Historically, in international negotiations, this question of diversity is at the heart of the recurring debate between liberalism and protectionism. Faced with the imbalance of international trade, protectionist temptations rose up, from the 1930s, to an essentially European/American confrontation in the film industry, before expanding to the entire audiovisual sector. The agreement signed in 1994 by the member countries of the GATT—now the World Trade Organisation (WTO) –, the famous “cultural exception”, leads to a complex situation in which Europeans have made no commitment to liberalise the audiovisual sector, and obtained provisionally to preserve the existence of their public support mechanisms. The policy of cultural exception has become the symbol of the resistance of all cultural activities to the laws of the market, although the culture in question, as it is envisaged in the WTO negotiations, remains almost exclusively centred on cinema and audiovisual. It means that culture is different from other goods, because of its symbolic dimension and the values it conveys, and therefore must constitute an exception to the rules of free trade.

While the notion of exception was clearly associated with a protectionist ambition in the context of trade negotiations, the vaguer notion of cultural diversity has gradually imposed itself in national and international debates, a somewhat “soft” political objective. The display of an ambitious policy in defence of cultural diversity is sometimes only the screen of a classic policy of protectionism in favour of national industries (Farchy et al., 2022). The idea that national public authorities must protect diversity, faced with the presumed cultural homogenisation to which free trade would lead, occupies a central place in Europe. Behind the common banner of promoting cultural diversity, however, strong political opposition remains between the countries, and unlike the audiovisual industry, the music industry has received little attention regarding the issue of diversity.

The existence of content produced by National or European companies in each country is far from being a guarantee of cultural diversity. The objective of cultural diversity therefore contains a great ambiguity: is it a question of allowing companies whose capital is French, Spanish or Swedish to manufacture images and sounds? Only classic benefits to local industries would then be expected. Or is it to encourage the production of works different from those offered by the United States, India, Brazil or Korea and to disseminate European culture more widely on international services? Similarly, aiming to maintain a variety of small and medium producers and distributors will not necessarily lead to a great disparity of musical genres if everyone seeks to duplicate the genres that perform best.

At the end of semantic shifts, protectionism for the benefit of European economic sectors has therefore, falsely, become

TABLE 3 Multiple approaches of cultural diversity measurement.

(a) Criterion—Languages
Sample—Top 100 most listened tracks
Dimensions
Variety: number of different languages available in the Top
Balance: share of French or English within the sample
(b) Criterion—Publishing firms
Sample—Most followed editorial playlists
Dimensions
Variety: number of firms inside the sample
Balance: shares of majors/independent publishers within those playlists
(c) Criterion—Music genre of the tracks
Sample—Top 1,000
Dimensions
Variety: number of music genres
Balance: shares of these genres
Disparity: proximity metrics between multiple music genres (with the use of acoustic metadata, for example)
(d) Criterion—Emerging of new artists
Sample—Whole of editorial playlists
Dimensions
Variety: number of new artists highlighted by editorial recommendation
Balance: relative share of new artists within the entire artists set within editorial recommendation

synonymous with the diversity of cultural identities conveyed by the contents. Beyond this historical ambiguity, choosing suitable measurement indicators could be an opportunity to clarify, in a pragmatic manner, the objectives pursued.

Choosing indicators adapted to the objectives pursued

The Table below (Table 3) provides an overview, in the case of online music streamed on Spotify, of possible approaches to measuring diversity. Monitoring associated indicators correspond to different objectives. As we have noted, measuring diversity presupposes, methodological choices: the identification of the relevant samples, the choice of the appropriate diversity criteria and finally that of the dimensions of the diversity to be measured (and the associated indicators). Public decision-makers must therefore carry out arbitration (bearing in mind that depending on the criteria selected, the effects may prove to be contradictory), and regularly evaluate, thanks to appropriate measurement tools, the results of the means implemented.

We have selected four diversity criteria (the musical genre, the distribution company, the language of the titles and the

novelty of the artists) which can be associated with one or other of the dimensions of diversity. Depending on the preferred angle, the diversity indicator will not be calculated in the same way and the result obtained will have to be interpreted differently.

The choice of the sample (the Tops, the editorialised playlists, etc.) corresponds to different questions. The diversity resulting from the content highlighted by the self-sustaining recommendation (the Tops) sheds light on the observed diversity of demand. The analysis of samples of editorialised playlists allows, from a different angle, to calculate the diversity of content highlighted according to the strategy driven by the platform.

Likewise, the choice of diversity criteria does not follow the same expectations. If the objective is to maintain a fringe of independent distributors in relation to the oligopoly (Sony, Warner, Universal, Believe) the relevant criterion will be that of the firms. If it is a topic of questioning the predominance of urban music, the criterion to remember will be that of musical genres. The diversity of genres can be understood by defining predetermined genres ex-ante or, on the contrary, on the basis of acoustic metadata (see above), determining the greater or lesser acoustic diversity of the titles. The number of different artists in playlists and the identification of “new entrants” (who offer their first tracks) gives an additional indication of the sector’s capacity to renew itself. Finally, if the objective is the defence of the “Francophonie,” monitoring a linguistic diversity indicator will prove useful. Depending on the diversity criterion chosen, contradictory results may appear. Thus, the linguistic protectionism of French (see *infra*) can lead to paradoxes, by setting aside certain non-sung or non-spoken musical genres (such as music called “classical” or certain forms of electronic music) and excluding French (or French-speaking) artists, choosing to express themselves in another language (Daft Punk, Rile, etc.).

Conclusion

Diversity indicators, while they do not replace a policy, nonetheless remain compasses, valuable decision-making tools in a rapidly changing cultural universe increasingly impacted by technological changes. Rather than setting up quotas, which are largely unsuitable for de-linearized services, a policy in favour of cultural diversity could be based, beforehand, on the choice and monitoring of a certain number of diversity indicators corresponding to the preferred objectives. This article offers a methodological reference framework for empirically developing new indicators on which regulators and companies could rely.

Once implemented, indicators of cultural diversity should be regularly published. Monitoring could be carried out either directly by a dedicated Observatory of cultural diversity, or be subject to a requirement for transparency on the part of online

services which would publish at regular intervals the requested indicators concerning them. Bulk data and diversity indicators could be available. Failing to address this, public authorities will condemn policies in favour of cultural diversity as being nothing more than wishful thinking, without substance.

Data availability statement

The original contributions presented in the study are included in the article/supplementary material, further inquiries can be directed to the corresponding author.

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Author contributions

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Conflict of interest

The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

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Value of art and culture institutions: a case study of Jyväskylä, Finland

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This paper presents a case study about perceptions of residents about the value of publicly funded art and culture institutions (museums, city theatre, and symphony orchestra) in the Finnish city of Jyväskylä. In this study, the kinds of value that residents attribute to these local art and culture institutions and what kind of economic value the visitors' expenditure to these institutions illustrates are explored. The analysis in this study is based on a survey conducted in 2019 that included the visitors and non-visitors to these institutions as participants. The results illustrate several values of art and culture institutions, which also point to multiple policy domains related to art, economy, social, and wellbeing effects. According to previous studies on cultural policy, it is important to be aware of the various value dimensions of future cultural policy. Though there are conflicting aims regarding cultural values, varied value dimensions complement each other in future-oriented policies.

KEYWORDS

art and culture institutions, perceived value, economic value, cultural policy, Nordic

Introduction

This paper analyses the value of publicly funded art and culture institutions (museums, city theatre, and symphony orchestra, hereafter referred to as JI in this article) in the Finnish city of Jyväskylä. The evidence comes from Nordic context, where a variety of values have traditionally been attached to the functioning of art and culture institutions. Across all Nordic countries (Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, and Sweden), art and culture institutions play a significant role in cultural policy, and they have been and still are considered important vehicles for promoting societal welfare. Therefore, a large share of public funding for culture is allocated to them (Kangas and Vestheim, 2010; Sokka et al., 2022).

One of the major reasons behind the official funding of art and culture institutions has been the aim to civilize, which was an essential part of the public cultural policy already in the nineteenth century (Sokka, 2005; Sokka and Kangas, 2006; Helminen, 2007; Ministry of Education and Culture and Finland, 2017). After World War II and especially from the 1960s onwards, institutions were integrated into municipal service production when the welfare aims of the developing welfare state became connected

with the evolving administrative branch of cultural policy (both in Finland as in other Nordic countries) (Duelund, 2003; Sallanen, 2009; Sokka et al., 2022). Furthermore, since the 1990s, economic aims have been added to the existing layers of cultural policy.

Currently, art and culture institutions are entwined in a variety of discussions, such as cultivation of art, democracy, economic importance, as well as local and regional development strategies and sustainability (Kangas, 2004). In the context of regions and cities, culture is nowadays said to boost economic development, regenerate neighbourhoods, increase the attractiveness of cities and regions, and make communities livelier and more cohesive (Florida, 2002; Gibson and Stevenson, 2004; Grodach and Loukaitou-Sideris, 2007; Sacco et al., 2009; Anttiroiko, 2014). At least part of this development can be regarded as “defensive instrumentalism” that does not recognize the enabling functions of culture in society and culture as such; instead, it focuses on measuring without elaborating “a positive, confident and coherent notion of cultural value” (Belfiore, 2012, p. 106).

There is surprisingly little knowledge on how residents value art and culture institutions and whether their perceived valuations, for example, meet the existing motives of public cultural policy. Therefore, this study aims to generate such knowledge. We ask, what kinds of value residents attribute to JI and what kind of economic value their visitors’ expenditure illustrates. Based on empirical evidence, a spectrum of values are illustrated here. Because we believe that it is reasonable to consider value of institutions in all the dimensions we can trace from our data we include also values that are realized through cultural consumption. The approach in this study combines economic analysis and qualitative analysis of the perceived values, thus illustrating the interconnected nature of various value dimensions as well as their attachment to different kinds of argumentation and language within cultural policy.

Empirical evidence about the values reveals some of the expectations that the social environment of the JI poses for the functioning of these institutions in the contemporary society. Such a “mapping” of values may prove valuable when considering the role and development needs of art and cultural institutions in the future. To quote Kangas and Vestheim:

“Institutions are dependent on the social environment to survive, they must all the time prove that they are satisfying some societal need, and meeting some aims, expectations and functions that are not met by other institutions. It is only by fulfilling their aims (which may change, but usually that happens only slowly) that institutions can legitimise their existence” (Kangas and Vestheim, 2010, p. 272).

The significance of values and their perception and role in cultural policy argumentation must be situated in a specific

context. The context of this study, Nordic welfare state and its cultural policy, can be considered specific in the variety of various values it presents. Yet—because of this plurality of values—we believe that our results could be useful for cultural policy research in other contexts as well.

Next, we begin by explaining the concept of value and its various meanings. Then we describe the materials and methods used in this study. After that we describe the local and national context of this study. The analysis section begins with a rather traditional economic input-output analysis to show the realisation of economic value through the consumption of culture. After that, we proceed to a more qualitatively oriented analysis of other perceived values of the JI. Finally, the findings and their implications and conclusion are presented.

Value

Studying cultural value may be regarded as a means to understand the various aspects of supporting culture as well as to achieve gains through arts and culture across various policy sectors (Carnwath and Brown, 2014). The dimensions and categorisations of cultural values have been debated throughout the history of Western civilisation (Belfiore and Bennett, 2007a; Belfiore and Bennett, 2007b). The question of how value should be understood and approached has been discussed widely in research (Heinich, 2020; Kaufmann and Gonzales, 2020). There has been significant research focus on the topic in recent years. In the United Kingdom, the Arts Council England (Carnwath and Brown, 2014), the Warwick Commission on the Future of Cultural Value (Belfiore et al., 2019), and the Arts and Humanities Research Council have been active in this sphere of research (Crossick and Kaszynska, 2014; Crossick and Kaszynska, 2016). For example, Carnwath and Brown refer to John Holden’s conceptualization of “institutional value,” which concerns “the value that organisations provide above and beyond the value of their products” (Carnwath and Brown, 2014, p. 41–42,86). However, none of the mentioned researchers have specifically focused on the values that visitors and non-visitors attribute to art and cultural institutions.

Researching the value of culture is also a means of examining the relationship between culture and varied dimensions of public policies. In practice, there seems to be an increasing need for cross-sectoral public policies wherein the various dimensions of culture are recognised, supported, enabled, and developed in a collaborative manner (Gray, 2017; Mangset, 2020; Mujica, 2022). One, perhaps simplified, way to classify the various values of culture is to recognise its economic value, social value, and public value (Carnwath and Brown, 2014). Crossick and Kaszynska identify “components of cultural value” that signify the varied outcomes of cultural activity, including the basis of shaping reflective individuals and engaged citizens with the help of

culture (Crossick and Kaszynska, 2014). This implies that the arts and culture have cultural, political, and social effects. However, some dimensions of values can be hard to distinguish from impacts that in many cases become ambiguously attached to value generation. Still, it is not the task of this paper to dwell on the area of impact studies as the aim of this study is simply to recognize which kind of value dimensions can be found from the survey data.

As this study is aimed at empirically illustrating the kinds of values that residents attribute to local art and culture institutions, Armbricht's research about perceived values is a rare reference point to our approach (Armbricht, 2014). Based on a survey of visitors to cultural institutions (museums, instead of a larger set of institutions), Armbricht analysed the value of cultural institutions, recognizing six categories or value typologies for cultural institutions: economic, education and skills, social, identity, image, and health. Armbricht emphasises that his value-scale is based on individuals' perceptions and thus "grounded in individuals' knowledge about the studied institution" (Armbricht, 2014, p. 269). As such, it is "to be regarded as one complementary way of understanding the values that cultural institutions provide to society" (Armbricht, 2014, p. 269). From this perspective, the value of an object is not only contextual but also based on several categories of intrinsic and extrinsic resources, observable, for example, in verbal expressions (Heinich, 2020).

Each of the values presented in the following chapters is based on experiences and attitudes of individual survey respondents. In this sense, they could be thought as illustrations of "intrinsic values," regardless of what kind of value dimensions may be found: the individual relationship with the institution comes close to that given by John Holden, who calls "intrinsic value" as the "set of values that relate to the subjective experience" (Carnwath and Brown, 2014, p. 86). It is not, however, in the interests here to consider either the "intrinsicity" or the "instrumentality" of the values found in the data of this study. That will be left for future research. Despite acknowledging their importance, this study has not focused on the actual valuation processes, either at the individual or at the social level. The aim of this study was only to recognise the kinds of values that could be tracked from the study's data.

Materials and methods

This study is based on a survey of existing and potential visitors to the JI that was conducted in 2019. The study's data represents valuation by individual respondents in the context of Jyväskylä, and it is bound in this context. Yet, these results can provide comparison points for other localities in other Western countries, especially in other Nordic countries, which share similarities in the organisation of art and culture institutions (Kangas and Vestheim, 2010).

We conducted the survey¹ as part of a city centre development and regeneration project (Heart of Jyväskylä/*Jyväskylän sydän*), funded by the Business Services Unit of the City of Jyväskylä. It had 834 respondents, of which 92.6% had visited the institutions during the previous 12 months. The majority (87%) of the respondents reported their place of residence to be in Jyväskylä. The median age of respondents was 68 years. Forty-four percent of the respondents reported university and 21% reported applied sciences as their highest level of education. The largest single category of respondents by occupation or status consisted of pensioners, who accounted for 24% of respondents. Thirty-seven percent of the respondents lived in households/family groups with children under 18 years of age. Eighty-one percent of the respondents were women, 17% were men, and 2.3% chose the option "other/I do not want to answer." This study's data thus consists of respondents who are known to attend cultural events and visit cultural facilities, i.e., elderly women with a higher degree of education (Van Eijck, 1997; Chan and Goldthorpe, 2005; Stanbridge, 2007; Christin, 2012; Sokka et al., 2014). This would not have been optimal if the aim had been to have a representative study of who participates and why they visit the art and culture institutions. This was however not the intention, and the nature of the data does not as such affect the efforts made to find which kinds of value dimensions the respondents attributed to JI.

The questionnaire consisted of questions dealing with the institutions as a whole as well as individual institutions and visits to those institutions. The respondents were asked to answer questions based on their latest visit to the JI in the previous 12 months. If they had not visited any of the institutions, they were asked to consider the local institutions in general. The survey mainly targeted visitors to art and cultural institutions; however, some respondents who had not used the services of these institutions were also included by disseminating the questionnaire in both paper and digital formats through various communication channels (for example, the city's official media channels, social media, and on-site institutions, including public libraries).

The questionnaire included the following themes:

- Frequency of visits to the JI during the previous 12 months and respondent's relationship with arts and culture

1 The survey was conducted with the online survey tool SurveyPal as well as in paper form. The data was collected anonymously in the period from March to May 2019. An introductory text to the survey explained that data would be used for research purposes and anonymized. Research was conducted along the Finnish National Board on Research Integrity TENK guidelines 2019 (https://tenk.fi/sites/default/files/2021-01/Ethical_review_in_human_sciences_2020.pdf): Participation in the research did not deviate from the principle of informed consent, and therefore, an ethical review statement from a human sciences ethics committee was not needed. Enquiries about the questionnaire can be directed to the corresponding author.

- Description of the most recent visit to the cultural institution: expenditure, company, reason/s for the visit
- Impressions about cultural facilities based on the latest visit: characteristics and quality of the cultural institution, perceived impacts of the visit to the cultural institution on the respondent's personal life, perceived impact of the cultural institution on the city as a whole
- Suggestions for development/improvement
- Views about roles and impacts of local public libraries
- Views about cultural institutions as part of the development and wellbeing of the city and its residents.

Various methods and data were employed for value analysis. As part of the methodology, we applied qualitative analysis, descriptive statistical analysis, and economical input-output-analysis to the data (see [Supplementary Appendix S3](#)). As mentioned, the survey data does not reflect a representative sample of the visitors, nor the entire population of the city. We cannot empirically illustrate any other values than those that are represented in the data. It still provides an understanding about the kinds of values that residents may attach to art and culture institutions. Most likely, we could find inequalities in who participates in JI, but it is not the task of this study. We will however discuss the value dimensions we found in our data from the perspective of equal participation and access to culture.

The opinions and experiences of visitors and the consumption patterns of visitors as well as their local and regional economic effects were analysed. Basic frequencies have been reported in [Ruokolainen et al. \(2019\)](#), but this is the first time any of those results have been presented internationally. Most importantly, for this paper, we engaged in descriptive analysis of the visitors' behaviour, for example, not just how often different types of institutions were visited by them but also why. Varied methods of analysis were applied in varying degrees to discuss different values. For example, economic value has been illustrated mainly using input-output analysis, whereas image and identity values have been chiefly analysed using descriptive and qualitative means based on written answers of the survey that until now have not been presented.

To a certain extent and by using open text response questions, this study has employed survey as a qualitative tool ([Braun et al., 2021](#)). The open responses revealed issues that the respondents valued as important and essential while consuming, enjoying, and/or creating art and culture. The first open question that provided data for this purpose was, "How would you describe yourself in relation to culture?" It received 696 answers, out of which 218 respondents expressed various values that attributed to culture in their lives. The second open question "How could we make the cultural facilities of Jyväskylä more attractive?" received 547 responses. It also revealed valuations through the perceived development of and problems related to the institutions. In analysing the

responses to these questions, we have used qualitative content analysis to recognise various value dimensions present within or underpinning the responses ([Miles and Huberman, 1994](#); [Silverman, 2001](#)).

Context: arts and culture institutions in Jyväskylä

The city of Jyväskylä is located in the Central Finland region. Jyväskylä fares quite well when compared with other Finnish cities. The total population of the city was 143,420 in the year 2020. The population growth has been steady (around 1,000 new inhabitants per year) during recent years ([The City of Jyväskylä, 2022](#)). More importantly, Jyväskylä is a centre of higher education as it has both a research university and a university of applied sciences. The city has a student population of approximately 40,000. In the year 2018, Jyväskylä ranked fourth among Finnish cities and towns with regard to overall image; its strengths included providing better possibilities for study and leisure, offering a healthy environment to grow up in, as well as having a pleasant living environment ([The City of Jyväskylä, 2019](#); [The City of Jyväskylä, 2021a](#)).

The analysis in this study included five of the most important publicly funded JI:

- Alvar Aalto Museum
- Jyväskylä City Theatre
- Symphony Orchestra (Jyväskylä Sinfonia)
- Jyväskylä Art Museum
- The Craft Museum of Finland

Four of the institutions are directly connected to the city of Jyväskylä's administrative and financial instruments, while the Alvar Aalto Museum is a local destination belonging to the Alvar Aalto Foundation.

All of the above institutions receive a considerable amount of funding from the city of Jyväskylä. According to official documents and decisions of the city council, these institutions may be linked to a variety of goals. Jyväskylä City Strategy presents the vision of a "growing and internationally recognised city of education and expertise" and aims at making the city "the best place to live, work and study" ([The City of Jyväskylä, 2021a](#)). This strategy, as well as other sector-specific strategies and plans, manifests various values related to the culture, art, and cultural institutions of the city ([Luonila and Ruokolainen, 2023](#)).

The strategy includes responsibility, trust, creativity, and openness ([The City of Jyväskylä, 2021a](#)). The four strategic goals of the city are as follows: 1) happy, healthy, and participatory citizens; 2) fresh, growth-oriented business policy; 3) wise use of resources; and 4) to emerge as the capital of sport and physical activity in Finland. As part of the

goal of “happy, healthy and participatory citizens,” several themes are emphasised: providing opportunities for children and young people to enjoy healthy growth and learn successfully; opportunities to influence decision-making; promoting equality; availability and accessibility of services; and building a strong sense of community to reduce loneliness through multifaceted leisure activities, arts, and culture. Through its aim of “a fresh, growth-oriented business policy,” the strategy seeks to develop Jyväskylä into an international city of culture, events, and tourism, with a charming city centre, and also a city that is capable of attracting employers.

The cultural plan of the city also focuses on four strategic themes: allocation of services, cultural facilities, business policy, and culture as a profession (The City of Jyväskylä, 2021c). In the Centre Vision of the City of Jyväskylä, the art and cultural institutions of the city provide open spaces for participation and venues for cultural events, enabling Jyväskylä to develop as an event city (The City of Jyväskylä, 2021b). Art and culture institutions are also mentioned in strategies and documents that concentrate on the social, health, and wellbeing aspects, such as the Wellbeing Plan, the Inclusion Programme and the Equality Plan of the city (Luonila and Ruokolainen, 2023).

Value dimensions of art and culture institutions in Jyväskylä

Economic value

Art and culture institutions contribute to economic value in various ways. For example, according to Throsby, the economic value of an art museum is derived from the asset value of the buildings and contents as well as from the service flows provided by these assets (Throsby, 2001). The JI buildings have their own accounting values. However, artworks, archaeological resources, or buildings of cultural importance (for example, buildings designed by Alvar Aalto) cannot be easily valued reliably. Consequently, this study focused on the flows of services provided by JI.

Throsby distinguished the economic flows of art museum services as follows: 1) excludable private goods, 2) non-excludable public goods, and 3) beneficial externalities (Throsby, 2001). The same classification has been used in the analysis of the economic value of the JI in this study. According to Throsby's classification, private goods include the consumption experiences of the visitors. These include economic use values, which can be measured by the value of the tickets sold. Moreover, the visitors may be willing to pay more for the visit than they actually pay. This reflects the utility a visitor receives while buying services. The consumer surplus is the highest if there are no entrance fees. If visitors buy merchandise at the art institution shop, it creates added value for the institutions.

Accordingly, the economic value and valuation of culture can be seen in the consumption patterns of individual JI visitors. For example, the average visitor² buys tickets, other services, and so on related to the visit. An estimate of these patterns was asked in the survey, and therefore, the following calculations are grounded in consumption patterns expressed by individual survey participants (a survey of existing and potential visitors to the JI that was conducted in 2019). In the case of JI, the median value of consumption was 37 euros (Table 1).

Moreover, the economic flows of art and culture institutions may generate economic impacts such as employment and income at their respective locations. These externalities are typically important at the regional level, as they create multiplier effects on the regional economy. Accordingly, in this study, analysis of the regional economic flows of visitors' consumption was based on the input-output tables of Central Finland for 2014. The effects of spending by visitors under the heads of production, employment, households' net incomes, and taxes are shown in Supplementary Appendix S2 (how to calculate the economic value of Jyväskylä Art institutions is shown in Supplementary Appendix S3).

The total number of visitors to the JI was 194,257 in 2019. Although foreign visitors contribute to the export income of Central Finland, domestic tourism expenditure is also a form of export income for the region. Athanasopoulos et al. suggests that the demand for domestic tourists has received little attention in the previous studies (Athanasopoulos and Hyndman, 2008; Allen et al., 2009; Athanasopoulos et al., 2014). Domestic tourism can contribute more to the tourism-related industry of the region than foreign tourism, since services aimed at attracting foreign tourists have often been built and tested based on domestic demands (Crouch and Ritchie, 1999; Athanasopoulos et al., 2014). Furthermore, domestic tourism may increase residents' cultural consumption. It is however difficult to predict the extent to which domestic tourism spending will replace foreign spending.

This study showed that financial spending by visitors living outside Central Finland has had an impact on employment, amounting to approximately 22.9 person-years in Central Finland (see Supplementary Appendix S2).³ The production impact of spending by visitors from outside of Central Finland totalled 2,287,205 euros. As a result of increased demand, state taxes increased by EUR 48,536 and municipal taxes by EUR 127,682. The net income from households

² Except for the Alvar Aalto Museum, the share of foreign visitors is low (see Supplementary Appendix S1).

³ Among the respondents in the survey, there were only a few from outside Central Finland. We used the cost structure of visitors to the entire audience as a basis for analysis. This underestimated the amount of consumption by visitors living outside Central Finland.

TABLE 1 Median spending per visitor.

Place of residence of JI visitors	Alvar Aalto Museum	Jyväskylä Sinfonia	Jyväskylä City Theatre	Jyväskylä Art Museum	The Craft Museum of Finland	All institutions (average)
Jyväskylä	13 €	43 €	45 €	15 €	22 €	35 €
All others	40 €	—	65 €	43 €	78 €	62 €
Average	16 €	45 €	47 €	20 €	30 €	37 €

increased by EUR 723,767 due to consumption related to art institution visits.

In this study, the economic impact of locals spending on visits to JI, for the entire region of Central Finland, across varied sectors, was also calculated. Such spending has a more significant impact on regional production and employment, compared with spending by visitors from outside of Central Finland. The estimated money flows from visitors to JI, who were living in Jyväskylä and elsewhere in Central Finland, totalled EUR 8.46 million. Spending by visitors living in Central Finland, during their visits to the JI, affected employment across different sectors in Central Finland by 122.9 person-years (Supplementary Appendix S2). Based on the regional input-output analysis, the production impact of spending by Central Finland inhabitants during JI visits totalled EUR 12,226 million, including the multiplier effect on various industries. The total impact on state taxes was EUR 260,615, whereas the impact on municipal taxes was EUR 685,560. Households' net income increased by EUR 2,623 million.⁴

The JI also provide collective benefits. The economic value of the benefits of these public goods may be evaluated using the contingent valuation method.⁵ In this study, we did not attribute economic valuation to these benefits. However, a previous research found that the residents of Jyväskylä were willing to pay more than what they actually paid for the existence of the Museum of Central Finland, through their taxes (Tohmo, 2009). Consequently, Jyväskylä taxpayers received value from the existence of the Central Finland museum, which exceeded the public funding used to pay for its existence.

⁴ Besides consumption experiences, private goods benefits include formal educational activities, curatorial and conservation services, and rewards to donors. Educational activities, which include, for example, instruction of school groups, can increase the stock of human capital in the short or long run. Increased human capital can lead to higher productivity, higher salaries, and higher consumption. For example, museums may display works of practising artists to the public, creating a utility value for those artists. Further, donors gain private utility for supporting art institutions.

⁵ As part of the contingent valuation method, individuals are asked directly about how much they are willing to pay for the existence of a cultural feature. In this study, we did not utilise the contingent valuation method. However, we asked visitors to the JI about the spending structure connected to their visit. We analysed the spending related to these visits through an input-output analysis.

Image and identity

The role of arts and culture in shaping local identities as well as in constructing the images or brands of places has been recognised by research studies and utilised widely in urban public development policies. Influential studies by Landry (2000) and Florida (2002), have highlighted the role of creativity and urban cultural amenities in attracting a skilled workforce and shaping cities into sites of innovation and economic activity, which may be concretised in various ways: cultural capital theme years, cultural events, public space art schemes, cultural flagship projects, such as impressive cultural buildings, and so on (Richards and Wilson, 2004; McCarthy, 2006; Grodach, 2008; Garcia, 2017; Richards, 2017). All this is done to “characterise cities as a unique urban space and create authenticity” (Ulldemolins, 2014, p. 3026).

The respondents of our survey valued the impact of the JI on the image and attractiveness of the city in various ways (Figure 1). The majority (92.6%) of the respondents were frequent visitors to these cultural institutions. Ninety percent of the respondents agreed, to at least some extent, that the cultural facility they had last visited during the previous 12 months helped make the city of Jyväskylä comfortable. Eighty-five percent of them thought that the cultural facility they had recently visited helped make the city attractive, whereas 76% thought that the facility helped to make the city well known. Eighty-five percent of the respondents agreed, to at least some extent, that the cultural facilities made Jyväskylä a city of culture.

The JI thus seems to play a role in constructing the image or brand of the city. Further, they also provide a basis for the identity of individual respondents as well as the local collective identity of Jyväskylä and its people. According to our data, culture manifests itself on a broad spectrum, emerging from the identities and self-perception of individual visitors and ranging all the way to the collective identity of Jyväskylä and its role as a city of culture. Our data highlighted the residents' own experience of their city and its art and culture institutions. The results presented are, therefore, more about the creation of the city dwellers' own urban identity through arts and cultural institutions than about the external image of the city. However, from the point of view of the city's attractiveness, the positive experience of those already living in the city is also important.

The apparently superficial image or brand related to a place is rooted in the deeper identity of the place or the collective identity

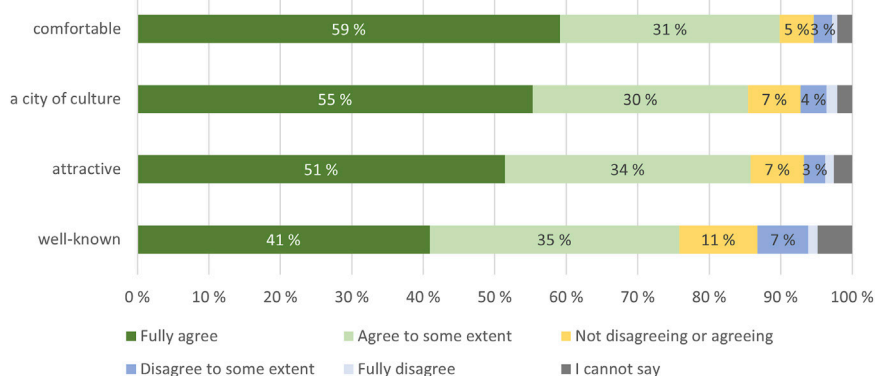


FIGURE 1

Cultural facility helps to make the city... (comfortable $n = 821$, a city of culture $n = 814$, attractive $n = 816$, well-known $n = 813$).

of people living in a particular place (Fan, 2010). Ulldemolins claims that place branding processes cannot start from scratch or banish the existing culture (Ulldemolins, 2014). Also, he states that branding should be based on local identities, instead of creating artificial narratives. Similarly, Bianchini and Ghilardi recommend that place marketing should be “cultured,” that is, there should be awareness of traditions of cultural expression, and rooted in history and socioeconomic realities as well as the cultural life and representations of a locality (Bianchini and Ghilardi, 2007). In our case, art and culture institutions may be regarded as places where individuals are offered opportunities to engage with the community and to influence how the city is perceived among both the residents and the visitors from outside. All this emphasises localised understandings of art and culture values, including the impact of art and culture on a person’s feelings and the ways in which they interact with place (Mackay et al., 2021).

Although our survey did not explicitly deal with issues such as self-perception, self-expression, or personal identity, many of the respondents (99 written responses to the question “How would you describe yourself in relation to culture?”) described these matters, which are also acknowledged in previous works (Belfiore and Bennett, 2007a; Radbourne et al., 2010; Azevedo, 2017). In these responses, enjoying art and culture is connected to fundamental aspects or verbs such as “being,” “breathing,” “opening up,” “being aware,” and “realizing.” Several respondents opined that art and culture were important parts of their selves.

“Culture is an important part of me.”

“I cannot imagine my life without it. Cultural pursuits are a key part of life. Through them, I guess, one exists...”

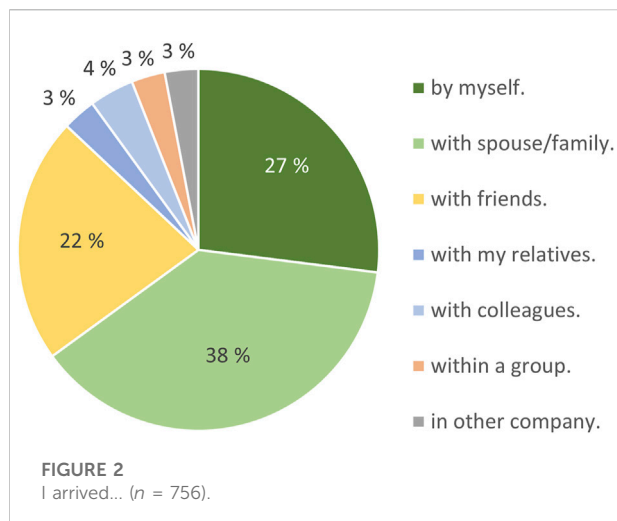
Some respondents also write in a manner that can be connected to the projection or image of oneself to the outside world, such as: “I am a cultural person.” In this case, art and culture are ways of constructing an identity and image of oneself. Further, the following responses were recorded for the question, “How could we make the cultural facilities of Jyväskylä more attractive?”:

“Jyväskylä is known as a cultural city. ... You should put more effort into it. To take it further. Advertise. Give opportunities to new actors. Maintenance and renovate already well-known and culturally valuable facilities.”

“I hope that at last a proper concert hall will be established here, the kind you can find in many smaller places. Embarrassing that it still lacks one.”

“City Theatre’s renovation is necessary; it is shocking that performances are cancelled when the technology in the house breaks down.”

Such responses bring out the concrete demands for cultural investments and simultaneously emphasise the importance and value of the JI, especially when these institutions seem to be neglected by the local decision-makers. The respondents were concerned about negative developments that could undermine the identity or image of Jyväskylä as a city of culture. There were critical comments about the state of funding and that the lack of investments in culture was “embarrassing” or “shocking” to the city. In addition, the respondents were concerned about the working conditions and facilities of artists and how the neglect of these could hinder the reputation of the city. These statements contest the identity of Jyväskylä as a city of art and culture.



While analysing the identity and image values present in the responses, we ended up considering the objectives underlying the activities and roles of institutions as part of the development of the city (Grodach and Loukaitou-Sideris, 2007). Art and culture institutions can relate to tourism promotion, image construction, and place-marketing measures as well as city centre development and regeneration. On the other hand, the role of institutions in urban development is also reflected in how they help create cosy, vivid, diverse, and participatory urban spaces. Consequently, institutions are not quite facade-like places of cultural consumption and “billboards” of the city’s image but can become part of the urban space, thus empowering urban dwellers with opportunities to express themselves and interact.

Social relations

According to our data, 80% of the respondents thought, at least to some extent, that visiting art and culture institutions promotes social relations. It may be summed up that visiting art and culture institutions was thought to be a collective and social activity among the respondents. Only 27% of those who had visited the institutions had come there alone (Figure 2). The most common forms of company cited were spouse or family (38%) and friends (22%).

Almost half of the responses to the open question “Why did you come to the cultural facility this particular time?” emphasised the cultural content provided by the institution. Only some respondents explicitly expressed the social aspects of culture in their written answers, summarising how these social aspects are present in the immediate moment of experiencing culture with others, connecting to the broader community through the cultural content, and regarding institutions as communal places.

“Culture, in my opinion, comes to be best experienced along with other people. Shared pleasure is the best pleasure.”

“I think museums and libraries are really important to myself. They are . . . places that make me strongly feel like I am part of the community.”

Previous research has covered a broad array of impressions that count as “social impacts,” mainly due to the importance of communal human actions in generating them (KEA, 2006; Belfiore and Bennett, 2007a; Belfiore and Bennett, 2007b; Council of Europe, 2017; Lindström Sol et al., 2022; MESOC, 2023). In the context of regions and cities, culture is said, for example, to regenerate neighbourhoods, make communities livelier and increase their cohesion (Matarasso, 1997; Grodach and Loukaitou-Sideris, 2007; Sacco et al., 2009). Such “impacts” are however also stressed to “be complex relationships that sometimes cannot be measured directly” (MESOC, 2023, p. 17).

Armbrrecht (2014) sees the social value of culture profoundly entangled with social relations and networks (Bourdieu, 1973; Putnam, 2001; Bourdieu, 2008). According to him, “Cultural institutions are facilitators and catalysts of social interaction and the construction of social networks” (Armbrrecht, 2014, p. 255). From previous research, we already know that cultural facilities could (and should) be designed as enabling spaces that facilitate dialogue and participation (MESOC, 2023). Our case also illustrates that established institutions undoubtedly could contribute more than they do currently to their surrounding society if they could provide broader access to their actions and invite more diverse groups of visitors to participate in their actions.

Despite the evidence regarding the importance of social relations for our respondents, the JI were not considered to be especially inclusive in their actions (Figure 3). Most striking result was that only 59% of them thought that the JI affected all the citizens of Jyväskylä. Those who visited the institutions and used their services enjoyed and produced the social value of culture, but a large proportion of Jyväskylä residents seemed to be left out (cf. Stevenson and Balling, 2017). This evidently is an important issue that requires further research.

Capacities and skills

Cultural institutions are also known to help in transmitting and disseminating skills and knowledge; an example of this is the role of cultural institutions in (arts) education. We did not however come across capabilities and skills in our data through instances such as arts education, school visits, or enabling of cultural participation. Instead, acquisition of occupationally relevant knowledge and maintenance of skills needed for creative activities were mixed with genuine personal interest in arts and creative content offered by institutions.

In our data, 94% of the respondents acknowledged the role of art and culture institutions in human development, when they agreed that visiting a “culture institution civilised” them. Further,

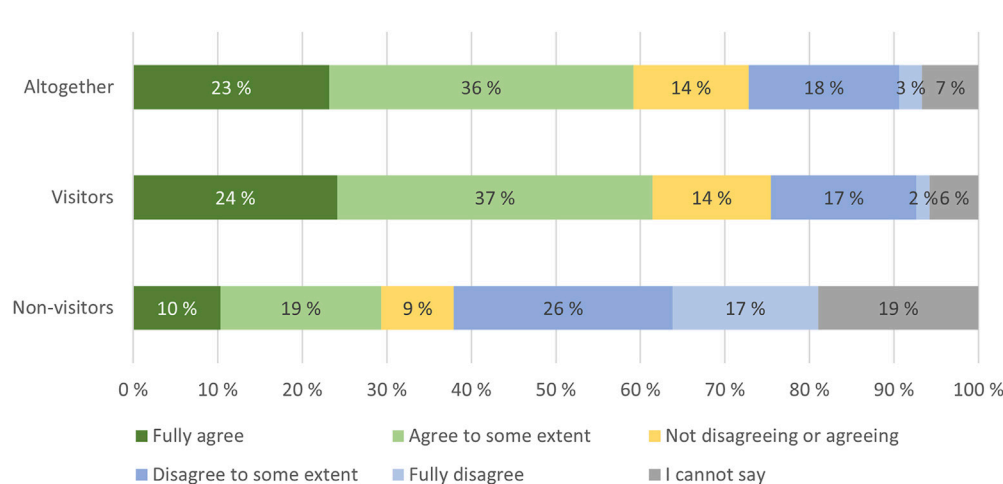


FIGURE 3

The facility and its activity affect all citizens ($n = 820$, visitors $n = 761$, non-visitors $n = 58$).

for 84% of the respondents, visiting institutions inspired one to cultivate art as a hobby, whereas for 58% of the respondents, such visits inspired the creation of art. The growth of professionals and occupational development in the fields of art and culture can thus be regarded as one of the means of realising capabilities and skills generated by cultural institutions (Mackay et al., 2021). The capabilities and skills approach to cultural value came across as essential, both for occupational terms and as a human way of living, developing, and experiencing.

“(Culture is a) (p)rofession and hobby, a lifeline in many ways.”

“Work, hobby, whole life, among which now the emphasis is work.”

Art and culture institutions are also reported to play a part in other creative processes that generate new knowledge and enhance new skills (Armbrecht, 2014). Recently, for example, the OECD has emphasised the importance of “cultural and creative sectors” as “a source of creative skills” that “also have a role to play in increasing educational performance generally” (OECD, 2021, p. 2). Similar views have been expressed by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD, 2023).

A recent EU-report states how “analyses of population surveys support a clear link between participation in cultural activities and patterns of engagement with key civic and democratic activities as well as democratic and civic values” (Hammonds, 2023, p. 74). OECD experts suggest how creative thinking “can improve a range of other skills and capabilities, from metacognitive capacities to inter- and intra-personal and problem-solving skills” (OECD, 2021, p. 16). This can be linked to capacity building and the positive impacts of having opportunities for self-representation. Such

impacts are not easily measurable (Sacco et al., 2013; Mackay et al., 2021; OECD, 2022), which becomes no easier after acknowledging the differences between capacities and capabilities: the former generally refers to knowledge and skills in “development speak,” whereas the latter can be regarded as a central element in human development (Sacco et al., 2013; de Beukelaar and Spence, 2019). Still, based on our survey, the capability approach, in particular, could be further developed also in the context (though not limited to them) of established art and culture institutions—through widening the access and participation in the activities they produce, institutions could have profound meaning for the functioning of democracy (Hammonds, 2023).

Health and wellbeing

In our data, as many as 95% of the respondents agreed, at least to some extent, with the proposition that visiting a cultural facility is good for one’s wellbeing. Obviously, we can talk about health and wellbeing only related to JI here; many modes of culture deserving attention remain unexplored. Our results however show that JI are perceived as important for health and wellbeing even among those who did not visit them.

A total of 77% of those respondents who had not visited any of the institutions in the past 12 months agreed, to at least some extent, that visiting institutions would be good for their wellbeing. Perhaps, they were aware of the discussion around the impact of culture and art on wellbeing, or they may have reflected on their previous visit to an art or cultural institution more than a year ago, which was excluded from the period of our questionnaire.

In any case, in the previous year, both visitors and non-visitors to the JI recognised the importance of the institutions for their own wellbeing. Further, there were 51 health-related open

responses to the question, “How would you describe yourself in relation to culture?” The respondents talked about how culture helped them cope with the struggles of everyday life and how culture somehow transcended everyday life to give them strength. The responses ranged from descriptions of “lighter” effects, such as the role that culture played as a relaxing, delightful, empowering, and invigorating activity in everyday life, to more fundamental and perhaps even sinister meanings of culture in the lives of the respondents, such as coping with the help of culture and seeing culture as an absolute necessity to oneself or a way to survive.

“I enjoy culture! It empowers, in many ways . . .”

“Cultural events invigorate and relax.”

“Culture helps me to cope with everyday life.”

There were also several explicit expressions of the word “wellbeing” in relation to culture and the arts:

“I use culture to maintain my mental wellbeing!”

“Cultural services bring wellbeing and contentment to life, at all stages of life.”

Interest in research around the area of culture, health, and wellbeing has grown over the past decade, although leaving the role of everyday cultural participation under-explored (Dowlen, 2023). Broadly speaking, arts and culture have been found to generate positive effects on the wellbeing of a person (Wheatley and Bickerton, 2019). In 2019, the WHO published a scoping review focusing on the evidence base of the role of arts in improving wellbeing. The scoping identified over 900 publications, of which several were systematic reviews, meta-analyses, and meta-syntheses, covering over 3,000 different publications (Fancourt and Finn, 2019). Several health effects were identified, which were related to visits to art and culture facilities. According to the evidence base, visiting museums, theatres, galleries, concerts, and operas resulted in lower rate of cognitive decline, lower risk of dementia in older age, enhancement of self-worth, and development of coping mechanisms.

The Finnish term for “wellbeing” (“hyvinvointi”), which was used in our questionnaire, refers both to physical health and “feeling good,” covering both the physical and mental sides of health. Further, it also refers to “material wellbeing”.⁶ The Finnish language, therefore, encompasses a wide understanding of wellbeing, wherein an environment viable

for actualising one’s social, psychological, and physical resources is crucial for experiencing wellbeing (Dodge et al., 2012).

In practice, perceived physical and mental health are often used interchangeably with wellbeing, and both are used to imply the quality of life (McCrary et al., 2022). The general effects of art attendance on happiness have also been found (Hand, 2018). Parallel to our results, there is evidence that higher attendance results in greater levels of happiness; in fact, even less frequent attendance in some activities has been found to indicate positive association with life satisfaction (Wheatley and Bickerton, 2017).

Wellbeing may even be considered to result from the participation of city dwellers in institutional activities, since the experience of inclusion may be considered a significant part of the experience of wellbeing (Dodge et al., 2012). As mentioned earlier, 40% of respondents disagreed with the proposition that institutions impact all citizens (or did not know how to answer the question regarding the inclusiveness of institutions). This creates a somewhat contradictory picture of the impact of institutions on urban residents’ wellbeing. Viewed through the lens of inclusion of citizens, it appears that institutional activities do not include all residents and not all welfare impacts take place fully. The results however remind us of the possibility of developing the established institutions towards more participatory ways of functioning. In the context of our case, this is feasible, as we recall that access and participation are recognized as important development goals (The City of Jyväskylä, 2021a).

Discussion of the results: from strictly economic to broader values of culture

In Finland, as in all other Nordic countries, art and culture institutions occupy an important, institutionalised place in cultural policy (Duelund, 2003; Kangas and Vestheim, 2010). In Finland, the establishment of these organisations dates back to civil society activities aimed at social development (Sokka, 2005; Sokka and Kangas, 2007). Art and culture institutions in Jyväskylä have historically fulfilled several societal functions, which have been tied to various kinds of values over time. Based on the obvious importance of these institutions, it could be hypothesised that we might find several kinds of values intertwined with our institutions. Still, we do not know much about how residents value these institutions.

An earlier article by Armbricht gave us a feasible reference point. As anticipated, we detected several perceived values of the JI, closely resembling Armbricht’s findings in Austrian data (Armbricht, 2014). For further studies, it is however important to note that different communities with different degrees of immigration and diversity, for example, might

⁶ <https://www.kielitoimistonsanakirja.fi/#/hyvinvointi?searchMode=all>

provide different kinds of emphases of the value dimensions that were found in Jyväskylä.

Based on our data, the JI generate economic value; they impact regional production and employment, exceeding the amount of public funding they receive. However, the JI also have other significant values. For example, they shape local identities and the image of the city: our respondents opined that the JI make their native city comfortable, attractive, and well known; they also felt that the JI are important in social relations. Visiting institutions is often a collective and social activity, highlighting the importance of art and culture institutions as communal places, which, through social relations, can help generate several kinds of positive impacts. However, such impacts affect only those who visit these institutions and not all citizens, as indicated by several respondents, especially non-visitors.

When discussing the perceived values of art and culture institutions, one of the most obvious questions is: Whose value are we talking of? We are aware that, in Finland, as elsewhere, both higher level of education and gender meaningfully impact visits to museums, theatres, and symphony concerts (Van Eijck, 1997; Chan and Goldthorpe, 2005; Christin, 2012). It must be conceded that elderly women with a degree have been over-represented in our data. However, our study did not focus on the socioeconomic background of the visitors: we aimed simply at identifying the kinds of values of art and culture institutions available in our data and using this knowledge in the discussion about such values.

It is obvious that the valuations of varied groups should be examined in future in relation to several forms of culture, and not just the institutions our case covers. Recently, this has been done in the EU-funded research project, INVENT. Initial results of the project reveal how the Finnish people hold institutions, especially museums, in high regard, overall.⁷ We have no reason to believe that Jyväskylä residents were somehow different in this respect. The respondents in our data, at least, were not.

Our results have shown that publicly funded art and culture institutions, which form the backbone of Finnish cultural policy, have multiple values attached to various kinds of public policy aims pointing to multiple policy domains: it is not just about art, nor is it just about economy or social and wellbeing effects. In fact, the value dimensions that we found in our data seem important for the legitimacy of public funding allocated to these institutions.

Perception of values links them to individual knowledge and experiences, which apparently vary among individuals as per their social contexts. Art and culture institutions also relate to the

principles according to which value is bestowed upon an object (e.g., “the beauty of a thing”) (Heinich, 2020, p. 87–88). This means that our analysis, to use Heinich’s terms, includes “value-as-worth,” as well as “value-as-goods,” and “values-as-principles” (Heinich, 2020, p. 88). Some respondents, for example, perceive value in the virtues they attribute to the JI. Our analysis did not directly answer Heinich’s call for generating more emphatic methodology in researching the actual valuation processes, because it would require a different kind of research setting and data (Heinich, 2020). This question also connects the valuation of culture to processes of shared knowledge and social learning, which lead further to questions about participation in value formation (Kenter et al., 2016; Klammer, 2016). Participation—who participates, where, and how (on whose terms?)—is an obvious question for further discussion that was not however the focus of this study.

As stated by an earlier research on cultural policy (Gray, 2017; Mangset, 2020; Mujica, 2022), it is important to be aware of various cultural dimensions in developing a future cultural policy. Both in economics and culture, the notion of value can be seen as an expression of worth in a static as well as a dynamic way, as both a negotiated and a transactional phenomenon (Throsby, 2001). For ensuring future legitimacy, studies should focus on openness of the institutions and their social relationships. This is even more crucial, as the respondents view JI to be important for health and wellbeing, and even for human development, as a way of living, growing, and experiencing.

Other researchers have also acknowledged how values are fundamentally plural (Kenter et al., 2016). The plurality and contextuality of value appreciation deter adopting normative approaches to realising value (Crossick and Kaszynska, 2014). When values are complex, inter-subjective, relational, and multidimensional, understanding of contexts and different levels of value realisation is also important for understanding the direction of cultural policy. There exist conflicting aims around cultural values; however, various value dimensions also complement each other in case of future policies (Throsby, 2001). This also implies that, ignoring cultural forms other than publicly funded, established cultural institutions can lead to unequal policies overlooking the heterogeneity of cultural values in modern societies.

As Armbricht stressed, the contribution of this kind of study “lies in a deeper understanding of why cultural institutions are valuable rather than how the value should be measured” (Armbricht, 2014, p. 268–269). In this sense, we scrutinised the social context wherein contemporary institutions survive: which kind of needs they are thought to satisfy. All of this has evidently much to do with how the institutions can remain legitimate and important in the face of cultural policy and related public funding (Kangas and Vestheim, 2010). Today, this is especially important when we know that established modes of cultural policies, at least in the way they have been organised in the Nordic countries, are facing several challenges (Sokka et al., 2022).

⁷ Based on INVENT, public funding for cultural institutions, such as community centres, museums, and libraries, is regarded as important by Finnish citizens. Theatres and orchestras were not included in the survey (<https://inventculture.eu/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Infographic-How-important-do-europeans-find-public-funding-of-culture.pdf>).

Conclusion

This paper, based on a survey that we conducted in 2019, presented a case study about the value of city museums, city theatre, and public symphony orchestra in the Finnish city of Jyväskylä. We asked what kinds of value residents attribute to JI and what kind of economic value their visitors' expenditure illustrates. The Nordic context of our case study emphasized the plurality of values: In the Nordic countries, a large share of public cultural funding is directed towards institutions, and a variety of values has been attached to the functioning of cultural institutions at different historical phases of (cultural) policy development.

In previous research studies, it was common to consider the meaning of cultural actions for a certain value (e.g., economy or wellbeing) in a single study. However, further research is needed on the diversity of various, and often intersecting, values people attach to certain cultural organizations in particular contexts. Our results show that visitors—and perhaps somewhat surprisingly even the non-visitors—attribute many positive values to art and culture institutions in Jyväskylä. We found that the residents attribute a multitude of value dimensions to these institutions that they see having not only economic value but also value for image and identity, social relations, building capabilities and skills, and maintaining health and wellbeing.

The survey was aimed at the visitors and non-visitors alike, but it must be specified that most of the responses were gathered from residents who had visited at least some of the institutions during the last 12 months prior to the time of response. Our data does not represent the population of Jyväskylä, but neither did we aim to do participation study nor consider the meaning of social background for consumption of cultural offerings organized by our case institutions. Our intention was simply to find which kinds of value could be found from the data. We believe that the empirical evidence—especially through our qualitative analysis—about the current values attributed to the institutions in Jyväskylä not only helps to consider the value of established, traditional institutions for contemporary and future policies but also illustrates the broadness of possibilities the institutions have for developing their actions.

Despite the positive value attributions throughout the data (including non-visitors), it was striking how a large share of the respondents (including visitors) felt that these institutions were not inclusive enough in their actions. It is easy to think of cultural policy in which these institutions would partake more strongly in fulfilling the city's strategic aims, including the attractiveness of

the city, its economic development, and widening access and broadening the chances for participation. This however most likely would require new kinds of collaboration between the institutions and other cultural actors and some kind of re-organizing of the existing working methods throughout the city organization and the institutions.

The several values of art and culture institutions we found from our data also point to multiple policy domains related to art, economy, social, and wellbeing effects. Although we know that conflicting aims also exist regarding cultural values, the varied value dimensions can complement each other in future-oriented policies. All this shows the potential that is embedded in the established institutional structure, not only for the art and culture institutions themselves but also for considering cross-sectoral policies that are needed to answer the growingly complex questions existing in the society.

Data availability statement

The datasets presented in this article are not readily available because Dataset may contain information that is potentially identifiable. Requests to access the datasets should be directed to olli.ruokolainen@cupore.fi.

Author contributions

SS, OR, and TT have all worked in a project where the data was gathered. All authors contributed to the article and approved the submitted version.

Conflict of interest

The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

Supplementary material

The Supplementary Material for this article can be found online at: <https://www.frontierspartnerships.org/articles/10.3389/ejcmp.2023.11618/full#supplementary-material>

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Decolonising cultural policy: the cultural and linguistic rights of the Sámi in Finland

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In this article, the writer considers the current state of the cultural and linguistic rights of the Sámi, how they are supported by cultural policy and how decolonising cultural policy could contribute to the ongoing struggles of realising the self-determination and cultural rights of the Sámi. The article stipulates that concrete steps need to be taken for decolonising cultural policy in Finland specifically concerning the cultural and human rights of the Sámi. Cultural policy should be based on cultural rights, thus introducing decolonial practices in support of the Sámi culture and languages and into the culture policy and funding is imperative. The article suggests creating decolonial practices of research and policymaking rooted in intersectional and participatory methods that recognise the many forms of discrimination, not only the current-day colonialism or the effects of assimilation but also the intersections of an indigenous identity with other forms of discrimination. Furthermore, contributing to decolonisation should include research on the effects of colonisation on cultural rights, cultural policy and the distribution of funds for promoting the Sámi culture and languages in the Sámi communities and Finland.

KEYWORDS

cultural policy, cultural rights, decolonisation, colonialism, the Sámi

Introduction

The current societal and political climate in Finland and all over the world has become polarised. The concern over the progress in equity and equality is current. The concern over cultural policy and funding in Finland is current as this polarised political atmosphere and austerity measures are affecting cultural policy. The fear for the cultural and human rights of the marginalised is urgent as the demands for diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) are met with resistance. The most vulnerable, the colonised, marginalised, and discriminated bear the weight of that resistance. Tackling these issues of diversity, equity and inclusion signifies challenging the very structures of society and dismantling the systemic oppression that resides at all levels of society, also within arts and culture, cultural funding, and cultural policy.

In Finland, one of the most critical issues currently concerning minorities is the rights of the Sámi, human rights, and cultural and linguistic rights. The critical issue connecting all these rights is the right to self-determination, an integral part of cultural rights. As a

case study of the cultural and linguistic rights of the Sámi, this article aims to briefly describe the impacts of colonialism and assimilation as cultural colonisation and to discover through a literature review what previous research reveals about the steps taken by the Finnish government and the practices created by the Sámi themselves in preserving the Sámi languages and culture as well as the current issues and challenges in ensuring the cultural rights of the Sámi in Finland. This article considers cultural rights as human rights and their implications for cultural policy and proceeds to briefly describe Finnish cultural policy and funding as it pertains to the Sámi. In addition to considering the cultural and linguistic rights of the Sámi, and the significance of the self-determination of indigenous peoples, the goal is to recognise through interpretative policy analysis how these issues correlate with past and present colonialism, the influence of colonialism on cultural policy and what kind of practices should contribute to decolonising cultural policy.

In order to position these topics among the current discourse they are considered within the frameworks of cultural rights and Finnish cultural policy. As cultural rights are human rights (United Nations Human Rights Council, 2010), no actual decolonisation can take place with current Finnish legislation and policy. In addition, discourse and research on colonialism in Finland are still rather new (Keskinen, 2019), even though research on the Sámi and Sámi histories is plenty. Perhaps due to the difficult and multiple aspects of colonialism and the difficulties of defining it in the Finnish context the field of study has been evaded by the academia (Kuokkanen, 2022: 294). Cultural colonisation of the Sámi is described to further elaborate on the current state of cultural and linguistic rights of the Sámi followed by practices of revitalising Sámi languages and ensuring self-determination considered here as decolonial practices in support of the Sámi. Research of decolonial methodology amplifying the Sámi knowledge is needed. The article concludes that decolonising both, cultural policy and the colonised Sámi Homeland should reach all these aspects with intersectional participatory practices to bring about social justice through legislation and cultural policy to ensure the cultural and human rights of the Sámi.

Cultural rights and cultural policy

The discussion on cultural rights became relevant within the discourse and demands for indigenous rights (Saukkonen, 2007: 22). Deeply intertwined with the right to self-determination, cultural rights can only function together with self-determination (Vrdoljak, 2008: 42). Furthermore, cultural rights were devised to ensure not only the economic and social aspects but also to protect from discrimination and to safeguard participation in the cultural life (Valoma, 2024: 24). However, cultural rights have been difficult to define and in search of an international consensus on cultural rights, the United Nations Human

Rights Council (United Nations Human Rights Council, 2019) took upon to investigate and define a list of cultural rights (United Nations Human Rights Council, 2010). Cultural rights are human rights as the independent expert of OHCHR found that many human rights mechanisms are already included either directly or indirectly in the cultural rights they defined (United Nations Human Rights Council, 2010). Though scholars at large seem to agree with the OHCHR's findings (e.g., Renteln, 2006; Koivunen and Marsio, 2007; Caust, 2019; Jonathan, 2018), cultural rights appear to be neglected and underdeveloped as human rights (see (Symonides, 1998; Koivunen and Marsio, 2007; Balta Portolés and Dragičević Šešić, 2017)). Furthermore, as cultural rights are difficult to define and apply across diverse cultures and cultural expressions, there is no one clear set of laws worldwide to determine cultural rights but rather different countries have developed particular interpretations of cultural rights (Koivunen and Marsio, 2007: 20). In addition to difficulties of defining, cultural rights may be considered human rights from the Western perspective but come at odds with human rights particularly considering harmful cultural customs such as female genital mutilation (Renteln, 2006: 325; Nyangweso, 2016). Despite the challenges, cultural rights still offer a solid opportunity to advocate indigenous self-determination (Robbins and Stamatopoulou, 2004: 426).

Cultural rights have also become prominent within cultural policy domains of current though the implementation still appears implicit (Balta Portolés and Dragičević Šešić, 2017: 163; Jonathan, 2018: 2). In Finland, the implementation of cultural rights has been to protect minority cultures (Saukkonen, 2010: 56). However, rather than an explicit policy instrument, cultural rights have been incorporated into the values and ethics of Finnish cultural policy (Saukkonen, 2007: 22). Indeed, cultural rights are considered within multiple national and international conventions, declarations and agreements as part of the cultural policy framework and as such can be considered as value-based policy instruments. (Valoma, 2024: 25, 51). The Ministry of Education and Culture states in its strategy until 2025 that cultural policy should be based on the understanding of cultural rights (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2017: 13). Cultural rights appear to be mainly considered as parts of the existing legislation ensuring the rights of the Sámi. As a national minority, the linguistic rights of the Sámi stem from the Finnish Constitution (17.3 §) and form the Sámi Language Act (1992, renewed 2003). Under the Constitution, the Sámi have linguistic and cultural autonomy in the Sámi Homeland. Still, the Sámi languages in Finland are classified as endangered (Arola, 2021: 9; Endangered Languages Project, 2019). Apart from the legislation to protect the Sámi languages and education in the Sámi Homeland, the government has not been able to mend the damage done through colonisation and assimilation. Thus, the cultural rights, and policies especially preserving the languages and culture of Finland's and the EU's only indigenous peoples, the Sámi, are still lacking. Furthermore,

beyond the legislation protecting the Sámi, the Ministry of Education and Culture has no policies to ensure cultural rights *per se*. Nonetheless, practices and policies to protect the current culture and education of the Sámi languages can be done. Some of them await only the passing of the parliament, such as the Sámi Parliament Act and The Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention No. 169 (ILO 169). Acknowledging and taking responsibility for the colonial past and present and passing the acts and conventions in question would be vital in the process of decolonising the Sámi Homeland. What kind of implications ratifying these conventions would have on cultural policy remains to be seen.

Though the Sámi are one the most researched indigenous peoples, research on cultural policy and funding regarding the Sámi culture is still scarce. This could reflect the political climate and the lack of interest among the researchers and policymakers. Funding as a key instrument of Finnish cultural policy (Jakonen and Sokka, 2022: 249) also calls for examination considering the Sámi culture. The Ministry of Education and Culture supports the Sámi with a yearly state fund appointed to the Sámi Parliament to maintain and develop the Sámi languages, arts and culture. Arts Promotion Centre Finland has a regional arts council in Lapland but nothing to support the Sámi arts and culture *per se*. Outside the cultural policy domain, the ELY centres in Finland are responsible for promoting culture and creative economy, and Lapland's ELY centre website is also available in North Sámi. However, these subsidies and services are for all residing in Lapland with an economic emphasis, and not explicitly directed towards supporting the Sámi languages and culture. As the funding of arts and culture is divided between multiple policy domains (Jakonen and Sokka, 2022), reliable data on funds directed at the Sámi are difficult to obtain. In addition, *statistics on race, ethnicity, or other minority status are not collected in Finland, and subsequently, there is no adequate data on funding of the Sámi arts and culture.*

Though there are monetary policy mechanisms in place, *research conducted by the Sámi Parliament in Norway on the cultural funding throughout the Sámi Homeland concludes there is no overall picture of the funding of Sámi arts and culture because the Nordic funding structures are not obligated to report how much of the funding is allocated to the Sámi* (Utsi et al., 2022: 8). *Kultur-Sápmi, commissioned by the Sámi Council and compiled by the 2020 Sámi Think Tank confirms that to support the Sámi culture, infrastructure and funding must be organised and strengthened* (Utsi et al., 2022: 8). *In addition, the need for cross-border funding in the Sámi Homeland is important* (Sokka et al., 2022: 145). Nevertheless, the Sámi Council in Norway is the only funder to accept applications from the whole of the Sámi Homeland, including Finland, Sweden, Norway, and Russia, supporting Sámi culture and revitalisation projects (Sokka et al., 2022: 114). *This data stipulates that further research, informed policymaking and funding are vital for the survival of the Sámi languages and culture.*

Cultural colonisation of the Sámi

For perhaps a wider understanding of the current situation of the Sámi cultural rights, the colonial past of Finland and its implications to cultural policies must be carefully examined and acknowledged. Until recently, the discourse on colonialism in Finland has been to either belittle Finland's role in colonialism or to downright contest the Sámi histories of colonial rule and assimilation. Though research on Finnish colonialism and decolonising is sparse, recent studies and publications such as *Sámi Research in Transition: Knowledge, Politics and Social Change* (Lehtola, 2021) offer valuable insight into the past and present of colonial and decolonial practices in Finland. Nevertheless, Finnish colonialism has mostly been discussed in the context of Nordic colonialism. Though colonialism in the Nordic countries has many similarities it also has its distinct features within all Nordic countries, thus describing it as one homogenous practice would be insufficient (Spangen et al., 2015; Keskinen, 2019; McGuire, 2022). Finland as the historical subordinate to Sweden and Russia has yet difficulties in owning its colonial past (Keskinen, 2019: 164; McGuire, 2022) as the colonisation of the Sámi Homeland began well before the Finnish nation-state was created (Spangen et al., 2015; Keskinen, 2019). In addition, the previous discourse has concentrated on "colonial complicity" (Keskinen, 2019: 164), that Finland was neither in the colonial centre of Europe nor a mere victim (Kuokkanen, 2022: 294). Though later venturing into anti-racist and anti-imperialist activities, Finland has yet to be able to acknowledge its colonial and racist past (Loftsdóttir and Jensen, 2012: 2). These complexities do not absolve but rather highlight Finland's part in the colonisation and assimilation of the Sámi shedding some light on the complexities of Finland's colonial past and present and its implications to the formation of Finnish cultural policy.

Finnish cultural policy began to take shape in the 19th century by establishing national institutions to strengthen the national identity (Sokka et al., 2022: 49). The creation of these national institutions dating to cultural colonialism, still state-funded today (Valoma, 2024: 29) resulted in excluding the already existing Sámi culture and languages (Capdeville, 2017: 12). Policies originating from colonial power structures are intertwined with intricate assumptions, norms and interests of economic and political gain (Frenander, 2008). These colonial values and norms are rooted also in cultural policies (Canyürek, 2022: 42) subsequently maintaining systemic inequality within the structures of decision- and policymaking. These policies irreversibly affected the Sámi and their indigenous culture resulting in generations losing their native languages.

Although colonialism in Finland was not written in official policies such as the Norwegianisation in Norway (Spangen et al., 2015: 23), the effects of this were still the same. Finnish colonialism has conveniently been described as "colonisation of the mind" and "persuasive colonialism" which refers to the

assimilation and socialisation of the Sámi resulting in “institutional forgetting” (Spangen et al., 2015: 26). Lehtola continues to describe this “institutional forgetting” as adopting the Sámi part of the dominant society by assimilating through language, culture, and education which subsequently justified the overtaking of lands and water, affecting the indigenous heritage and way of life such as reindeer husbandry, hunting, fishing rights, and moreover enabling the government mining in the Sámi Homeland (2015: 26).

As colonialism is the idea of superiority (Mulcahy, 2019: 230), cultural hierarchies are essential in signifying the supremacy of the dominant culture over the minority and indigenous cultures (Spangen et al., 2015: 26). These were manifested within the policies supporting the national institutions and within the means of assimilation. To justify the colonisation, discrimination and subsequently assimilation, the coloniser must be a unified we and the colonised the object. Colonialism operates exactly by objectifying, dehumanising and othering the colonised. Othering within the context of Finnish colonialism takes the forms of racism, systemic discrimination, and assimilation. Othering expands from systemic and governmental policies to popular culture as it strives to dehumanise and humiliate the object. Subsequently, through epistemicide, the knowledges of the oppressed are marginalised and lost (Bennett, 2007; Näkkäläjärvi, 2017). Indeed, colonialism manifests itself in “the denial of one group’s capacity to produce knowledge of their own, by extension, is a denial of their membership to the genus of rational beings” (Masaka, 2018: 288). This is the essence of colonialism, othering and epistemicide. The cultural colonisation and assimilation of the Sámi are essentially epistemicide, the destruction and marginalisation of the indigenous Sámi knowledge, languages, and culture.

The impacts of colonialism are most apparent regarding culture (Paquette et al., 2017: 270). Yet, the colonialism of today continues to thrive not only in cultural discrimination but in the inequalities of wellbeing, socioeconomic means, and the south and north as it resides within the political, educational, and cultural systems (Czyzewski, 2011: 4; Dirks, 2020: 92–93). Though this more often describes the situation as seen in the global south, it accurately depicts the disparities between the north and south in Finland as well. The educational, social, and economic status and possibilities of the Sámi are unequal to the majority. The government has not been able to sustain and support the linguistic, cultural, and human rights of the Sámi. Cultural policy and institutions in Finland were the building blocks of a new nation (Sokka et al., 2022: 49). This national hegemony could not endure the cultural other, the Sámi, thus the policies of culture and education were created with national conformity in mind. Sámi histories, art and culture were then systematically erased from the canon of Finnish art and history. Rewriting those histories and amplifying the voices and research of the Sámi beyond the Western understanding of arts and

culture is imperative. These practices have already been adopted within museums in the form of repatriating collections of Sámi artefacts. However, including the Sámi histories accurately in the narratives of the museums and beyond is equally important. The recognition of colonising the Sámi Homeland and the assimilation of the Sámi is crucial. Instead of outright contesting the Sámi histories, scholarly research should avoid amplifying the perspectives and purposes of the white majority, thus supporting, and enabling indigenous peoples both as active agents and researchers (Spangen et al., 2015: 31).

Decolonial practices

Revitalising the Sámi languages and culture

“Colonialism may be dead, yet it is everywhere to be seen.” (Dirks, 2020: 93). In the context of Finland and the Sámi, it is important to be aware of the ongoing colonial conventions and to regard the process of dismantling those conventions as decolonial rather than post-colonial. Post-colonial as a term suggests an era after colonialism and thus denies or minimises the colonial presence (Keskinen et al., 2021: 50). In Finland the colonial presence persists in the Sámi Homeland and matters concerning the Sámi rights while decolonial practices recognise those colonial structures in place and strive to demolish the inequalities.

Through colonising the Lapland and Sámi Homeland and assimilating the Sámi people, Finland among other Nordic countries almost obliterated an entire family of languages. As a cultural right, the right to language combines all cultural rights. Language encases information and communication, expression and creation, identity and belonging to a community with shared values, development of a specific world vision and the pursuit of specific ways of life, education, and training, access to contribution and participation in cultural life and cultural practices and access to and enjoyment of heritage (United Nations Human Rights Council, 2010). From the 17th century to the 1970s teaching or speaking in Sámi in schools was forbidden (Joona, 2018: 111). Researchers further describe the assimilation and the influences the government and church had on the Sámi families as traumatising and resulting in generations losing their native languages and subsequently their culture (Joona, 2018: 111; Aikio-Puoskari, 2018: 3) leading to epistemicide, the killing of the Sámi knowledge. The killing of other forms of knowledge and knowledge production is essential to colonialism. Killing knowledge and subsequently, the culture, and languages of the Sámi was and is colonialism in action.

Preserving the Sámi knowledge, culture and languages is essential in revitalising and safeguarding the indigenous culture, communities and way of life. As Wiesner states in their article on

the rights of indigenous peoples: “Membership of a group is of fundamental importance to individuals, to their pursuit of self-realisation, a key human need.” (2011: 124). This signifies that being a member of an indigenous culture and having a mother tongue that reflects that culture is essential in growing and maintaining a strong indigenous identity. Language is at the heart of that identity. A child denied a common language with their community and ancestors detach the child from the culture and community and in effect traditions such as Yoik and the Sámi folklore are lost (Valoma, 2023). However, since the 1960s with the rise of Sámi activism people across the Sámi Homeland have rigorously fought for the right to their own language and mother-tongue-medium education (Hirvonen, 2008). But only as recently as 1992 was a language act protecting the Sámi languages passed and renewed in 2003 (Ministry of Justice, 2003). In October 2021 the government appointed a Truth and Reconciliation Commission concerning the Sámi People in cooperation with the Sámi Parliament. Apologies by the government and church have been made, and in the spirit of reconciliation, repatriation, the return of Sámi heritage objects to the Sámi Homeland has been successfully executed (Spangenberg et al., 2015: 22). Even though the damages of epistemicide, linguicide and assimilation cannot be fully remedied, strides in the right direction have been taken by the government, but particularly through considerable efforts by the Sámi communities.

The legal status of the Sámi languages in Finland is protected (Joona, 2018: 120). However, the problems occur in implementation and practice (Capdeville, 2017; Joona, 2018). Many studies on the language rights of the Sámi appear to be focused on children and education (Hirvonen, 2008; Hammine, 2016; Laihi, 2017; Aikio-Puoskari, 2018; Joona, 2018) revealing the vulnerable situation of the Sámi languages and culture. The language and culture will inevitably die if not passed on to new generations. The studies indicate that 70% of Sámi children under the age of ten live outside the Sámi Homeland (Hammine, 2016; Aikio-Puoskari, 2018) and as many as 75% of Sámi children are born outside the Sámi Homeland (Joona, 2018: 2). Living in other parts of Finland poses a problem as the Sámi Language Act (1992; 2003) protects language education mainly in the Sámi Homeland (Capdeville, 2017: 17; Hammine, 2016: 9; Joona, 2018: 120). This is the result of the Sámi Language Act not obliging the districts outside the Sámi Homeland to offer Sámi education (Hammine, 2016: 12). Research reveals that education in other parts of Finland is offered, but not comprehensively, and after primary school, there is almost no further education offered in Sámi outside the Sámi Homeland (Hammine, 2016: 12; Capdeville, 2017: 19; Joona, p. 2018: 119).

Practices in revitalising the language inside the indigenous communities by the indigenous peoples have proven to be fruitful (Laihi, 2017; Aikio-Puoskari, 2018; Joona, 2018). Research indicates that language nests are one of the most effective practices for both revitalising and nurturing the Sámi

languages (Aikio-Puoskari, 2018: 4; Arola, 2021: 9; Capdeville, 2017: 19; Laihi, 2017). 12 language nests are operating to this date (Aikio-Puoskari, 2018: 4; Sámediggi, 2022). These language nests are subsidised on a year-to-year basis by the Ministry of Education and Culture (Arola, 2021: 14; Sámediggi, 2022). The language nest method was initially used by the Māori. In Finland, the method was first introduced in Sevetijärvi from where it quickly spread to Inari, Rovaniemi, Oulu, and beyond (Aikio-Puoskari, 2018: 4). A study of the Sámi language nests describes how the revitalisation of a language within new generations is imperative for the continuity of the culture itself (Laihi, 2017: 21). Even adults have been found to benefit from the language nests as they are finally being introduced to the language of their parents or grandparents (Capdeville, 2017: 19).

However, the survival of an endangered language needs more than revitalisation inside the communities. Governmental, monetary and legislative support is imperative for the language to survive beyond the language nests and primary schools, also outside the Sámi Homeland. *Sámi Barometer* offers some perspective from the adult Sámi speakers from both the Sámi Homeland and Finland (Arola, 2021). Results of the study indicate that the language rights of the Sámi are not actualised (Arola, 2021: 67). The study continues to clarify this to be the result of poor or no services in Sámi in healthcare, daycare, and schools. *Sámi Barometer* (Arola, 2021) findings confirm those of previous literature on governmental shortcomings in providing education in Sámi (Hirvonen, 2008; Hammine, 2016; Laihi, 2017; Aikio-Puoskari, 2018; Joona, 2018). These governmental shortcomings in maintaining and supporting the Sámi social services and cultural rights are the effects of past and present policies based on colonial practices.

Ensuring the self-determination of the Sámi

Vital to colonialism is the denial of self-determination. Moreover, the self-determination of indigenous people and cultural rights can function only together (Vrdoljak, 2008: 42). Wiessner elaborates that self-determination is imperative for an indigenous people's willingness to preserve their distinct language and culture (2011: 122). Self-determination is also vital for the mental health of indigenous peoples (Lawson-Te Aho and Liu, 2010). In general, although not enough studied, the Indigenous have more mental health issues than the white majority (Sørly et al., 2021: 1283). The Finnish Prime Minister's Office stated in a study from 2017 that there are on average more mental health issues and suicides in the indigenous areas compared to the rest of Finland (Koivurova et al., 2017: 14). The poor or nonexciting healthcare services in Sámi languages reported in the *Sámi Barometer* (Arola, 2021) add to the problem. Denial of self-determination in addition to poor services in Sámi languages and increased health problems add to the mental distress. Thus, the self-determination of the

Sámi is a much wider issue and intertwined with the inequalities of wellbeing, healthcare, socioeconomic status and politics as well as cultural, linguistic, and human rights.

In Finland in addition to the existing legislation self-determination could be achieved by renewing the Sámi Parliament Act. Previous literature agrees that the renewal of the Sámi Parliament Act would in effect give the Sámi themselves the right to determine who is Sámi, can enrol as a voter, and thus have a say in Sámi Homeland matters (Joona, 2018: 112; Saijets, 2022). Literature agrees on the Sámi Parliament's main functions as to execute the tasks appointed by the Constitution, meaning self-governing issues related to the Sámi languages and culture and the preservation and development of Sámi culture and heritage (Nuorgam, 2022; Laihi, 2017: 114; Sámediggi, 2022). Generally the literature also agrees on the indigenous peoples' right to self-determination (Vrdoljak, 2008; Wiessner, 2011; Alakorva and Valkonen, 2022). In Finland, some disagree, usually political or economic actors, and it has been argued that this is fuelled by political agendas of control and ownership of lands and businesses in the Sámi Homeland (Alakorva and Valkonen, 2022; Saijets, 2022). Consequently, this describes continued colonialism as the power relations in the Sámi Parliament seem to uphold the colonial structures rather than pursue its dismantling (McGuire, 2022: 7). The implications of this continued colonialism to the mental health and wellbeing of the Sámi people as well as the future of the Sámi culture and languages are distressing. Previous research indicates that great results in revitalising have been done in Norway (Aikio-Puoskari, 2018) and these procedures should be considered in Finland as well. Norway's example of creating Sámi language centres and projects across the national borders has strengthened and revitalised the Sámi languages across the Sámi Homeland (Aikio-Puoskari, 2018: 5).

The debate on self-determination of the Sámi is current and has generated a lot of writing, some academic but also opinion pieces influenced by both sides of the debate (Valoma, 2023). Passionate statements should be carefully reviewed through legislation as well as international cultural and human rights conventions as the UN Human Rights Council has found Finland to be violating the Sámi rights (United Nations Human Rights Council, 2019). Ratifying the *ILO 169* would be the first step in mending this, something Norway, for example, did already in 1990 (Valoma, 2023). *ILO 169* is at the heart of self-determination and culture as it is aimed to give the indigenous peoples the opportunity to maintain and further develop their own culture and it obliges the government to take action to endorse this work (Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development in Norway, 2020). However, with the current political climate in Finland, the issue of the Sámi cultural and human rights continues to be polarised.

The core of both, the *ILO 169* and The Sámi Parliament Act is identifying and acknowledging the equal rights of the indigenous peoples and mending the damage done through colonisation and assimilation. The *ILO 169* is pending on issues of land ownership

and land use rights with arguments that the current legislation already recognise the rights of the Sámi (Spangen et al., 2015: 25; Valoma, 2023). Lehtola describes researchers contesting the history of Finland as colonising the Sámi Homeland as it is legally a part of Finland, but the characteristics of colonialism are clear (2015: 25). The Finnish influence seeks to exclude the Sámi themselves from taking part or being active agents in matters concerning their rights, culture, and heritage. The Finnish influence aims to maintain control over the Sámi Parliament with agendas of control and ownership of lands and businesses in the Sámi Homeland, and as such, deny the Sámi Parliament's autonomy and the very task and objective to self-govern the Sámi languages and culture (Alakorva and Valkonen, 2022; Saijets, 2022).

Renewal of the Sámi Parliament Act has made it to the Constitutional Law Committee three times, and on all occasions, it has been voted against. The latest was just before the parliamentary election of spring 2023. The since-elected government has claimed committed to seeing the renewal through until the Constitutional Law Committee again postponed the Act in response to the Supreme Administrative Court's decision that the Sámi Parliament election needs to be renewed. These tactics of delaying and preventing the Act from going before the Finnish parliament only reveal the continued colonialism in Finland. Finally, as the autonomy of the Sámi Parliament continues to be hampered by Finnish control, it begs the question, how can the Sámi Parliament fulfill its cultural autonomy and ensure the preservation and development of the Sámi culture and languages?

Decolonising cultural policy

In addition to the decolonial practices described regarding specifically the Sámi, decolonising cultural policy, the power structures behind arts and culture, are needed. The most powerful and devastating forms of the colonial rule regarding the cultural and linguistic rights of the Sámi are as described assimilation, epistemicide and linguicide. These processes of decolonising discriminatory histories and policies call for recognising those oppressed and centring their knowledge. This can be achieved through for instance research committed to participatory and intersectional methodology and participatory practices in policy- and decision-making.

"In short, a decolonisation project involves being aware of how we live our lives and how our thoughts, beliefs, and interactions with others are shaped by systems that create universal norms, by erasing, delegitimising, or marginalising other knowledges and forms of knowing." (Nathani Wane, 2009: 171).

The understanding of a decolonial cultural policy is essentially intertwined with the knowledge base of the cultural policy domain (Lettau and Canyürek, 2024: 13). Cultural policy is instrumental in

legitimising diverse cultural expressions, it has the power to either normalise or prohibit diversity (Saukkonen and Pyykkönen, 2008: 50), depending on the knowledge base. Thus, centring diverse and indigenous knowledge is pivotal to decolonial practice. The colonial rule strives to centre the white Western knowledge and knowledge production. These centres decentre other centres HKW–Haus der Kulturen der Welt, 2018. Thus, decolonial practices should strive to decentre white Western knowledge and amplify the knowledge, knowledge production, and research of BIPOC academics, artists, and activists contributing to cultural policymaking. Only by creating space and methods for other forms of knowledge and of existing can we truly decolonise and dismantle the white Western colonial rule.

Among academic writing, where the research on othering or the colonised has been and perhaps still is vibrant, ways of writing without othering have been studied. These participatory methods against othering, although concerning writing, are universal, easily applied to any vocation, and can help in recognising shrouded but harmful ways of oppression and colonial practices that persist. The methods are narration, dialogue, and reflexivity (Krumer-Nevo and Sidi, 2012, p. 306). In narrative methods, the oppressed are described within the context of their life, reality, relationships, and inequalities yielding a more accurate and diverse description of who they are. Dialogue as a method then allows for a multitude of voices and as such is more representative of the oppressed. Reflexivity on the other hand seeks to reveal the writers'/researchers' position within their privileges and power structures (Krumer-Nevo and Sidi, 2012, p. 306). In essence, these participatory methods amplify the voices of the colonised and oppressed and centre other than white Western knowledge. For the Sámi these methods should signify a shift from being the subject of research into active agents in consolidating the knowledgebase of cultural rights and cultural policy. Research contributing to decolonisation would include research and reporting systems in cultural funding and distribution for promoting the Sámi languages in the Sámi communities and all over Finland. Centring the Sámi knowledge, research and social movements are vital in decolonial practices. Furthermore, research on polarisation from a cultural point of view is needed. What are the effects of polarisation on the cultural rights and cultural heritage of the Sámi? Also, investigating equity and equality within arts and culture institutions and among funders is paramount in creating a decolonial cultural policy.

Mulcahy' then describes two variations of post-colonial cultural policy, one strongly opposing the culture of the colonial power and the other idolising, perhaps even exoticising the indigenous culture and heritage (2019: 253–254). Both of which lack the intersections of an assimilated indigenous identity within the globalised and white Western cultural realities and institutions. Thus, there is no easy way to decolonise cultural policy, it is a challenge not easily addressed (Mulcahy, 2019: 254). Colonialism is not fixed but rather changes according to the needs of the dominant culture (Spangen et al., 2015: 31). The colonial practices are as varied as the colonisers. Even in the Nordics, colonialism and the assimilation of Sámi have been conducted in various forms and suggests more research is needed

to understand Finnish colonialism (Spangen et al., 2015; Keskinen, 2019). In the case of the Sámi, it is also important to recognise the diversity of the communities, there is no one language or culture but many (Spangen et al., 2015: 30; Normann, 2021: 80). And the intersections of an indigenous identity are just as varied as the community itself. The cultural hegemony of the white majority reveals the intersections of cultural discrimination (Belfiore et al., 2023:164). Thus, there is no one correct method or practice of decolonising but rather a multidisciplinary approach is required rendering a much wider perspective including economic, cultural, and psychological aspects. For instance, whether heteronormativity and homophobia are products of colonialism and Christianisation within indigenous communities or inherent to that culture determines how to tackle said discrimination. All the interlocking aspects together with the indigenous identity must be factored in when considering a decolonial cultural policy.

“Intersectionality foregrounds the multiple intersecting manifestations, mechanisms, and adjoining socio-political processes of settler colonialism, including land dispossession and repossession, patriarchy, ableism, heteronormativity, capital accumulation, and white supremacy” (Dhamoon (2015): 33).

As such, intersectionality as a framework for decolonising should expose the many forms of discrimination, not only current-day colonialism and the effects of assimilation on the Sámi, epistemicide and linguicide but the intersections of an indigenous identity with other forms of discrimination within the Finnish society.

“Building participatory, democratic interpretive communities across differences of experience, expertise, and resources has been the hallmark of intersectional projects” (Collins et al. (2021): 692).

The recognition of intersectional indigenous identities should be reflected in the policies made, as research indicates encouraging results in social inclusion by actively involving minorities throughout the processes of policymaking, budgeting and decision-making (Vella and Xuereb (2021): 40–41).

Thus, including the Sámi as active agents in knowledge production, policymaking and research are vital to decolonising cultural policy.

Perhaps an “intersectional cultural policy” (Belfiore, et al. (2023): 166).

Could recognise and consider the intersections of the Sámi communities, cultural policies stemming from Finnish colonialism, and systemic discrimination and create an equitable cultural policy in line with legislation and social justice. Understanding the many forms of discrimination and their distinct mechanisms, manifestations, and intersections within colonial practices is pivotal.

“It is important to challenge exclusionary and discriminatory attitudes and to make the values of inclusiveness and solidarity a priority in cultural policy.” (Vella and Xuereb (2021), p. 41).

Conclusion

“A post-colonial cultural policy must build on the grounds of ethics (and ethos).” (Paquette et al., 2017: 269). The colonial past and present of Finland should not be a matter of debate. The negative effects of assimilation, epistemicide and linguicide are evident in the Sámi communities today. As previous research has demonstrated, the work of advancing, developing, and protecting the Sámi culture and languages has been and is being done inside the Sámi communities (Hirvonen, 2008; Laihi, 2017; Aikio-Puoskari, 2018; Joona, 2018). However, the governmental actions in endorsing the Sámi culture and languages need to be examined more. How to build new and truly functional practices of decolonising on top of the existing legislation, demands for cultural rights, and a colonial past Finland is yet to come to terms with? The international human rights demands or the discriminatory legislation cannot be overlooked. Decolonisation means taking responsibility for the colonial past and subsequently dismantling all the structures still discriminating against the Sámi.

Meanwhile, cultural policy with DEI initiatives has been embraced by the cultural sector. However, the implementation, monitoring, and analysis should be well-laid and transparent. In addition to existing DEI initiatives, decolonising cultural policy would benefit not only the colonised Sámi but all those discriminated against as it aims for equity. Moreover, the colonised, and the indigenous must be supported as active agents. Participatory intersectional practices have proven to be fruitful as they recognise the intersections of identity and discrimination. Measures of investing in the education and revitalisation of Sámi languages and culture and mending the legislation in line with the cultural and human rights appointed by the UN are vital. As the colonial past and present of Finland are unique, the measures in decolonising should reflect that. Moreover, further research into Finnish colonialism is needed as the field of study is rather recent.

Moreover, the implementation of policies governing and supporting Sámi culture needs to be further investigated and widened to include all of Finland, and the self-determination of the Sámi ensured. Research also revealed that apart from the Sámi Council in Norway, and Sámi Parliament in Finland, there are no explicit subsidies for Sámi culture and languages. Good practices and revitalisation methods such as the Sámi language centres can be found in Norway (Aikio-Puoskari, 2018). Furthermore, education in Sámi languages should be offered and improved in all of Finland (Hirvonen, 2008; Hammine, 2016; Capdeville, 2017; Laihi, 2017; Aikio-Puoskari, 2018; Joona, 2018). Research in cultural funding and distribution for promoting the Sámi languages in the Sámi

communities and all over Finland is needed. As cultural policy should be based on cultural rights, taking the Sámi culture and languages as an integral part of the culture policy and funding is imperative. The structures of policymaking and state funding call for examining the effects of policies concerning the preservation of Sámi culture and languages. The yearly state grant to the Sámi Parliament for maintaining and developing Sámi art, culture and languages appears as a mere token without the autonomy affirmed. Asking the difficult questions of how current state funding and cultural policies contribute to the continuing struggles of the Sámi in preserving their culture is imperative. And even beyond the Sámi struggles, how does the Western canon of art dictate the policies and whose art and culture are recognised, valued and funded? (Valoma, 2024: 76).

To conclude, concrete steps are to be taken for decolonising cultural policy in Finland specifically concerning the rights of the Sámi, such as securing the cultural and linguistic rights and ensuring self-determination by new legislation, support and funding Sámi research and education and arts and culture. Furthermore, facilitating the Sámi as active agents in further research and knowledge production is paramount. In addition, an investigation of decolonial practices for cultural policy that recognises the intersections of various identities, and the many forms of discrimination is needed. In other words, Finland needs to create an intersectional decolonial cultural policy.

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LV participated in the design, interpretation of the studies and analysis of the data and review of the manuscript.

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Conflict of interest

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SHORT_CUTS: collective image making - as regenerative practices

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Why

We consider the urgencies and complexities of a triple transition (climate, digital, social) demand fundamentally new concepts and understandings of research and innovation facing increasingly complex societal challenges. They are sources of development and we see development as non-linear, sometimes contradicting and certainly interdependent processes requiring imagination, hybrid creations and creative experimentation. We approach these complexities through the lens of microcosms of everyday lives, situated in the rural in which a microcosm of complexity is “graspable,” and we step into this complexity with film-methodologies in itself a microcosm of ways of organizing that we can also grasp and reconfigure into seamless ways of making (Lefebvre, 1991). We begin by co-creating spaces that relate to everyday lives, through shared filmmaking methodologies, situated in the context of the rural municipality of Genalguacil and with an initial small crew of people from KIT/NTNU and LAB Genalguacil.

What

In 2023 - we started a small experiment: what happens if you share the story of Genalguacil, a pueblo blanco, a whitewashed village atop the mountains of Andalucia, with a group of MFA students. The story shared was a snap-shot of how Genalguacil since 1994, has been fighting depopulation by commissioning contemporary art works that populate the entire village and the practices that shape this. The story inspired a group of students to organize a visit to Genalguacil in the coming May - in which they created audio-visual works inspired by a brief (Farocki, 2011; Busch, 2024) which culminated in a moment of collective sharing with people from Genalguacil as well as surrounding villages of the Genal Valley in the *Roof-Top Cinema* - each student created a perspective, to be shared as an outdoor event with “neighbours.” The videos were not only searching for narratives of innovation in the places one would least expect them, but were innovative in their playful and performative encounters with the art, architecture, natural environment

and everyday happenings of life and livelihood in the village (de Certeau, 2011). These initial interactions between students, locals prompted the desire in some of the group to start a film festival that is not a film festival. Drawing lines of similarities with depopulation experiences, with the potential for art and culture, in rural regions in other parts of Europe and the world – the places where the students were from. Imagine a multi-place film festival not only as an event, but as a site of production, research and learning. In which filmmaking is a methodology for the production and sharing of situated knowledge - as collaborative relationships between people, place, arts, reframing narratives of innovation (Haraway, 1988). A festival, dedicated to address the various challenges of rural areas within their respective historical backgrounds through the collective and inviting methodologies of filmmaking and film viewing. To spark innovative ideas in exchange with other peripheral, rural places - challenging people's ideas or stereotypes about what being rural really means.

As the students returned to Trondheim, the smaller crew inspired by the “rooftop cinema” - as a way to reimagine a film festival began the work of making a film-festival that is not a film festival, making it one scene at a time, iterating and connecting through the relationships made in May and beyond.

How

Our first next step was to relate with the needs and desires of everyday life and to continue to connect with the young people of the village. Our frame becomes “El Huerto” a project to develop cooperatives linked to the recovery of traditional knowledge, fused with artistic practices to nurture innovation ecosystems and enhance the potential of local products. In this context, we situate our approach to filmmaking as a learning space. We reach out to the local youth to work with us in various capacities—as translators and co-ordinators, as co-creators and co-producers of the audio-visual material. We also reach out to local women, as their involvement as interlocutors and co-creators is crucial and their perspective on labour and value is essential to the reframing of concerns around regenerative economies. This became the first co-production, filmmaking in the collective making of lunch at a finca.

The “festival” is beginning to enable collective image-making as a site for sharing multiple perspectives, film viewing as a third plane that creates common ground (Busch and Annas, 2008), and gives us insight into how we can create opportunities to participate in innovative, open and care-centric ways of cultural production and to get hands-on experience with video production, design and publishing not only as skills but as methodologies for research. The next scene is now emerging of film-making as a learning space, with the development of “festival” as a framework for conversations and reflection, learning to see and to create relations between film narratives, the corresponding environment of the local areas and the

relationships we can generate to foster shared creativity, and creative confidence (Lefebvre, 1991).

This learning process brings together locals, visiting students, filmmakers, artists who are actively engaging with practices, with place. They are working together through the making of new audio-visuals and developing questions, insights, skills, potential solutions—a way to understand the value of on-site production (Haraway, 1988) and to propel and change perspectives with an audience as makers. Integral to this is the work together to foster spaces for reflective practice - reflecting on the exchange of knowledge and experiences with the NTNU students over the familiar scene of making food together. For example, we asked one of the youth from the village to reflect on her process of interacting with the NTNU students, being part of creative processes, as she observed her friends learn filmmaking, in a reflective voice-over over the footage of food-making at the finca (Figure 1).

E.g., *“It is so interesting, that people from all different places share something which is the desire to learn about new places, and a place that you have always known - is suddenly made new by sharing them with someone else from somewhere else”* Maria de los Angeles.

In addition, we are learning how to develop feedback loops - by taking care of the “rituals” of place - to bring in new questions, and topics into these conversations and the new “everyday moments” that are coming through the film/food making.

E.g., We are sharing the films back in the village, in the lab, distributing them on people's phones, showing them live and recorded on the TVs in the restaurants and bars. This sharing of the “film” from making to viewing is as the process of food-making to sharing a meal, they are always connected to reflect food, festivities, and collective making, sharing - from the neighbourhood rooftop cinema, or as part of opening the LAB Genalguacil, or to new initiatives such as the open kitchen turning the streets of the village into a lab, a place of experimenting and connecting.

E.g., We are introducing ways to frame encounters (Lefebvre, 1991) (puntos de encuentros), working on questions, repeating the question “what is innovation?”. By bringing different combinations of people, with different knowledge and interests, together to discuss it with each other. We take care of the framing – both the question and the camera – as a prompt, a spark, and let it roll.

E.g., We are actively exploring the museum collection as a way to combine and recombine practices the audio-visual, art and local knowledge, By re-engaging with the archives of the museum, the art in the village, through filmmaking, through reading and filming short scenes with people connected to the art works (not the artist). In this way we wish to iteratively collapse stereotypes of knowledge of labour.

These are some ways we are developing methods of filmmaking as artistic research: begin to frame conditions in which we are sharing knowledge and skills across film-making



FIGURE 1

Nerea Holgado Holgado, Ana Alvarez Gutierrez, Beatriz Alvarez Urda, Maria Jose Alvarez Rubio.

and food-making. By teaching basic camera skills, camera and image making as a way to observe closely the techniques of food-making. Familiar recipes are broken down into bite-sized processes. Following the process, filming the process - the process film (Skvirsky, 2020). The parallel dishes, the parallel montage. De-familiarising the familiar - a way to study, reflect on the (gendered) labour of food-making. The filmmakers, the youth, are also familiar with the people, and are participants in the food-making - laying the table, taking care of small servings, and playing with the children. It is all about exploring how to foster the elements for “mixology”.

In addition, we are developing a carefully curated selection of films across genres that opens up global perspectives on rural issues, including questions of time, material and heritage, artistic and collective entrepreneurship, care, agriculture and food production, and ways to foster regenerative practices and cooperative models of production.

The structure and dynamic of the festival itself is changing accordingly. The festival-time is not seen as a representative endpoint of an exclusive preparation process, but as a period of intensification as part of a pre- and post production, and as a new starting point. The subsequent process of editing and re-viewing will allow for a time of reflection and preparation for the next festival, not through the pressing logic to increase and surpass, but as a continuation according to the needs, questions and experiences raised through the previous one.

SHORT_CUTS

Addresses the impact of artistic research and the necessary framework as collective image making - as regenerative

practices to help us develop artistic research practices for complex societal challenges structures as well as enabling frameworks for advanced practices in artistic research for today and in the future.

Ethics statement

Written informed consent was obtained from the [individual(s) AND/OR minor(s)' legal guardian/next of kin] for the publication of any potentially identifiable images or data included in this article.

Author contributions

All authors listed have made a substantial, direct, and intellectual contribution to the work and approved it for publication.

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Conflict of interest

The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

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Why is managerial shared leadership in creative organizations a more resilient, transparent, open, and generous constellation? A case analysis approach

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Leadership models in the cultural and creative sectors are frequently based on collective, shared, or distributed structures. In recent decades, research on these plural forms has yielded insights in the form of typological models and empirical studies. This article seeks to examine two issues in the literature on plural leadership that have received insufficient attention. The first is how cultural organizations combine and integrate multiple leadership models. The use of horizontal co-leadership at the macro (organisational) level alongside either vertical or horizontal leadership of embedded projects managed by teams is one example. Little is known about how the existence of distinct leadership styles at the macro and meso levels influences the career paths of individuals and organizations. The second is an inquiry into the evolution of leadership models in cultural organizations over time. This is especially important when an organisation transitions from a startup to a successful enterprise and expands its operations internationally. To empirically investigate these issues, we propose a single case study of Snøhetta, a multinational architecture firm. The results of this case study allow for a better understanding of how forms of collaborative leadership style can influence the career paths of people and organizations, and how it is possible to find a balance between the paradoxical institutional logic on which management and leadership of creativity is based. In other words, how the constellations of relationships that are generated make organizations with this leadership style more resilient and sustainable by virtue of being more transparent, open, and generous.

KEYWORDS

plural leadership, creative entrepreneurship, creative leadership, international studio, architecture and design

Introduction

Recent contributions to the literature on arts and cultural management situate cultural leaders as social agents (Price, 2017), whose capacity to enable artistic work to flourish (Mandel, 2017) may be explained by talent for advocacy and facilitation (Sutherland and Gosling, 2010). As individuals, cultural leaders are revered because they are thought to be exceptional individuals with charismatic personalities (Nisbett and Walmsley, 2016). Professionally, they are esteemed for their ability to balance a somewhat challenging juxtaposition of artistic, creative, and economic objectives (Lampel et al., 2000; DeFillippi et al., 2007). In a nutshell, the personality of a cultural leader unites the traits of an entrepreneur (success at the project or organisational level) who is a generous (attentive to the needs of the field or sector) public figure (demonstrates interest in larger societal issues and public concerns) (Price, 2017).

However, the emphasis on the individual traits of leaders may obfuscate significant aspects of the actual managerial models and leadership configurations utilised in the cultural and creative sectors. One important consideration is that so-called collective, plural, or shared models of leadership between two or more people have over time become the standard executive constellation (Hodgson et al., 1965) within management for cultural and creative organizations in many countries (Roeseng, 2008; Reid and Karambayya, 2009; Fjellvaer, 2010). Common configurations at the tops of organizations are premised on pluralistic models with two or more individuals having joint responsibility of leading the organisation with separate managerial areas of responsibility (Denis et al., 2012; Gibeau et al., 2016).

Another factor that may condition leadership styles and performance is that cultural and creative organizations' main line of activity is the acquisition, management, and execution of temporary projects (Gann and Salter, 2000; Grabher, 2002). Bureaucratic models and organisational structures therefore tend towards horizontal rather than vertical alignment. This is because horizontal structures are better for facilitating the management and leadership of temporary projects (Müller et al., 2018), whilst providing intra-organisational infrastructure and resources that facilitate and support project work (Grabher, 2002; Cohendet and Simon, 2007).

Further, leadership by constellations within project-driven horizontal structures may prove to be challenging. This could be related to cultural differences across geographic contexts (Mandel, 2017; King et al., 2019); conflicts between leaders (Reid and Karambayya, 2009); or intra-organisational tensions between the need for creative autonomy (of the project teams and their members) and performance at the organisational level (Lampel et al., 2000; Gilson et al., 2015). Finally, the variety of relationships with external stakeholders (from providers to competitors, politicians, or media) in project-based

organizations implies that there is not a single hierarchical path or procedure, but several often-complementary relations (more or less dissonant) to track and monitor. Solutions are therefore most likely to be both customised and context-specific, as there are few standard recipes or procedures to draw upon (Cohendet and Simon, 2007).

It should therefore be of no surprise that leadership and management of cultural organizations requires capacity to address competing institutional logics (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983; Peterson and DiMaggio, 1986; Thornton et al., 2008). Among those identified we find the actual influence of both internal and external stakeholders on the mission, goals, strategy, and resource of the organization; its governance model, defined both by the ownership or legal nature and by how priorities are set, or the executive management is elected (or changed); the values of the organization and its professionals; and obviously, its history and evolution. Others have synthesised these into five logics as they relate to profession, mission, bureaucratic, resource and business aspects of leadership and governance (Fjellvaer, 2010).

Thus, our starting rationale is an interest in assessing the efficiency and potential of one of the perspectives on plural leadership constellations that the literature has conceptualised: *managerial shared leadership* (Döös and Wilhelmson, 2021). How can managerial shared leadership help strike a balance between the paradoxical institutional logics management and leadership of creativity is premised upon? Is this constellation more resilient because they are considered more transparent, open, and generous? Our knowledge of creative and cultural sector organizations has yet to yield in-depth insight into the way co-leadership at the top is combined with other plural models at the embedded level of temporary projects. Most of the literature consider either plural leadership forms at the top and their impact [some examples are Roeseng (2008), Reid and Karambaya (2009), Nisbett and Walmsley (2016)] or leadership of teams managing an organisation's portfolio of temporary projects (Grabher, 2002; Müller et al., 2018). Combining levels of analysis, by considering plural leadership of an organisation in tandem with how leadership constellations at the top facilitate or hamper the leadership and management of intra-organisational project teams is less common. Drawing together these perspectives would enable the study of cultural leadership as a confluence of top-down (formally imposed) structural influence together with interactional and emergent bottom-up strategies.

An added benefit of combining perspectives is that it will enable us to focus on two issues in the broader literature on plural leadership, of which managerial shared leadership is a part that has received inadequate attention. The first is how cultural organizations combine and integrate multiple leadership models. The second is an inquiry into the evolution of leadership models in cultural organizations over time. This is especially important when an organisation transitions from a

startup to a successful enterprise and expands its operations internationally.

To examine these issues, we propose a case study based on the international architecture firm Snøhetta. The rationale for our choice is linked to some of the company principles—sustainability, uniqueness, generosity through shared public spaces, collaborative work, and co-creation inside the team and with the clients. These organisational values are not common either in creative industry firms or in society in general. Even as of 2019 before COVID, Snøhetta justifies the rationale of adhering to these principles by showing how an entrepreneurial creative studio can be successful in applying ‘soft’ values and approaches to work in very competitive market environments. We therefore believe the organisation provides an interesting setting for studying the use of managerial shared leadership and its potential resilience.

The article is structured as follows. In the next section, we outline the theoretical framework, based on a review of recent literature on plural leadership models. Following that, we detail our methodology, data collection and analysis procedures, the results from the case study, and the discussion and conclusions in the following sections.

Literature review

In this literature review, the concepts and approaches to researching leadership at the organisational or embedded project level will be presented and discussed. The review will then transition to a discussion of some of the competing logics and paradoxes that leaders and managers of cultural organizations will have to confront in the course of their work. Defining leadership and management functions, as justified by the tensions and paradoxes faced by cultural and creative organizations, may provide the framework and concepts for an analysis of managerial shared leadership within these organizations.

Whether “manager” and “leader” refer to the same or different categories of people remains a point of contention in the literature. People are split on whether or not these two functions are distinct jobs in and of themselves (Bolden, 2004). In the first case, there are those who take the position that leaders are distinguishable from managers because of their personalities (Burns et al., 2010) and exceptional ability to formulate organisational visions and direction, engender confidence, and effect the required change despite adversity (Kotter, 1996; Bolden et al., 2011, pp. 25–30). This approach may also include some who correlate leadership with a capacity to protect artistic autonomy and work from instrumental concerns and market imperatives (Royseng, 2008). In the latter faction, there are those who consider management to be a profession with numerous facets. As an illustration of this school of thought, Mintzberg (1973) asserts that leadership is only one of the many responsibilities of a manager. This is

congruent with the view articulated by Döös and Wilhelmson (2021) that some have a semantic preference for the term leader over manager, even though both jobs are linked in practise. Individuals’ placement in a given group is always specific to their circumstances and the context wherein the organisation they represent is active. In brief, this position implies that while we believe that not every leader is a good manager, some managers can have the makings of future leaders. For practical purposes, it is difficult to compartmentalise roles: people may, depending on the circumstances, need to act as either leaders, managers, or both. As the focus of the article is on the interrelationship between both roles, we will not seek to differentiate between leaders and managers. The second consideration is the usage of terminology such as *model* or *constellation* to describe how to arrange leadership and managerial functions. As an alternative to model, a *constellation* describes how and in what way the various tasks and responsibilities associated with these functions are being divided between people (Döös and Wilhelmson, 2021). The “executive role constellation” as a conceptual framework to analyse collective or shared leadership by teams consists of three dimensions: “specialisation,” “differentiation,” and “complementarity” (Hodgson et al., 1965). When combined, they yield a useful framework for analysing managerial configurations within the shared role space (Gibeau et al., 2016). Specialisation is the extent to which each individual’s roles are broad and comprehensive or focused on specific areas. The differentiation dimension is the degree to which roles overlap, creating (or not creating) zones of mutual replacement or duplication. Complementarity can be broken down into two components: how well the people’s duties overlap, and how well they are able to coordinate their efforts within the shared role area. Given that constellation, as defined, is a more conceptually dense term than the neutral model, the article uses constellation to refer to the way the responsibility for leading an organisation is distributed among people in leadership roles and implemented in practise.

Having established our understanding of leadership, management, and possible ways to assess constellations within which they manifest as managerially shared forms of leadership, we turn to the question of how to define and interpret the variety of so-called plural forms of leadership in the next section.

Plural forms of leadership—an overview

It is not an easy task to make sense of the concepts of leadership constellations that involve more than a unitary leader at the top of an organisation. As Table 1 indicate, there are at least five different conceptualisations, each with an established research stream, that partly overlap and do not always speak with one another. What binds them together is that they focus on forms of leadership and managerial practice in the *plural*, by which it is inferred that the actual responsibility can

TABLE 1 Examples of concepts and definitions of plural types of leadership.

Concept	Definition	Analytical perspective	Focus and emphasis	Contributions
Distributed Leadership	A leadership approach whereby responsibility is dissociated from formal organisational roles, and people at all levels are given the opportunity to influence the overall direction and functioning of the organisation. Bolden et al. (2011)	How to diffuse leadership away from the organization's apex to develop leadership practises throughout the entire organisation	- Focus on understanding and explaining the role and nature of distributed leadership and how the approach can contribute to organisational change - Emphasis on how leadership as a practice is developed interactively and situations where it is enacted (organisation as unit of analysis)	Spillane and Diamond (2007) , Bolden (2011) , Bolden and Donato (2011)
Shared Leadership	A dynamic, interactive influence process among individuals in groups for which the objective is to lead one another to the achievement of group or organizational goals or both Pearce and Conger (2003)	How leadership responsibilities are shared or divided among project team members through either formal designation or interactive emergence	- Focus on leadership as an emergent group-based phenomenon where influence is dispersed and configuration is horizontal, whereby group members take on tasks usually handled by designated or elected leaders - Emphasis on room for individual action within the dynamic frame provided by group dynamics	Pearce and Conger (2003) , Pearce (2004) , Müller et al. (2018) , Zhu et al. (2018)
Co-Leadership	A leadership constellation where a group of two, three, or more people situated or pooled at the top leads an organisation Alvarez and Svejnova (2005) , Denis et al. (2012)	How co-leadership constellations can be considering effective managerial structures, adept at navigating intraorganizational complexity, and balance competing tensions	- Focus on acknowledging that leadership constellations can have more than two people, and that these constellations are plural in nature, e.g., leadership can be shared, distributed, or combined in different ways - Emphasis on the characteristics of the organizational context within which co-leadership takes place. These settings are defined as having multiple (organisational) objectives, diffuse power structures, and knowledge-based work processes (Denis et al., 2007)	Alvarez and Svejnova (2005) , Denis et al. (2012) , Sergi et al. (2017) , Reid and Fjellvæ (2022)
Dual Leadership	A management structure in which two leaders of equal standing divide the top management position and functions between them so that each is responsible for different organizational domains. Fjellvæ (2010)	How leaders relate to one another to achieve organisational goals and avoid conflict	- Focus on potential for conflict and how to avoid it. Largely premised on leader being mandated or appointed by a board - Emphasis on competing logics (e.g., tension between art and commerce)	Reid and Karambaya (2009) , Fjellvæ (2010) , Reid and Karambaya (2016) , Gibeau et al. (2016)
Managerial Shared Leadership	A constellation with a few individuals being mutually responsible for the tasks (administration, leadership towards goals, and organising working conditions for others) included in holding a managerial position. Döös and Wilhelmson (2021, p.717)	How leadership in practice either emerges within or is being imposed upon a constellation of any number of managers sharing responsibilities	- Focus on how leadership constellations are structured rather than the number of people and their relationship with one another - Emphasis on both how these structures relate to organisational aspects (equality (of standing), work tasks, and organisational units)	Döös and Wilhelmson (2021)

be shared or distributed throughout an organisation, always with two or more people involved as a part of the constellation ([Denis et al., 2012](#); [Döös and Wilhelmson, 2021](#)).

As an example of the confusion, take the article by [Gibeau et al. \(2016\)](#) that defines co-leadership as situations where “... two people might successfully share an organizational leadership role on an equal footing.” (p.225). Conversely, another definition

of co-leadership situates the practice as a constellation that also includes “...trios or other smaller groups” ([Reid and Fjellvæ, 2022](#)). This may be explained by the fact that co-leadership as a plural construct is an evolution of an earlier concept of dual leadership ([Reid and Karambaya, 2009](#); [Fjellvæ, 2010](#)) which focused on dyads of leaders in specific organizations from particular sectors, of which museums ([Fjellvæ, 2010](#)) and

performing arts organizations (Döös and Wilhelmson, 2021) are interesting and relevant settings in the present context. However, the literature on co-leadership (Reid and Fjellvåg, 2022) is critical of the concept of managerial shared leadership. This is because they see the concept as a conflation of shared leadership with co-leadership by a formally defined leadership constellation.

Part of the criticism can be explained by the previous research. The literature on management of cultural and creative organizations has put more emphasis in investigating different forms of behaviour relative to the more artistic and creative output rather than profile and strategies of managerial stratum (Peltoniemi, 2015). Another is the level of analysis and concerns of the different traditions detailed in Table 1. The older notions of shared and distributed leadership are primarily concerned with investigating and theorising leadership and management practise that diffuse horizontally, or bottom-up (Pearce, 2004; Bolden, 2011; Ebbers and Wijnberg, 2012), rather than models vertically imposed by the constellation leading from the top (Fjellvåg, 2010). Indeed, as others have pointed out, the co- and dual-leadership literature has a particular affinity with how to establish trust and/or avoid conflicts between leaders and managers of an organisation (Ebbers and Wijnberg, 2017). Thus, the overlap has in practice more to do with whether the level of analysis focuses on teams working on projects (Gann and Salter, 2000; Grabher, 2002) or an organisation (Reid and Fjellvåg, 2022), or whether the leadership constellation is imposed via selection or emergent (Denis et al., 2012). Thus, studying the efficacy and efficiency of managerial constellations, two aspects require consideration. First, the structural form of the constellation of leaders (i.e., whether the constellation has a joint, functional, horizontal, or vertical orientation) and the formal organisational aspects (i.e., if the managers are equals or non-equals hierarchically, if the area of influence is within or across organisational units, and if tasks are merged or divided) (Döös and Wilhelmson, 2021).

In brief, combining a perspective of the constellation with these organisational aspects is what distinguishes managerial shared leadership as a concept: it bridges these concerns. Since our interest is in analysing the resilience and potential of horizontal leadership models premised on autonomous teams that manage their work on temporary projects across units with a different constellation leading the organisation overall, we believe there is some purchase in adopting the plural concept of managerial shared leadership in the article.

In the next section, we turn to some of the challenges encountered by those with managerial responsibilities working within this model.

The challenges facing cultural leaders and managers: balancing paradoxes

As discussed in the preceding section, there are various constellations of plural leadership based on distributed (Ebbers and Wijnberg, 2017), shared (Bolden, 2011), or

collective (Reid and Fjellvåg, 2022) configurations with varying levels of embeddedness (Döös and Wilhelmson, 2021) in organisations. These constellations in and by themselves, however, do not explain why an organisation or a project fails or succeeds. Failure and success are heavily influenced by the type of organisation and the nature of the ventures. For example, entrepreneurial cultural organisations founded by one individual or a group of cultural entrepreneurs that become growing concerns over time (DiMaggio, 1982) differ from established non-profit arts and cultural organisations whose leaders are chosen and appointed by boards for a set period of time (Reid and Karambayya, 2009).

A richer analysis may therefore want to consider contextual issues that may or may not influence the performance of managerial shared leadership constellations. Some of these variables, frequently tied to organisational or project-specific objectives, are the geographical political and cultural framework an organisation is embedded in, cultural sector specificities, the legal form of entities (public, profitability), organizational philosophy/model (hierarchical, self-managed, by project ...), size of the organization, and maturity of the organization or project (start-up vs. consolidated organization). This section of the review will discuss some of these.

Whilst managers obviously want to realize organizational objectives, their ambitions for outcomes may conflict with some or all the plural objectives of the professionals involved in artistic or creative work (DeFillippi and Arthur, 1998; Lampel et al., 2000; DeFillippi et al., 2007). In small or newly created organizations, i.e., entrepreneurial organisations, the objectives of teams and organization are generally well aligned. Differences are usually resolved with the departure of those partners who are dissatisfied with the developed mission and strategy adopted by the organization. As an organization grows and expands operations, the differences between its interests and those of its professional teams must by necessity be aligned to better ensure successful outcomes. This requires balancing the need to maintain and continue attracting talent while guaranteeing the sustainability and viability of the organisation's project. Thus, in situations faced by many cultural organisations where creativity is at the core and outcomes are both complex and uncertain, horizontal approaches to leadership work well because their use dictates intensive interaction among team members (Müller et al., 2018). These approaches develop naturally through practice in many cultural organisations because of the founders' natural drive and inspirational personalities. These character traits help cultural managers keep track of the overall vision and direction, manage fairness in leadership assignments, and trigger progression by asking the team for solutions (Bolden, 2011). Delegating some of the responsibility and initiative will thus provide a setting for working collaboratively to develop balanced solutions.

The management of creative resources, both tangible and intangible, is thus one of the most significant obstacles facing

managers of organizations in the cultural and creative sectors (Eikhof and Haunschild, 2007). As a result of the difficulties inherent in carrying out these responsibilities (Lampel et al., 2000), management becomes a balancing act when trying to strike an equilibrium between either economic results or mission fulfilment, even in the case of cultural and creative for-profit organisations. Adding to the intricacy is the potential influence of exogenous factors on managerial performance, which further complicates the task of balancing these aspects. Differences in national contexts, policy regimes, governance models, organisational objectives, and the demand for transparency are just a few examples (Mandel, 2017; King et al., 2019).

Ambidextrous leadership has been discussed in the literature as one explanation of how to succeed operationally with leadership and management of creativity (Rosing et al., 2023). A style based on ambidexterity necessitates approaches that are both open enough to allow for creative experimentation while also closed enough to allow for effective implementation control. One example of what may constitute ambidextrous leadership and management is the development of organisational systems that encourage the efficient recruitment, retention, and performance of creative employees without stifling them (Cohendet and Simon, 2007).

Nonetheless, our concern is on the challenges faced by cultural managers when acting as ambidextrous leaders. Another strand of the literature has formally conceptualised these as the paradoxes of cultural management (DeFillippi et al., 2007), defined as:

“...a group of conditions that lead to contradiction or defy intuition. Paradoxes prompt exploration of whether the conditions that are inferred are actually true. A paradox sparks further inquiry and the recognition of assumptions and ambiguities. The exploration prompted by paradox leads to rethinking and considering the phenomena at hand.” (p.514).

Four paradoxes have been identified: the difference paradox (the need to craft or standardise practises; the balance between creativity and economic efficiency); the distance paradox (couple or decouple routine work); the globalisation paradox (reconcile or separate local and global arenas of activity); and the identity paradox (creating individual or collective identities, reputations, and careers). These are some of the issues that need to be considered by managers and leaders, whether they are at the “top” of the organisation (Denis et al., 2012) or are embedded as leaders of temporary projects (Grabher, 2002).

Furthermore, in the case of architecture, there is a need to reconcile the “Artist-Entrepreneur Logic” (emphasis on architects’ roles as artists and creative entrepreneurs) and the “Engineer-Manager” Logic (emphasis on architects’ roles as problem solvers and managers who prioritise technology, efficiency, and practicality in their work) (Thornton et al.,

TABLE 2 Overview of the informants.

Name	Function	Office
Informant 1	Chief Executive Officer	Main Office
Informant 2	Creative Manager of country office	Country Office
Informant 3	Country Executive Officer	Country Office
Informant 4	Senior Architect—Project Leader	Main Office
Informant 5	Senior Architect	Country Office
Informant 6	Architect—Board Member	Main Office
Informant 7	Junior Architect	Main Office
Informant 8	Intern	Country Office
Kjetil	Founding Architect	Main Office

2005). Depending on conditions, (e.g., the historical epoch, societal context, and economic factors) one of these logics becomes the most prominent, influencing the architectural styles and approaches of that time. In both cases, however, logics and paradoxes follow a cyclical nature of shifts, oscillating between prioritizing one pole of the continuum (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983; Peterson and DiMaggio, 1986; Thornton et al., 2005). This cyclical pattern has been a defining characteristic of not just the architectural profession’s evolution, but the cultural sector overall (Bonet and Donato, 2011; Bonet and Négrier, 2018).

Thus, being able to juxtapose and balance logics that require ambidextrous approaches (Rosing et al., 2023), through managerial shared forms of leadership is one theoretical explanation to successful leadership styles and organisational performance.

Methods

The study was conducted as a single case study with embedded units of analysis (Yin, 2018). By a single case-study with embedded units of analysis, we mean the identification of different groups within the organisation (e.g., top, and middle management, administrative staff, architects, and interns) across units. As an example, the cases and informants represented the managerial shared leadership of the organisation, the manager of a country office, architects and interns working on project teams with shared and distributed models, alongside administration in charge of defining and structuring management and leadership models. Who the informants were are detailed in Table 2.

A case study is a research method that focuses on the intensity (details and information richness) of an analysis of a defined bounded unit (a person, community, or organisation) in relation to developments and context (where and when of the setting) (Flyvbjerg et al., 2011). The exploratory dimension is prominent in this study because we seek to understand how a phenomenon (managerial shared leadership) can be used to

balance dichotomous conflicting logics. Furthermore, a case study elucidates the contextual conditions that may (or may not) cause a phenomenon to occur, thereby identifying links between processes and outcomes. Therefore, it is an appropriate and justified methodology for a study investigating managerial shared leadership constellations in an international architecture firm. This is because the case study approach has been found suited for answering questions about *how* something was initiated or occurred in a particular way (Flyvbjerg et al., 2011; Yin, 2018). In addition, the emphasis on data depth and richness provides a level of insight that may aid in the advancement of the research field by serving as input for the development of new hypotheses and research questions (Flyvbjerg et al., 2011).

Evidently, a qualitative case study approach has some limitations. While findings from one or a few case studies may contradict and thus call into question established knowledge and assumptions (Flyvbjerg, 2006), generalisations about a population or universe are not possible. Case study generalisation is typically based on contrasting findings to corroborate or refute established theory, also known as analytical generalisations (Yin, 2018).

To ensure transparency and possibilities for replication, the study was designed as a stepwise process with five phases. These were 1) negotiating access, 2) collecting data, 3) analysis and interpretation, 4) contrasting results and findings with theory, and 5) writing the case report. Rather than strictly following a predefined recipe (Pan and Tan, 2011; Yin, 2018), this simplified procedure took cues and inspiration from examples from best practice, premised on a belief that the most important methodological principle is transparency of processes to enable replication.

We began by negotiating access to Snøhetta, by pitching the idea of conducting research on their leadership constellations. The rationale for selecting Snøhetta was a lack of case studies on entrepreneurial creative organisations in the arts and cultural management literature, which, with notable exceptions (Alvarez and Svejnova, 2005; Cohendet and Simon, 2007; Ebbers and Wijnberg, 2017) primarily focuses on the arts end of the cultural and creative sectors, through empirical research into art museums and performing arts organisations (Royseng, 2008; Reid and Karambayya, 2009; Fjellvaer, 2010; Mandel, 2017; Byrnes and Brkić, 2019; Reid and Fjellvæ, 2022).

After being granted access, data was gathered through interviews and participant observations during two field trips: one to the main office and another to one of the country offices. In-person interviews lasting 60–120 min were conducted while we observed how people worked and interacted, through participating in communal activities such as having lunch with the staff.

The analytical strategy used was a proprietary take on thematic analysis that included manual coding and categorization of notes and interview transcripts. Thematic

analysis has been described as a “rather basic, flexible tool” that entails coding the data by assigning “labels to segments of potentially relevant data.” (Herzog et al., 2019) We used close reading to sort fragments and chunks of texts gradually and iteratively into different thematic categories. The purpose of iteration was to reduce the number of thematic codes and categories.

Two choices were made to avoid biases in interpretations. First, it was decided to incorporate triangulation of data sources into the research design by including informants with varying levels of managerial responsibility, from various departments and offices, and with varying levels of seniority. Second, based on the reporting rationale, it was decided to write up the case study in a narrative style, with extensive use of quotations. The justifications were, on the one hand, that the reporting style helped to better illustrate the analysis process (Eldh et al., 2020), while also ensuring transparency by allowing the reader(s) to make their own decisions about whether our interpretations of the findings of the themes accurately reflect the participants’ accounts (Noble and Smith, 2015).

Following this largely inductive approach to collecting and analysing data, the identified data categories and concepts were compared to literature and theories of cultural management and leadership. The rationale was to ensure alignment between theory and data, as well as analytical (theoretical) validity and generalizability relative to our interpretations (Pan and Tan, 2011).

Based on this process, it was decided to focus the case reporting on three thematic areas: Snøhetta’s (as an organization’s) leadership constellation, project management and leadership, and recruitment. The findings are presented in the following section.

Results from the case

Introduction and presentation

Snøhetta is an international architecture and design studio premised on a holistic, horizontal, and co-creative organisational model. It employed 230 professionals in 2019, located in seven permanent offices (Oslo, New York, Hong Kong, Adelaide, Paris, San Francisco, and Innsbruck) and multiple global project offices. These people were at the time simultaneously involved in 300 projects and 30 building sites.

Snøhetta is a conceptual and philosophical grounding of people taking part in projects. The studio is an unusual firm in a highly competitive world of professional architecture. The inherent high risk and uncertainties, and individual choices and preferences of some of the founders, led to some of the colleagues progressively leaving the firm and selling their part. To secure financial stability, Fritt Ord (a Norwegian foundation devoted to supporting freedom of expression and a free press)

became a minority owner in 2016, acquiring a twenty percent stake of the company.

Another particularity is that individual architects and designers do not sign off on their designs and buildings. Different professionals (from administrative staff to designers, architects, and technicians) work together in teams out of shared, mixed office spaces, with salaries based on a relatively horizontal and transparent pay scale. Instead, the people working for the studio engage in horizontally shared creative processes that lead to precise outputs as well as social outcomes, either in the form of products (the result of design processes and projects) or as places (in the case of architectural processes and landscapes).

The leadership constellations and organizational structures are essentially built on transparent and participatory values. Fortnightly, there are internal meetings where employees can learn about status for ongoing projects and get information on the company's position and financial situation. Additionally, employees have representation at the board level; everyone knows the salary table of the architects (designers' pay scale is governed to a larger degree by market prices).

The organizational leadership constellation of Snøhetta

The evolution of the current leadership constellation of Snøhetta has been shaped and formed by visionary entrepreneurs, based on a Nordic approach to work, and a generational spirit taking a holistic and collective approach to creativity, with emphasis on generosity and social responsibility.

The gradual transition from being an entrepreneurial start-up to Snøhetta's current complex international operation is the combined effects of three main factors. Primarily, the resilient capacity to overcome periodic difficult economic moments, with many high and low conjectures determined in part by the wider economy at large and demand from the construction sector. Secondly, an aptitude for maintaining an artisanal approach to work processes, compatible with developing a distinct brand value, based on a work model and interactions with clients at a very personal level. Thirdly, international expansion and a multidisciplinary approach compatible with strong, value-based local grounding. Those three elements are why Snøhetta has survived and existed for nearly 30 years.

To comply with the logics and demands of these factoring conditions, internal leadership and management of work at the company combines horizontal relationships (everybody's opinion and voice are taken into account, as it corresponds to a creative company) with projects concurrently running according to the specific scope and scale of the task (project managers, project leads, and creative leads working together in constellations premised by the size of the project).

Kjetil has never had any management training. *"I don't think I'd manage anyone. Motivation needs management. Leadership*

needs inspiration. . . How can you actually create game-changing architecture, for instance, that has a deeper meaning, is not game-changing only in the sense of aesthetics, or function, but as a total package and direction in society? How do you put people together that manage to think game-changers? And we found that cannot be managed.

Let me do maybe one diagram (see Figure 1). What I do on the management side is maybe just to create the bottle. And we know there is a bottleneck somewhere for a project, for an organisation. Up here somewhere, there is a goal, maybe. And then we let all the people within the boundaries that they'd been given, spread freely inside this bottle with only one condition. You must move upwards towards the top, like champagne. We sometimes even allow people to move out of the framework. As long as they come back in, it's okay. What we've seen is that those that go straight for this goal, they miss because, in time when you come to this point, the goal is here and not there. If you want to make a game-changer, you have to recognize that you have a moving goal. (. . .) Everyone move in their direction, and at some point, the least important sentence said in a room could be what solves the issue. (. . .) You have people coming together along the goal that is moved in the bottleneck and then actually pulling together into something that then becomes the project exploding out of the bottle. I think that's where we came from."

The company has thus far relied on strong leadership but potentially lacked some management tools in present operations (current projects, international expansion, multidisciplinary approach, and recruitment policy). In addition, Snøhetta appointed an executive leader (CEO), to fulfil some of the challenges. One of the significant challenges of the CEO is to maintain a good work environment, respecting the core values of the company and being able to maintain a competitive company with high brand recognition. This implied filling the position with someone able to put in place structures and oversee the legacy and transition of the company into the future, once the current directors and majority shareholders of the holding company (and the US Company) retire.

Here, the horizontal and communal organisational model, developed by the entrepreneurial leaders, in a specific geographic (Norway) and social (egalitarian) context may present challenges and tensions when transferred to different geographies.

Informant 1's view is that there is a risk that the company sometimes confuses the Norwegian social system with an organisational culture premised on generosity, transparency, and openness. As informant 1 comments: *"We move seats every other year, and we have one table where we all have lunch together, we share toilets. That's how we kind of show our open and transparent culture and then we have the stories we tell. (. . .) So, we start confusing labour issues, which is how much do you earn or about maternity leave, and our company culture."*

Some of these may stem from differences in the perception of roles and diffusion of power. Informant 2 sees his role as leader of a country office as *" . . . creating an environment so that the people*

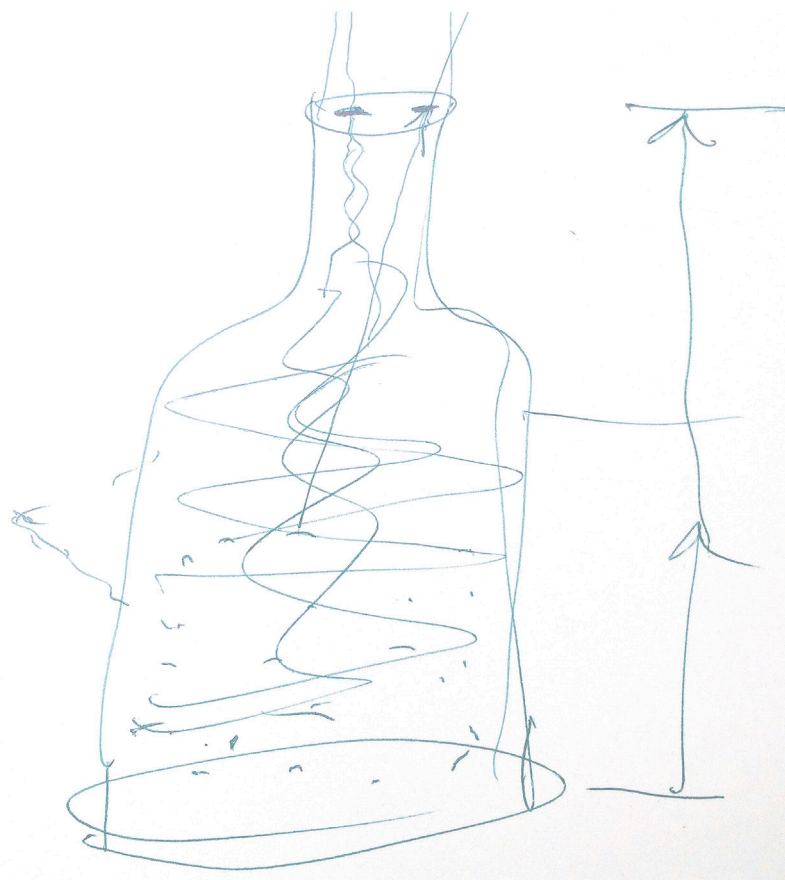


FIGURE 1

Leading creatives: the bottle approach.

who are here like to work together.” The leadership role resembles that of a facilitator, providing an operational space for the employees to unleash creative potential (see Figure 2) by “...organising the boundary conditions, atmospherically as well as economically for them to be able to work.”

The leadership of projects

The logic of projects requires execution and delivery in line with defined budgets and deadlines, something that requires assigning and assuming responsibilities. This has led many to flee from the self-organising chaos generated in very creative processes. Conversely, creative processes need motivation and inspiration, and both grow better in horizontal structures. The output of the balancing act is a tailor-made product, something idiosyncratically Snøhetta, reflecting Snøhetta’s conceptual core values: social engagement, generous features, and game-changing design.

Snøhetta has various categories of project leaders and managers. Small projects with a maximum of four team

members have a creative lead who “owns” both the creative work and the administration of the project. The next level up is a project that is larger in scale and scope and is managed by a project lead. Typically, the project manager does not participate in the conceptual design process, which is delegated to a creative director. Thus, on a functionally shared basis, two individuals will share the managerial responsibility for delivering the project. Larger initiatives involving multiple offices, subcontractors, and a contract value exceeding 10 million euros will be led by a constellation of a project manager, project lead, and a creative leader on their team. Nonetheless, whether the structure is vertical or horizontal is also person dependent. Informant 3 describes an architect working as a project manager in the country office in the following way: “...what (project manager) likes about his job is to make the decision. So, it’s rather conservative. People are working, and (project manager) organizing, structuring, saying yes or no. In other project teams, where the hierarchy is flatter... then they’re all discussing.”

However, there is room for optimisation of constellations. As informant 1 describes, the actual practice of assigning people to constellations is challenging because of the mismatch between



FIGURE 2

Snøhetta office Oslo- 2020.jpg by Gtit-Wiml retrieved and downloaded from Wikimedia Commons is licensed under CC BY 4.0.

capacities to creatively lead design processes and the necessary skills of managing projects. These choices may have economic consequences. *“For larger projects . . . you should probably not be an architect there, you should probably just be a project manager. . . what’s happened is that we’ve kind of mixed all of these things together. We’ve put a poor architect who is a creative lead into something like this. and that’s where money just goes down the drain.”* Cultural perceptions and values can also interfere with the leadership of projects. In the country office, implementing the constellation is challenging. *“We always have this problem of clients being very conservative and hierarchical, and they would only talk to the creative leader (informant 2) . . . , they never want to talk to the project leader”* says informant 3. *“As an example, they would not talk about everything openly with the project leader. About numbers, they mainly talk about numbers with informant 2”*.

For informant 4, the magic starts when everyone gets onboard, and the conceptual work gets underway. *“... It’s not about our creation, something already made by us for a special customer. It’s something we create together, and that is tailor-made for that customer. All our processes are tailored—we are a lot about how to design a process. Not only the buildings but to come up with the results, at the end of the process”*. Kjetil does not believe in the necessity to compromise between social qualities and aesthetically pleasing design. *“A lot of the qualities and the designs come out of the attitude of trying to implement exactly these things into the project, and that is what makes them aesthetically valuable. The offer could not become that part of an aesthetic understanding if it hadn’t been for the social approach. So the aesthetics follow the social approach in many*

ways.” In his opinion, *“there is no contradiction between aesthetics, great experiences, emotional settings and the social ambition of a larger architectural project.”*

Snøhetta is an expensive studio, due to the emphasis on creative processes grounded in the business and work models. People are allowed to spend more time on conceptual work in initial phases. This is, in essence, what brings the prices up. *“If we could get that in half, then we wouldn’t be expensive,”* Informant 1 comments. *“It is a fact here that everyone is allowed to spend a long time on developing a concept, on doing workshops . . . creating concepts and models. We allow that, which makes it more expensive. . . it’s not the fact that we have a huge overhead, it’s actually because we’re allowing people here to spend a lot more time”*. These cost structures are also not well understood by clients in all countries. Informant 3 describes a situation outside of Norway in the following manner: *“... we had one meeting with a client, . . . informant 2 told me that the client said, ‘Well you have no overview, or you always want to invoice, and now you’re here with three people. Why are you here with three people? One would have been enough, and then it’s not that many hours you need for the project.’ And then informant 2 said, ‘Yeah, but that’s how we work in Snøhetta. We take different people to have different perspectives on that. And that’s our creative process.’”*

Recruitment

Success is essentially dependent on one of the P’s: people. Snøhetta is in the lucky position that many professionals would

like to work for the organization. An important recruitment tool to identify suitable candidates for new openings is an expansive database of candidates. According to informant 4, Snøhetta looks for candidates with an ability to collaborate, and general receptiveness to the organisational culture and environment: *“Everyone that comes to our team should feel that they get responsibility. They can flourish, show their talent, and we immediately give everyone much responsibility. As soon as you are on-board, you start collaborating with us. Your skills, your opinions, everything is important to us.”* Part of the strategy is hiring young people *“We want to educate them our self, to grow slowly, with quality.”* The ambitions are to have a group consisting of *“Experienced people together with young people, creating our culture.”*

Recurrent methods are using the employee's networks and internships, in the Oslo as well as the country office. Informant 7 does not believe these strategies are exceptional, although timing and luck may play a part *“First, like everything in life, timing needs to be good. I was lucky because I did an internship while I was doing my diploma. When I delivered it, I was working already. I know that many people that were interns, the people in the company saw some potential in them and kept them tight”.*

Others were introduced to Snøhetta while studying. Informant 5, a senior architect, met Kjetil and informant 2 while at university. Snøhetta's conceptual approach and philosophy was what drew him in. Informant 6 had a similar experience *“Snøhetta had a big exhibition in my school. At the Royal Academy (Copenhagen). One of our landscape architects was there to open the exhibition. Jenny. She was telling me about the way of working, about Snøhetta. I came up afterward to the studio space where I was working and told my fellow students that, ‘Right, I know now where I am going to be working after I’m done here.’”* Informant 8, an intern in the country office, was third time lucky because there was an opening *“I had made a submission based on an advert two times before. After my internship in another company and my Bachelor thesis, I had better chances, so I got an invitation for a talk, they needed someone to start very quickly; we need help; please come on Monday.”*

The danger with this system, according to informant 1 is *“...we all become a bit too similar; we don’t look at a broad enough portfolio of different people, skills, and ways of looking at things. It is very varying how we pick people, especially in the creative areas”.* Informant 3's take resonates *“...many of the architects that work here used to study together. Many of them are actually from one class. I remember we talked about needing different people. Then I thought about how we hire people. I’m not sure we’ll get different people. It’s always the safe decision you make when you hire a person that you already know, or that you heard positive things about.”* Informant 3 is clear that this system does work for the country office. It allows them to reach out to the right candidates more effectively than via a typical job advertisement *“Take this model builder position we advertised for instance. First, we tried to put an ad online only. ...we had an*

impression that many of the applicants had no relationship to Snøhetta ... We had many applications, but most of these people wanted to be architects. They just went for this model builder position because they wanted to work with Snøhetta.”

Remuneration and benefits, at least for architects, are according to a predetermined, transparent scale with progression dependent on seniority. Informant 7 seems to agree with the model. *“This idea that you are part of a democratic system, you earn depending on seniority, how many years you have been working here”* In his view, it has a conditioning effect on the work environment. People in Snøhetta are not there for the money or the positions. *“That prevents clashes between people, fighting against each other in the hope of reaching better positions and pay. It depends on how long you work here, if you have worked here for 10 years you earn this amount of money.”*

Informant 1 is more reserved. Partly because the set scale only applies for some of the employees, *“I have never really been a fan of everybody telling what they earn because I do not think we are here for the money. The danger is that we keep everybody on a scale, and we say you’re not here for the money, and then we pay these people a lot and then they’re here for the money. The market for architects is pretty much on scale everywhere you go. For designers, it is like; you pay what you’re worth. It’s very different. Very market driven. It’s just a different way of doing business too.”*

For informant 2, it is a balancing act *“We have 40 paid effective working hours, in the main office in Oslo, they have 35 because they have 37 and a half hours, and a half hour lunch break, which is paid. Here the lunch break is not paid. It’s a balance. Some things we have to do legally. We don’t do precarious employment, everybody who works here has a contract, and of course, we have sensibly market-oriented salaries.”*

Discussion and conclusion

As previously discussed, findings from a case study that is both single and singular, such as the one presented here, cannot in itself explain the behaviour of managerial shared leadership in a sector as broad as that of the cultural and creative industries. However, from its uniqueness, our explorations allow us to understand some of the logics at play, in particular when it comes to how a project that remains resilient over time, without direct public support, is able to survive periodic crises in the sector, and moves in diverse international environments. What Snøhetta has in common with other cultural projects, and what distinguishes it from organizations in other economic sectors, is the artisanal and collaborative character of the creative process, the ability to attract new talent to the organization based on the recognition and artistic uniqueness of the project, and the interaction with the client and the local community in which each project is located. Part of the success lies in the act of balancing aesthetic sensibility and commercial viability, also known as the difference paradox (DeFillippi et al., 2007), a

recurring factor in most corporate cultural projects. All of these aspects are linked to the leadership model.

In this context, what makes Snøhetta a singular case, compared with other international companies in the creative economy, is the strong participatory and shared culture beyond the organisational leadership constellation. Further, the signature of the creative work is socialized: the outputs are credited collectively with the name of the firm instead of appearing with the names of the main creators. This fact contrasts with the dominant logic in the cultural and creative sector of highlighting the name of the main creative figures, despite the fact that most major projects are the result of the collective contribution of many creative people (Becker, 2008).

Initially, our case study of Snøhetta contemplated the following research questions. How can *managerial shared leadership* help strike a balance between the paradoxical institutional logics that management and leadership of creativity is premised upon? Is this constellation more resilient because they are considered more transparent, open, and generous?

Starting with the first, Snøhetta succeeds with the use of a particular kind of managerial shared leadership. At the top (Alvarez and Svejnova, 2005; Denis et al., 2012), the leadership constellation is distinguished by a division of labour between distinct yet interdependent roles for all intents and purposes. This is what the concept of managerial shared leadership refers to as functionally shared leadership (Döös and Wilhelmson, 2021). The leadership constellation for managing projects and teams is distributed among professionals in a way that varies with the complexity of the tasks at hand to promote adaptive problem-solving and forward momentum (Müller et al., 2018). The relationship between the approaches is that leadership becomes shared across units (projects, headquarters, and country office), and the model functions because of a set of values (the conceptual philosophy of the 3 p's people, places, and projects) held in common (Döös and Wilhelmson, 2021).

In relation to the second question, does a balance premised on openness, transparency, and generosity make these constellations more resilient? The difference in employment conditions, social benefits, and business culture between studios and countries, as part of different legislative models, generates a perception of inequality with a short distance between the highest and lowest salaries and titles. The incorporation of a design division, with their concurrent, market-based salaries, increases the feeling that the horizontal model is failing. How may Snøhetta at once resolve the imbalances between international expansion and the social compatibility between offices? In particular, when professionals move from one office to another.

This is a concern related to the second foci in the literature on paradoxes: managing creative processes (DeFillippi et al., 2007). Here, Snøhetta succeeds due to the idiosyncratic way by which it enables exploration (providing opportunities for creative and

inspirational work) and exploitation (making enough money to sustain the company's expansive and expensive conceptual line of working) (Cohendet and Simon, 2007).

Snøhetta, a place, as well as a name is a conceptual and philosophical grounding of people taking part in projects. However, the resilience is in part due to processes of recruitment, ensuring that people who come to work for the company understand and are willing to adopt and engage in proprietary ways of conducting architecture business. This model—as it goes beyond a leadership constellation (Hodgson et al., 1965)—is shaped and formed by visionary entrepreneurs, is based on a Nordic approach to work, and has a generational spirit taking a holistic and collective approach to creativity, with emphasis on generosity and social responsibility. Essentially, as Kjetil argues, the “bottle” model requires freedom so that people are inspired to come together and manage to think as game-changers. This involves providing an environment wherein creative processes can flow through the collective, in other words, resolving the identity paradox of creating a collective identity and brand (DeFillippi et al., 2007) that leads to precise outputs as well as social outcomes, either in the form of products (the result of design processes and projects) or as places (in the case of architectonic processes and landscapes). All the offices try to maintain the key cultural and social values of the organization, but here again, the local dimension is necessary to consider.

This is something that attracts creative talent, and is an essential resource of any creative, since a collaborative leadership style influences the career paths of people and organizations. However, not everyone is prepared to work for a creative company where output is collectively credited (individual people do not sign off on designs and buildings) and under specific conditions (which includes a collective annual excursion to the Norwegian mountain of Snøhetta or a skiing day). That said, recruitment is not an issue; the studio receives far more applications from prospective candidates than they can process. There are many people interested in and fitting the personality and profile required to function as a creative within the organisational set-up.

Our findings demonstrate that creative workers are drawn to Snøhetta because the studio provides high-quality employment in an environment that puts more emphasis on symbolic value, knowledge sharing, and learning as opposed to financial gains. Without necessarily being in thrall of art-for-art's sake motivation, there is a continuing match between their professional creative motives and the job opportunities (Lampel et al., 2000). For them, the ability to be part of the collective, the processes, and projects trumps financial motives. The cooperative spirit induces some of the creative employees to forfeit traditional benefits, such as individual recognition (stardom) and financial gain. The employees express similar attitudes to those of members of the art world when the discussion revolves around the collective production of

designs and buildings (Becker, 2008). The fact that they are working for a commercial private enterprise that in many ways differs from publicly funded cultural institutions of the art world does not seem to matter. That is also the answer as to what characterises some of the most important success factors as they relate to managerial shared leadership: contextual antecedents (organisation and culture), alongside selection and appointment (Döös and Wilhelmson, 2021).

To conclude, this article has—through a case study of the international architectural studio Snøhetta—sought to show how it may be possible to resolve the potential conflicts caused by paradoxical logics of attending to the needs of creative workers (architects as artists and creative entrepreneurs) and the need for efficiency and practicality at the organisational level (Thornton et al., 2005) through managerial shared leadership constellations (Döös and Wilhelmson, 2021). Snøhetta achieves success by 1) fostering an atmosphere that encourages creative freedom and 2) addressing the organization's need to continue operating profitably. (Cohendet and Simon, 2007). While there are issues and problems associated with translating constellations and horizontally shared practices across countries—a globalization paradox (DeFillippi et al., 2007)—the model is resilient because of a shared understanding of a common conceptual model and way of working (Döös and Wilhelmson, 2021).

Some literature on cultural leadership, notably those strands based on the visionary, charismatic approach often seen in the public sector institutions (Price, 2017), shows a need for management skills and structure when a private company seeks to control continuity and expansion. In line with Bolden (Bolden, 2004), it does not make sense to differentiate between the role of the leader and that of the manager, for specific ventures to succeed and grow. It is the dual capacity (ability to inspire and at the same time motivate) that is important. As Kjetil emphasized; motivation needs management, leadership needs inspiration.

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In brief, the capacity to manage the process of symbol creation is a form of continuous innovation (Lawrence and Phillips, 2002). This may be some of the hallmarks of what make managerial shared leadership come together in this particular study of management and leadership of cultural organisations.

Data availability statement

The datasets presented in this article are not readily available because Employee data has been anonymized. Requests to access the datasets should be directed to the corresponding author.

Author contributions

AR: Concept development, literature review, data collection and initial analysis, writing LB: Concept development, data interpretation, analysis, writing.

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Conflict of interest

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Critical feedback from artists: initial findings of the impact of the health crisis on the field of art and culture

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Our research project aims to study the impact of the Covid crisis on the professional cultural sector in the Nouvelle-Aquitaine region. To achieve this objective, the research team has joined forces with several stakeholders in a participatory process. Initial consultations with artists from various disciplines show that the crisis has affected the relationship to time and space in terms of the creative process and the relationship to audiences and inhabitants. It also reveals the need to rethink the organisation of the cultural system in order to better support artists and include them in the decision-making process.

KEYWORDS

Covid crisis, artists, impact, time space, re-organisation

Introduction

Financed by the Nouvelle Aquitaine regional authorities for a duration of 3 years (2021–2024), our research project aims to observe and analyse the impact of the coronavirus pandemic and its consequences on cultural and artistic activities, for those who work in this field, those who are involved in it on a voluntary basis, and those its content is addressed to. The objective is to bring to light and analyse the way in which the different categories of actors have worked and operated in order to maintain cultural and artistic activities, whether in terms of creation, dissemination or reception, in the various types of relational space in which they have been conducted: physical space, digital space, institutional space. The attention given to their actions, their testimonies and their processes will make it possible to stimulate reflection on contemporary cultural issues and to study their potentially innovative nature for the evolution of the sector. The productions that have emerged are also prisms through which it is possible to analyse our social ties and the role of art as an indicator of our relationship to the world (Simmel, 1988; Baudry, 2009).

Our main thesis is that the health crisis and its repercussions reveal and/or accelerate changes in the field of culture: the taking into account of people's cultural rights and participation, competition from mass culture, the impact of digital technology, new forms of cultural practices on- and off-line, environmental issues. . . (Donnat, 2007; Henry, 2014; Lucas, 2017; Cardon, 2019; Lombardo and Wolff, 2020).

In terms of methodology, the originality of the project consists in proposing a research process based on participation. Participatory research consists in associating non-scientific actors, citizens and or professionals, to the observation of data and knowledge production. By mobilizing different types of knowledge and expertise, it aims at developing appropriate solutions (Lamoureux, 2021) that will serve the community (Bergold and Thomas, 2012). We are currently working with professionals in the cultural sector—a theatre, a local community organisation, a cultural mediation association, a media library, a festival organizer, and artists' collectives—to build a common understanding of the crisis and its effects. Together we are defining and developing research protocols suited to different professional contexts and for dealing with specific issues. In a cross-sectional approach, questions and elements of analysis are shared and discussed within a common research space.

Current research in the field of arts and culture has so far focused on monitoring the crisis in terms of its economic impact on the professional sector (Département des études, de la prospective et des statistiques, 2021; GESAC/EY, 2021; Giorgi and Scott, 2022). Our research aims to provide qualitative insight into the crisis through the analysis of experiences and practices. Beyond this, the choice of conducting a participatory project should enable us to develop a shared knowledge of the pandemic period with the professionals in order to accompany them in the process of change and evolution of the sector.

In addition to this participatory process, more traditional methods are used by the researchers, namely, semi-structured interviews with cultural operators and their team in order to gather data on a broader spectrum that will feed the study conducted by the mixed research team (researchers and stakeholders).

This paper aims to report initial findings derived from interviews with artists conducted during the health crisis. This data is of particular importance in that it shows how the actors experienced this extraordinary period and reveals ongoing issues and transformation processes of the professional sector.

Indeed, the first stage of this research has consisted in gathering testimonies in order to record the individual experiences that have resulted from the disruption caused by the pandemic before they give way to more practical considerations. Collecting this shared experience in the time frame following the crisis when memories are still vivid, was of particular importance to the research as it points out the ongoing changes and/or the elements potentially leading to them. This collection process is part of a monographic study (Dufour et al., 1991) which, through the use of qualitative methodologies, aims to study what “a cultural or artistic job” consisted of during the first lockdown period. Indeed, in methodological terms, the goal of this research is to adopt a comprehensive approach (Weber, 1995; Watier, 2002).

To this end, group interviews were organized in partnership with the Nouvelle Aquitaine cultural Agency and UBIC, Bordeaux Montaigne University's Valorisation Unit, during the last lockdown period in France (3rd May–30th June 2021). They targeted a broad range of artists based in Nouvelle-Aquitaine from different fields: theatre, visual arts, danse, music, cinema, writing. These artists represented a diverse panel, both in terms of professions and fields of application: We opted for a multi-centric qualitative study in order to account for the heterogeneity of the experiences and to put this diversity to work by identifying the underlying common issues. 57 artists¹ participated in videoconference interview sessions between April and May 2021. The participants were questioned on how they felt about the crisis, how they responded to the challenges, how they adapted to the constraints in their creative work, and how they saw the future of their artistic activity.

These first collective sessions have enabled us to identify key issues raised by the health crisis that will be discussed and analysed in upcoming focus group sessions with the artists (Table 1).

The study of the economic impact of the health crisis shows that the French cultural sector was more impacted than any other sector but there is significant heterogeneity in how the effects were experienced, depending on the artistic field (Giorgi and Scott, 2022).

The performing artists in our panel were forced to stop their activity whereas visual artists and authors were able to continue working despite constraints. The French system of individual financial support, known as “the intermittence system,” was reinforced during the crisis and has benefitted performing artists whereas the former category of artists had to deal with the usual financial difficulties made more acute by the reduction of projects.

For many performing artists, being unable to perform for their audience seems to have led to a loss of sense and purpose, whereas for other categories of creators, isolation and remoteness could be experienced as an opportunity to invest the digital space for new projects or to develop new skills. Although ways of dealing with the situation can also be related to each individual's

TABLE 1 Research timeline.

April–May 2021	Initial consultations with artists
September 2021–June 2023	Individual and Focus group interviews
September 2023–June 2024	Data sharing and collective analysis
June 2024–November 2024	Dissemination and optimization of research results

¹ 32 performing artists, 12 visual artists, 8 cinema and audiovisual artists, 5 authors. Of which, 22 were intermittent employees, 20 under the author's status, 4 self-employed, 4 on long term contract.

own way of perceiving reality, the exchanges we had with the artists have brought to light common issues at a collective level.

The closure of cultural venues, interrupted or disrupted artistic activity, investment in the digital space: changes in cultural and artistic practices were observed during the health crisis, in all artistic disciplines.

The COVID pandemic appears to have caused an upheaval in practices both in terms of space and time. Interrelated in the process, space and time constitute both a constraint and an opportunity for change. On the one hand, the spatial-temporal disruption signifies loss of control, uncertainty, a limited power of action; on the other hand, it can foster reflexivity and lead to new perspectives.

Thus, the pandemic can be seen as having highlighted or accelerated the transformations that have been taking place in the artistic and cultural fields, and in so doing emphasizes the need to rethink time and space factors in the creative process and in the relationship with audiences and inhabitants, and to reconsider the role of artists in the cultural system.

A new relationship to time

Most of the artists in this research have placed the question of creative time at the heart of their comments and questions. After experiencing what many of them call a “*time of shock*,” they emphasize the extent to which the impact of the crisis on their artistic and creative activities has taken the form of a disruption of their relationship to time. By focusing on the way artists express their relationship to time, we wish to propose an analysis that takes into account the modulations and transformations of creative practices brought about by the temporal dimension of the crisis. In this analytical approach, the notion of time is seen as a framework that shapes the activities of artists (Ricoeur, 1983).

Regarding this issue, the crisis has brought to light two temporal categories: constrained time and new free time.

Constrained time

The first reason why artists experience a feeling of time pressure lies in the disruption caused by the crisis. The disorganisation of the sector has led to a feeling of loss of control over time. In the testimonies collected, this period is presented as a period marked by the interruption of activities, but also by an awareness of uncertainty about the future and a blurring of temporal reference points. Schedules and projects were rushed, postponements and cancellations had to be managed, the search for funding had to be made in a hurry . . . The time for creation was constrained and framed by the time of the crisis. This disturbed temporal experience gave rise to changes in projection: how does one project oneself into future when the near future is uncertain and when temporal

organisation is no longer under control? The artists reported feeling a lack of visibility of the situation and indecisiveness and also emphasized the extent to which this period gave rise to contradictory feelings: between the desire to act, to create, to move forward and the constraints imposed by the time of the crisis. The superimposition of the time of the crisis and the time of creation brings to the fore issues related to constraining, challenging and contradictory temporalities. In our analysis, we hypothesize that this temporal configuration, which was strongly characterized by uncertainty and an awareness of troubled times, present and future, reveals a problematic relationship to time that was already at work before the crisis and with which artists are confronted in their daily practices.

The second reason lies in the need, for many artists, to conduct several activities, a need which has emerged in recent years due to income uncertainty (Gouyon and Patureau, 2013).

Forced to carry out several activities in order to make a living, artists are “*caught up in time*” and no longer have enough time to create. Artistic activity is also “*competing*” with dissemination and mediation functions that considerably reduces creative time. Artists’ testimonies have underlined that much of their activity is now devoted to meeting institutional constraints (administrative, cultural, financial). The organisation of their work, based on the “*trptych creation/production/distribution*” seems to be questioned. The time spent trying to “*fit a project into an imposed system*” results in a lack of time for creation. In the artists’ comments, the idea emerged that this crisis has highlighted the need to change this mode of organisation, in order to find space and time for creation. The desire to regain control of time is therefore at the heart of their testimonies.

The pandemic has added to this the need to be present and active on the internet, which implies a substantial investment. Thus, in a context of crisis marked by increasing precariousness and a lack of financial means, creation time becomes a small part of their overall activity.

New free time

For many artists, the pandemic year, although complicated in many ways, has given rise to “a new time”: a time to reflect on their projects (past and future), to complete projects that had been put on hold, or to come up with new ideas and implement them. Some of them reported that this new “free” time had led them to reflect on their creative process. One visual artist wondered “*For what and for whom do we create?*” The question of the audience and the artist’s relationship with them seems to be one of the subjects that emerged from this period of reflection. One theatre director said: “*During that period, I asked myself a lot of questions. Like how can we get closer to the audience?*” The distance that was imposed between artists and their audience seems to have also led to a focus on venues and how they operate. The theatre director told us how

the pandemic period gave him the idea of working on smaller performance projects and to bring them to places where culture was not easily accessible (countryside, poor neighbourhoods). One performing artist described how the question of proximity to the audience was also at the heart of her reflection on her creative process. The development of a small project, she said, creates intimacy and helps to restore meaning. She also emphasized the importance of moving away from a strategy of big shows with a large number of spectators, and of fostering connection and closeness. The desire to reconnect with the public was also central to a project developed by an artist involved in the performing arts: for 3 days, a “space-time” was set up in the city of Bordeaux to collect the dreams of passers-by. The artist also emphasized the extent to which this new-found time had made it possible to produce small, easy-to-implement creations. This feeling was shared by another artist who explained how she tried new forms of creation during that period. She set up small performances in the public space which were filmed *in situ*. She explained that this had allowed her to rediscover the pleasure of creating quick art projects that could be produced and implemented within a short time. This new approach seemed to her to be the opposite of the lengthy processes that her previous projects usually involved. Reflection on how to develop a community-based culture is not entirely new in the arts sector but the exceptional pandemic period has provided more time to develop it further and has made it more prevalent and urgent.

The crisis has indeed generated a sense of urgency that has led artists to question the profound meaning of their artistic approach in light of society’s transformation. “*What message do I want to convey*” when time seems to be running out and existential priorities are emerging? Some of them talked about how this period led them to question the role that an artist plays in society. One author told us that the lockdown was not a time for creation but for listening. It was now more important for her to “*take the pulse*” of society, to listen to the experiences of others, to hear what was being said and talked about in society.

Other artists also emphasized that taking time for listening was necessary for engaging in a creative process. One of the actors explained that this “*physical and psychological*” availability was one of the characteristics of the artist’s work and as such was an integral part of the creative process (Nicolas-Le Strat, 1998; Jeudy, 1999; Jeudy, 2011).

One of the artists interviewed perceived this time of “*nothingness*,” of “*emptiness*” as a time for observing the social environment. It is a necessary step that must come prior to the time of creation so that the artists can put into words, give shape, or stage their observations of society. In this approach, the role of the artist is reminiscent of that of the mediator: the function of the artist lies in his or her power to reveal social issues and the collective social imagination (Jeudy, 1999). In this perspective, the role of the artist is inseparable from a social act: that of restoring, translating and interpreting the problems of society in a sensitive form (Bourdieu, 1992). It is in this sense that Tim

Ingold proposes to draw an analogy between art and anthropology and, more precisely, between the creative process of artists and the research process. According to Ingold, art can have an anthropological dimension when the artist, engaged in a sensitive relationship with the social world, produces a work which, for the public, bares a relationship to knowledge (Ingold, 2013).

The question of artistic creation, as a social act, is therefore inseparable from the question of transmission. Indeed, the pandemic period seems to have given rise to this question among artists: “*Why create if your work cannot be transmitted?*”. Because the crisis temporarily distanced audiences from places of culture, artists were led to reflect on the forms of transmission of art and culture, which can make sense in a social context marked by the dematerialization of works of art. Thus, it is important to place the notion of transmission in a double dynamic: both as a movement that ensures a link between the artist and the public and as a movement that allows for the establishment of a relationship with the work being disseminated (Davallon, 2006).

Thus, a tension is perceptible between the feeling of having experienced this “*return to oneself*” as an opportunity to confront one’s desires and draw new energy from them, to become aware of the social role of the artist, and the feeling of not being able to move forward, of being stuck.

The relationship to cultural venues: rethinking spaces and artists’ mobility

Artists have expressed their difficulty in creating art in the absence of suitable spaces: a major constraint was that interiors were too small and unsuitable for their artistic practices.

Some of them found a solution in moving to rural areas, as the latter offered artists facilities that were better suited to the pandemic situation, such as larger work and exhibition spaces.

These newcomers have discovered opportunities offered by rural spaces which artists that were already residing in those areas have been exploring for some time. Indeed, the attractiveness of the countryside for artists has been growing for several years (Delfosse, 2011). They move to rural areas in order to find the space they cannot have in urban areas, as well as work opportunities, non-dedicated places to create, as opposed to studios or cultural facilities, (landscape sites, heritage sites, farm buildings, etc.), new sources of inspiration and creation as well as new relationships with the public. In a context of widespread criticism of urban life (metropolitan congestion, air, and noise pollutions, artificialization and loss of connection with nature), recently accentuated by the experience of lockdown, artists are also sensitive to the benefits and positive representations of the rural world: the quality of the living environment, proximity to nature, closer social relations with the inhabitants (Delfosse and Georges, 2013).

One director in the audiovisual sector described how his view of the village he moved to during the first lockdown has changed since. This period, he said, “*has given me time to think about the challenges associated with the creative process in the public space and the relationship with the inhabitants.*” Today, he is involved in a creation project that promotes a close relationship with the inhabitants of the village, the farmers and other local actors. According to him, it is the rural environment that allows for relationships of proximity.

Cultural resources are increasingly identified as driving development in rural areas, and the presence of artists is perceived as a factor of attractiveness, a means of creating an image and a narrative for the area, their contribution can also help to enliven and enhance the area.

This desire of artists to invest in rural spaces should lead us to question what types of relationships to rural space they forge, the effects of their presence in those areas and how artists contribute to reorganizing the public’s relationship to art and culture, but also social relationships and spatialities in the rural world. This also implies thinking with artists about how to accompany them in this shift in creative activity, the types of support—financial or otherwise—to be mobilized, as distance from networks and institutions can be an obstacle to the development of their production and consequently their career. Just like art renews itself through its margins (Becker, 1985; Becker, 1988), the renewal of territories may thus mark the renewal of artistic creation.

The artists’ reflection about space has also focused more broadly on the need to reconsider the question of venues for creation and dissemination: facilitating artist’s mobility, putting a variety of venues at their disposal, linking city and countryside, reinventing exhibition formats outside dedicated venues or in mixed venues... were some of the proposals made by both visual and performing artists.

This implies reconsidering the spatiality of the creation process as well as artists’ mobility. Itinerancy, which is characteristic of artists residing in rural areas due to a lack of dedicated cultural facilities and venues, could prove to be a pragmatic and flexible response to recurring difficulties caused by the lack of creative space and the rise of property costs. Organising the reflection at a political level between urban and rural communities and institutional actors could make it possible to develop the links and spatial modalities that are necessary today in an interconnected world where the borders between the different types of territories are becoming blurry and lifestyles more uniform. This could also contribute to meeting the need expressed by artists to reconfigure the relationship to time in order to find more time for creation. This implies profound change in spatial references as well as in the methods used for organizing the creation and distribution chain, but it also responds to current sociological changes and lifestyles (Marchal and Stébé, 2022), as well as to the aspirations of

artists and inhabitants for a quality living environment to which art and culture make an essential contribution.

Finding one’s place in digital space

Faced with the closure of venues for creation and art dissemination, artists have invested in communicating with their public through social media or, more globally, through digital technology, in order to create and disseminate their work and above all, to continue to exist in public space. Thus, digital space has emerged as an opportunity to continue the activity; however, there is often a lack of knowledge and understanding of that space among artists, which also led to frustration and misuse.

Artists reported on stimulating attempts to manage various physical, virtual or hybrid spaces. Visual artists and professionals in the audiovisual sector in particular have explained how digital technology has enabled them to maintain their activity and stay in touch with peers.

Lockdown has made it necessary for artists to familiarize themselves with digital tools and how they work; “*I progressed,*” “*It pushed me 3 years forward,*” which was beneficial to the activity. A singer trained himself in streaming and digital tools. Another singer talked about how he used video to stay in touch with the amateur singers he works with. A visual artist told us how he used Instagram to continue his sales activities and used the Internet to launch a fundraising campaign in order to make a documentary he had wanted to make for a long time.

With pragmatism, some of them insisted on the fact that the use of the tool was now essential, “*unavoidable because it is the world we now live in.*” For young artists especially, digital technology also represents an essential means of communication for making oneself known. On a more personal level, digital tools serve as a palliative to isolation and a remedy for anxiety: “*It saved my life,*” “*I took the digital pill to calm myself down,*” a visual artist explained, underlining the role of digital technology in maintaining social links.

These new users stand out from the existing digital artists who have made their mark on the virtual space, which they also use for technical support, and as a creative and social tool (Fourmentaux, 2011). For these artists, the Internet represents a workshop and an exhibition space (ibid). They master the codes, the language, the functionalities, which they can use to their advantage in their creations (bypassing computer code, hijacking interactive software applications, creating artistic viruses. . .). Artists of the Net Art movement have demonstrated the potential of the internet to generate interconnectivity and interaction between artists and receivers. At the same time, digital technologies reinforce “*le sacre de l’amateur*” (Flichy, 2010), by providing users with the means, tools and spaces to develop their skills and knowledge and disseminate their creative work. As well as being dialogue spaces to exchange with family,

friends and other users, digital social networks have now become spaces for the display and reproduction of digital works by a wide audience. The use of digital technology reveals a desire for connection, a need to communicate with others, which confirms an “aesthetic of collectivity” (Turki, 2020) specific to the Internet.

Although the crisis has revealed to some artists the potential of the digital space and encouraged them to use digital tools both in the creative process and in project design, a majority of them perceive digital technology as an imposed constraint. Its potential appears limited in that it is considered by some as just another way of exhibiting their work. For many, it was above all a palliative used “to occupy the field” so as not to lose contact with the public, and “to not be forgotten”; and it also provides temporary alternative creation and performance spaces to artistic teams.

As for performance artists, they, above all, seek to stay connected with their public. These artists insisted that interaction in virtual space could not replace real face-to-face interaction: “There is no such thing as theatre on the Internet, it is something else.” Because creation is perceived as fundamentally involving a relation to the public in a physical and sensitive way, virtual space, and the substitute for relationship it provides gives rise to a strong sense of rejection: “I refuse to adapt.” Artists experienced a kind of culture shock which they perceived as a betrayal of their own values—“I do not exist without an audience”—a mediocre way of “selling oneself for free to continue to exist.”

Indeed, what defines performing arts is the co-presence of artists and public². Therefore, the broadcasting of performances on the Internet breaks with this fundamental principle and reinforces artists’ distance from the public. But it is important to note that “remote theatre” is nothing new and that the practice of “theatrophone” developed by Graham Bell in the 1870s, for example, structured a form of regular access to theatre for 50 years (Bauchard, 2021). Online experiments were conducted—as some English theatres had done—prior to the crisis with the aim of responding to the new cultural practices of audiences (ibid).

Modes of interaction and sociability frameworks exist in the virtual space, but artists cannot use them efficiently unless they have a good knowledge and understanding of the tools available (blog, forums, digital social networks). Likewise, artists and cultural operators in the performing arts remain unfamiliar with the culture of digital mediation and are more used to traditional forms of mediation based on face-to-face encounters and exchanges. The *hic et nunc* and “life on the screen” have formatted creative activity during the pandemic period and have been perceived by many as injunctions that

professionals unfamiliar with this format of aesthetic communication have found difficult to comply with.

Beyond the variables related to discipline or age, one’s relationship to digital technology raises objective technical questions, primarily related to skills and expertise. Creating art on a digital medium implies mastering specific modes of production and distribution, their techniques, purposes and effects. The fact that one has not learned or does not have the necessary skills to use these tools generates a feeling of powerlessness, of being forced to use them, and in turn can lead to a reaction of aversion. Beyond the technical aspects, designing quality digital creations and communications requires a combination of skills and expertise, but also the creation of partnerships and the mobilization of financial resources, which an individual cannot achieve alone.

Secondly, this raises legal and remuneration questions. These are familiar issues, but the pandemic has given them more prominence and made them unavoidable. Artists have expressed frustration and even anger about the use of their productions on the Internet as well as a fear that they might lose control over video distribution. One of their concerns is that their work might not be sufficiently remunerated and could benefit broadcasting channels instead.

However, the pandemic has aroused an interest among the public for a new cultural offer on the internet (Jonchéry and Lombardo, 2020). There is growing awareness among professionals that virtual space offers opportunities to develop new artistic propositions and digital narrations, to create new forms of mediation, all of which could not only enhance and enrich the work of artists and the missions of cultural operators, but also revitalize their connection with the public.

Structuring and reorganizing the sector: putting the artist back at the heart of the system

Artists share a desire to better promote their work: to disseminate more visibly what they do, how they do it, what skills and abilities they mobilise in their artistic practices, and what they bring to society. They believe that a major effort to promote artistic practice to a wide audience is necessary and should be a priority in the months and years to come.

Our exchanges with artists have focused on the issue of collective decision-making and how to involve artists. The discussion was political in nature and was based on the premise that artists were, more than ever, the “forgotten ones in this crisis.” They felt that they had been “forgotten” in terms of support systems: whereas cultural structures, venues and operators benefited from financial support from the State and/or had their subsidies maintained without having to expand their activities, artists experienced even greater levels of precariousness.

² The legal definition of live performance in France has been established since 1999 and stipulates the physical co-presence of performers and audience.

It was also noted that young people, starting in the profession, faced important obstacles and sometimes had to give up. Several cases of career abandonment among artists of all ages were pointed out, which represents a failure and alerts us to the lack of support artists received during that period.

This lack of support for artists is seen not only as a sign of ignorance of the realities faced by creators, but also of the contempt in which they feel they are held and, more generally, of the contempt in which the artistic function is held. One scriptwriter has strongly denounced the way in which institutions keep artists on the sidelines of decision-making. On the one hand, the State or local authorities do not consult artists enough, and on the other hand, regional and departmental cultural agencies have neither heard nor accompanied artists, even though these agencies were created to serve the function of representing and associating all the actors, including artists.

Finally, many artists have highlighted the need to rethink the links between creation/production/dissemination. The majority of the artists interviewed insisted on the idea that the Covid crisis had brought to light an organisational issue that was already present and which they felt needed to be discussed. Some mentioned the difficulties linked to the permanent partitioning between institutions, operators, programmers, artists and companies. They report being generally confronted with more or less porous and frictional layers that lead to difficulties in the daily implementation of projects and criticize a constraining organisational logic that formats the process and inhibits creative risk-taking. One artist has reported that she spends a lot of time adapting her projects to distributors and broadcasters' evaluation and reading grids, and that she regretted the lack of meetings and exchanges with institutional decision makers. In her opinion, more interaction with institutional actors could help to give them a "*sensitive sense*" of artistic projects, which in turn could lead distributors to take more risk and include atypical and innovative projects into their programming. Another artist agreed and stated that the Covid crisis may have made it possible to rethink the relations between programmers and creators and to think about how to take into consideration the importance of a "space-time" of freedom necessary for creation.

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

Conclusion

For the representatives of the art world in our panel, the health crisis has played a revealing role in the world of art as in society as a whole. The pandemic has generated unexpected benefits (new free time which has been a source of reflection and innovation) and new opportunities (discovering the

potential of digital technology, and of rural areas; experimenting new creative formats), but it has also had deeply ambivalent consequences, in that it has resulted in individual and collective psychological, organisational and professional destabilization.

The COVID crisis has highlighted the structural difficulties of a fragile artistic and cultural sector and has revealed sharp differences in treatment between operators/cultural actors and independent artists. Artists have felt misunderstood and poorly supported and thus have felt violently affected by the crisis.

These first observations, although they were conducted in one specific French region, seem to reflect a general situation, and alert us to the situation of creators, their fears, and their needs, both in terms of technical support and of recognition and valuation of their work. Beyond this, what is pointed out is the need to collectively reflect on the place of creation in society and the role we wish artists to play in the transformation of society.

The reflections on "meaning" that have been expressed in the debates must be heard. While they raise philosophical or ethical questions, they also highlight concrete problems and call for tangible measures:

- The need to rethink the place and role of creation and dissemination venues by giving greater priority to the possibility of mobility, of having several venues at one's disposal, of thinking in terms of a network (town/country), of reinventing formats such as off-site exhibitions, or in mixed venues. . .
- The issue of valuing and disseminating artists' work: how can their work be made more visible and how does one highlight its social contribution?
- The question of remuneration for artistic productions. It is no longer just a question of working for symbolic "valuation," but of (re)thinking the way in which we give an economic and monetary value to artistic production.
- The challenge of the transition to a digital environment calls for an acculturation of the sector and requires an increase in technical and legal skills. From this perspective, the need for digital training must be met.
- The political challenge associated with the necessity to develop structures and collective methods in order to give artists a more active and decision-making role.

Finally, and this is also the challenge of this ongoing study, the initial results highlight the importance of understanding the frameworks of artistic creation and its dissemination by exploring the spatial and temporal issues underlying contemporary social logics: creating, transmitting and disseminating are indeed understood in the light of a more global transformation of the social uses of space and territorial

practices. This “urban world” (Lussault, 2017) in which we live is inseparable from the emergence of spatial and temporalities forms that may prove decisive in the establishment of theoretical and practical frameworks for thinking art and the role of the artist in their social link dimension.

Data availability statement

The original contributions presented in the study are included in the article/supplementary material, further inquiries can be directed to the corresponding author.

Ethics statement

The studies involving human participants were reviewed and approved by SM, Université Bordeaux Montaigne. The

patients/participants legal guardian/next of kin provided written informed consent to participate in this study. In addition, the data were collected respecting the GDPR rules (<https://gdpr-info.eu/>) and stored accordingly.

Author contributions

All authors listed have made a substantial, direct, and intellectual contribution to the work and approved it for publication.

Conflict of interest

The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

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Navigating the intersection of dramaturgy and artistic research in contemporary theatre education

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This paper discusses dramaturgy and artistic research's evolving role in theatre education, focusing on the Master's program in Theatre at Oslo National Academy of the Arts as a case study. Drawing inspiration from Richard Jochum's ideas in "After Artistic Research," the paper highlights the shift towards incorporating artistic research into the curriculum of art universities. However, it acknowledges the challenges in establishing a clear framework for artistic research within these institutions. The author argues that teaching and practising dramaturgy and artistic research in theatre academies have significant implications, marking a departure from traditional theatre education paradigms. The paper aims to contribute valuable insights and practical strategies to educators and practitioners involved in theatre education and artistic research, emphasising the importance of understanding and navigating the complexities of this evolving field.

KEYWORDS

dramaturgy, artistic research, art and culture institutions, education management, curriculum development

"The object of artistic research is art. As artists we engage in research to become better at what we are doing, for the development of knowledge and methods (Lillja, 2021)."

In "After Artistic Research" Jochum (2020) rightfully contends that we have arrived at a time where we can begin to move past the epistemological questions of how we can define artistic research and begin to look at how we can incorporate it into our practice and integrating it in our curriculums. In recent years, the organisational restructuring of art schools and the integration of theatre academies in research universities has "transformed the (epistemological) status that art carries, receives, and exerts within the domain of knowledge production" (Jochum, 2020: 101). After artistic research, we are entering a mode of teaching where the importance of artistic research and reflective practice is the hallmark of art universities, Jochum argues. However, while art universities embrace artistic research in their strategy and vision of art education, many struggle to find a clear and common institutional, ideological, and cultural framework for artistic research. While Jochum's argument is far from controversial, things are rarely as straightforward and unproblematic in the complex and paradoxical world of education management and curriculum

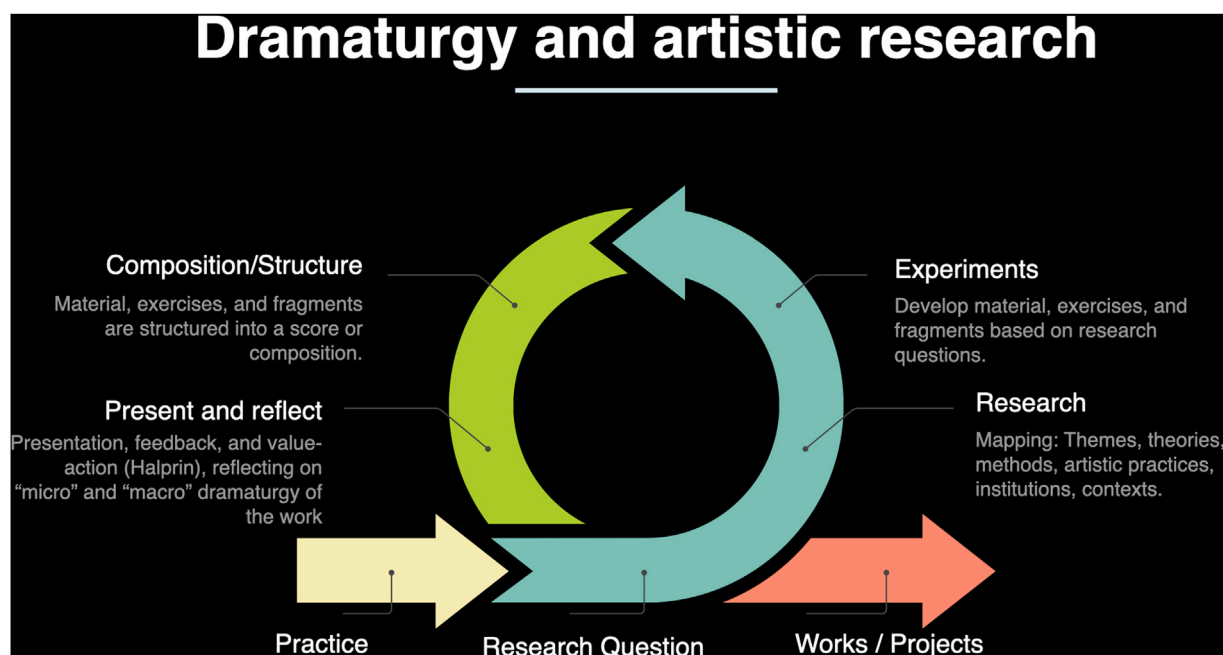


FIGURE 1
Dramaturgical model for research-based learning processes.

development. The understanding of artistic research and its terminology is often loaded with ambiguity and dissension.

In this paper, following Jochum's insights, I will argue that "doing" and "teaching" artistic research in our academies carries profound practical and theoretical implications, marking a significant departure from the established educational paradigm of theatre education and a shift toward an emerging paradigm grounded in artistic research. Exploring a specific case study, I will critically explore the intersection between dramaturgy and artistic research to discuss how we can handle the complexity of artistic research in theatre education. As a teacher, researcher, and educational leader with a history of dealing with these questions, I hope to contribute to the ongoing dialogue in theatre education and artistic research. For this investigation, I will employ the Master's program in Theatre at Oslo National Academy of the Arts as a case study. By delving into the specific context of this program, I intend to share hard-earned insights and practical strategies that can benefit both educators and practitioners in the broader field of theatre education and artistic research.

Redefining theatre education after postdramatic theatre: embracing artistic collaboration and process-oriented dramaturgy

The central thesis of this paper is that contemporary dramaturgy and artistic research inherently recognise the crucial connection between thought and creation, as well as

the interplay between theory and practice. Like dramaturgy, the theories of artistic research promote a culture of reflection and dialogue, aligning closely with the dramaturg's role in fostering conversations and providing feedback within the creative team. This fosters a more exploratory approach to education and theatre-making, where artistic aims, processes, and results are thoughtfully contextualised and investigated.

In the context of dramaturgy, this shift in theory and practice aligns with the works of scholars such as [Trencsényi and Bernadette \(2014\)](#), [Trencsényi \(2015\)](#), [Theresa Lang \(2017\)](#), [Szatkowski \(2019\)](#), and [Bleeker \(2023\)](#), who discuss the role of "new dramaturgy" ([Kerkhoven, 1994](#)) and the heritage of the so-called "postdramatic theatre."¹ Since the development of

1 The concept of the postdramatic, which gained significant momentum in the early 2000s, is primarily due to the inner circle at the Institute for Applied Theatre Studies in Giessen (Andrzej Wirth, Hans-Thies Lehmann, among others), where the concept was introduced in a short article written by Andrzej Wirth for the university newspaper as early as 1987. However, the peak moment arrives only with Hans-Thies Lehmann's influential *Postdramatisches Theater* from 1999, where the concept is given its most comprehensive development. Cf. Bernd Stegemann's critical essay "After Postdramatic Theater," in *Theater* (New Haven, Conn.), 2009, Vol.39 (3), p.11-23 (DURHAM: Duke University Press, 2009). DOI: 10.1215/01610775-2009-002. In his critical review of the heritage of postdramatic theatre, Stegemann contends that Lehmann's aesthetic theory has shifted towards a more prescriptive stance within the theatre community, constraining artists from fully harnessing the compelling elements of theatre, such as characters and narrative storytelling.

postdramatic theatre (Lehmann, 1999), the traditional hierarchy governing theatrical components has shifted and greatly expanded. In this context, the primacy of text has waned, and other elements such as space, light, sound, music, movement, and gesture now share an equivalent significance within the performance process. In “Dramaturgy on Shifting Grounds” (2009), Hans-Thies and Patrick (2009) discuss these evolutions of theatre and performance within dynamic cultural contexts marked by the influence of new media technologies and the emergence of hybrid forms encompassing theatre, dance, performance, installation, exhibition, film, and media art. These radical changes, highly relevant to contemporary theatre education, are often driven by innovative production methods and new approaches to institutional dramaturgy. For Lehmann and Primavesi, “new dramaturgical forms and skills are needed, in terms of a practice that no longer reinforces the subordination of all elements under one (usually the word, the symbolic order of language), but rather a dynamic balance to be obtained anew in each performance” (Lehmann and Primavesi, 2009: 3). Moving beyond the narrow confines of the text-based theatre, they also underscore the challenges faced by contemporary dramaturgy, which encompass fostering creative collaboration, particularly between authors and directors, ensuring effective communication within interdisciplinary production teams, formulating innovative concepts, curating novel approaches within cultural institutions, and promoting unconventional forms of exchange and discourse.

In *Doing Dramaturgy* (2023), Bleeker expands these ideas, discussing the historical shift in the dramaturg’s role and aptly demonstrates how these new approaches can be developed into a process-oriented approach. Overall, Bleeker’s theory represents a shift from conceiving dramaturgy as a noun to conceptualising it as a verb, emphasising the practice of “doing dramaturgy” (Bleeker, 2023). Studying the emergence of dramaturgy from Gotthold Ephraim Lessing to late modernity, she rightfully notes that dramaturgy is historically closely connected to the privileged role of dramatic text in Western theatre. Still, Bleeker, 2023 also expands on Lehmann’s theory of postdramatic theatre, but in less prescriptive tones, to describe the shift in paradigms towards a more process-oriented approach to dramaturgy. Rather than viewing theatre as a medium primarily for representing pre-existing structures of meaning, such as dramatic texts, Bleeker’s theory of dramaturgy envisions theatre as dynamic spaces where meaning, form, and content evolve organically throughout the creative process and collaborative thinking-making. Arguing that *Doing Dramaturgy* “is not a matter of intellectual interpretation, or of having the correct answers to how to construct a performance, but of engaging with the complexity of creative processes, where this may also mean to complicate or problematize rather than to clarify,” (Bleeker, 2023: 6) describes creative processes as collective efforts of “thinking making,” with dramaturgs often playing a crucial yet non-

directive role. Bleeker presents this dramaturgical approach and comprises seven distinct modes of engagement with the creative processes and performances as they unfold. She poetically labels these seven modes as speculating, analysing, feeding, articulating, questioning, creating conditions, and structuring. Taking on this approach to *Doing Dramaturgy* as a teaching method, I will contend that it entails focusing on what emerges through the collaborative process of creating and thinking with others (Bleeker, 2023: 57). In the following, I will discuss how Bleeker’s approach to dramaturgy shares several critical elements with artistic research. Both perspectives view artistic practices as ongoing, process-oriented explorations rather than static outcomes. Just as artistic research emphasises the investigative journey within art, this form of “new dramaturgy” (Kerkhoven) focuses on “doing dramaturgy,” thereby turning it into an action or a way of thinking rather than a fixed role in traditional production dramaturgy.²

Why are we discussing the intersection between dramaturgy and artistic research? At this very moment, a considerable shift is taking place. Most Performing Arts Schools across Europe are transforming significantly, reinventing their educational paradigms for Bachelor’s, Master’s, and doctoral degrees. Examples of this development can be seen in the strategies and curriculum developments of interdisciplinary academies such as Oslo National Academy of the Arts (KHIO), Iceland University of the Arts (IUA), The Danish National School of Performing Arts (DASPA), Zürich University of the Arts (ZHdK), Uniarts Helsinki (UH), Amsterdam University of the Arts (AHK), and Stockholm University of the Arts (SHK). Thus, we find ourselves at a practical and theoretical crossroads, and the path we choose to travel has profound implications for the future of dramaturgy and theatre practice. In summary, as artistic research gains prominence in various theatre disciplines, it enriches those fields. It expands and challenges conventional approaches to theatre practice and production dramaturgy, ultimately leading to more nuanced, thoughtful, and impactful theatrical productions and projects.

In “What is Artistic Research?” from 2010, Klein (2010) follows a similar mode of thinking, contending that research is not exclusive to science and that artists have also engaged in systematic and creative activities akin to research. Emphasising that art and science are two dimensions within the same cultural space, Klein describes the role of artistic experience as a mode of perception, highlighting its importance in artistic research. Klein argues that, unlike science, artistic knowledge is sensory,

2 This shift has also been described by Theresa Lang, who, despite a more analytical approach, defines dramaturgy as “a mindset, rather than a function” and “as a way of seeing and communicating, a way of engaging with material and audiences, and ultimately a way of looking at the world” (Lang, 2017: 4).

physical, and embodied, distinguishing it from traditional declarative knowledge. Following Klein's thought, I will discuss the development of an educational model that fosters a critical dialogue between dramaturgy and artistic research. My experience teaching dramaturgy to theatre students (e.g., playwrights, actors, directors, dancers, light designers, etc.) for over two decades has solidified my belief that theory and practice can mutually inform and inspire one another. By teaching that theory and practice are deeply interconnected, we can empower students to take ownership of their learning process. In this approach to dramaturgy, students are encouraged not merely to consume theoretical knowledge but to apply it in their artistic processes actively. Like the Applied Theatre Studies program in Giessen, our approach to dramaturgy underscores the interplay between theory and practice. Here, theory emerges because of artistic practice, and in turn, practice is critically examined through the lens of theory. However, it's important to note that our MA in Theatre program differs in several aspects. Firstly, the scale of our program is distinct from the renowned university education in Giessen, as we have only 8–14 students in the program. This smaller cohort allows for a more intimate exploration of the integration of theory and practice in the study of theatre. Secondly, our institutional setting primarily emphasises artistic practice and research. This encompasses various forms of knowledge, including sensory, physical, and embodied aspects, as highlighted by Klein. Thirdly, we strongly emphasise the individual artistic development of each student. While this approach demands significant time and effort, it is a highly rewarding task. To unlock artistic research's potential, as Julian Klein, Efva Lilja, and Richard Jochum note, students and teachers need opportunities for in-depth work processes, risk-taking, experiments and research that do not necessarily culminate in a product—such as a theatrical performance.³ As a place for learning and research, theatre academies can offer students and teachers the time for research-based processes, providing a laboratory for collective thinking-making and peer-based dialogue.

Artistic research, as discussed by Lilja, Klein, and Jochum, can be described as a practice-based or practice-led exploration undertaken by artists who aim to enrich knowledge about artistic processes and production through their investigations within art. Artistic research employs artistic methodologies, with the findings presented as works of art—these could manifest as performances, concerts, exhibitions, written works, or a fusion of various media. Accompanying this presentation of findings is detailed documentation and reflection on both the process and the outcome, providing a comprehensive insight into the entire journey of artistic exploration. In recent years, educators from

various theatre disciplines, such as acting, directing, sound design, and choreography, to name a few, have found new ways to incorporate artistic research into their pedagogy and bring new methodologies and perspectives into the dramaturgical process.⁴

The following reflections aim to engage in the ongoing conversation about these issues and to provide a blueprint for instructing dramaturgy and artistic research methodologies. Specifically, I will examine the approaches employed within the curriculum of the Master's program in Theatre at Oslo National Academy of the Arts, using it as a case study. I do not intend to assert that this model can be universally applied, but rather, I seek to offer insights and potential strategies that may be valuable to the broader discourse on this subject.

Rethinking the curriculum: KHIO's master in theatre as a case study

The master's program in Theatre at Oslo National Academy of the Arts (KHIO) is a two-year, full-time program tailored for individuals with a bachelor's degree in Theatre or equivalent education and experience.⁵ Its primary aim is to provide students with a research-based and specialised education in acting, directing, writing, and dramaturgy, equipping them with the necessary knowledge and tools to collaborate, research and experiment. Within this discourse, let us delve into the institutional challenges this program encounters and illuminate how it occupies a position at the crux of the tension between the traditions of dramatic theatre and the emerging postdramatic paradigms.

In 1996, the Theatre Academy, which was initially formed in 1953, merged with four other academies and is now situated as one department within the interdisciplinary art academy (KHIO). The academy takes pride in its illustrious heritage, which is firmly grounded in the pedagogical principles of Konstantin Stanislavsky, further evolved by teachers such as

³ See Efva Lilja's "The Pot Calling the Kettle Black - An Essay on the State of Artistic Research," In: Huber (2021): *Knowing in Performing* (Bielefeld transcript Verlag, Bielefeld, 2021: 28–34).

⁴ A compelling illustration of the intersections between artistic research and this new approach to dramaturgy can be seen in Yann Coppiet's "Absurd sounds" (Journal of Artistic Research, 2021. <https://doi.org/10.22501/jar.820939>). Coppiet's research interrogates conventional methods of engaging with sound by employing absurdity as an innovative tool. While the scientific fundamentals of sound are rarely questioned in various sound-related fields, Coppiet's project challenges these underlying assumptions. By actively questioning or even rejecting established norms (e.g., considering silence as a construction tool for musical composition), the research follows a unique methodological path that shares similarities with conspiracy theories: it starts with an absurd premise and logically develops it to uncover new techniques, ideas, or art forms. This approach exemplifies the type of questioning and innovation encouraged in both artistic research and new dramaturgy.

⁵ Cf. <https://khio.no/en/studies/academy-of-theatre#masters-in-theatre>

Marija Knebel, Georgij Tovstonogov, and Irina Malochevskaja.⁶ This tradition is the foundation for its acclaimed acting and theatre direction programs at the bachelor's level. The MA in theatre was formed in 2013, and during the subsequent years, a discernible gap emerged between the BA and MA programs. While the BA program remained committed to the Stanislavsky-based training, the MA program started to lean towards devised work and process-based approaches to dramaturgy, gradually embracing a postdramatic mode of thinking. This development introduced a degree of tension within the academy, prompting a critical re-evaluation of the institution's educational framework and its approach to artistic research.

First and foremost, assessing how the academy's specialised focus on dramatic theatre (acting and directing), firmly rooted in the Stanislavski method, could be further developed through artistic research became crucial. Secondly, there was a desire to explore the integration and implications of non-representational methods from the postdramatic theatre. This critical move aimed to align with the progressive development seen in schools and programs such as The Norwegian Theatre Academy (Østfold University College), DasArts (Amsterdam University of the Arts), and, notably, the Institute for Applied Theatre Studies in Giessen, Germany. Drawing from my experiences as a dramaturg and educational leader who faced similar institutional tensions and curriculum development challenges at DASPA (from 2015 to 2021), as well as through my collaboration with the NORTEAS Schools, I find it evident that this debate mirrors the ongoing development and discussions in most theatre academies across the Nordic and Baltic countries.⁷

Within the complex institution of KHIO, it was also pertinent to acknowledge a political obligation to educate students who can work in a diverse spectrum of theatre, which includes both dramatic and postdramatic forms of expression. This strategic aim, however, gave rise to a noticeable division between the two educational levels, each following its unique approach to teaching and research.

However, with the revision of the MA curriculum, there is a collective effort to bridge this gap.⁸

In the new 2023 curriculum, we aim to offer students the opportunity to specialise in various fields, including acting, directing, writing, and dramaturgy. This restructuring represents a significant organisational goal to expand and enrich these fields within the academy while fostering collaboration with many schools and programs I have mentioned above. In the Norwegian context, we face a significant challenge regarding interdisciplinary and stage design and composition. This challenge stems from the fact that the education for scenography is hosted within The Norwegian Theatre Academy (NTA), an institution with a pivotal role in training actors and stage designers in the expanded field. It is crucial to underscore that our institution maintains institutional and artistic collaborations with NTA, with students working together on theatre productions.

Within the discourse of theatre in Norway, a concerning narrative persists regarding the relationship or perceived competition between these two schools. NTA, which formed the first Scandinavian MA in scenography in 2015, is widely recognised for its ability to question conventional theatre practice and challenge normative ideas on the methods of acting and scenography within the context of theatre education.⁹ As noted by Camilla Eeg-Tverbakk and Karmenlare Ely this was done out of a “commitment to deepen the connection between theory and practice” (Eeg-Tverbakk and Ely, 2015: 11). For this reason, NTA is often linked with physical theatre and postdramatic methods, while KHIO is occasionally seen as firmly grounded in the traditions of dramatic theatre.¹⁰ By comparison, the MA in Theatre at KHIO was first offered in 2013 with a similar aspiration to expand on the connection between theory and practice, including a questioning of conventional theatre practice and production dramaturgy. Although there have been significant differences in the respective curriculums, I find the narrative of dramatic vs. postdramatic schools in Norway problematic and overly simplistic for several reasons. Firstly, despite their differences, both institutions share a deep

6 In the Scandinavian context, these methods have served as a significant foundation for the training of actors and directors, notably at The Theatre Academy (KHIO) since 1994. Cf. Irina Malochevskaja: *Regiskolen* (translated by Hans Henriksen and Sverre Rødahl, Tell, Vollen 2002). It is also worth noting, however, that the school was also influenced by the teachings of Rudolf Penka, who visited and taught a system for actors based on the synthesis of Brecht and Stanislavski in the 1970s.

7 Cf. NORTEAS is a Nordplus network of Nordic and Baltic Performing Arts institutions in higher education. NORTEAS encourages students and teachers to seek innovation and new approaches to the already established practices through exchanging knowledge, experience and visions on contemporary performing arts and education. <http://www.norteamnetwork.org>. KHIO is also committed to collaboration with other networks for knowledge exchange and internationalisation, including: <https://alexandrianova.eu>, <https://www.ecoledesecoles.eu>.

8 To me, this development also honours the continually evolving work of Stanislavsky, whose artistic method was marked by a commitment to experimentation, science, and research. See, for example, Jonathan Pitches: *Science and the Stanislavsky Tradition of Acting* (Routledge, Abingdon, Oxon 2006) and Mel Gordon's *The Stanislavsky Technique* (Applause Theatre Book Publishers, New York 1994).

9 Cf. Camilla Eeg-Tverbakk and Karmenlare Ely: *Responsive listening—theatre training for Contemporary Spaces* (Brooklyn Arts Press, United States 2015).

10 In Karmenlara Ely's essay “Yielding to the Unknown: Actor Training as Intensification of the Sense” (Eeg-Tverbakk and Ely, 2015: 15–33), there is a notable exploration of how the legacy of postdramatic theatre is examined and contemplated in actor education. Eeg-Tverbakk highlights that “postmodern dramaturgies” have been experimenting with form and challenging actors to rethink the dynamic space between the “self” and the “other” within the staging of a text or character (Eeg-Tverbakk and Ely, 2015: 17).

commitment to contemporary theatre practice and artistic research, which—as we shall see—includes research into a wide range of issues, such as developing postdramatic methods for acting and collaborative methods for theatre direction.¹¹ Secondly, this juxtaposition of dramatic and postdramatic methods tends to impede essential collaboration and the exchange of knowledge, which is crucial in a community of art schools with a relatively limited number of students and scarce funding for research. This is particularly worrisome in a prosperous country like Norway, which can boast a national academy of the arts offering 21 study programmes and a doctoral program in fine art, design, arts and crafts, opera, dance, theatre, and arts education. Unlike comparable partner institutions like DASPA, ZHdK, UH, AHK, and SHK, however, KHIO does not provide a comprehensive spectrum of theatre disciplines such as light design, sound design, and stage design. This limitation constrains the potential for artistic research and collaborative endeavours in our MA in Theatre—although we enjoy the privilege of interdisciplinary collaboration with our opera and dance departments. It's important to note that this observation doesn't imply that every institution should encompass all possible disciplines, as that would be an impractical and unsustainable expectation. However, given the relatively small number of students and teachers in light design, sound design, stage design, writing, and theatre directing, it underscores the need for cross-border knowledge-sharing and collaboration among these theatre schools and programmes.

A model for such institutional collaboration can be found within the MA in Comparative Dramaturgy and Performance Research (CDPR), offered by KHIO alongside the MA in Theatre. This initiative is strategically positioned to address the complexities brought about by “postdramatic theatre” (as described by Lehmann in 1999) and “the performative turn” [as articulated by Fischer-Lichte (2004)]. It forms an integral part of a broader network, including five European universities, all united in their endeavour to equip dramaturgy students with the knowledge and competencies necessary for the critical analysis of chosen issues within the realm of performing arts. The curriculum is designed to prepare students for the significant challenges that have shaped the performing arts field in recent years. These challenges, as Nikolaus Müller-Schöll has noted, encompass the expansion of the concepts of performance and dramaturgy, shifts in the role of the dramaturge, transformations in the relationship between art and research, and the growing importance of international and multidisciplinary collaboration.¹² It is specifically designed for students who

aspire to work in international and intercultural settings, such as festivals, co-productions, exchange programs, and various collaborations. My experience is that including students with diverse backgrounds and exchange between the five universities creates synergy between these master's programs and enriches the educational experience, offering a diverse, interdisciplinary approach to theatre and performance studies.¹³

This brings me back to the MA in theatre, established in 2013, positioning itself at the crux of the debate surrounding dramatic and postdramatic theatre. From a dramaturgical standpoint, we can consider this ambition as a productive paradox. In the context of an academy with a strong tradition of Stanislavsky-based theatre, it may appear contradictory at first glance, but it also encapsulates a valuable insight. Specifically, it implies that postdramatic sensibilities influenced the aspiration to evaluate theatre education. However, there was also a determination to transcend binary thinking and challenge the dogmatic aspects of both dramatic and postdramatic theories. Such institutional paradoxes are often the most fruitful and stimulating, as they can encompass pertinent insights from both sides. It is interesting to analyse how established dichotomies, such as text/performance, dramatic/postdramatic, staging/devising, etc., can be discussed. Furthermore, it's worth examining how these apparent contradictions can contribute to creating a more enriching and complex educational framework on various levels.

Several crucial questions and institutional paradoxes have come to the forefront in revising the MA in Theatre. These questions highlight the essential link between expanding students' respective disciplines (e.g., acting, directing, writing, and dramaturgy), how they can work with artistic research, and their involvement in collaborative theatre endeavours. Furthermore, the curriculum has had to address the paradox between aiming for specialised education in theatre disciplines like acting, directing, writing, and dramaturgy and the ambition to question the norms and values of these disciplines in the light of contemporary theatre and performance art. While the former has a strong foundation in established techniques and methodologies, the latter requires a more experimental approach that encourages students to question, experiment, and engage critically with their respective disciplines and research questions.

Among these inquiries, one is particularly significant: What knowledge and methods do students need to fully grasp and integrate to contribute actively to meaningful artistic research?

11 Notable examples include Petra Fransson's research in acting and postdramatic text. cf. Fransson's *Omförhandlingar: Kropp, replik, etik* (Malmö Faculty of Fine and Performing Arts, Lund University (2018).

12 Cf. Nikolaus Müller-Schöll's introduction to dramaturgy and CDPR: <https://dramaturginfrankfurt.de/macdpr/> (accessed 14.12.2023).

13 The five CDPR universities are: Goethe University, Frankfurt/Main, Université libre de Bruxelles, University of the Arts Helsinki, Université Paris Nanterre, Oslo National Academy of the Arts. The program was initiated in 2017 following extensive discussions and meetings with various partners. The program's inception involved collaboration with Nikolaus Müller-Schöll, Karel Vanhaesebrouck, Christophe Triau, Tore Vagn Lid, Esa Kirkkopelto, and Karoline Gritzner.

This question prompts students and teachers to reconceptualise learning, shifting from a static accumulation of information to an ongoing, dynamic interaction with and critical understanding of theatre practice. Ultimately, however, the overarching goal of this didactic shift is to empower students, enabling them to take ownership of their artistic development, not just as practitioners of their craft but as creators, thinkers, and facilitators of their artistic research. This empowerment is not limited to individual growth but extends to creating a diverse and vibrant community of theatre artists. While this aspiration is undeniably utopian, it must be acknowledged that it is not without its inherent demands. It requires technical resources and specialised skills in mentoring, feedback methods, and team building, necessitating a collaborative spirit that thrives on the synergy of diverse disciplines and artistic values. This endeavour is, in essence, a testament to the relevance of dramaturgy (as discussed above), which fosters the kind of “thinking-making” (Bleeker) that transcends the boundaries of conventional paradigms and strives for a richer, more profound exploration of the theatre arts.

Dramaturgy and artistic research

This leads us to our “dramaturgy and artistic research” course, which shapes the beginning of the programme. Students analyse and explore methods of production dramaturgy and process-oriented approaches to theatre and performance-making. In the following, I will utilize Bleeker’s seven modes of dramaturgical engagement to systematise how we work with the essential skills, knowledge, and mindset required to engage effectively with collective thinking-making. “Creative processes are instances of collaborative thinking-making in which dramaturgs participate,” Bleeker notes, adding that “dramaturg’s involvement does not usually start from one particular aspect of the creation or a particular expertise, such as dancing, costumes, acting, light, or sound” (Bleeker, 2023: 57). Unlike the dramaturgy I enjoyed teaching in the theatre schools in the late 1990s and early 2000s, which primarily centred on analysing plays and performances (based on a European canon of plays), this process-oriented dramaturgy aligns with the emerging concerns of postdramatic paradigms and emphasises the theoretical and methodological framing of students’ research and practice. See Figure 1, which provides a visual representation of our approach to dramaturgy and artistic research.

In the first year, students participate and collaborate in projects and dramaturgy courses alongside their chosen specialisation during both semesters. We aim to teach students to identify, appropriately select, utilise, and research artistic methods through theory and practice. In this *feeding* process, they are exposed to the thinking of various theatre traditions (e.g., dramatic theatre, epic theatre, physical theatre, performance art, postdramatic theatre) and artistic methods specific to their chosen specialisation—acting, directing, writing, or dramaturgy. It is a part

of the ongoing discussion that we work on *questioning* our relation to and assumptions about these traditions and how they have been institutionalised in theatre education, including our own.¹⁴

In dramaturgical practice, Bleeker (2023: 64) highlights the close relationship between *speculating* and *analysing* materials and performances in their developmental stages. This part of the development process involves comprehending the inherent possibilities and considering potential dramaturgical implications and complexities of students’ projects. We observe artworks and processes to re-describe, analyse, and compare the poetics and values of various artefacts, including performances, texts, and production and reception processes. This critical reflection on poetics and values teaches the students to identify, apply and research methods for their artistic expressions and intentions. Following Bleeker, we can also consider that this analysing and contextualising *feeds* the students’ reflections on the implications of their projects (micro dramaturgy) and the cultural context of their work (macro dramaturgy). Even when the student’s projects do not explicitly relate to the traditions and context that inform them, their work inevitably shows traces of such contexts. These traces could, for instance, encompass the values, philosophical foundations, discourses, practices, and institutional conditions within which the students have undergone their training.¹⁵

On this theoretical background, students develop a theoretical framing for their research, which includes research into relevant topics, methods, and materials. The second year is dedicated to further honing their craft through exchanges and internships, culminating in creating and realising a master project based on their individual research questions. Coming from various backgrounds (most often acting, directing, stage design, and physical theatre), our students aspire to explore various approaches to theatre and performance, such as ritual theatre, the post-Anthropocene, autobiographical work, documentary theatre, and research-based writing. They are often driven by the possibility of generating novel ideas and knowledge across diverse fields and disciplines. These original insights and concepts emerge through research-oriented artistic practices that address specific research questions and evolve new methods, processes, and performances.

14 We also incorporate Janek Szatkowski’s *A Theory of Dramaturgy* (2019) to analyse and contextualise research-based aesthetics. Adopting Szatkowski’s complex theory of second-order observations and his analysis of theatre artists and their poetics contribute significantly to our theoretical and practical exploration of dramaturgy.

15 Adopting the distinction between micro (the individual production) and macro dramaturgy (cultural context) from Van Kerkhoven, Bleeker proposes that “Macro dramaturgical concerns are about how the larger social, historical, and cultural context, as well as the institutional conditions of making and showing, is intentionally or unintentionally implicated in the construction of performances” (Bleeker, 2023: 94).

Articulating the ideas central to their projects is also part of how students communicate with their peers and the potential audience of their work. At the end of the MA, students must present their work to their peers within and outside the academy and the broader public. This necessitates thorough documentation and critical reflection, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of their artistic journey. This step entails contextualising the research question, with particular attention to the students' artistic practices, chosen methods, relevant theories, and current developments in the field. Once the framework is in place, students engage in artistic experiments informed by their research question. The artistic research uses various methods, resulting in fragments and material that can take numerous shapes and forms, such as texts, images, light, sound, movement, and scenes. The contextualisation of their work is a fundamental pillar in cultivating a research-oriented mindset. It goes beyond mere experimentation in their respective fields, extending to the documentation and analysis of results. This approach to "doing" dramaturgy, as previously discussed, strongly aligns with Efva Lilja's concept of "the artist as a researcher" (Lilja, 2018), who embarks on artistic research, asserting that art and artistic development are the focal points of their artistic research. In the role of actors, directors, writers, and dramaturgs, they primarily embark on research to enhance their artistic capabilities and understanding. Like Lilja's artist-researcher, our students' approach to "doing dramaturgy" demands a discerning eye for how their research and performances are influenced by or become interconnected with the current circumstances or context in which they operate. In essence, they learn to be attentive to how external factors impact their work and how their work, in turn, impacts the broader environment it exists within. This process-oriented approach should ideally involve questioning and experimental exploration within these contexts. From this perspective, dramaturgy emerges as a critical mindset, akin to Lilja's artist-researcher, actively engaging with materials, audiences, poetics, and the role of art in society. In this light, the artist-researcher assumes the roles of both *creator* and *observer*, effectively bridging the realms of theory and practice.

Working on *questioning*, where students engage in dialogue to further the development of their projects and discuss the inherent possibilities of what is being created, gains depth and nuance when supplemented by artistic research methodologies. In this context, Bleeker's concept of collaborative thinking-making emerges as a methodological approach for exploration and comprehension, aligning with our pedagogical model of theatre education, which inherently embraces collaboration and interdisciplinarity. Fostering constructive questioning and dialogue in a learning environment can be a challenge, especially when dealing with theatre students from diverse backgrounds and varying artistic interests and values. To address this challenge, we provide training in feedback

methods (e.g., "critical response theory," Lerman 2022; Borstel, 2018). Our approach to feedback methods is also profoundly influenced by our cross-border collaboration with teachers from DAS Theatre (Amsterdam University of the Arts). This theatre education, which specialises in research-based artistic practice and feedback methods, has played a pivotal role in bringing hybrid, cross-disciplinary artistic practices to the forefront of contemporary art discourse.¹⁶

This is all part of *creating conditions* for artistic research, which may sometimes require teachers to be "present and attentive" (Bleeker, 2023: 68), adopting the role of a supportive listener and observer of the student's artistic practices and research. My approach to facilitating the process builds on a cyclical model, which incorporates research questions, frames, material, scoring, and presentation/evaluation. I draw inspiration from Lawrence Halprin's seminal work, "The RSVP Cycles" from 1969. Developed in collaboration with dancer and choreographer Anna Halprin, the RSVP cycle emphasises "scoring" to make creative processes visible and facilitate participation. Halprin defines "scores," as a visual mapping "which describe the process leading to the performance" (Halprin, 2014: 42). Halprin's work initially focused on exploring the notion of 'scores' and examining how they function across various artistic disciplines. Here, a 'score' refers to a drawing or visual representation of processes that unfold over time. While scores are commonly associated with music, Halprin broadens the definition to encompass 'scores' across all aspects of artistic practice, and his interest lies not in any single, fixed scoring system but instead in the broader concept of scoring to outline and visualise processes, experiences, and creative endeavours. Similarly, our approach to portfolio and documentation uses scoring to outline, analyse, and articulate the various elements of the artistic process, thereby aiding communication within artistic collaborations. Just as Halprin's RSVP cycles offer a helpful framework for articulating and understanding creative processes, our dramaturgical model aims to clarify what is often implicit or intangible, facilitating a deeper understanding of artistic collaboration and the interplay of ideas and actions.

This model begins by tapping into students' research questions, practical experiences, and assumptions about their work. This knowledge consists of their reservoir of skills, ideas, and experiences they might not have articulated, formalised, or fully realised. By initiating a dialogue with students, we start a discovery process and formulate a research question that directly resonates with their interests and experiences. For instance, a student might be interested in exploring documentary material,

16 The primary objectives of DAS Theatre's feedback sessions are as follows: to empower artists receiving feedback on their work, move beyond mere judgments, facilitate in-depth criticism, promote precision and clarity as a form of (self-) discipline, and ultimately enhance the satisfaction derived from both giving and receiving feedback. Cf. <https://www.atd.ahk.nl/en/theatre-programmes/das-theatre/study-programme/educational-vision/> (accessed 14.12.2023).

leading to questions about its development method and the ethics of staging it.

This dialogue is the initial stage in documenting and mapping tacit knowledge and artistic practice into a structured portfolio. As the dialogue continues, students gradually articulate and organise their skills, knowledge, and expertise in relation to a specific research question. This process helps them become conscious of dominant themes and questions in their artistic practice, effectively externalising these as research questions. This allows for self-reflection and growth and provides a framework through which their artistic practice can be understood, critiqued, and developed by themselves and others.

In line with Halprin's method, the student's material and scores are presented, evaluated, and reflected upon multiple times. This prompts us to analyse and discuss the structuring of their work, recognising tendencies and possibilities in the form and content of their work. Such evaluations consider the content and structure and the methods, experiments, inquiries, and decisions that led to the presented artistic results. These reflections on *structuring* often lead back to the research question, which may be refined and re-evaluated throughout the process. Following the final presentation, students create a portfolio and a critical reflection of their work. Ideally, this step can lead to publications and further dissemination of their work, assisting them in finding relevant peers and expanding their artistic practice.

This model highlights the cyclical aspect of artistic research and emphasises the importance of reflection and peer feedback. Encouraging students to evaluate their practice critically allows them to contribute to theoretical discourse, making them creators of knowledge rather than mere consumers. This fosters a reciprocal dialogue between theory and practice. As Lilja notes, the development of presentation and evaluation methods is crucial for generating new knowledge: "By developing my artistic work also as research. [it] can be criticised and reflected upon by the outside world" (Lilja, 2018: 71–72). Peer feedback and review are vital for nurturing research-based thinking in our educational programs, requiring what Lilja describes as "a critical mass of relevant competence" (Lilja, 2018: 70). In line with our goal of cultivating an environment of constructive criticism and peer-to-peer feedback, our students are trained in the Critical Response Process developed by Lerman and Borstel (2022). This pedagogical approach aligns seamlessly with our model and stresses the cyclical nature of artistic research and the vital role of reflection and peer critique. By employing Lerman's framework, we equip students with a structured methodology for giving and receiving feedback, enabling them to contribute meaningfully to theoretical discourse. As emphasised by Lilja, the strength of methods for presentation and evaluation is pivotal in generating new knowledge. We aim to foster a two-way dialogue between theory and practice through structured feedback, enhancing the educational experience and promoting research-based thinking.

The question of what the research process entails when actors, directors, and writers also assume the role of dramaturg is at the core of this development. While Bleeker's theory delves into the multifaceted role of dramaturgy, our teaching model aligns with a similar ethos, aiming to empower students to become creators, thinkers, and facilitators of their artistic research. For example, students with an education in acting might simultaneously work as writers and directors performing self-written texts. Others who specialise in theatre direction may depart from the authorial role of the director, focusing on developing devised work and collaborative processes. This raises an intriguing question within an educational context where students are forced to collaborate on their artistic work and integrate dramaturgical thinking into their artistic practice. What might the creative process entail if actors, directors, and writers themselves assume the multifaceted role of the dramaturg? How can they collaborate as a team? How can their roles develop and change during the thinking-making process?

As discussed above, recognising the collaborative nature of the creative process is essential for fostering effective teamwork and the growth of theatre professionals. This teaching approach fosters an environment where students learn from their creative endeavours and experiences. In essence, they are not just learning about dramaturgy but learning to work and think as dramaturgs themselves. Therefore, by giving students the autonomy to engage in their own critical reflections and creative processes, we encourage them to develop a more nuanced and comprehensive understanding of dramaturgy as both a theoretical discipline and a practical art form.

In contrast to Lehmann and Primavesi, who advocate for a thinking process that naturally evolves within "non-hierarchical groups" (Lehmann and Primavesi, 2009: 6), our experience has revealed that such collaborations can often be quite challenging when roles merge, shift, or become unclear during the process.¹⁷ As noted by Bleeker, dramaturgical sensibility and facilitation become even more critical in collective processes or devising, where responsibilities and roles are not always sharply defined. As a result, we have increasingly focused on the decision-making processes and how to ensure transparency for all participants, drawing inspiration from Halprin's seminal work. Adopting the notion of "non-hierarchical" theatre in an uncritical manner, we are running a potential risk that the idealistic goal could deteriorate into confusion and conflict. This is especially true when students participate in creating each other's research projects. As a result, participants may have different objectives, requiring dramaturgical sensibility and a solid ability to handle complexity. We find that students become adept at recognising that decision-making processes and hierarchies are not static entities but temporal processes where roles and decisions are renegotiated many times

¹⁷ In *Dramaturgy in the Making*, a similar point is made by Trencsényi (2015: 163), who studies how the dramaturg's role can shift or even disappear in process-led dramaturgy.

along the way. Interestingly, Halprin's resource, score, presentation, value-action method, and mentoring and feedback methods (Lerman and Borstel) have proven valuable tools in navigating these dramaturgical challenges.

It requires a specific dramaturgical skillset to create conditions (as noted by Bleeker), creating and cultivating a space for such collaborations to occur meaningfully and productively. In the projects undertaken by our students, we often witness various individuals taking on dramaturgical tasks during the creative process. What is intriguing is that even when the formal position of the dramaturg diminishes in such projects (cf. [Trencsényi, 2015: 163](#)), the essential dramaturgical functions they typically fulfil, such as facilitating, generating ideas, articulating concepts, archiving the work, identifying emerging structures and meanings, making connections, and offering specialised knowledge, continue to play a vital role in this type of creative work. Additionally, it's worth noting that this flexible approach to other roles, such as the actor, writer, and director, can also be observed in certain situations. Depending on the research question and the evolving creative process, these roles may shift during the process or be shared among team members, highlighting the adaptable and collaborative nature of these artistic endeavours. As these are all complex matters, dramaturgy becomes a method to handle this complexity and facilitate artistic research in a way that allows everyone to contribute to the process in a meaningful way.

Conclusion: redefining dramaturgy and artistic research in MA theatre education

In this paper, I have outlined and contextualised the curriculum and teaching of the MA in Theatre, which strongly emphasises reflective practice and artistic collaboration. Our proposed model can be seen as a case study for integrating dramaturgy and artistic research within theatre education, emphasising the cyclical and iterative process of theory and practice, honing skills through continuous exploration, experimentation, reflection, and refinement. By acknowledging and validating the students' personal research questions, we aim to foster a teaching environment where their tacit knowledge can be articulated and critiqued. As such, we are shaping not just observers and interpreters but creators, directors, and facilitators of their artistic research. Ultimately, this transforms the understanding of dramaturgy within the academic setting and reshapes the broader landscape of theatre practice, marked by dramatic and postdramatic concerns.

By contextualising the curriculum and outlining the course on "Dramaturgy and Artistic Research," I have discussed how this teaching model aligns with Bleeker's theory of dramaturgy, fostering a mindset where students are encouraged to be not just

practitioners of their craft but also active creators, critical thinkers, and facilitators of their artistic research.

I have tried to explain how we, as teachers, can support and mentor this development with relevant knowledge, engaging in critical examination and feedback on the students' research questions, theories, and methods, encompassing their projects' micro and macro dramaturgy. Through their research, students can discover novel concepts, allowing them to reconsider their roles in the process and the nature of their artistic work. This process allows them to engage in artistic collaboration, assume leadership roles, explore the relationship between performer and audience, explore innovative presentation formats, address political and societal concerns, and establish sustainable theatre practices. Ultimately, our educational endeavours are driven by a commitment to maintain the relevance of theatre as an art form in an increasingly complex and diverse society.

In my capacity as a dramaturgy teacher, I consider one of the most significant facets of this paradigm shift to be the incorporation of dramaturgical theories and models as essential tools for navigating the intricacies and complexities inherent in artistic collaboration and peer-to-peer feedback. While our BA programs in Acting and Directing are designed to nurture excellence in specific roles and skills, the MA in Theatre encourages students to transcend these boundaries and participate in collaborative thinking and practice. A theatre academy like ours should be able to strike a balance between specialisation and interdisciplinarity within its curriculum. This equilibrium should allow us to engage effectively with dramatic and postdramatic concerns.

Our theatre academy's strategic objective is to establish a stronger connection between the two educational levels, thereby bridging the gap between the BA programs, which emphasise individual specialisation, and the MA program, which promotes collaborative and interdisciplinary approaches to theatre. This transition brings opportunities and challenges to the ongoing development of theatre education.¹⁸

As outlined in our MA curriculum, the intersection of "Dramaturgy and Artistic Research" is designed to endow students with practical competencies and theoretical insights, equipping them to craft meaningful contributions within theatre practice and production dramaturgy. Ideally, this pedagogical approach enriches the individual theatre disciplines, fostering a more profound and expansive engagement with dramaturgy. As educators, our role in this transformative process is pivotal. We

18 At the same time, we aim to prepare them for further study in KHIO's doctoral program. Focused on hands-on, studio-centric artistic work, the department explores methods and concepts that further develop the expertise in acting and directing. On the Master's and PhD levels, there is systematic experimentation in theatre art's artistic, organisational, and contextual possibilities. Particular emphasis is placed on studying individual and collective strategies as mutually dynamic and creative challenges. The department currently hosts five PhD students and has two open positions for PhD in theatre direction

guide and nurture students, encouraging them to explore and question their work's "micro" and "macro" dramaturgy. In this endeavour, we aim to reshape the academic perception of dramaturgy and redefine its role within the diverse and multifaceted theatrical landscape.

Biography

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Data availability statement

The original contributions presented in the study are included in the article/supplementary material, further inquiries can be directed to the corresponding author.

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