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The construction of cultural leadership

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ABSTRACT

Cultural leadership became a key concept in cultural policy and training in the UK during the early 2000s. It attracted significant public and private investment and remains a major focus for development programmes, now internationally, despite significant changes in sectoral needs and context. This paper reviews the evolution of cultural leadership as a discursive construct, drawing on a decade's research. It pays attention to key inclusions and exclusions, employing Arendt's theory of action to critique fundamental assumptions. A tendency to privilege organisational leadership is challenged by considering the social and aesthetic dimensions of cultural practice alongside corresponding influences from other spheres of action which complicate the notion of autonomy in cultural production. To define cultural leadership is therefore to engage with culture's place in civil society. Distinctions between *entrepreneurial*, *generous* and *public* dimensions of cultural leadership are identified in the analysis with implications for practitioners, training providers and policy makers.

Keywords:

Cultural leadership
Artist
Policy
Training
Discourse

Introduction

The paper reflects critically on the development of cultural leadership as an area of expertise at the crossroads of culture, education and management over the last 15 years. It draws on work undertaken over the past decade by On The Edge Research in association with Gray's School of Art (Robert Gordon University, Aberdeen) which investigates the history and discourse of cultural leadership. A brief history of cultural leadership shows how the concept emerged from specific concerns about cultural sector governance in the UK, leading to the establishment of the Clore Leadership Programme in 2004, before becoming the subject of widespread initiatives nationally and internationally. The character of cultural leadership has been explored through analysis of policy and training discourse alongside material from individual interviews and group debates conducted with selected professionals from different fields in the cultural landscape, including artists and public sector leaders. This narrative considers the ways in which the concept of cultural leadership has related to political and economic changes in recent years and raises questions about the position of artists in relation to organisational development in the cultural sector.

The construction of leadership as a concept in itself is critiqued through an application of the political philosophy of Hannah Arendt which highlights a number of features particularly relevant to cultural contexts. This analysis suggests that a tendency to focus on leaders as decision makers and problem solvers conceals the uncertainties of human action and sits in tension with the social operation of culture. This difficulty resonates with the experiences of many of the contributors to the research. The paper goes on to argue that the perspective of the artist provides a lens through which alternative and richer understandings of cultural leadership can be identified, widening the focus beyond questions of financial and organisational management. Finally, several essential points of focus for cultural leadership are differentiated, allowing distinction between *entrepreneurial*, *generous* and *public* characterisations of action. These understandings are important for the coherent development of the many cultural leadership courses and training programmes now in operation worldwide. They are also relevant to artists and other cultural sector actors reflecting on their relationship to cultural structures and the wider public realm.

“CULTURAL LEADERSHIP EMERGED AS PART OF THE TERMINOLOGY OF CULTURAL POLICY IN THE UK SHORTLY AFTER THE TURN OF THE MILLENNIUM. AT THAT TIME THERE WAS A STRONG SENSE OF MANAGERIAL CRISIS AT A NATIONAL LEVEL IN THE CULTURAL SECTOR”

The research underpinning this paper consists of three connected parts taking place over a period of more than 10 years. The Artist as Leader project (2006-2009), which included a series of investigative labs, interviews and a research report (Douglas & Fremantle, 2009), was perhaps the first systematic critique of cultural leadership discourse. Working from a UK perspective, it questioned the absence of artists from the prevailing business-based leadership framework, suggesting that the orientation towards organisations left out key parts of how leadership works in relation to cultural practice, particularly the role of artists as leaders through their creative practice and in the public realm. Following on from this, my doctoral research (2012-2016) employed further interviews to revisit these issues in the wake of the financial crisis,

also questioning how forces external to the cultural sector play formative roles in its development both in the UK and internationally (Price, 2016). Finally, the project Cultural leadership and the place of the artist (2015-2016) consisted of a partnership between On The Edge Research, The Clore Leadership Programme, Creative Scotland and ENCATC, producing a series of seminars in Edinburgh, Brussels and London to generate engagement with cultural sector professionals around the concepts developed through the research, while attempting to link hitherto disconnected debates in the UK and Europe.

These events took place in the context of accelerating political change which further reframed the question of leadership for cultural actors and policy makers internationally.

A brief history of cultural leadership

Cultural leadership emerged as part of the terminology of cultural policy in the UK shortly after the turn of the millennium. At that time there was a strong sense of managerial crisis at a national level in the cultural sector. From about 1997, a string of major organisations had encountered serious organisational and governance difficulties in quick succession. These included nationally significant institutions such as the Royal Opera House, English National Opera, the British Museum and the Royal Shakespeare Company, leading to the perception of a pervasive problem that needed to be addressed by concrete action (Hewison, 2004). Why was the country, or at least the sector, somehow

failing to develop and retain individuals with sufficient business and relational skills to meet the evolving needs of these iconic cultural organisations? The issue caught the particular attention of philanthropist Dame Vivien Duffield, then a member of the board of the Royal Opera House, and it was through her Clore Duffield Foundation that a report was commissioned from writers John Holden and Robert Hewison, which ultimately recommended the setting up of the Clore Leadership Programme (Hewison & Holden, 2002). This report, which reflected on evidence from a range of existing management reviews in subsectors such as theatre, the performing arts and museums, used the term "cultural leadership" to characterise the common thread of concern now seen as relevant across the broader cultural sector. Established in this way, cultural leadership is an umbrella term and therefore brings together a range of practices and settings with a corresponding diversity of purposes and business models. At the outset, however, it was clear that what it indicated were top executive roles within high profile, large-scale, publicly funded institutions – or, as Pablo Rossello from the British Council has put it, "a highly entrepreneurial senior manager (...) a very institutional version of the cultural leader. Someone who could drive the Southbank Centre" (Rossello, 2014: 5-6). This kind of context, together with the unifying issue of managerial competence, set the tone for subsequent discourse around cultural leadership in policy and training.

It was against this backdrop that serious investment was poured into cultural leadership in the UK during the next few years, producing ripples in a pond which has never been still since. In addition to the Foundation-backed Clore Leadership Programme, a government-funded Cultural Leadership Programme was established in 2006 with endorsement and direct funding from the then-Chancellor and soon-to-be Prime Minister, Gordon Brown. Cultural leadership became entwined with the agenda of "creativity" as a key ingredient of entrepreneurial culture and economic success: following the recommendations of the recently published Cox review (2005), it seemed that the learning relationship between culture and mainstream business was no longer a one way street. This perception was by no means limited to the UK. In the heady period prior to the global financial crisis the *Harvard Business Review* would declare that "the MFA is the new MBA" (quoted in Adler, 2006: 486); as the Chair of the USA's National Endowment for the Arts could comfortably observe, the new economic virtues of "imagination, innovation and creativity" were very much the "skills that artists develop, nurture and promote" (National Endowment for the Arts, 2008: iv). The Clore programme continued to thrive, expanding its UK provision with new short courses alongside the main fellowship activities, while also starting to wield international influence through an advisory role on the University of Hong Kong's Advanced Cultural Leadership programme from 2009. The British Coun-

cil also got in on the act, launching Cultural Leadership International in 2008 with a particular emphasis on developing relationships in the Middle East and North Africa (Rossello, 2014). Dedicated writing on the topic slowly began to emerge, produced both within and in response to the official training programmes (Leicester, 2007; Douglas & Fremantle, 2007 & 2009; Kay & Venner 2010).

By this point, however, the economic crisis was beginning to bite and its political consequences soon followed. The Conservative-led coalition government that took power in the UK in May 2010 introduced new programmes of austerity and immediate cuts to cultural budgets. The expensive Cultural Leadership Programme was an early casualty, winding up in March 2011, while the developmental needs of arts and cultural organisations became subsumed in an urgent focus on dwindling resources. A smaller publicly funded programme, Developing Resilient Leadership, was announced by Arts Council England in 2012, its very title reflecting the more embattled times (Arts Council England, 2012). The delivery contract went to Clore. Resilience was becoming a keyword, appearing with increasing frequency as a theme in conferences and initiatives elsewhere in the UK and Europe (Cultura 21, 2012; Creative Scotland, 2017; Wilkinson, 2014). Nonetheless, interest in the topic of cultural leadership showed little sign of abating. Research in the UK showed around 60 management and leadership courses with specific relevance to the cultural sector in operation annually by 2013 (TBR, 2013). Internationally, the language of cultural leadership appeared in new programmes in South Africa (2012) and the Netherlands (2013) as well as in the discussion about a proposed pan-European programme under the name of The Fika Project from 2014; this initiative has produced two books on cultural leadership (Dalborg & Löfgren, 2016a & 2016b) while one of its core partners, Nätverkstan Kultur, already runs a regular two-year professional leadership course in Gothenburg (*Kulturverkstan*). The Fika books were launched in June 2016 in Brussels to coincide with the ENCATC Annual Policy Debate held by the European network of cultural management and policy, an event focused for that year specifically on cultural leadership. A short Global Cultural Leadership programme was piloted in October 2016 by an EU-convened consortium, The Cultural Diplomacy Platform, to coincide with the IFACCA World Summit in Malta, also themed on cultural leadership for its 2016 edition; the programme continued in Athens in 2017. King's College, London piloted a new, intensive course aimed at high level international cultural managers, *Leading Culture in the 21st Century*, in April 2017 (King's College, London 2017). Further north, Leicester's Curve Theatre responded to the demographics of its home city by launching the Curve Cultural Leadership Programme (CCLPP) for black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) professional leaders as a two-year course from October 2016 (Stafford, 2017).

These new UK initiatives suggest a movement towards more specialised provision for specific needs and target markets but retain a family relationship to Clore: *Leading Culture's* course director, the former Cultural Leadership Programme director Hilary Carty, was appointed as the new Chief Executive of Clore in September 2017, replacing Sue Hoyle (Clore Leadership Programme, 2017), while CCCLP was established by a former Clore Fellow, Curve Chief Executive Chris Stafford. In the related literature, interest in new models of cultural sector management and innovation has produced a substantial survey of approaches to cultural leadership in Asia (Caust, 2015) and a survey of related courses and theory under the guise of "cultural entrepreneurship" internationally (Kuhlke, Schramme & Kooyman, 2015). It is now possible to learn cultural leadership from a handbook written by the original Clore report authors (Hewison & Holden, 2012) or to peruse international case studies (Caust, 2013).

Amid this proliferation it is worth remembering that the topic has a prehistory. Once upon a time the arts sector, at least, was satisfied with the term "arts administration", which was good enough for John Pick (1980) to use as the title of an early handbook and to designate Arts Council of Great Britain Secretary-General Roy Shaw's visiting professorship at City University in the mid-1970s (Moody, 2002). ENCATC, which now describes itself as the European network on cultural management and policy, derives its acronym from its original 1992 title "European Network of Cultural Administration Training Centres" (ENCATC, 2017). The term "arts management" began to gain currency around the end of that decade, a little ahead of the concern with leadership (Evard & Colbert, 2000). The path from "administration" through "management" to "leadership" could be seen as some kind of linguistic arms race in terms of adding significance and credibility to the business of running cultural organisations. This progression has encountered at least one dissenting voice, with Christopher Gordon and Peter Stark describing large scale investment in cultural leadership as "hubris" in a 2010 government report, seeing it as feeding and reflecting a surfeit of "middle management" posts in the sector (Gordon & Stark, 2010: 3.b.ii.5). Scrapping of the government-funded Cultural Leadership Programme followed shortly afterwards. This was a clear sign of a change of era which also suggested that cultural leadership training had by that point shifted its focus away from top executive positions. Few would argue that good management and efficient administration are valuable to the cultural sector and well worth some investment in training, but it is legitimate to question whether all activities which have at various points come under the umbrella of cultural leadership fully justify the billing. A starting point for *On The Edge's* research was a sense that something was missing from the narrative.

This short history traces cultural leadership as a term, rather than as a practice. It sketches a trajec-

tory of the concept's development in the UK and internationally but does little to account for several key areas of action and influence which shape cultural life. To begin with, many of the possible leadership roles played by artists are not represented within a business-focused definition of cultural leadership which tends to foreground the structural needs of organisations and institutions ahead of the aesthetic and social concerns which may be driving cultural practice. This was the objection raised in the *Artist as Leader* research project. By questioning the implied inclusions and exclusions of cultural leadership, the final report consciously problematized the assumptions of cultural leadership: "The focus on the leadership of artists opens up a complexity around leadership and takes the discourse beyond organisations, skills and competencies" (Douglas & Fremantle, 2009: 5).

Critical writing on cultural leadership was in short supply at the outset of this research. At the time of the *Artist as Leader* work, published work that used the terminology was almost exclusively linked to the Clore programme, whether forming part of its setting up process (Hewison & Holden, 2002) or reflecting subsequently upon it (Hewison, 2004). These documents themselves quote a handful of more specific subsectoral reports to illustrate the combination of skills, management and recruitment issues which combine to form the cultural leadership crisis (see, for example, re:source, 2001). As the decade wore on, two trajectories of interest opened up: reflections within the cultural sector on the scope and meaning of its new topic, represented principally in the *Cultural Leadership Reader* (Kay & Venner, 2010), and interest from the business community in the potential leadership lessons now emanating from the creative sector (Adler, 2006). In the UK, this took official form in a report for the Treasury by Sir George Cox which attempted to pin down the secret formula of creativity as an ingredient for economic success (Cox, 2005). For the most part, these strands of literature mapped out the possible features of cultural leadership and considered either what was necessary for cultural professionals to become leaders or what could be learned from culture for the study of leadership. At this stage there was little critical engagement with the concept of leadership itself. One welcome exception to this appeared with Graham Leicester's paper for *Missions Models Money*, "Rising to the occasion", which reconsidered the role of arts and cultural leadership in an age of anxiety, uncertainty and complexity (Leicester, 2007). This recognised the burn-out potential of heaping ever more "miraculous" expectations on idealised leaders in all fields, pointing to a need to evolve organisational culture as much as the leader (Leicester, 2007: 6). It also identified the societal resource represented by the arts and cultural sector for retrieving meaning in a time of crisis and embodying the new relationships and structures demanded by change. Leicester's diagnosis goes beyond the needs of the

cultural sector while avoiding reduction to the demands of business. After a decade's intensification of the cultural crisis he describes, it bears revisiting¹.

Another alternative coinage of cultural leadership appears in a book derived from a 1995 symposium in Boston, *Cultural leadership in America* (Corn, 1998). This work refers to the role of private collectors, particularly women, in establishing late 19th and early 20th century galleries and museums in the United States and in the process acting as public tastemakers. Its subjects are wealthy amateur benefactors whose patronage (or "matronage") was essential in sustaining artistic careers at that time. The distinction of this definition from what has usually been connoted by cultural leadership in the UK and elsewhere since 2002 is worth considering for a moment: it highlights the specialisation acquired by the term, and its narrowness. Benefactors or tastemakers may be non-specialist or at least non-professional – nothing to do with arts management – but are nonetheless important shapers of the circumstances in which art is produced and cultural development occurs. Rather than being an internal issue for a cultural sector, such a conception of cultural leadership is outward facing, concerned with the public as much as with the artist or with the mechanics of running a building or organisation. It also refers to those whose access to wealth and the power to intervene according to their own tastes and values (and therefore in their own interests) gives them a privileged position in relation to the establishment of aesthetic norms and the cultural economy. In this context the scope of the term includes all of these things and the relationships between them. Despite its own highly specialised frame of reference, *Cultural Leadership in America* represents a useful alternative perspective on the concept, a counterpoint to the growing interest in arts management as a distinct profession that was also developing on the same side of the Atlantic around this time (Evard & Colbert, 2000; Lapierre, 2001).

Action and leadership: a theoretical critique

For a better understanding of the overall concept of leadership this research makes use of Hannah Arendt's theory of action as articulated in her 1958 work *The Human Condition*. Arendt sees action as a fundamental category of behaviour (alongside speech) through which we make ourselves distinct as human beings and begin to live a human life among other people (Arendt, 1998: 176). Arendt grounds her theory by tracing the development of words designating "to act" in Greek and Latin. She observes that each language originally employed two words for this, with

one (*archein* in Greek and *agere* in Latin) indicating the element of initiating or setting in motion, and the other (respectively *prattein* and *gerere*) meaning to achieve or complete. The relationship between the two suggested the interdependence of the elements of action as a principle of human affairs: whoever begins an action depends on others for its realisation and completion. Over time, however, the latter term became the word for action in general, whereas the "initiating" term acquired a political specialisation: to lead, or to rule. The interdependence of action split into separate functions: "the function of giving commands, which became the prerogative of the ruler, and the function of executing them, which became the duty of his subjects" (Arendt, 1998: 189).

Arendt shows how this development ruptures the original integration of action and works to isolate the ruler or leader from others. In terms of the concept's development in politics she goes on to identify Plato as the source for the archetype of the "strong man", the leader who is not dependent on others (Arendt, 1998: 222-223). Seeing dependency as a form of weakness, Plato proposes an ideal leader whose power derives from the fact that he is alone. Only this solitary strong man can be fully invested with authority – not only in the sense of being able to command, but also in the sense of being the sole author of action, beginning a story of which he will also determine the ending. For Arendt this figure is a "fallacy" (Arendt, 1998: 190). Such a fetishisation of leadership ruptures the integrated process of action, denying the dynamic contribution of its necessary net of relationships. This isolation of authority also creates a significant ethical problem, as the field of action becomes divided between those who give orders and those who follow them. Arendt, as a German-Jewish philosopher notable for her concern with the origins of totalitarianism, is particularly alert to the implications of this construction. Indeed, the present political moment of resurgent populism and bombastic national figureheads is an apt time for revisiting Arendt's political philosophy. Crude as the Platonic strong man figure may appear, it casts a significant shadow into our own era and across modern leadership theory. It appears not only in the simplistic techniques of the "transactional" leader, who ensures compliance through punishment and reward, but also in the variety of "heroic" leadership models which position the leader as inspirational or visionary (Bass, 1990). Such "transformational" figures have long been celebrated in corporate business culture, often looked to as potential miracle workers who can sort out problems almost through the force of their personality (Alvesson & Spicer, 2011: 14-15). It is a form of emphasis which foregrounds the individual, reducing all issues of leadership to the symbolic leader who becomes the source of all solutions and, in case of failure, the site of any problem. A result of

1 Leicester himself returned to these ideas in a piece for the *Cultural Leadership Reader* (Kay & Venner, 2010: 16-23) before expanding them in the 2012 book *Dancing at the Edge: Competence, Culture and Organization* in the 21st century, co-authored with Maureen O'Hara.

“ARENDRT’S THEORY SERVES AS A REMINDER THAT LEADERSHIP IS A MEANS TO AN END RATHER THAN AN END IN ITSELF. ULTIMATELY IT IS ACTION THAT MATTERS – FOR EXAMPLE THE PRODUCTION OF ART ITSELF, RATHER THAN THE STRUCTURES OF A SECTOR WHICH SHOULD EXIST TO SUPPORT IT”

this, and a danger, is that systemic issues can become suppressed or ignored (Alvesson & Spicer, 2011: 168). In circumstances where it is not possible to address root causes or to effect cultural change, it can therefore be particularly tempting to make extravagant demands of the much more visible individual leader. For cultural organisations the frequent pressure to deliver short-term results in trying circumstances can make the pursuit of charisma particularly attractive – the sector constituting, as Robert Hewison puts it, “a system where only heroic leadership appears capable of overcoming all the obstacles and difficulties that are inherent in the system” (Hewison, 2004: 163). This can lead to flawed recruitment processes and excessive tolerance of the foibles of those who seem, outwardly, to represent the desired silver bullet solution; in this respect, pervasive cultural sector stereotypes such as the “diva” or troubled genius contribute unhelpfully, even to the point of fostering bullying (Quigg, 2011).

Arendt’s theory serves as a reminder that leadership is a means to an end rather than an end in itself. Ultimately it is action that matters – for example the production of art itself, rather than the structures of a sector which should exist to support it. One theme arising from the research interviews, particularly in relation to the financial crisis, was the need for lighter touch organisational frameworks to support projects and, sometimes, for organisations to be allowed to die when they have served their purpose (Fremantle, 2013: 5; Glass, 2013: 9-10). Cultural leadership should ask questions of the purposes we want to pursue, and therefore of what structures are necessary for the future, rather than being limited to questions of how we manage and maintain the organisations we already have.

Arendt’s theory also identifies three distinctive features of action: unpredictability, plurality and boundlessness. Action is unpredictable because it exists in an endless chain of action and reaction. An action is the beginning of a story that will be continued through the responses of others, the further consequences of which cannot themselves be foreseen. Action is plural because of this necessary relationship to others. Many people are involved in the realisation of an action or the response to it, forming the basis (in Arendt’s terms) for political life. It is through the in-

volvement of others that any human action derives its meaning. Finally, action is boundless because responses and interactions cannot be limited to any one sphere of human affairs. The knock-on effects can make themselves felt well beyond the original actor’s field of operation (the appropriation of technological advances for unforeseen uses is illustrative of this kind of process). These elements of action relate strongly to two essential dimensions of cultural leadership which are frequently emphasised in research interviews and group discussions: its orientation to the future, and its relationship to people. In fact any kind of leadership must be defined in terms of these two aspects. Exactly who is included and prioritised in action, and how the unknowns and uncertainties of the future are encountered, are key to understanding the character and effectiveness of cultural leadership as it is practiced and experienced. It can correspondingly be observed that the limitations of leadership are revealed by patterns of exclusion. Such limits are defined in the negative by the needs, interests and contexts which go unrecognised or are unvalued in the processes through which intended action (or policy) is decided.

The experience of cultural leadership

Throughout the research programme conversations and exchanges with artists, cultural managers and policy makers have been central to the development of thinking. This process continued into a third phase with the project Cultural leadership and the place of the artist (2015-2016), funded by the UK’s Arts & Humanities Research Council. This added a series of group seminars and discussions to the earlier programme of interviews². Participants at these events included previous research interviewees, some of them contributors from the original Artist as Leader programme, producing mature reflections from long-standing engagement with the themes. Participants were invited to relate the constructions of policy and theory to their own experiences and interpretations of cultural leadership.

² For more information, see <https://ontheedgeresearch.org/cultural-leadership-and-the-place-of-the-artist-2015-16/>

One form of understanding which emerged with surprising consistency within the research was the perception that cultural leadership is something that happens internally within the cultural sector. To a large extent, the original discursive construction remains intact, in spite of the fact that it was produced by a particular set of circumstances at a particular time and place. Cultural leadership tends not to be interpreted as a role or process with external significance or influence – shaping cultural life and experience for a community or a nation – even by those professionals who are otherwise powerful advocates for the social significance of artistic expression and cultural participation. The compound term “cultural leadership” has potential to carry a great variety of meaning but instead is used within the sector to point narrowly to organisational management and direction finding. Within this, one interesting distinction can still be identified. On one level cultural leaders can be seen simply as those responsible for the success of their particular cultural organisation or project. This is consistent with the “highly entrepreneurial senior manager” identified by Rossello (2014: 5) as the basis of cultural leadership discourse in the 2000s. An alternative understanding is that cultural leadership involves working for the greater good of the sector as a whole, being prepared to put aside personal or local interests where necessary. This calls for organisations to be “generous” rather than competitive (Ward, 2014: 7) or for individuals to demonstrate a “vocational” form of commitment (Fuller & Tregidden, 2014: 10). This sense that there is a higher principle to serve may be typical of voluntary or not-for-profit organisations more generally; the vocation or higher purpose could be education, health or social work. There is nothing essentially “cultural” about either construction. In essence these internally focused understandings of cultural leadership involve generic conceptions of leadership being mapped onto the cultural sector. What is distinctive about culture is not how the sector’s organisations operate as businesses but the role that the content of their work plays for individuals and society, their processes of making meaning and communicating different forms of value. A third and perhaps fuller understanding of cultural leadership would therefore involve an external focus, an engagement with the forms of social exchange that cultural production entails. A cultural leader thus understood is someone connected with society, prepared to intervene and propose or even impose meaning. Such a cultural leader is an active social agent, not a mere purveyor of goods in a cultural market place. In interviews and other research discussions with cultural professionals, it is consistently individuals showing characteristics of vocational generosity or public engagement who are recognised and respected as leaders within their peer group.

One of the research programme’s events took place in Edinburgh in 2016 with a strong representation of artists amongst the group of contributors³. Thinking about the ways in which artists might lead drew us inevitably into discussion about what it is that art does which is distinctive from other fields of human activity. For several in the room at least part of the answer lay in art’s capacity to engage with uncertainty and to articulate contradiction without feeling compelled to resolve or deny conflict. Art is able to hold onto paradox. This was seen as of particular value in a world of “wicked” problems for which clear and simple solutions will never be available. This is part of its contribution to human knowledge⁴. Such an understanding relates closely to an earlier research interview with the producer Roanne Dods in which she characterises her role in terms of the timescale for decision-making:

The ability of a producer to keep ambivalence open for longer is different than a traditional hero leader or entrepreneur leader (...) traditionally leaders are quick decision makers, you know, sorting out problems, moving things through with a very particular sense of time, and will see their jobs done sooner (Dods, 2014: 4).

By keeping a decision open for longer, resisting resolution, a wider range of possibilities remain available within the artistic process. The sociologist of art Pascal Gielen adds an important observation to a similar point when he ascribes to the artist the role of “problematizing” issues and contrasts this with the “problem-solving” purpose now routinely allocated to “creativity” in public policy (Gielen, 2013: 38). Two possible conclusions can be drawn from all of this. One is that the ability to hold paradox or to live with conflict could suggest at least a partial answer to the question – often asked – of what is distinctively “cultural” about cultural leadership. An alternative way of looking at it is that creating the space for uncertainty or tension to be expressed is a specific task of cultural leadership – that in resisting pressure to provide neat solutions or conclusions a leader opens up the capacity of a given cultural form or process to realise its deeper value.

This outlook relates strongly to issues of trust in intra-sectoral relationships, something that emerged repeatedly as a crucial ingredient of cultural leadership in the process of research. Both in relevant literature and in the experiences of interviewees, increasingly “managerialist” approaches to implementation of cultural policy, particularly in terms of relationships between funders and the funded, appeared as strongly negative influences on cultural development (Caust, 2003; Belfiore, 2004; Hewison, 2006). The tendency of this approach is to require certainty about what will be achieved and to impose rigorous controls

³ Part of the Cultural leadership and the place of the artist programme, this event took place in Edinburgh on the 20 May 2016. The present analysis draws on recordings of the sessions which are in possession of the author. A short review of the event is available at: <https://ontheedgeresearch.org/2016/05/28/holding-the-paradox/>

⁴ It is perhaps significant that a large proportion of the artists at this event work predominantly with environmental issues.

“IF PART OF THE ROLE OF CULTURAL LEADERSHIP IS TO CREATE SPACE FOR THE CREATIVE PROCESS, TO KEEP POSSIBILITIES OPEN AND UNRESOLVED, THEN SUCH TENDENCIES IN PUBLIC MANAGEMENT CREATE DISCOMFORTING TENSION”

– in the name of accountability and value for public money – to ensure that contractual promises are kept. Unfortunately this relates very poorly to how cultural activities actually function, as Leeds City Council's cultural director Cluny Macpherson observes: “There’s a sort of confusion about how ideas and creativity [are] at the basis of it, rather than outcomes” (Macpherson, 2014: 6). In a similar vein, Jane Spiers (Aberdeen Performing Arts) relates an experience from a previous workplace of dealing with a new financial manager who had come from outside of the cultural sector. This individual struggled to understand ambitious conversations taking place at board level about projects for developing the venue:

And this guy sort of said, I don't understand why you're even having this conversation, there's no money in the budget. And I said to him, you know what, there's never any money in the budget – that's what working in the arts is. But we don't stifle creativity because there's no money in the budget... The process is we have conversations about what we want to do... and then we go out and raise the money for them. That's how it works, you know. And we bring in a million pounds a year for these projects (Spiers, 2014: 12).

This is not about not being business-like – Spiers is elsewhere infuriated by the tendency in cultural discourse to separate or even oppose “business” and “the arts” (Spiers, 2014: 16) – but about doing business in the way that is appropriate to cultural action and creative ideas: “Take it as read: if we don’t have the money for a project, we don’t do it. But the process is, what is it we want to do, fire the imagination, get out there, raise the money, and deliver the project” (Spiers, 2014: 12).

Managerialism denies the unpredictability of action with which culture and many of its professionals are otherwise well suited to engage. If part of the role of cultural leadership is to create space for the creative process, to keep possibilities open and unresolved, then such tendencies in public management create discomfoting tension. It is a false interpretation of financial accountability if the process through which it is pursued damages the purpose for which expenditure was originally allocated. Nonetheless, those in the public and cultural sectors who manage or receive public funding still have a democratic duty

to be accountable. Dealing with this tension productively rather than counter-productively is a key part of their specific leadership challenge.

This form of understanding helps to illustrate management theorist Keith Grint's (2005) observation that leadership is not only about “person” and “position” but also “result” and “process”. Much leadership theory and training, being focused on the individual leader, concentrates on the necessary capacities of the leader (person) to effect change in connection with their role in a hierarchy (position). The impact of leadership is achieved in this sense through purposeful individual action. However, other important processes of leadership can be experienced more subtly as forms of influence, including for example the influence of artistic work on other artists and on society. Rather than working through direct and deliberate action the leader acts as exemplar – perhaps even unconsciously – and the effect of leadership may only be detectable retrospectively in the light of whatever difference has been made (result). Meanwhile, individual agency may not be traceable at all, or simply may not be the most significant factor, in the operation of broader social or organisational dynamics (process). Such processes may not be susceptible to being taught or tamed via regular training courses, but they remain integral to the operation of culture. It may be that some artists, particularly those active in relational or social practices, are well ahead of policy makers and training providers in understanding how to acknowledge such ambiguous influences and accommodate them in their creative work. This does not mean, of course, that the same individuals are necessarily good at the day to day running of organisations. Reconciling these different elements of conceptual potential and practical requirement lies at the heart of the challenge of leadership development for the sector.

Conclusion: three dimensions of cultural leadership

The modern policy agenda of cultural leadership emerged out of a concern for the future of cultural organisations and the ability of the cultural sector to develop and maintain the skills required for their suc-

successful operation. Critique of the discourse of cultural leadership through the programme of research at On The Edge has questioned whether this construction is sufficient to account for how cultural activity is shaped, both in terms of the ways in which artists and other cultural sector actors may lead in different spheres of activity and in terms of how forces of influence from outside the sector act upon it. The forms of cultural leadership development that became established through training programmes from the Clore Leadership Programme onwards emerged as responses to a particular sense of crisis at a certain moment in the UK. This perception of crisis emerged just as the cultural sector's economic and social significance was achieving rare recognition and support within government. Leadership discourse provided a route through which this uncomfortable coincidence could be resolved, and with its aura of "creativity", culture seemed well placed to make a reciprocal contribution. Within a few years, UK training providers were in a position to begin exporting a particular brand of cultural leadership expertise. For this, in the sector both nationally and internationally, appetites remain strong, perhaps stoked in turn by the renewed and more general atmosphere of crisis proceeding from the economic earthquake of a decade ago and the various political tsunamis that have followed. As critical analysts Mats Alvesson and André Spicer have observed, leadership now has a tendency to be proposed as the solution to almost any kind of organisational or societal problem (Alvesson & Spicer, 2011: 1).

The discourse of cultural leadership which has developed over the last decade and a half continues to frame understanding among cultural professionals of what the concept is and can be. Analysis of this discourse reveals its limitations and assumptions, and this paper has considered some of the broader and richer ways of interpreting leadership in culture which can be considered by artists, policy makers and training providers. These raise essential questions about the role of art and culture in public life which, it is suggested, should be actively considered by any artist who wishes to understand or extend their individual autonomy. A challenge is also set for training providers in terms of which levels of leadership they are prepared or equipped to address in their courses. Reflecting on

the 10 years of research at On The Edge, three different focal points can be identified: *entrepreneurial* cultural leadership (centring on the interests and operational success of a project or organisation, at whatever scale of operation); *generous* cultural leadership (prioritising the needs of the cultural form or sector, extending efforts beyond individual or organisational interest); and *public* cultural leadership (relating to wider societal influence and involvement in the public realm)⁵. The first two of these are internally oriented with regard to the cultural sector and the third is outward facing. They are all relevant across different financial or organisational models. Entrepreneurial in this sense means the ability to gather people and resources around an idea and to deliver on strategies for its realisation. It can involve public funding, private enterprise, voluntary commitment or any combination that can be made viable. It is essential for every kind of work; it is often the reason why boards send their executives on training courses and it is what the original understanding of cultural leadership in UK policy and training was established to improve. The cultural sector, however, would be unrecognisable without generous leadership, and it would also be dysfunctional. The form of commitment that this expresses is vocational. It is not unique to cultural professions but it has a recognisable and integral function within them. Public leadership, meanwhile, includes everything from civic and social commitments to the role of the sector in

the wider economy. It includes the values expressed through creative work and the issues at whose service an organisation or individual may choose to put their reputation and practice.

Naturally, these categories overlap and concern for one focus does not exclude operating in relation to another. The entrepreneurial and the generous can be linked by enlightened self-interest (it may be entrepreneurially advantageous to be part of a healthy, thriving sector) while it may be public concerns that cause an entrepreneurially demanding project or organisation to be established in the first place; but the three elements do not dissolve in these areas of fusion. Differentiating between these different centres of focus can be useful for the analysis of a shifting discourse and may help to explain various communica-

"THE LANGUAGE OF LEADERSHIP CAN HAVE A GREAT VARIETY OF MEANINGS WHEN EMPLOYED ACROSS THESE DIFFERENT REGISTERS. FOR DIFFERENT TIMES AND PLACES, CULTURAL SECTOR LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT REQUIRES CONTINUAL READJUSTMENT OF ITS FOCUS ACCORDING TO CONTEMPORARY CHALLENGES"

⁵ Sue Hoyle, from the Clore Leadership Programme, has written about "generous" leadership as the basis of a more relational style with particular relevance to the cultural sector (Hoyle, 2014a).

tion breakdowns between individuals or organisations whose outlook is dominated by (or excludes) one or other frame of reference. The language of leadership can have a great variety of meanings when employed across these different registers. For different times and places, cultural sector leadership development requires continual readjustment of its focus according to contemporary challenges. Graham Leicester's 2007 analysis argued that in a time of cultural crisis the cultural sector can provide the people, settings and forms of knowledge and perception that can help evolve the culture (Leicester, 2007: 12-13). The first task, then, is to be clear about which crisis we consider ourselves to be addressing. A meaningful approach to cultural leadership development must therefore take into account the public dimension which goes beyond the internal functionality of cultural sector management, where the artist's ability to engage with paradox and unpredictability is understood as an essential component of the concept's value. Further research would be required to see to what extent today's leadership programmes have evolved their focus to include this perspective and to reflect changing needs.

These three dimensions of cultural leadership (entrepreneurial, generous and public) can be related to, but do not precisely match, the three scenarios of artistic leadership identified in the Artist as Leader research – organisational, aesthetic and public realm (Douglas & Fremantle, 2009). One final point worth making is that you do not have to be an artist, or even a professional within the cultural sector, to act or wield influence in any one of these dimensions. Non-cultural organisations – and individuals like the matrons and patrons of *Cultural Leadership in America* – can initiate cultural projects. People whose primary role is external to the cultural sector can act or intervene in relation to its interests, as politicians and lawmakers continually do. Society, meanwhile, shapes cultural production through its appetites, technologies, tolerances and structures just as culture, in turn, shapes social values and identity. Here is culture's plurality, and also its boundlessness. The public realm is a place of exchange. It is perhaps where many of the most important but least understood processes of cultural leadership take place.

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The mind of the artist/the mind of the leader: what neuroscience can teach us about the training of arts managers and leaders

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ABSTRACT

This research paper will triangulate neuroscience with performing artist cognitive traits and the training of arts leaders. The authors will examine current research in the burgeoning field of neuro-cognition and its pedagogical implications for teaching future arts leaders who come to the study from a performing arts background. The paper will present several discoveries on how the mind works and how this research helps us understand the parallels between the habits of mind utilized by performing artists and the training of the arts leader. Leadership training for future arts leaders is a critical component of their education, but we often rely on pedagogical tools created for the business world or generic nonprofit education modified to suit the realities of arts organizations. This presentation will illustrate a new pedagogical model that draws from research into how the brain works, our understanding of the mind and practice of the performing artist. Using new research on the practice of thinking and learning to inform leadership models in arts management and applying the habits of the artistic mind to the training of arts leaders points to a broadening of our pedagogical toolbox and may indeed be a new way forward in the field.

Keywords:

Arts management training
Arts leadership
Neuro-cognition
Creative brain

Introduction

The contemporary literature of leadership is rife with works by successful entrepreneurs, corporate CEOs, business tycoons, product inventors and self-help gurus, sharing their personal stories of perseverance and suggesting that you too can be a success by following the author's example and principles. These works are anecdotal in nature and while often inspiring, provide little in the way of scientific proof, evidence, data, or testing. They are popular literature that is unfortunately too often read as not only fact, but replicable fact. Those who teach leadership within the academic community should view them as case studies, at best. The authors of this paper look to the seminal research of psychologist Daniel Goleman, who first published his groundbreaking book *Emotional Intelligence* in 1995, and in 1998 his classic article in *Harvard Business Review*, "What Makes a Leader?". It remains the most requested article in *HBR*'s history. In this paper, we will review Goleman's theories as they apply to leadership in the workplace, examine how emotional intelligence is perhaps the critical factor in the training of performing artists (dance, music and acting), examine some of the latest research in how the brain¹ works, and finally connect the dots between the theory, current research, and implications for the future training of artists as leaders.

The theory of emotional intelligence and the training of leaders

Goleman's pioneering research in the 1990s with over 200 large companies across the globe provided him with abundant evidence that emotional intelligence is primary to the success of the leader and that education, practical skill, and experience are secondary (Goleman, 1995). His research led him to conclude that there are domains of emotional intelligence and related personal competencies that the best leaders exhibit and that can be learned by aspiring leaders (Goleman, Boyatzis & McKee, 2002).

The first of these domains is personal competence, the capabilities that determine how we manage ourselves. Personal competence includes:

Self-awareness

- Emotional self-awareness: reading one's own emotions and recognizing their impact; using gut sense to guide decisions (intuition).
- Accurate self-assessment: knowing one's strengths and limits.

- Self-confidence: a sound sense of one's self-worth and capabilities.

Self-management

- Emotional self-control: keeping disruptive emotions and impulses under control.
- Transparency: displaying honesty and integrity; trustworthiness.
- Adaptability: flexibility in adapting to changing situations or overcoming obstacles.
- Achievement: the drive to improve performance to meet inner standards of excellence.
- Initiative: readiness to act and seize opportunities.
- Optimism: seeing the upside in events.

The second domain is social competence, the capabilities that determine how we manage relationships. Social competence includes:

Social awareness

- Empathy: sensing others' emotions, understanding their perspective, and taking active interest in their concerns.
- Organizational awareness: reading the currents, decision networks, and politics at the organizational level.
- Service: recognizing and meeting follower, client, or customer needs.

Relationship management

- Inspirational leadership: guiding and motivating with a compelling vision.
- Influence: wielding a range of tactics for persuasion.
- Developing others: bolstering others' abilities through feedback and guidance.
- Change catalyst: initiating, managing, and leading in a new direction.
- Conflict management: resolving disagreements.
- Building bonds: cultivating and maintaining a web of relationships.
- Teamwork and collaboration: cooperation and team building².

Within these domains reside threads of human behavior that bind these competencies together. Goleman and George (George, 2000) contend that our emotional life is dependent on our connection with others. There is an open loop of communication between people that informs our emotional life. The stronger this connection, the more likely that people will mirror each other's emotions and physiology. We

¹ Researchers use the terms brain and mind, often interchangeably. The authors of this article use brain when referring to the physical organ and mind when referring to the feeling, thinking, and reasoning elements of consciousness. However, when quoting others, we defer to the usage of those authors.

² These domains of emotional intelligence and related competencies are described by Goleman et al (2002).

“THE CONTEMPORARY TRAINING OF DANCERS, MUSICIANS AND ACTORS RELIES ON A SHARED SYSTEM OF PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT, SKILL ACQUISITION AND, EQUALLY IMPORTANT, THE CAREFUL DEVELOPMENT OF THE ARTIST’S EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE”

feel the other’s pain, joy, sadness, loss, and not only metaphorically, but as a function of the part of the brain known as the mirror neuron system. The strong emotions we sense in others can stimulate the very same physical manifestations, such as tightening in the throat, tears, or a smile. Significant research has been undertaken over the past 20 years to understand the workings of this system, particularly with individuals who manifest disorder on the autism spectrum and with those who suffer from social-emotional agnosia and individuals who fail to recognize emotions, the inability to recognize facial expression in another person (Rubin et al, 2005).

There is also a contagious element to our emotions. One need only recognize how quickly laughter manifests and spreads in an audience watching a comedic performance. We can also look to the performance – the relationship between the performer and the audience – to see how the expression of one’s emotions can draw in other people. We can become captivated by expressions of pain, joy, sadness and loss. So too, our moods have a distinct effect on other people. A leader with a bad mood can significantly alter the dynamics of a meeting, impairing the communication between attendees and ultimately lowering productivity. Perhaps the most damaging behavior is allowing our emotions to hijack our reasoning. Crimes of passion, road rage, and lately Brexit and Trumpism are examples of emotional hijacking and its effects on the behavior of individuals caught in the moment.

Training of performing artists

The authors of this paper posit that the contemporary training of dancers, musicians and actors relies on a shared system of physical development, skill acquisition and, equally important, the careful development of the artist’s emotional intelligence. The latter is of particular interest to this article and the authors’ attempt to link the training of arts leaders and the training of performing artists. The authors contend that the artists physical training and skill acquisition must be accompanied by the development of focus, flow, intuition, and mastery in order to develop the whole artist. Furthermore, artists must be keenly aware of how empathy, inspiration, influence, change and collaboration affect not only social awareness but the ability

of the artist to manage relationships with others. The authors believe that these elements directly relate to the competencies proposed by Goleman (in Goleman, Boyatzis & McKee, 2002). Therefore, the personal competency and social competency described by Goleman et al will serve as the organizing framework for this discussion.

Personal competence: self-awareness and self-management

Focus

The ability to simultaneously concentrate rational thinking, emotional life, physical presence and skill is an essential activity for the performing artist. Dancers and musicians may spend much of their young lives, beginning at the age of 3 or 4, in the studio or at home with lessons, learning to focus their minds on the mastery of their art. It is only through focused practice that a high level of creative competence can emerge. Research with patients of traumatic brain injury has found that the ability to suspend traditional beliefs or paradigms (when wrestling with a problem) and to practice thinking patterns outside of the individual’s norm are key to creative solutions (Heilman, 2016).

Flow

Performers (and athletes) understand what it means to be in flow, sometimes known as “in the zone”. It is a heightened state of presence in the here and now, of highly energized focus, of both awareness and freedom, and powerful emotion – often a deeply felt satisfaction and joy. While it can be found in rehearsal, it is truly the hallmark of performance, when the artist must abandon the kind of focus required for preparation and immerse in a complex dynamic that is, for the audience, a mystery.

Intuition

Researcher Dietrich found (through a survey of literature and experiments on the frontal lobe) that total absorption in a task causes the individual to “forget oneself” through the suspension of self-awareness and become fully absorbed in the task (Dietrich, 2004).

This transition from the awareness of self to the liberation of unconscious mind allowed for suppression of the analytical brain functions and gave reign to the intuitive functions. This is a key element of the creative process, allowing the use of intuition to link sensory input and problem-solving in unique ways. Artists engaged in improvisation utilize intuition to a high degree, yet such intuition is reliant on a highly developed level of skill and competence that the artist has acquired through study and practice.

Mastery

This is perhaps what most people (including young students) think of as the way that a performer is trained – the acquisition of skill, the mastery of technique, the development of talent, and the capacity to make interesting creative choices based on an ever-growing personal experience with the art form. Heilman and his team, reviewing literature on traumatic brain injury (TBI) patient brain activity concluded that skill mastery and the challenges posed by skill mastery created a “creative ready brain” (Heilman et al, 2003) . Competence, in and of itself, is insufficient and must be integrated into a holistic process of training the performer that assimilates intuition, empathy, flow and focus – thus, creating the whole artist.

Social competence: social awareness and relationship management

Empathy

Performers working together, in an ensemble, and in both rehearsal and performance, must exercise their empathetic emotional skills to a high degree. Cognitive empathy, the ability to recognize the emotion felt by another person, is not only a sensory process involving listening, seeing and, particularly for dancers and actors, often touching. It is also a function of the previously mentioned mirror neuron system, which allows us to similarly feel what another person is experiencing. But empathy for the performer must go beyond recognition and include what is known as affective empathy, the ability to respond appropriately once the emotion of the other is recognized. This forms the basis of method acting training, which emphasizes that the actor generates a realistic affective response (perspective taking) to the emotional behavior of the acting partner.

Inspiration and Influence

The stage director, choreographer and music director all have a primary task in the creative process: to create an artistic vision and to inspire performers to that vision through the rehearsal and performance of

the art. Stage director and author Anne Bogart states it well when she says that “we create journeys for others to be received in the spirit of a gift” (Bogart, 2001). In this quote, Bogart refers to the elusive concept of inspiration. Bogart believes inspiration to be a gift that inspires connection, and perhaps even reciprocity between the giver and receiver. The act of inspiration, in leadership, shifts the focus from the leader to the other and the giving of a gift implies generosity toward the recipient, the creation of a bond between the giver and the recipient, and engendering good will with the recipient (Latham, 2014). It is an unselfish act which, in the leadership context, shifts the focus from the leader to the other and in so doing facilitates the accomplishment of the primary task.

Catalyzing change

Change is an ever-present factor in art. It inspires artists to create original work and to interpret or re-interpret the works created by others. The desire to create change is at the center of the creative impulse which in turn has the potential to create change in the world. In his essay on *The Field of Cultural Production*, Pierre Bourdieu (1993), the seminal cultural theorist of the late 20th century, argues that both the agent of cultural production (the artist) and the perceiver (the audience) are invariably influenced by the social reality in which art is created, presented, and perceived. For the artist, Bourdieu defines this as “habitus” or “a feel for the game”. The artist, influenced by current reality as well as past life experience, transforms artistic output, consciously or unconsciously, to suit the form and pressure of the times. In other words, the transformative experience is what artists seek and, coincidentally, what audiences yearn for (Bourdieu, 1993). The artist, therefore, by very nature is a catalyzer of change.

Collaboration

Collaboration within the performing arts is both second nature and a practiced skill. Children learn it at an early age when the notion of “playing well with others” is first reinforced in their consciousness and behavior. Artists carry this throughout their entire lives, honing their collaborative skills through improvisation, ensemble work, and their relationships with those who make their work possible – technicians, designers, stage crews, publicists, payroll managers, and on and on. As dancer and choreographer Twyla Tharp states, “Collaborators aren’t born, they’re made. Or, to be more precise, built, a day at a time, through practice, through attention, through discipline, through passion and commitment – and most of all, through habit” (Tharp, 2009).

In summary, Goleman (1995) and Goleman, Boyatzis and McKee’s (2002) work allow us to examine leader-

ship traits through the framework of two competencies: personal competence and social competence. These two areas of competence, according to Goleman, orient the leader to a relationship with the self and with the external world. The internal and often reflective concepts of focus, flow, intuition, and mastery support the personal competence of the artistic leader. The concept of empathy orients the artistic leader to social awareness while inspiration, catalyzing change and developing collaboration provide the needed focus on managing relationships with others. These competencies form the bridge to what we now know as emotional intelligence (Rubin et al, 2005; Latham, 2014). Goleman's domains of personal competence and social competence, when connected to the artist's unique emotional intelligence, provide the infrastructure for the development of the unique capabilities of the artist-leader.

Recent research that expands our understanding of emotional intelligence

The burgeoning field of neuroscience has been expanding at an ever-increasing rate over the past 25 years as new research tools have been applied that safely reveal the workings of the brain's interior. Using such tools as optogenetics, functional magnetic resonance imaging, electroencephalography, and positron emission tomography researches have been able to study how the brain works in greater detail, with more accuracy, and often in clinical settings that approximate the way in which research subjects actually function in the world. Now, equally as exciting is the scope of research that uses less technical and perhaps more prosaic investigatory methods of observation and behavioral measurement with no less striking conclusions. These tools now allow our understanding of the brain to further build upon Goleman's competencies and the concepts of focus, flow, intuition, mastery, empathy, inspiration, change and collaboration. The results of recent research have both confirmed what has been commonly accepted and illuminated new and sometimes surprising understanding of cog-

niton, emotional intelligence, perception and creativity. We shall look at just a very small sample of this research as it pertains to emotionally resonant leadership and how the creative brain functions.

Traditional theory of mind (ToM) says that we understand or predict the behavior or beliefs of others (mentalizing) and then respond accordingly. For example, I make assumptions about the beliefs of someone who supports Donald Trump or Brexit and then determine that this is someone I do not want to engage with and would rather ignore. My behavior is determined by how I understand the mindset of the other person. ToM includes cognitive empathy, putting

yourself in someone else's shoes to understand him. New research suggests that affective (emotional) empathy is a precursor to cognitive empathy – we need to feel the other person before we can empathize (Divash & Shamay-Tsoory, 2014). This two-step process is an essential tool for stage actors who in both training and performance observe the behavior of their acting partner and respond to it.

Researchers looking at TBI and frontal lobe studies concluded that being "in flow" suspends the rational, analytical brain and allows the individual greater ability to connect with their environment and individuals within that environment while engaged in problem-solving; thus, evolving the emotions and identifying/understanding with the emotions of others (Heilman et al, 2003).

Near wins and motivation

Researchers from INSEAD Business School found that near wins are more motivating than actual wins, which seems counterintuitive. They created various near win experiences and found that subjects ran faster to get to a chocolate bar and salivated more for money. In consumer research, it was found that near wins motivate shoppers to spend more on consumer goods (Wadhwa & Kim, 2015).

Combinatory play and neuroaesthetics

Clinical psychologist Victoria Stevens looks at the recent subfield of neuroaesthetics, which examines the neurological basis for the creative process and recent research. She looks at combinatory play: conscious

"THE INTERNAL AND OFTEN REFLECTIVE CONCEPTS OF FOCUS, FLOW, INTUITION, AND MASTERY SUPPORT THE PERSONAL COMPETENCE OF THE ARTISTIC LEADER"

2 Creative Saskatchewan works closely with the six creative industry associations: SaskGalleries, SaskMusic, Saskatchewan Crafts Council, Saskatchewan Motion Picture Industry Association (SMPIA), Saskatchewan Interactive Media Association and SaskBooks.

and unconscious interplay of ideas, senses, thoughts, etc. that are a hallmark of creative process, and the imagination (Stevens, 2014). Method actors are expert at combinatory play, wherein the technique teaches the performer to emulate realistic behavior under imaginary circumstances. Johns Hopkins researchers mapped jazz musician's brains during improvisation and found that their musicianship affected the neural network of the brain, resulting in greater interplay of brain functionality. Improvisers demonstrate a more efficient combinatory play (Pinho et al, 2014).

Researcher Dietrich examined the intersection between flow and sensory (body) input as the basis for creative happenings. These happenings combine previously mastered skills with the brain's intuitive processes, which then allowed the brain's implicit knowledge base to "play" with combinations and creative problem-solving without interference from the brain's more analytical systems (Dietrich, 2004).

Heilman and his team, reviewing literature on TBI patient brain activity, concluded that skill mastery and the challenges posed by skill mastery created a "creative ready brain" (Heilman et al, 2003).

Divergent/convergent thinking

TBI researcher Heilman theorized that the individual has to be willing to abandon preconceptions and accepted "normal" paradigms to achieve focus on a problem. He further found that being totally absorbed in a task (in flow) helped with that suspension; allowing creative applications of previous skills and knowledge. This experience of divergent/convergent thinking is part of creativity (Heilman, 2016).

Improvisation

Dietrich's work on flow and sensory input demonstrates improvisation as enabling of the brain's intrinsic system (intuition) to dominate over the explicit system (rational analytical); he terms this as "flexibility" (Dietrich, 2004).

Circuitry of the creative brain

Researchers Finger, Zaidel, Boller and Bogouslavsky (2013) in their study of patients with TBI (imaging via magnetic resonance imaging [MRI]) conclude creativity as a whole brain activity and not limited to right or left brain activity (right brain or left brain). Observing patients engaged in creative problem-solving shows the entire brain is engaged – not one particular area (Finger et al, 2013).

Brain plasticity

Dietrich's research suggests that creativity is a higher-level process and forces the "brain space" to expand (we use more of our brains when engaged in creative flow) and further reinforces the physical structure of

the brain to generate more "room/capacity" for this thinking later. Creativity begets creativity (Dietrich, 2004).

In summary, Goleman's personal and social competencies, when examined in tandem with the core concepts of focus, flow, intuition, mastery, empathy, inspiration, change and collaboration, create a new lens. This framework provides a structure for evaluating contemporary neuro-research and combining these findings with the skills that are inherent to the artist leader. Further nurturing these inherent capabilities enhances the leadership capabilities of the artist.

Mirroring artistic training and leadership training

Trained performing artists are often ill equipped to understand the cognitive and emotional underpinnings of their craft. They are, after all, practitioners and not theorists, and their job is to deliver a great performance. Unlike professor Harold Hill's *think method* in *The Music Man*, musicians do not learn their craft by thinking about how to play their instruments, they learn by playing them. Even the more academic aspects of artistry – music theory for musicians, anatomy for dancers, script analysis for actors – are a small fraction of the training and best accomplished within the context of applied music, dance and theatre.

Leadership, however, can and should be thought about. Goleman, Boyatzis and McKee (2002) state this quite clearly in *Primal Leadership*:

The crux of leadership development that works is self-directed learning: intentionally developing or strengthening an aspect of who you are or who you want to be, or both. This requires first getting a strong image of your ideal self, as well as an accurate picture of your real self – who you are now. Such self-directed learning is most effective and sustainable when you understand the process of change – and the steps to achieve it – as you go through it (Goleman, Boyatzis & McKee, 2002).

The model of this self-directed learning, according to researcher and theorist Richard Boyatzis (Goleman, Boyatzis & McKee, 2002), is a series of discoveries, illustrated in figure 1:

- Understanding and describing your real self.
- Imagining your ideal self.
- Creating a learning agenda that capitalizes on your strengths while filling gaps as you plan a path to your ideal self.
- Experiment with and practice new behaviors.
- Develop supportive relationships that will provide honest feedback and encouragement.

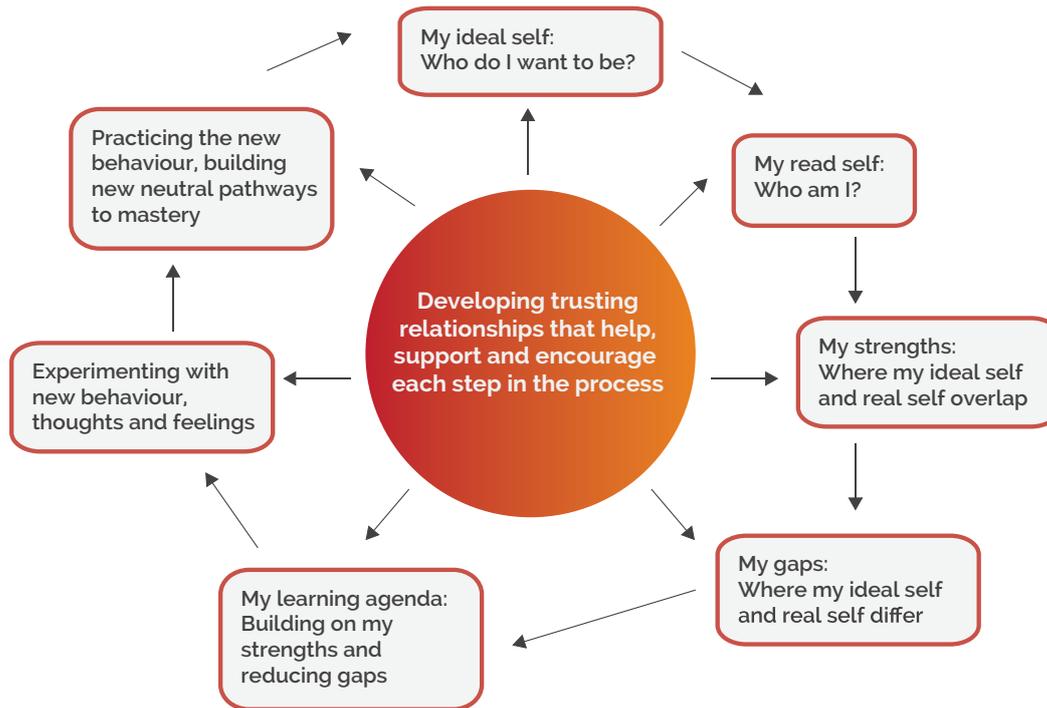


FIGURE 1. BOYATZIS' THEORY OF SELF-DIRECTED LEARNING

Source: Goleman, Boyatzis & McKee (2002).

In essence, Boyatzis' work not only combines the personal and social competences of Goleman by utilizing the core concepts of focus, flow, intuition, mastery, empathy, inspiration, change and collaboration but it also provides further framework for the incorporation of new neuro-research into the training of artist leaders. As we examine the best way to prepare and educate artist leaders, it becomes apparent that there are striking similarities between Goleman's theories of emotional intelligence, the learning model developed by Boyatzis, and the creative learning process by which performing artists develop their craft. Recent research in the field of neuroscience helps us to understand the connections.

Boyatzis' concept of moving from the real self to the ideal self is a fundamental construct for performing artists. All young performers who have the ambition to succeed in their chosen craft fantasize about the artist that they seek to become. They restlessly examine the

path to this goal, recognizing that their strengths as performers must constantly be honed and their weaknesses strengthened. This path (the learning agenda) will require years of training with trusted coaches and teachers who guide and support them, all the while experimenting with behavior, technique, emotional life and collaboration within the practice room, the rehearsal hall, and on stage.

“USING GOLEMAN AS THE BASIS, WE CAN LEAD THE ARTIST FIRST TO AN UNDERSTANDING OF THE THEORY OF EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AND THEN THROUGH THE CREATION OF A SELF-DIRECTED AND PERSONAL MODEL OF LEADERSHIP LEARNING”

This artistic path is in many ways a perfect mirror to the training of the leader. Using Goleman as the basis, we can lead the artist first to an understanding of the theory of emotional intelligence and then through the creation of a self-directed and personal model of leadership learning. What makes this learning process so relatable to the artist is the already familiar turf

of focus, flow, empathy, intuition, and competence. When trained artists are asked to think about their artistry, how they have prepared, how they engage in practice, rehearsal and performance, the relationship between their cognitive brains and their emotional

brains (metacognition), we connect the familiar to a new goal – training them to be leaders. In a nutshell, they get it. And the neuroscientific research supports this claim, showing why it is that trained performers have an easy, often innate understanding of what for others can be a challenge, not to comprehend, but to accomplish.

Connecting the research to the training of artist-leaders

Using the building blocks of Goleman's competencies, the core concepts of focus, flow, intuition, mastery, empathy, inspiration, change and collaboration, new neuro-research, and Boyatzis' theory of learning, we have created a framework for training of the artist leader. This framework incorporates both the emotional intelligence of the artist and the refinement of skills as tools to further develop the leadership capabilities of the artist leader. Using this lens, artists are uniquely able to harness their artistic sensibilities and work habits and form valuable tools for leadership. Below we explore the manifestation of this framework.

Empathy is at the heart

- Artists experience and practice both cognitive and affective empathy within their training.
- As Goleman states, empathy is the essential ingredient of social awareness, one of the four competencies required of the successful leader.
- Implication: artists are pre-disposed, through training, to a higher social awareness and empathy. This is borne out by the research of Waddington (2013) and Heilman et al (2003) who both conclude that empathy is essential for optimal engagement with the other.

The leader's practice room

- Artists exhibit intense focus, problem-solving, and physical repetition and refinement over many years of training and practice: accomplished solo, in an ensemble, or both. It is only through such intensity, accompanied by a high degree of intrinsic motivation, that skill mastery is attained.
- Similarly, a self-directed learning agenda is, according to Boyatzis (Goleman, Boyatzis & McKee, 2002), a lynchpin between the leader's self-awareness and the creation of new behaviors and patterns (new neural pathways) that support attainment of the ideal self.

- Implication: artists are attuned to and exhibit a high degree of discipline for the creation of a self-directed learning agenda to develop the competencies required of successful leadership. De Manzano et al (2010) support this conclusion with their correlation between concentration and performance noting that a positive physical effect combined with high attention results in the ability of the performing artist to find a maximum state of performance quality. Furthermore, Finger et al (2013) and Lee and Therriault (2013) both conclude that this activity is a whole brain process, indicating the high degree to which the executive and emotional parts of the brain are integrated in the practice of both art and leadership.

The leader's jam

- Flow is an essential element of creativity, found in pure improvisation and in the here-and-now moment of live performance. Performing artists use both skill and knowledge together with divergent/convergent thinking to achieve this higher brain state known as flow.
- Goleman, Boyatzis and McKee (2002) describe the open loop of communication that allows people to sense the emotional life of another person and respond. The critical element of leadership is how the leader responds in situ, a kind of emotional improvisation.
- Implications: López-González and Limb (2012), and Dietrich (2004) affirm that the intuitive nature of improvisation (the dominance of intuition over rational thinking) is a form of cognitive flexibility, during which decision-making leads to new ideas and combinations. We see this in both leaders and artists – a leader's response within an open loop of communication is similar to the improvisatory response of the artist.

The ensemble and the team

- The performance of an ensemble, whether in music, dance or theatre, is perhaps the ultimate expression of the artist's collaborative work. It is the place where the practice room and rehearsal hall are abandoned and the artist must rely on a combination of learned competence and intuition to deliver a quality performance. According to de Manzano (2010), artists will also then find themselves in a state of flow, functioning in a highly aware state of suspended consciousness.
- In the leadership setting, working with teams is perhaps the most complex yet productive aspect of the job. It too requires a high degree of collaboration, trust, and building of bonds (Goleman, Boyatzis & McKee, 2002). At the same time, the leader's intuitive brain informs the executive brain allowing for new combina-

“RECOGNIZING THE UNIQUE BRAIN CIRCUITRY AND FLEXIBILITY INHERENT IN THE PERFORMING ARTIST MUST BE EMBEDDED IN A PEDAGOGY CREATED FOR EMERGING ARTS LEADERS”

tions of ideas, strategies and decision-making (López-González & Limb, 2012).

- Implications: we must help artists to recognize the validity of their leadership skills learned through performance. The very same skills that are valued in performance (competence, intuition, and flow) are transferable and directly applicable to the work of a leader with a team.

The risks and rewards

- Artists experience performance and practice as near wins and misses. The goal is never achieved, even at the conclusion of the performance, because there is no perfection. The constant refinement required by a demanding aesthetic increases the artists' motivation to succeed but not to win.

- Leaders experience this same need for refinement. Chase and Clarke (2010) postulate that near wins and misses create new brain circuitry which continually inspires further engagement – much like that experienced by the artist. It is the pursuit of the chocolate bar, not its attainment, that motivates leaders to succeed.

- Implications: both artists and leaders continually, in fact almost obsessively, refine their craft. Each failure to obtain perfection increases motivation and the pursuit of the ideal self. That pursuit, according to Boyatzis, is the fuel of self-directed learning that is required of all leaders (Goleman, Boyatzis & McKee, 2002).

Conclusion – the Aha! moment

Our task as educators of future arts leaders is to recognize the degree to which performing artists already understand the intricacies of leadership. The pursuit and engagement of the artistic process predisposes these individuals to intuitive understanding of the practices, theories, and concepts of leadership that are described within this paper. The framework represented by Goleman and Boyatzis provide the basis for the understanding of leadership training. And it is an easier climb for artists, given their training, honed intuition, collaborative experiences, and pursuit of their ideal selves.

This predisposition of artists as leaders suggests that in order to prepare young arts students for leadership roles within the professional performing arts a

new systematic approach to teaching arts leadership is required. Recognizing the unique brain circuitry and flexibility inherent in the performing artist must be embedded in a pedagogy created for emerging arts leaders. This conclusion begs several questions. How can educators best illuminate the intrinsic and essential leadership qualities that artists already possess? What classroom resources (teaching tools) can adequately inform a curriculum as suggested and do these resources currently exist? If resources exist, how must they be adapted to serve this unique pedagogical need of training the artist-leader? If these resources do not exist, is there sufficient marketplace for this kind of new teaching material? Further research is needed to investigate this particular aspect of arts leadership training, and thus give validity to the implications outlined in this paper.

The current popular literature on leadership relies heavily on personal anecdote based on the author's experiences. Scholarly writing on leadership pays little, if any, attention to the particular needs of training artists to become leaders, perhaps because it is perceived as an insignificant need. There remains a dearth of relevant material – either popular or scholarly – for the illumination of the creative brain of the artist and how this understanding can be harnessed in the training of arts leaders. Marrying the research of Goleman, Boyatzis and McKee with current research on brain and creative thinking can provide a platform for the creation of a scholarly supported and systematic training of arts leaders. This may be considered a next logical step that arises from the research and conclusions presented in this paper.

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“Originated in China”: Western opera and international practices in the Beijing National Centre for the Performing Arts

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ABSTRACT

The international reputation of Western operas – with artists and producers moving across the world's opera houses – has become even more global in recent years. Nevertheless, the field of opera has never been analyzed in terms of strategies to foster this vocation in line with the development of the emerging markets outside Europe. China is one of the most flourishing among them in terms of the creation of grand theaters able to perform Western opera together with a strong indigenous opera tradition. Due to the novelty of such appealing context, a case study analysis would provide an evidence-based account of the questions raised as to how this ambivalence is managed: How does a Chinese opera house performing Western opera find its legitimacy in the international arena? Which are the artistic and production strategies fitting under the definition of international practices? Why is the Chinese context appealing to the Western opera industry? This paper, therefore, aims to address such questions by examining the international practices of the National Centre for Performing Arts (NCPA) in Beijing, in view of the process of building a reputation in the global opera network, with a particular focus on the artistic program, casting choices, the attractive power of the theatre and the exchange of expertise between Western and Chinese operatic contexts.

Keywords:

Western opera

China

Globalization

Cultural identity

Internationalization

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Introduction

Globalization, cultural identity and internationalization: the case of opera

In his comprehensive chapter on globalization and cultural economy, Throsby (2008) argues that the interaction between the economic and cultural consequences of globalization has resulted in a crisis of value. His position focuses on the effect of different cultures upon each other, thus generating the risk of loss of cultural identity. A different perspective is proposed by Leung et al (2005), with an emphasis on the increasing importance of each national culture, recalling Hofstede's theories¹ (Hofstede, 1980 & 1984). Apparently opposite perspectives, one concerned with the possible risk of losing identity through the cultural melting pot, and the other

asserting a strengthening of national identity, they do not exclude each other, but may rather be framed in a logic of cause and effect. Driven by the underlying assumption that works of art play a decisive role in the development of a country's identity and citizens' education, Throsby (2008 & 2010) argues that countries react to globalization by trying to shelter art goods from market forces in order to prevent the replacement of original national creative products by imported forms, a process that would ultimately dilute the country's image (Grefe, 2008). This theoretical frame-

work refers to countries which are somehow affected by the spread of a dominant culture. Alongside, Rogers (2006) defines the use "of one culture's symbols, artifacts, genres, rituals, or technologies by members of another culture – regardless of intent, ethics, function, or outcome" (Rogers, 2006: 476), as a process of cultural appropriation. He further classifies it into four categories: (a) the exploitative cultural appropriation, in which members of the dominant culture appropriate without reciprocity, permission and com-

pensation; (b) appropriation as cultural dominance, referring to the use of a dominant culture's elements by members of a subordinated culture in a context in which the dominant culture has been imposed; (c) appropriation as cultural exchange, reflecting reciprocal exchanges of elements between cultures with similar levels of authority, and finally the (d) appropriation as transculturation, whereby cultural elements are the result of multiple cultures, so that the identification of a single originating culture becomes problematic. From the research perspective, this discourse is particularly relevant for those new countries², such as China, importing Western opera³ despite having their own ancient music theatre tradition.

The issue of cultural identity, defined by Triandis as the broad ideological framework of a country (Triandis, 1994) is probably the most relevant and immediate aspect motivating the internationalization of opera. The shared perception of opera as

"THE SHARED PERCEPTION OF OPERA AS NATIONAL HERITAGE GENERATES AN IMPROVEMENT PROCESS OF A COUNTRY'S IMAGE ABROAD, WITH ITS ROOTS STEMMING FROM THE COMPLEX INTERCONNECTION BETWEEN OPERA AND NATIONALISM "

national heritage generates an improvement process of a country's image abroad, with its roots stemming from the complex interconnection between opera and nationalism. Opera performances and opera houses physically contribute to creating national identities, often acting through national showcases and representing a country's political, social and economic status (Bereson, 2002: 2). Through the argument of identity, international recognition of a cultural institution becomes a key factor: it is a way to pursue international celebration but also to stimulate the citizens' understanding

and hence their willingness to support opera houses. International projects – being aimed at educational or cultural developments – are deeply intertwined with the interests of politics, in view of the exposure of a country's art and culture to overseas audiences. Such operations are framed into a long-standing tradition of wider political purposes behind international cultural relations, a component of the so-called soft power⁴, with the aim of fostering harmonious diplomatic alliances. In this landscape, opera too can be

1 In his work "Cultural dimensions in management and planning", Hofstede (1984) considers management skills as culturally specific, and discusses how national cultural differences affect the validity of management techniques and philosophies in various countries, stressing the difficulties in creating a global managerial culture.

2 In this study the term "new markets" or "new countries" refers to Bereson's (2002) definition of "Other operas" with some implementations. She groups South America, Africa, Asia and Asia Minor arguing that "They all in some way have taken opera from the European operatic tradition and translated it into their own environment" (Bereson, 2002: 77).

3 The term is used in order to distinguish the European operatic tradition from comparable art forms from other parts of the world. Common terminology on classical music refers to Western classical music, indicating the tradition started in Italy at the end of the 16th century (with Jacopo Peri's lost *Dafne*, produced in Florence in 1598).

4 The term soft power, originally coined by the Harvard professor Joseph S. Nye (2004), refers exactly to the ability of a nation to influence the behavior of other countries in attracting and persuading them to adopt their own goals. Nye's (2004) notion of soft power highlights the link between attractiveness and the ability to influence others in international relations.

“CHINA IS IN POSSESSION OF A DEEP-ROOTED AND ANCIENT INDIGENOUS OPERA TRADITION WHICH WAS EXTENSIVELY INFLUENCED BY THE WESTERN GENRE AND GAVE RISE IN THE 1950s TO THE MODERN CHINESE OPERA ”

considered an agent of soft power within two major perspectives: one focusing on the European context, reliant on the competitive advantages derived from opera, and the other converging on the Chinese market, directed in building operatic venues to perform operas drawn from the European operatic tradition. The two aspects can be seen simply as different facets of the same phenomenon called internationalization.

Chinese Western opera context and significance of the NCPA

The history of Western opera in China must be framed within modern and contemporary Chinese political, social, cultural and economic changes, and the parallel evolution of traditional Chinese opera. Although pioneering European opera companies touring China arrived to Shanghai around the mid-1870s (Melvin, 2014)⁵, the broad consumption of Western opera in China is relatively recent and was strongly stimulated by the effects of the pursuit of market liberalization through economic reforms started by Deng Xiaoping in 1978: an extraordinary urbanization drive in the post-1990s and the emergence of a growing upper middle class keen to consume foreign culture in the 2000s (Chen, 2007; Yeh et al, 2011).

China is in possession of a deep-rooted and ancient indigenous opera tradition⁶ which was extensively influenced by the Western genre and gave rise in the 1950s to the modern Chinese opera (*geju*)⁷ (Chin, 1982). The institutionalization of both traditional and modern Chinese opera after the establishment of the People's Republic of China (PRC) on 1st October 1949 contributed to a strengthened national identity and to legitimating the Chinese Communist Party's authority: state opera houses were established for each of the 360 styles of Chinese opera and a large amount

of public funding was directed into sustaining production, which was moreover experiencing a change in contents and style influenced by the Stanislavsky method⁸ (Haili, 2016; Mackerras, 2008).

The recent massive employment of internationally celebrated “starchitects” enriching Chinese major cities with marvelous opera houses corroborates how opera trends broadly reflect those in the country as a whole (Mackerras, 2008: 2013). To the extent of my knowledge, there is no up-to-date study comprehensively listing all art venues able to host opera companies. The most exhaustive attempt is the one by Victoria Newhouse, who researched the architecture of new opera houses and concert halls around the world (Newhouse, 2012b). Despite her attention on the technical aspect of this phenomenon, her article “Houses of the rising sun” (Newhouse, 2012a) stresses two important features of most newly built Chinese theatres: 1) their artistic programs, not typically operatic, and 2) their structure, as all-encompassing buildings hosting other smaller theatres and cultural venues. At the moment it is estimated that about 50 theaters in China (Stabler, 2013; Allison, 2012) stage operas or hybrid musicals: Beijing NCPA, Shanghai Grand Theatre, Guangzhou, Hangzhou and Tianjin opera houses are the most famous ones in the country, all built by acclaimed Western architects following a broader market policy agenda, centered on branding and promotion (Ren, 2011), developing global city status, and constructing shared national and city identities (Kong, 2007). Some of these venues are renowned for their performances of Western opera, namely the NCPA and the Shanghai Grand Theatre, whereas others, such as the Chongqing Grand Theatre, have more varied programs, which allow performances of Western operas by guest companies but whose seasons are not entirely dedicated to opera.

Data⁹ shows that the majority of theatres was inaugurated after 2004. Furthermore, as seen in figure 1, there has been a new wave of arts venue construc-

5 The first Italian opera troupe visited China in 1879. During its first visit to Shanghai, Augusto Cagli's Royal Italian Opera company performed *Il Trovatore*, *La Traviata*, *Rigoletto*, and *Ernani* – and *Donizetti* by Verdi, Rossini's *Barbiere di Siviglia* and Gounod's *Faust* (Melvin, 2014).

6 Chinese opera (*xiq*) is a popular form of drama and musical theatre with numerous regional branches. Its roots are estimated to go back to the third century BC.

7 The term *geju* (song drama) refers to Chinese contemporary classical opera and was created under the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) influence, combining Chinese and Western music and drama techniques (Brandon & Banham, 1997).

8 The Stanislavsky method influenced first the production style favoring director-led productions and extending rehearsals periods. Opera's content and style were also influenced by the realist system of acting, owing its origin especially to the Russian director (Haili, 2016; Mackerras, 2008).

9 Data on theatres built was collected from relevant journals and books, daily or periodic general newspapers, online sources, the platform *Operabase.com*, books and interviews held in China during the fieldwork in 2014.

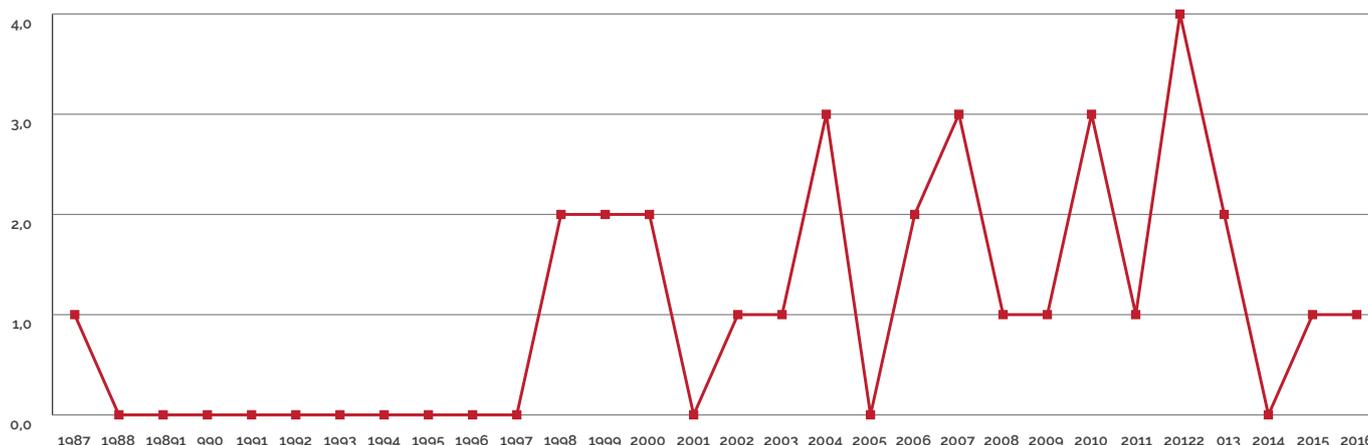


FIGURE 1. NUMBER OF OPERA HOUSES BUILT IN CHINA AND PROJECTS TO BE COMPLETED (1987-2015)

Source: Author's own elaboration.

tion since 2010, including three large-scale ongoing projects. Thus, contrary to expectations, this construction boom is not directly linked with the advent of the 2008 Olympics, but seems to be part of a more complex process of transformation of the Chinese Party-state into a force for architectural globalization, financing iconic projects as a demonstration of the Chinese geopolitical power (Ren, 2011). "If you want to find the level of a city, you ask if they have an opera house. If they do, it's a progressive, developed city" (Melvin & Cai, 2004: 301) said the composer Xiao Bai, to provokingly express the importance attached to a city's image through opera houses.

As distinct from Europe, Western opera performances in China are mostly staged in multi-purpose venues able to host different types of performing arts productions (Newhouse, 2012a), and they focus on the most renowned opera titles, often performed with a sensational and extravagant staging. One example is the 2000 *Aida* in Shanghai, with two orchestras, 500 chorus singers, 60 ballet dancers, 1,000 actors, 300 acrobats and various animals (Melvin & Cai, 2004). These venues become an attraction themselves, able to influence the captivate potential audience as in the case of Carnegie Hall, La Scala or the Sydney Opera House (Ouellet et al, 2008), but they are often designed as containers to be filled, whose artistic strategies might be an issue to think about only after the project is over (Melvin, 2010). This explains the need for the expertise of international professionals, capable of laying the foundation for a structured project concerning Western opera. For instance, the Canadian artist manager Wray Armstrong was appointed as the Tianjin's Grand Theater Director of International Programming and Giuseppe Cuccia is the consultant for Western opera productions at the NCPA (Malitz, 2013). Correspondingly, the Chinese government has also been investing in education with projects such as "I sing Beijing", introducing Mandarin as a lyric language, and with the establishment of conservatories specialized in Western music (e.g. the Sichuan Conservatory).

Nevertheless, while the architectural boom and the massive introduction of Western opera suggest a willingness to spread an imported tradition that is considered prestigious, holding "special status in contemporary Chinese society (...) in some ways superior to China's own music because it is more scientific, or heroic, or international" (Melvin & Cai, 2004: 307), the new tendency of the government cultural policy suggests a detachment from this propensity. The 12th Chinese five-year plan (2011-2015) introduced vigorous changes in the domain of cultural policy with a strategy aiming at maximizing cultural development as an active contributor to the country's GDP. This policy change is also reflected on the willingness of the Chinese government to use opera for the promotion of traditional Chinese culture as an antidote to Westernization (Sun, 2009). This attitude is also mentioned by the Director of the Beijing Italian Cultural Institute, Stefania Stafutti: "Right now the political attention is paid to the enhancement of the local heritage, the willingness to recover a precious heritage that has been neglected for years and that the world does not yet fully know" (interview to Stefania Stafutti, Director of the Beijing Italian Cultural Institute, Beijing, 12th September 2014).

Within this framework, the NCPA project responds to both of the cultural tendencies, by virtue of the mixture of performing arts and the coexistence of a local artistic line intersecting with the international thrust. Its wholeness and grandeur raise it as a cultural monument of the nation, a symbol of a new opening, a center of artistic trade and cultural creation where Chinese and Western culture coexist and enhance each other, rapidly fostering the NCPA's reputation in the international arena.

Methodology

The examination of the international practices of the Beijing National Centre for Performing Arts (NCPA) has involved both quantitative and qualitative approaches and was based on four main thematic categories: the history and organizational structure of the NCPA, the analysis of its artistic program, the western opera casting process, and finally the attractive power of the NCPA on international artists.

The data on the artistic program and casting were collected from the NCPA website under the heading "opera" and were gathered from theatre's booklets and from the professional database *Operabase.com*, considering the period from 2011 to 2014¹⁰. The considered time frame fits in with the aim of the study since it corresponds to a change in the artistic management strategy with the recruitment of Giuseppe Cuccia as consultant for Western opera in March 2011. The collected data is arranged on an annual basis and includes the list of opera productions put on stage, the typology of opera (Western or Chinese), the number of performances, the production system (new productions and revivals) and the presence of Western and Chinese singers in the soloist roles of each performance.

Data were then integrated with other external sources such as permanent exhibitions on opera production at the NCPA, newspaper articles and dedicated publications, together with in-depth, semi-structured interviews during a research trip following the entire production of 2014's *Norma*, a national premiere at the NCPA. Interviews were conducted with Giuseppe Cuccia, the NCPA Italian consultant for Western opera, the NCPA music coordinator, *Norma*'s creative team, Western and Chinese singers engaged in the production, the Italian coach for Chinese singers and the Director of Beijing Italian Cultural Institute. These interviews provide the opportunity to deeply understand the institutional vision and to further assess the reputation-enhancing strategy from the point of view of a new Chinese theatre performing Western opera.

Analysis

Chinese Western opera context and significance of the NCPA

The National Centre for the Performing Arts was founded in December 2007 as a component of the magnificent venues built on occasion of the Beijing Olympic Games. As a symbol of the Chinese reform, it testifies the government's engagement in developing arts and culture as a component of a long term economic vision (O'Connor & Xin, 2006). On the other hand, the NCPA has become the subject of widespread discussions not only due to its futuristic appearance, but also because its construction replaced dozens of traditional *hútòng*¹¹. These debates led to a wide dissemination of nicknames, extremely representative of social reactions to a project of this scale: supporters call it "water pearl", detractors label it "duck egg" (Melvin & Cai, 2004; Andreu, 2007), and some workers refer to it as "spaceship", alluding to the underground rehearsal rooms and offices. Specifically, the complex designed by French "starchitect" Paul Andreu is composed of a titanium circular shell covered with glass and surrounded by a lake which makes the building accessible only through a hallway underneath the water. Andreu himself motivated the iconic shape of his construction with both a symbolic and a cultural explanation, by stating that the particular entrance highlights the passage into the world of opera and the whole building recalls principles of ancient Chinese cosmology¹² (Moore, 2008).

The cultural centre is located between the Great Hall of the People and Tiananmen square, a position stressing its national importance (Andreu, 2007), and it stands in vivid contrast with the surrounding *hútòng* area, an aspect which has been considered a tangible glimpse of the Chinese social paradox (Bereson, 2002; Melvin & Cai, 2004). Construction works started in December 2001 with an initial planned cost of 2.688 billion renminbi (\$393.7 million USD), which rose to more than 3.2 billion renminbi (\$468.7 million USD) at the time of completion¹³. It is composed of three main halls: the Music Hall, designated for concerts, the Theatre Hall, used mainly for plays and some traditional Chinese operas, and the biggest Opera Hall, for opera

10 It has been preferred not to consider 2015 in the analysis, since at the time of the investigation the season was still ongoing and data on guest companies was incomplete. An exception was made for the list of new productions because I was able to consult the list of new Western titles previewed for the whole season, which is fundamental in order to get an overview of the evolution in the artistic choices.

11 *Hútòng* (胡同) are Beijing historical narrow streets hosting traditional courtyard residences.

12 In his articles Robbie Moore (2008) explains that the building wasn't built with feng shui references. Although Andreu's project received critics for its lack of symbolism, the egg shape floating in a lake has been interpreted recalling the beginnings of the universe as imagined by ancient Chinese cosmology.

13 Data retrieved from *The Egg Building in China – National Centre for Performing Arts*, 2 March 2010. Available at: <http://twistedstifer.com/2010/03/the-egg-building-beijing-china/> (accessed 12 March 2015).

“NCPA’S MANAGEMENT MODEL IS ENVISAGED TO ENSURE A SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF THE INSTITUTION, TO PRIORITIZE PUBLIC WELFARE WHILE MAINTAINING HIGH ARTISTIC STANDARDS, AND TO ALLOW IT TO BECOME AN INTERNATIONALLY WELL-KNOWN ART BRAND MAINTAINING ITS CHINESE CHARACTERISTICS”

and ballet, with a total audience capacity of 5,452. Due to the presence of three big theatres in the same venue, a variety of performances can be put on stage at the same time. An additional “Fifth space”, hosting the Olive Hall, the Grand Foyer, shops, bars and restaurants, is designed for exhibitions and concerts.

Approximately 60% of the NCPA budget is subsidized by the central government and the Beijing Municipality, while the rest of the revenues come from the box office, individuals’ donations, foundations and corporations (Dongbei Academy of Economic & Social Development, 2004). The leadership of the NCPA is represented by the Beijing Committee of CPC and Beijing Municipality guided by the Ministry of Culture.

The President of the NCPA, Chen Ping, is also the Vice Chairman of Beijing Municipal Committee of the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) and the President and Secretary of the CPC NCPA committee¹⁴. Alongside him, an operation managers’ team works with an artistic director for each theater: art, drama, dance and music. Due to the presence of three theatres in one enormous performing centre, the organization chart is extremely complex and comprehends 22 departments and 17 major operational systems. As stated by the NCPA, this management model is envisaged to ensure a sustainable development of the institution, to prioritize public welfare while maintaining high artistic standards, and to allow it to become an internationally well-known art brand maintaining its Chinese characteristics¹⁵. The institution proclaims itself as the top performing arts centre of China aiming to emerge as: (1) a key member of prestigious international theatres; (2) the supreme palace of performing arts in China; (3) the leader of arts education and outreach; (4) the biggest platform for international arts exchange; (5) an important base for cultural and creative industry.

Since 2008, the NCPA has been organizing each year the NCPA World Theatre Forum, an international conference where representatives of the most famous theaters of the world discuss the future of opera. Through this annual meeting, 59 Chinese and international opera houses have subscribed a cooperation agreement with the intention to collaborate in the artistic production and in education programs (Comerford, 2013).

Artistic Productivity: NCPA and programming choices

The NCPA performing company consists of a large orchestra officially established in 2010, a chorus formed in 2009 and a group of supporting and leading solo singers. There is neither a ballet company nor a children’s choir within the NCPA. Operas are usually performed in the opera hall with a capacity of 2,416 seats, using the internal orchestra and Chinese soloists pertaining to the theatre. Occasionally the orchestra requires outsourcing due to commitments arising from the symphonic season of the same institution. Since its establishment, the NCPA has invited and engaged many of the internationally renowned singers who flank or alternate the Chinese cast with Western operas.

The artistic repertory in opera is not controlled strictly by one person, but is jointly arranged by the artistic director and the general manager with variances among theatres (Agid & Tarondeau, 2010; Caves, 2000; Sgourev, 2012). In some cases, the artistic director’s choices deeply depend on the propositions of the internal music conductor, and the general director expresses his judgment primarily in terms of feasibility and economic sustainability of the program. This happens mainly in theatres with a renowned principal conductor (e.g. Zubin Mheta at Opera di Firenze), whereas in other theatres the authority in repertory decisions could be given almost completely to the artistic director (e.g. Teatro Real in Madrid [Sgourev, 2012]) or to the general manager (e.g. Metropolitan Opera in New York [Sgourev, 2012]). The case of the NCPA is slightly different: since the NCPA performs both Chinese and Western opera, four years after the inauguration, a Western opera consultant was recruited within the opera department. As a result, even though proposals for the season are formally presented by the artistic director to the general director, there is in fact a division of tasks between the consultant, who is entirely in charge of the Western opera selection, and the artistic director, responsible for the Chinese opera season at the NCPA. The final and binding approval comes in both cases from the general director, who may validate or not the proposals of the artistic department.

¹⁴ Information retrieved from the organizational structure proposed by NCPA theatre’s exhibition.

¹⁵ In the theatre’s permanent exhibition it is clearly stated that NCPA aims to become a “Worldclass with Chinese characteristics”.

Nr.	Year	Title	Co-production	Nr.	Year	Title	Co-production
1	2008	<i>Turandot</i>		17	2013	<i>Les Contes d'Hoffman</i>	
2	2009	<i>Magic Flute</i>	Oslo Opera House	18	2013	<i>Otello</i>	
3	2009	<i>Madama Butterfly</i>	La Fenice Venezia	19	2013	<i>Nabucco</i>	
4	2009	<i>Boheme</i>		20	2013	<i>Le Nozze di Figaro</i>	
5	2009	<i>Rigoletto</i>	Teatro Regio di Parma	21	2013	<i>L'italiana In Algeri</i>	
6	2010	<i>Traviata</i>		22	2014	<i>Evgenij Onegin</i>	Marinsky Saint Peterburg
7	2010	<i>Gianni Schicchi</i>		23	2014	<i>Il trovatore</i>	
8	2010	<i>Carmen</i>		24	2014	<i>Cavalleria Rusticana</i>	
9	2011	<i>L'elisir d'Amore</i>		25	2014	<i>Pagliacci</i>	
10	2011	<i>Tosca</i>		26	2014	<i>Norma</i>	
11	2011	<i>Die Fledermaus</i>		27	2014	<i>Don Pasquale</i>	
12	2011	<i>La Cenerentola</i>		28	2015	<i>Andrea Chenier</i>	
13	2011	<i>Il Barbiere di Siviglia</i>		29	2015	<i>Der Rosenkavalier</i>	
14	2012	<i>Der fliegende Holländer</i>		30	2015	<i>Aida</i>	
15	2012	<i>Un ballo in maschera</i>		31	2015	<i>Simon Boccanegra</i>	
16	2012	<i>Lohengrin</i>		32	2015	<i>Samson and Dalila</i>	Teatro Regio Torino and Opera di Firenze

TABLE1. NEW WESTERN OPERA PRODUCTIONS BY NCPA FROM ITS OPENING TO 2015

Source: Author's own elaboration based on NCPA data.

There are three main factors affecting the composition of the artistic program. First, the choice of the season's titles is made according to guiding principles with educational purposes. The aim is to create a Western opera culture starting from the opera classics. The second factor taken into consideration is theme, exploring the possibility of building a season celebrating, for instance, contingent composers' anniversaries (e.g. bicentenary from Verdi's and Wagner's birth). The third factor is the availability of relevant suitable artists (singers, stage directors and conductors). This last point suggests a strategy prioritizing artistic quality and laying the foundations for an illustrious international reputation.

As presented in table 1, since 2008, the NCPA has produced a total of 32 Western opera productions,

which is noteworthy for a relatively new performing arts centre that not only performs two different opera traditions, but also produces other performing art forms such as dance and music¹⁶.

The share of Western opera productions from 2011 to 2014 corresponds to an average of approximately 50% in the whole NCPA opera program, in perfect balance with the number of productions of Chinese opera in the same period represented by the remaining 50%. But a detailed composition of productions shows that the majority of in-house productions is Western, corresponding to an average of approximately 43% of the whole NCPA opera production. On the other hand, the majority of guest productions is Chinese, which covers 26% of the whole NCPA productions, while guest Western opera productions rep-

¹⁶ For example, considering the biggest Western opera houses, the Metropolitan of New York presents 30 operas annually (Sgourev, 2012), in 1998 the Deutsche Oper Berlin and the English National Opera presented respectively 36 and 22 different productions (Auvinen, 2001). Although these data are on annual basis, NCPA appears in line with such standards considering that it is producing not exclusively Western opera and that it is a newer institution.

resent only 7% of the whole program. As presented in figure 2, the data shows how the NCPA produces mostly in-house Western opera while hosting most of the Chinese opera productions, which can be explained through reason of accessibility and proximity. In fact most of the guest opera companies come from other Chinese cities, Taiwan and Korea. These measures indicate the high importance given to the proliferation of Western opera within the artistic agenda.

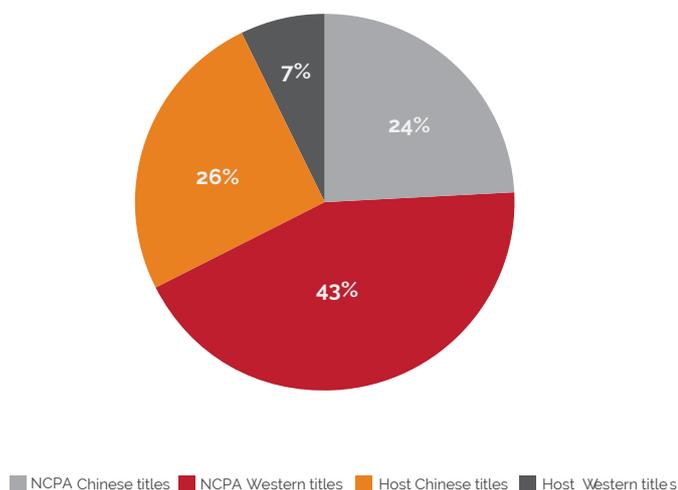


FIGURE 2. THE COMPOSITION OF THE OPERA PRODUCTIONS WITHIN THE NCPA PROGRAM (2011-2014)

Source: Author's own elaboration based on NCPA data.

As it can be seen in table 1, the list of Western opera productions describes exactly the didactic path which Giuseppe Cuccia, the Western opera consultant, is trying to follow. His arrival in 2011 corresponds to a change in the artistic agenda testified by a more refined choice of titles, moving the selection from catchy and popular operas such as Puccini's masterpieces, towards more complex compositions both from the musical and thematic point of view, from Wagner to Bellini's *Norma*. Furthermore, the list of co-productions reveals a general opening to the international market and a tendency to collaborate with important and renowned theatres from abroad, which can be interpreted as an attempt to build an international reputation. This attitude, supported by interviews, is more evident during the first years of the theatre, when the absence of a Western opera expert has been overcome through cooperation with prominent opera houses to establish the NCPA's reputation and create an internationally recognized value within the field. It is important to state that the NCPA collaborates more likely with famous theatres, considering the name of the institution as a fundamental criterion in the partnership selection. This is because collaboration with the Marijnski Theatre or with the Royal Opera House can easily increase the theatre's reputation while a co-production with a smaller and less known institution is less trenchant in terms of visibility¹⁷, an attitude proved by the list of co-production partners so far.

Overall, the NCPA presents approximately 86 opera performances annually, including both Western and Chinese operas, in a system of 4 seasons

Year	NCPA			Guest companies			Total nr. of performances
	Total nr. of NCPA performances	Western NCPA performances	Chinese NCPA performances	Total nr. of guest performances	Western guest performances	Chinese guest performances	
2011	74	47	27	11	0	11	85
2012	70	26	44	37	7	30	107
2013	58	45	13	5	4	1	63
2014	82	53	29	7	4	3	89
Total	284	171	113	60	15	45	344

TABLE 2. NUMBER OF PERFORMANCES (2011-2015, ON AN ANNUAL BASIS)

Source: Author's own elaboration based on NCPA data.

¹⁷ From the interview with Giuseppe Cuccia, the Western Opera Consultant if NCPA, Beijing, 3rd September 2014.

“THE STRONG PRESENCE OF WESTERN OPERA PRODUCTIONS REVEALS PRECISELY THE IMAGE THAT THE NCPA IS STRIVING TO SHAPE; AN INTERNATIONALLY RECOGNIZED PERFORMING ARTS THEATRE WITH LOCAL ROOTS, ABLE TO STAGE BOTH THE OPERA TYPES AT THE HIGHEST LEVELS”

corresponding to the solar periods starting from September and running until July. Regarding the type of production, there had been 284 in-house opera performances in total from 2011 until 2014, while the total number of guest companies' opera performances corresponds to 60 for the same period. As it can be deduced from the share of guest companies' opera performances, that corresponds to 17% on average for the period 2011-2014, the majority of the opera performances belong to in-house productions of NCPA. Table 2 summarizes the composition of the opera performances at the NCPA.

As far as the average life of a production is concerned, it is aimed by the artistic directory to annually stage every Western opera production on an average of four performances, while the average number of performances per production is two for both Chinese opera and guest companies' productions. This artistic goal is reflected in the statistical results which show how Western and Chinese operas are produced on an average of five Western and three Chinese new operas per year. These measures together with the higher percentage of Western in-house opera productions within the artistic program, reveal the prominence of the Western opera in comparison to the local opera tradition in the artistic program. The strong presence of Western opera productions reveals precisely the image that the NCPA is striving to shape; an internationally recognized performing arts theatre with local roots, able to stage both the opera types at the highest levels. The lower weight of Chinese opera productions within the artistic program can be explained looking at the territory through three possible reasons: (1) the scarcity of Western opera programs in Chinese mainland which sees the NCPA as the main center representing this form of art, (2) the number of companies in the territory specialized in Chinese opera favoring the outsourcing process, and (3) the aim of the NCPA to position itself as an international theatre.

Considering these measures as a whole, data indicates 2011 as a year of adjustment followed by a balanced growth in the creation of new works, appearing to have stabilized in the last two years (please see figure 3 and figure 4 for the details). The purpose seems to be the creation of an average of five new Western and three Chinese operas per year, with approximately the same amount of revivals compared with the volume of new productions. 2011 and 2012 are diametrically opposed in terms of new productions and revivals, this can be brought back again to the testing of different production strategies and to available budget possibilities for each specific year.

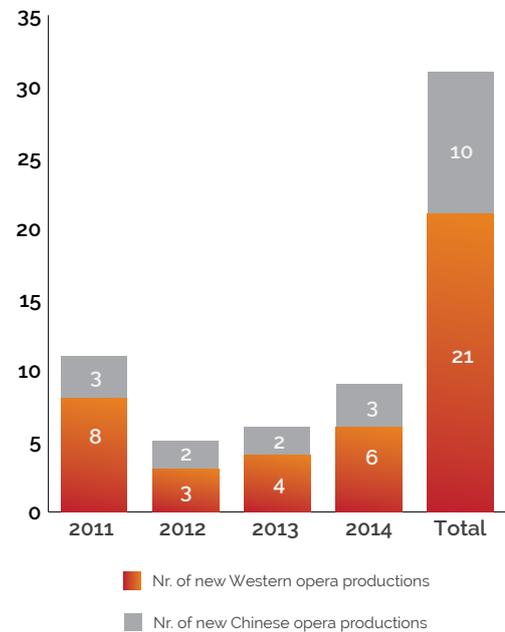


FIGURE 3. THE SHARE OF NCPA NEW WESTERN AND NEW CHINESE IN-HOUSE OPERA PRODUCTIONS WITHIN THE PROGRAM (2011-2015, ON AN ANNUAL BASIS)

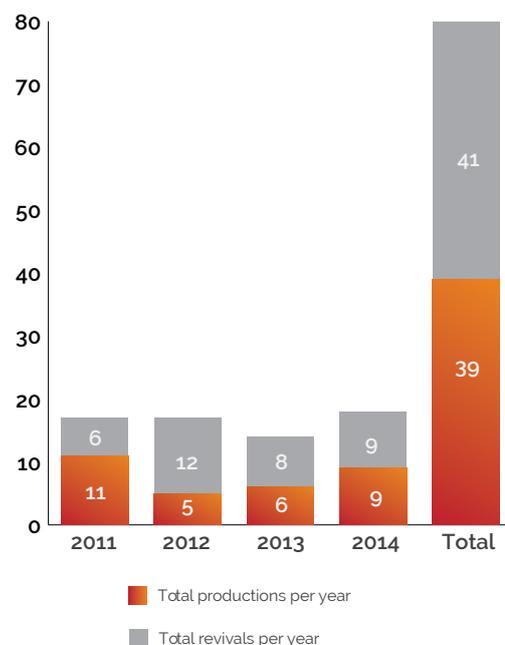


FIGURE 4. NCPA NEW OPERA PRODUCTIONS AND REVIVALS WITHIN THE PROGRAM (2011-2015, ON AN ANNUAL BASIS)

Source: Author's own elaboration based on NCPA data.

In 2013 the share between revivals and new productions seems to reach a balance: six new works and eight revivals are performed, and the following year the two variables are equal (see figure 4 for details). The NCPA hosts many guest companies, in particular dance performances, since it does not have a permanent dance company, whereas opera is hosted to a lesser extent. Though guest Western companies perform only Western opera for obvious reasons, Chinese companies are capable of dealing with Western opera as well (e.g. the China National Opera House Symphony Orchestra, a national opera company based in Beijing and founded in 1952¹⁸, often performs foreign operas at the NCPA Opera Theatre; the Shanghai Opera House was in tournée at the NCPA with Verdi's *Attila* in 2014).

The data also demonstrates a tendency to produce in situ and limit the presence of guest companies, with a constant trend after the settlement of 2011 and 2012. In this way the theater distinguishes itself from the "empty boxes to be filled" practice pursued by the most recently built Chinese theatres (Hays, 2008). Despite focusing on production to create a repertoire and an identity, the NCPA still leaves space for other companies, and gives crucial hints for becoming a national and international benchmark, with the associated benefit of expanding its audience and building trade potential for the future.

Casting: the criteria behind casting choices and the balance between local and international artists

In the NCPA, the choice of each opera title is followed by the designation of the creative team and the conductor. The stage director usually includes his personal set, costumes and lighting designers while the conductor establishes together with the consultant the version of the opera they intend to perform. On the other hand, costumes and set laboratories are outsourced and recruited through a public tender, prioritizing low costs as the selection criteria.

From 2011 to 2015 the theatre produced only six in-house operas with at least one Chinese member in the creative team¹⁹. While the Chinese creative team for Western opera is rare, the presence of Chinese conductors is frequent, also because the NCPA holds a principal conductor, Liu Jia, and a permanent orchestra conductor / artistic director of Music, Chen Zuohuang.

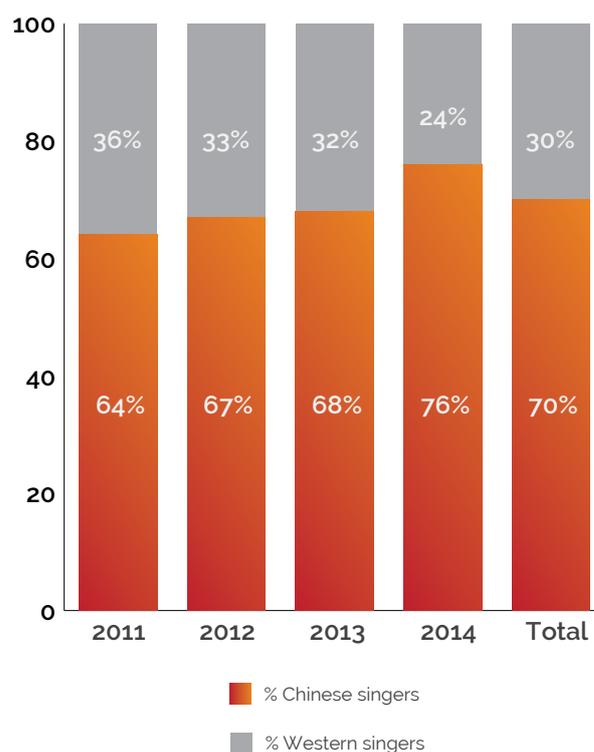


FIGURE 5. CHINESE AND WESTERN SOLOIST SINGERS IN WESTERN OPERAS (% , 2011-2014)

Source: Author's own elaboration based on NCPA data.

The NCPA proposes mostly two alternating casts: until 2011 there was a clearer division between the Western and Chinese cast, mainly because operas were often hired entirely from Western theaters. Over time, the casting has become increasingly mixed. Nevertheless, a division remains in the leading roles of the *premieres*, when one cast is composed of international artists for the main roles and by Chinese singers for minor roles. In the re-staging of in-house opera productions, however, the cast is often entirely Chinese. Data shows the relation between the share of Chinese and Western cast in Western opera productions. As seen in figure 5, after an initial decrease probably due to two more arduous Wagner productions put on stage in 2012, the Chinese cast is gradually growing. The casting choices affect the institution in three parallel ways related to quality of production, image of the theatre and financial effects. The first aspect is related to the recognition of a different preparation between casts who are performing roles for the first time and casts who perform them routinely ensuring less risky performances on a certain quality standard²⁰. The theatre is investing massively on the

¹⁸ The company is sustained by the Ministry of Culture and consists of a dance troupe, a chorus, a symphony orchestra and a stage design department.

¹⁹ *Turandot*, *Gianni Schicchi*, *Tosca* and *Il Barbiere di Siviglia* in 2011 and *L'Elisir d'amore* in 2015.

²⁰ To this purpose, it is interesting to consider Ken Smith's (2014) article reviewing *Norma* production. The article, despite the subjectivity of the opinion, states the superiority of the Chinese cast and demonstrates how the Western excellence is beginning to be questioned. To deepen the discourse on performance quality evaluation in opera, see Boerner and Renz (2008). According to their research on performances' subjective judgements by experts' and non-experts "opera goers", both the two categories formulate reliable judgements, experts discerning more aspects of an opera performance than the non-experts.

Chinese singers, who are followed by international tutors for pronunciation and for the preparation of their parts. It is of crucial importance that the NCPA demonstrates such a strong effort in educating artists, a visionary and strategic project that allows the theater to dispose of trained and experienced singers also for Western operas in the future.

Attractive power for international artists and competencies exchange

A strong contribution to the NCPA's international reputation derives from the effort in the creation of an experienced and knowledgeable human capital. This process is made possible through a transfer of expertise from international artists, creative teams and coaches to local artists and professionals.

The production of *Norma* lasted from mid August 2014 until the last performance held in September the 14th, and encompassed a production team composed by a lighting designer, a projection designer, an assistant to the set designer, a costume designer, a choreographer, a stage director and an assistant director, all of them Italians. As already mentioned, during the four performances two casts alternated: one composed mostly by Italian singers (three Italians, one Spanish and two secondary soloists who were Chinese) and the other one completely Chinese. In preparing them, a crucial role was attributed to the two rehearsal pianists working also as vocal coaches for the non-Italian speakers in the preparation of the *Norma*'s roles. One of them was born in China but was educated and worked in USA before joining the NCPA in the role of music coordinator; the second pianist is hired by the NCPA only for specific productions and at the time of *Norma* he was working in China for the 5th time. The role of the vocal coach is determinant in the process of transfer of competencies from the Italian operatic culture to Chinese artists, who are performing, mostly for the first time, routine roles for Western singers, as confirmed by one of the vocal coaches: "the NCPA is a Ferrari but it needs people able to explain how to drive it. The geographical distance from Western opera base countries becomes an obstacle for the Chinese singers' learning process and our presence here is a way to overcome such problem" (interview with the rehearsal pianist and vocal coach during the *Norma* production at NCPA, Beijing, 5th September 2014).

Rehearsals and creation phases are constantly followed by a team of interpreters, each one assigned to a specific production area. The majority are young Chinese students studying Italian language and culture and who had the opportunity to spend periods of time in Italy to improve their language skills. Despite their fluency, different cultural backgrounds still rep-

resent a problem in the transmission of information for the creative team: the translation does not always accurately reflect the idea of a stage director or the effect that a set designer would like to achieve, because it is not part of a shared knowledge between partners. For this very reason, the Director of the Beijing Italian Cultural Institute, Stefania Stafutti, is convinced that there are great opportunities for Italian Chinese speakers within the opera industry, a formula that, alongside Chinese interpreters, could become fundamental in making Italian creative teams' hints understandable and actionable²¹.

Almost all of the creative team indicated that they were attracted by the NCPA because of the economic treatment and the technical possibilities offered by the venue. Renowned stage directors, who were accustomed to creating productions within a certain cost during the "golden age" of Western theatres, are now limited in their creative potential by the reduced resources, often being asked to produce high quality output with minimum costs. The NCPA represents an *El Dorado* for them not only for its financial possibilities but also for the low cost of sets and costumes and for the technical means of the stage, matched only by the most advanced Western theaters. In this regard, the stage director of *Norma* underlined:

I am considered a director who makes expensive productions because I use a lot of special sets. In Italy there aren't neither money nor means anymore: they allow me to make my complete productions only for openings or big events but every time my projects are considered too expensive, they suggest me to make cuts. Here in China it does not happen (stage director of Norma).

The same attitude was shared by the more technical part of the staff: the light designer and the projection designer were also impressed by the astonishing precision and technological skills demonstrated by the technical personnel, despite the linguistic limits for the mutual communication.

Singers and creatives are attracted by the NCPA for its disposable income and ability to pay in comparison with European theatres, particularly in times of deep crisis. Chinese theatres pay a net amount per performance and the NCPA specifically provides hotel and transports for each artist hired by a contract, which is an exceptional treatment considering that usually singers must provide for themselves. Only one of them singing in the *Norma* production had worked already five times in China (three times for an opera in concert format and two times in a tournée with an Italian theatre) and was at his second performance at the NCPA.

21 From the interview to Stefania Stafutti, Director of the Beijing Italian Cultural Institute, Beijing, 12th September 2014.

Role	Attraction factors	Costraints	Contact channel	Previous experiences in China	Comments on competence transfer
<i>Stage director</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Economic treatment -Technical and economic possibilities offered by the theatre -Possibility to make new contacts in a new context 		Contact with the Italian artistic consultant	No	
<i>Conductor</i>	China is an expanding market for opera		Agency	Yes (first time in 1993 but for symphonic music)	
<i>Choreographer</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Exploration of a new market -Economic treatment -Possibility to make new contacts in a new context 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Organization and expertise level still reduced -More than the necessary number of rehearsals 	Contact with the Italian artistic consultant and the stage director	Yes (first time in tournée with her Italian company)	"Everybody does everything and nobody has a specific knowledge in one field".
<i>Costume designer</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Economic treatment -Technical and economic possibilities offered by the theatre -Visit a new country and make contacts in a new theatre -Explore a new market 	-Quality standards in the creation of costumes different from the Western ones	Stage director	No	
<i>Light designer</i>	Precision and technological skills	Linguistic barriers in the relation with Chinese technicians	Contact with the Italian artistic consultant and the stage director	Yes (2nd time at NCPA)	"They are already looking towards the future with the design of a production citadel, already aware of sustainability issues. They think about the second step when we are still at minus one".

<i>Projection Designer</i>	Size and technical possibilities offered by venues	Knowledge absence	Contact with the stage director	Yes (3rd time)	"Opera is created with years of experience and exchange of information with experts or with those who have a deep-rooted opera industry culture. To establish a tradition is a very long process".
<i>Western singers</i>	-Economic treatment -Exploration of a new market	-Flexibility deficiency in an artistic environment requiring it -Deficiencies in the organization -Excessive rehearsal times -Linguistic barriers in the relation with colleagues	-Agency -Contact with the Italian artistic consultant		"The idea is that they are trying to bring as much as possible from the West to then be able to produce opera by themselves. But Rome wasn't built in a day".

TABLE 3. NCPA ATTRACTION FACTORS, CONSTRAINTS, CONTACT CHANNELS, PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE IN CHINA AND CONSIDERATIONS ON COMPETENCE TRANSFER

Source: Author's own elaboration.

Curiosity was a constant attraction factor for the younger singers and people working for the first time in China, whereas experienced singers were more interested in expanding their working relationships. All of them declared their impression of being invited prominently for an image factor and thanks to the presence of the Italian artistic consultant Giuseppe Cuccia who "cares about quality" (interview to a singer of *Norma*, Beijing, 9th September 2014). They all shared the anticipation of a future for Western opera in China made by Chinese singers and perceived the transfer of knowledge only as an incubation period. The selection criteria, based on a personal relationship between the artistic consultant and artists, confirms the crucial role of the former in the creation of a system for the transfer of expertise: with few exceptions employed through an agency (but still chosen in accordance with Giuseppe Cuccia), the other members of the team were hired through direct contact with Cuccia or through their collaboration with the stage director, reached by the artistic coordinator. As argued by the Italian light designer: "I don't perceive an effort by Ital-

ian opera houses towards implementing export strategies, the merit of the contacts between Italy and China goes to the presence of Italians here".

None of the sample interviewed noticed substantial differences in their working experience in comparison with other theatres. Among the constraints noticed by the team, inexperience is a constant factor sometimes creating difficulties in the daily job performance; most of the observations concerned organizational issues and stock of knowledge, with remarks on the need for flexibility in the performing arts environment. Such considerations stem from deep cultural differences between Europe and China: "On the management side I perceive a lack in flexibility and creativity, the personnel is still not skilled enough to be rigorous concerning Western opera, the sector needs flexibility and imagination. There is a strong effort to be precise but if a failure happens rigidity comes in, not realizing that it is normal for problems to arise" (interview to a singer of *Norma*, Beijing, 9th September 2014).

Finally, the NCPA is perceived by international artists as a theater with enormous possibilities and with all the characteristics to become an international leader, provided that the competencies exchange lasts as long as necessary to create a solid cultural foundation. For the interviewees, it remains dubious whether this type of exchange and cooperation is only a step to learn and work independently in the future or may actually represent a model of cooperation and mutual development for both opera traditions.

Conclusion

This case study attempts to consider international practices in the cultural context of a receiver country, by studying a market which has shown a strong interest in Western opera. Therefore in this section I aim to draw some conclusions on the effects of opera internationalization, by providing an evidence-based account of the phenomenon through the analysis of the Beijing National Centre for the Performing Arts (NCPA) as a case study. The investigation on how the institution creates its reputation among the world's best opera houses brings light on the process of transfer of competencies, whereby international opera experts are directly involved.

A descriptive analysis of the data on NCPA showed how Western and Chinese operas alternate throughout the seasons and, each year, an average of five Western and three Chinese new operas are produced. I observed that choices in the Western opera repertoire are entrusted to an Italian expert, whose strategy includes an educational aim for the Chinese audience. Furthermore, there is a tendency to increase the number and quality of in-house Western opera productions, as opposed to outsourcing. This is also verified by the casting choices, which are crucial in production quality, image of the theater and financial effects. Such decisions are directly connected with the internationalization practices of Western theaters, confirming the interest for high quality opera and the need for Western experts able to establish a skills transfer process.

The analysis shows that all of the creative team of *Norma* and Western singers were attracted by the NCPA's economic and technical possibilities, but differences in their perceptions emerged according to

the various roles: technical roles in need of a direct contact with the Chinese technical department were more impressed by the precision and technical skills of the NCPA personnel; the artistic roles focused instead on aspects of excessive rigidity and inexperience. However, such traits all positively affect the process of information exchange, while language seems a strong obstacle in spite of the presence of interpreters. These dynamics are sustained by a general interest towards a new market: a sense of curiosity prevails in younger artists, but the more experienced ones tend to be more interested in establishing new working relationships. Despite the constraints listed by the respondents, the attraction factors are dominant and suggest a growth path which the theater may focus on.

As Zur Nieden (2013) observes referring to the structure of the theaters newly built or renovated in the 19th century, the process of internationalization implies nationalization in order to be competitive with other nations at higher levels. This thought finds a perfect expression in the speech of the Chongqing Theatre president during the 5th NCPA World Theatre Forum: "We don't want the etiquette 'made in China' but 'originated in China'" (Comerford, 2013). These words concisely summarize the path taken by the NCPA and the Western operatic system in China through international practices. To invite illustrious Western conductors, singing coaches, costume designers, set designers and stage directors to work at the theatre is not just a showcase but part of a far-sighted educational project. With this idea in mind, it can be argued that the NCPA is pursuing a double strategy where inter-

nationalization acts both as aid to and final output of the nationalization process: education through internationalization by strengthening national competencies, and divulgation in the global arena through the finished product serving to build a positive international reputation.

The fact that NCPA is in the process of developing a world's unique arts production center (60,000 square meters) separated from the physical location of the theater, with rehearsal rooms, scenery, costumes workshops, storage space, and even a hotel for artists (Proust, 2014) supports a shared vision, manifested during the interviews, of the future of Western collaborations. Will the theatre continue to foster international exchanges even upon reaching a certain

"THE NCPA IS PERCEIVED BY INTERNATIONAL ARTISTS AS A THEATER WITH ENORMOUS POSSIBILITIES AND WITH ALL THE CHARACTERISTICS TO BECOME AN INTERNATIONAL LEADER, PROVIDED THAT THE COMPETENCIES EXCHANGE LASTS AS LONG AS NECESSARY TO CREATE A SOLID CULTURAL FOUNDATION"

independence or, on the contrary, as soon as the expertise is well established, will it act independently and produce its own repertoire privileging local artists and experts?

Meanwhile, the theater organized its first Italian tournée in conjunction with the EXPO 2015. The choice of the theater has been to perform the NCPA production of the new Chinese opera *Rickshaw Boy*, moving from a passive internationalization phase to an active one, by promoting a local product in the homeland of Western opera.

At this juncture, the interest demonstrated by China towards Western opera can be brought back to the classification of cultural appropriation by Rogers (2006). Although there is not yet a complete appropriation of Western opera canons by the Chinese culture, newly produced Chinese operas mixing genres (e.g. in the *Rickshaw Boy*) suggest continuity in the passage from the appropriation as cultural dominance, to the appropriation as transculturation. Basically, despite not being in a context in which a dominant culture has been imposed, China is increasingly moving from the use of a dominant culture's elements by members of a locally-based culture (Western opera and Chinese traditional and modern opera), to a situation in which elements created by multiple cultures melt. What is still lacking is the reciprocity of the exchange and this assumption confirms Demonet's (2013) position on the need to identify and enlarge new common paths between China and European music markets. Along this path, research has shown that the internationalization of opera allows a bridge to form between cultures, through mutual exchange not only of production but also of expertise.

Building its international reputation involved in fact that NCPA adopted a strategy based mainly on the process of transfer of expertise from Western opera experts, technicians and artists to Chinese artistic and technical personnel. This was made possible by mixing human resources both on the decisional level (a local artistic director flanked by an Italian Western opera consultant) and on the artistic and production level, by creating an environment where Western experts and singers work alongside Chinese NCPA employees and artists. In this regard, educational institutions specialized in Western music and Western opera houses may orient their work towards the creation of a tangible culture exchange between the countries.

The NCPA's history, Western opera development and the process of exchange of expertise towards a mechanism of appropriation of Western opera by China all reflect the still vivid struggle of the government, in a desire to preserve the Chinese past, and the modern need for social change, due to the relentless progress of the country. If the creation of the PRC in 1949 led to the institutionalization of the traditional performing arts, the policy shift after 1978 turned China into a modern industrialized power, attracting and welcoming foreign productions onto its stages and promoting a process of restoration of tra-

dition. The advent of Xi Jinping and his policy of "State Capitalism with Chinese Characteristics" (Lam, 2015: 175) suggests that this latent conflict is now stronger than ever and recalls a parallelism with the NCPA's effort to develop a Western opera with Chinese characteristics, a "Western opera originated in China", which gives continuity to Mackerras's (2008) assumption on performing arts as microcosm of the Chinese history, where politics still play a decisive role in their evolution.

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Cultural capital schemes in Asia: mirroring Europe or carving out their own concepts?¹

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ABSTRACT

Despite bearing similar names and sharing certain aims, the implementation of the *cultural city/capital* initiative in Europe and in the subregions of Southeast and Northeast Asia has been substantially dissimilar. In Europe, the annual *European Capital of Culture* (ECoC) status commonly constitutes an opportunity to showcase the best of the arts and culture of the host city, and counts on the support of sizable public funding. In Southeast Asia, the initiative scarcely receives any public or regional funds and the understanding of what the designation means varies widely from country to country. In Northeast Asia, regional diplomacy is one of the main motivations for initiating the scheme. This paper seeks to examine the *cultural capital* patterns chosen in these Asian subregions in comparison with their European counterpart, as well as their motivations and reasons to exist. Ultimately, the paper investigates how much ASEAN and Northeast Asia are simply trying to replicate the European model, carve their own concepts, or create hybrid schemes.

Keywords:

Asian cultural cities and capitals
Cultural cooperation in Asia
Asian cultural policies

¹ For the purpose of this paper, the term "Asia" specifically refers to Northeast and Southeast Asia, the only two Asian subregions that have sustained cultural capital/city initiatives for a continuous number of years. Other schemes such as the Capitals of Islamic Culture and the Arab Capital of Culture have at times nominated cities in the wider Asian region, but always in alternation and/or in conjunction with cities from other regions such as Africa and the Middle East.

Introduction

In Europe, the concept of designating an annual *European Capital of Culture* (ECoC) was first formulated in the mid-1980s (in the framework of an initiative originally named *European City of Culture*). It was Melina Mercouri, then Greek Minister of Culture, who proposed the scheme, and in 1985 Athens became the first of over 50 cities to be in the European cultural limelight for the period of a year. The aim of the initiative was to bring Europeans closer together by highlighting the richness and diversity of European cultures, and raising awareness of their common history and values. Over the years the scheme consolidated and soon developed complex administrative procedures; cities are able to access considerable sources of European, regional and national funding, and there is keen competition among cities to become an ECoC.

Holcombe underscores that geographical regions "can be defined in many ways, and a variety of labels applied to them to suit different purposes" (Holcombe, 2011: 3). It is therefore significant to note that in the case of Asia, terms such as "Southeast Asia" or "East Asia" are not static and change according to contexts². The concept of "East Asia" used throughout this paper has been discussed in international relations, not without controversy. It can refer to several geographical realities, whether it is used from a historical, economic, political or geostrategic perspective. As such, Sikri maintains that the term East Asia "is not so much a geographical definition as a concept; [but rather] a politico-strategic construct" (Sikri, 2010), while Yeo depicts it as still "amorphous" (Yeo, 2008). Jones and Smith emphasise the widespread inconsistency in delimiting East Asia's boundaries when they affirm that its definition "presents acute definitional problems (...) [and] what constitutes East Asia remains imprecise" (Jones & Smith, 2007: 175). For the purpose of this paper, "East Asia" is used throughout it to refer specifically to China, South Korea and Japan in Northeast Asia, and to the 10 Southeast Asian member countries of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)³. Together, these 13 Asian countries form the ASEAN Plus Three (APT) alliance, a key geostrategic process of multilateral cooperation in the region that acts in political, security, economic and socio-cultural areas. The APT process has aroused great interest over the last two decades: it is perceived by numerous analysts as stable, and a catalyst for other key alliances and

collaborative processes in the Asian region (Stubbs, 2002; Zhang, 2006; Wanadi, 2004; Kim, 2004)⁴.

In East Asia, the cultural capital/city phenomenon is much more recent than in Europe. Several cities in the Philippines were labelled first *ASEAN City of Culture* for Southeast Asia for the biennium 2010-2011. Among the scheme's main objectives were the strengthening of regional identity, raising ASEAN's profile, and promoting the growth of the region's creative industries. Subsequently, Singapore, the Vietnamese city of Huê, and Brunei's capital, Bandar Seri Begawan, were designated *ASEAN Cities of Culture*. In Northeast Asia, Yokohama in Japan, Gwangju in South Korea and Quanzhou in China were the first nominated *East Asian Cities of Culture* in 2014. In the succeeding years, another nine cities in Northeast Asia received that distinction⁵.

The following pages seek to shed light on the recent *cultural capital/city* schemes currently being forged in the East Asia region, as well as on the motivations for these countries to develop them now. While the author is conscious of the profound differences of the three geopolitical contexts, and of the discrepancies in their understanding of cultural cooperation⁶, the paper also aspires to establish a comparison between the three schemes. In particular, it aims to investigate to what extent ASEAN Plus Three countries are simply trying to replicate the consolidated and established European model, carve their own concepts, or create hybrid schemes.

Capitals of culture: a very European concept

The notion of a temporary regional cultural capital has its origin in the mid-1980s when Melina Mercouri, Greece's then Minister of Culture, developed the concept of designating an annual *European City of Culture*. Europe, via its then Council of Ministers of the European Community, launched the first European City of Culture programme in 1985 in Athens, renamed *European Capital of Culture* (ECoC) in 1999 (European Communities, 1985). The initiative is designed to bring Europeans closer together by highlighting the richness and diversity of European cultures, celebrating the cultural features Europeans share, increasing European citizens' sense of belonging to a common cultural area, and fostering the contribution of culture

2 In *Orientalism*, Said warned that the concept of "Asia" is not constituted by physical realities but by the image and the perception of the same developed by the Western society (Said, 1978). The concept of "Southeast Asia", so commonly accepted in international relations today, emerged solely as a result of the World War II (Huxley, 1996); and Weatherbee describes it as "an aggregation of overlapping geographic, ethnic, cultural, political, and economic subregions" (Weatherbee, 2015: 16). The term only became popular after the creation in 1943 of the British Army's South East Asia Command (SEAC).

3 As of 2017, ASEAN has a membership of 10 countries: Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam.

4 For more information on the ATP process, see ASEAN (2017).

5 These cities are: in 2015, Niigata (Japan), Cheongju (South Korea), and Qingdao (China); in 2016, Nara-ken (Japan), Jeju (South Korea), and Ningbo (China); and in 2017, Kyoto (Japan), Daegu (South Korea), and Changsha (China).

6 For more on this disambiguation, see Ocón (2015).

to the development of cities. Initially conceived under a year-a-city scheme, since 2001 the designation is given to two cities a year, with a rotation of countries to ensure fairness (European Commission, 2016a). To date, 56 cities in Europe have at some point been designated ECoC. For the year 2017, Aarhus (Denmark) and Paphos (Cyprus) hold the designation, and cities in six countries (Netherlands and Malta 2018; Italy and Bulgaria 2019; Croatia and Ireland 2020) have already been appointed ECoC until the year 2020.

Although outcomes vary depending on the city implementing the scheme, in general, the ECoC is considered a successful initiative and several reports have demonstrated its overall positive impact on the appointed cities⁷. Also, according to the European Commission, the ECoC can be a good opportunity to: regenerate cities (in Kosice 2013, private sector and local universities worked together to transform its industrial past into a creative and cultural hub for the Carpathian Region); create economic growth (in Lille 2004, each euro of public money invested generated 8 euros for the local economy); boost tourism (Pécs 2010 experienced a 27% increase in overnight hotel stays); build a sense of community (Liverpool 2008 had nearly 10,000 registered volunteers and all schoolchildren in the city participated in at least one activity during the year); enhance the image of cities in the eyes of their own inhabitants (in 2009 neighbourhoods across Linz set up their own cultural events, generating works in such unusual venues as shop windows and tunnels under the city); breathe new life into a city's culture (Mons 2005 inaugurated 5 new museums, 2 new concert halls and 1 conference centre), and raise the international profile of cities (Stavanger 2010 established cultural collaborations, co-productions and exchanges with more than 50 countries) (European Commission, 2016b).

Despite this overall positive outlook for the ECoC, the efficiency of the scheme and its ability to fulfil its aims has also been questioned at times. For instance in 2004, a report on *European Cities and Capitals of Culture*, prepared for the European Commission by Palmer/Rae Associates, raised questions about the economic benefits and long-term impact of the Capital of Culture/City of Culture concept (Palmer/Rae Associates, 2004). In the report, the authors affirmed that "in many cities there was a sense that the full potential of the event had not been realized (...) [and] the huge levels of investment and activity they generated rarely seem to have been matched by long-term development in the city" (Palmer/Rae Associates, 2004: 146).

A lot has been written about the ECoC initiative in the last few years: periodic reports analysing the scheme, several monographic publications, books exclusively dedicated to the topic⁸, and evaluation reports on the designated cities published annually by the European Commission. There is no shortage of information, data and reviews on the European scheme, and indeed it is not the purpose of this paper to elaborate further on those analyses. Rather, below are some of its main features in order to allow a basic comparison with its Asian counterparts:

- *Bidding for ECoC status*: This occurs first at the national level in the form of bids, and the final selection is done by an international panel of experts in the cultural field. For instance, in the 2016 Spanish candidacy, up to 16 cities presented a first bid; they were reduced to a shortlist of six, before the panel ultimately chose Donostia-San Sebastián.
- *Forward planning*: European countries know well in advance when their turn comes to launch their first bid for their cities to become ECoC. Indeed, since a Council resolution passed in 2014, European countries know now the allocation of future ECoC countries all the way up to the year 2033 (European Union, 2014). Six years before the title-year, the host member state publishes a call for applications and cities can submit a proposal for consideration; designated cities receive the final confirmation at least four years in advance in order to allow them ample time to prepare (European Commission, 2016a).
- *Substantial financial support from institutions*: Each designated city has the opportunity to receive 1.5 million euros from European funds via the Melina Mercouri Prize, provided that it fulfils a set of conditions⁹. Cities usually receive significant national and regional funding too (e.g. for Galway 2020, the Irish government has earmarked 15 million euros on top of the European funds) (Tipton, 2016).
- *Supervision and monitoring*: Designated cities need to align as much as possible with the vision, objectives, strategy programme and budget as proposed during the bid. The independence of the artistic team must be appropriately respected as well, and the European dimension of the programme needs to remain prominent. Monitoring tools and arrangements for evaluations need to be put in place by the selected cities and they need to provide a report. Failure to do this can put the release of some of the funds in jeopardy.

⁷ For instance, the 1994 report *European Cities of Culture and Cultural Months* commissioned by the Network of Cultural Cities of Europe concluded that the scheme has "produced an energetic and imaginative response which reinforces the role of the cities as cultural entities". In the 2004 report *European Cities and Capitals of Culture*, prepared for the European Commission by Palmer/Rae Associates, it was noted that the vast majority of ECoC organizers considered that the event had been mostly beneficial to their cities.

⁸ See, for instance, Patel (2013).

⁹ For more on the Melina Mercouri Prize, see European Commission (2014: 17).

“DESPITE ITS RELATIVE NEWNESS, IN THE LAST SEVEN YEARS OVER 20 CITIES HAVE ALREADY BEEN DESIGNATED *CAPITAL/CITY OF CULTURE* IN THE ASIAN REGION, AND OTHERS ARE IN THE PIPELINE FOR FUTURE NOMINATIONS”

- *Decentralisation and potential for socio-economic development and cultural transformation:* During its first 15 years of existence the scheme focused on big and established cities with existing cultural infrastructure and heritage worth celebrating, often capital cities, such as Berlin (1988), Paris (1989), Dublin (1991), Madrid (1992), Lisbon (1994), and Copenhagen (1996). With the turn of the millennium, however, the focus turned towards less prominent cities for which the ECoC title has the potential to boost their cultural, social and economic development. Through culture and art, these cities can raise their international profile, improve quality of life, strengthen their sense of community, create economic growth, boost tourism, and initiate regeneration, among other positive outcomes. Being an ECoC can bring “fresh life to these cities” putting them “at the heart of cultural life across Europe” (European Commission, 2016b).

Diversity of international approaches

After the initial boost provided by the European initiative, some other regions, subregions and even countries took on the idea and started organizing their own *capital/city of culture* schemes, drawing some inspiration from the European one. In this way, the *Arab Capital of Culture* is an initiative started by the Arab League under the UNESCO Cultural Capitals Program to promote and celebrate Arab culture and encourage cooperation in the Arab region. Since the initiative was set up in 1996, when Cairo was designated the first Arab Capital of Culture, 22 cities have been selected Arab Capital of Culture. Luxor, in Egypt, is the city nominated for the title in 2017. The Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ISESCO), based in Rabat (Morocco), has appointed *Capitals of Islamic Culture* since 2005. To date, 34 cities in Africa, the Middle East and Asia have been awarded the title. In the year 2017, Amman (Jordan), Mashhad (Iran), and Kampala (Uganda) received the distinction (ISESCO, 2017).

For the Latin American region, at least two non-governmental organizations propose cultural capitals. The *Unión de Ciudades Capitales Iberoamericanas* (UCCI), based in Madrid (Spain), has nominated cultural capitals in Ibero-America since 1991, when Bogotá (Colombia), was granted the title (Ayuntamiento de Madrid, 2015). *The American Capital of Culture*, launched in 1998 by the International Bureau of Cultural Capitals (IBOCC), is recognized by the Organization of American States (OAS), and annually selects a city in the Americas since the year 2000 to serve as the *American Capital of Culture* for a period of one year. Mérida in Mexico is the city nominated for 2017 (Capital Americana de la Cultura, 2016).

In Brazil, the initiative *Capital Brasileira da Cultura* (CBC) was created to promote the social and economic development of Brazilian municipalities through the valorisation and promotion of their heritage and cultural diversity. The initiative lasted from 2006 to 2011.

Cultural Capitals of Canada was a programme that recognized and supported Canadian municipalities for special activities that harness the benefits of arts and culture in community life. A total of 42 communities were recognised as *Cultural Capitals of Canada* over the lifetime of the programme, from 2003 to 2012 (Government of Canada, 2013).

Despite the abundance of international precedents, the notion of an award to honour city of culture status for a limited period of time only materialised in East Asia in recent years¹⁰. Until the 2010s there was no similar initiative to the European one in the region. Despite its relative newness, in the last seven years over 20 cities have already been designated *capital/city of culture* in the region, and others are in the pipeline for future nominations. What reasons are behind this apparent recent Asian enthusiasm for the scheme? Are the Asian countries and regions trying to replicate or transplant what could be perceived as positive models into their geopolitical landscapes? Or on the contrary, are they carving their own models that just happen to bear a similar name? Are they perhaps adapting the European concept to their local realities, hence creating hybrid schemes?

¹⁰ The ASEAN City of Culture concept was first discussed and adopted at the 3rd Meeting of AMCA on 12 January 2008 at Nay Pyi Taw, Myanmar, and was launched in 2010 in Clark, Philippines. Kuala Lumpur, capital of Malaysia, and Jakarta, capital of Indonesia were nominated *Capitals of Islamic Culture* in 2009 and in 2011 respectively.

“THE FIRST ATTEMPT TO SET UP A CULTURAL CAPITAL/CITY SCHEME IN EAST ASIA BELONGS TO ASEAN. MARCH 2010 SAW THE INAUGURATION OF SOUTHEAST ASIA’S VERY FIRST ASEAN CITY OF CULTURE”

ASEAN City of Culture



FIGURE 1. LOCATION OF THE ASEAN CITIES OF CULTURE (2010-2017)

* A large number of cities were named *ASEAN City of Culture* in the Philippines for the period 2010-2011.

Source: Author’s own elaboration; map template courtesy of ASEAN UP.

Chronologically, the first attempt to set up a cultural capital/city scheme in East Asia belongs to ASEAN. March 2010 saw the inauguration of Southeast Asia’s very first *ASEAN City of Culture* at the 4th AMCA meeting in Clark, Philippines (AMCA stands for ASEAN Ministers Responsible for Culture and Arts). According to the official documentation, the broad objective of the initiative is “to strengthen the ASEAN identity and raise the profile of ASEAN in the region and internationally, to celebrate ASEAN arts and culture and promote the growth of the region’s creative industries, and to promote People to People Engagement, e.g. among practitioners, next generation artists, and the public, cultivating long-lasting friendship among the people of ASEAN” (ASEAN, 2010). The AMCA ministers decided to grant the inaugural honorific *ASEAN City of Culture* for the 2010-2011 biennium to the city of Clark in Pampanga, itself host city of the AMCA meeting. Although it was not initially mentioned in the official documentation, the label *ASEAN City of Culture* was later extended to at least another 10 cities in the

Philippines. In the framework of the 5th AMCA meeting, Singapore was designated *ASEAN City of Culture* for the period 2012-2013. Two years later, the relatively small city of Huê in central Vietnam, former capital of the country from 1802 to 1945, was named *ASEAN City of Culture* for the biennium 2014-2015. More recently, Bandar Seri Begawan, Brunei’s capital city and host to the 7th AMCA meeting in August 2016, is the latest city in ASEAN that has been granted this honorific title, in this case for the period 2016-2017.

Some of the main characteristics of the Southeast Asian scheme are explained below.

Honorific without competition

One of the most prominent features of the Southeast Asian cultural city initiative when compared with its European counterpart (but also, as subsequently will be shown, when compared with the scheme put forward by ASEAN’s Northeast Asian neighbours), is the lack of competition to receive the honorific title. The *ASEAN City of Culture* designation is to date solely based on the fact that the chosen city serves as the host to an AMCA meeting. In that respect, the designation acts more as an honorific title transiently awarded to a city/country that happens to host a strategic meeting, than as a planned or mindful effort to select the most suitable location to represent its country and the region for two years. As noted above, the designated city is meant to “raise the profile of ASEAN in the region and internationally” and “promote the growth of the region’s creative industries”; however, the Southeast Asian cities do not need to bid or present attractive proposals to be the chosen ones: the fate of being awarded the title is in the hands, for the time being, of a rotational administrative process.

Lack of planning, funding, institutional monitoring and reporting

While ASEAN provides an institutional framework for the *ASEAN City of Culture* initiative to exist, the association’s contribution ends there. After the title is conferred to the AMCA meeting host city, little monitoring, supervision or even evaluation of the scheme is performed or encouraged by ASEAN. In fact, often the only official mention of the scheme occurs two years

later on the occasion of the ensuing AMCA meeting; and it is done through joint media statements and without specific mention to the initiative's challenges, achievements or outcomes. The *ASEAN City of Culture* initiative therefore remains a low priority for ASEAN and in general lacks direction, monitoring and supervision.

This is equally the case with reference to funding. ASEAN does not provide any kind of funding to the designated *ASEAN Cities of Culture*, and the financial responsibility is left in the hands of the city itself and, if applicable, of the host country. In a 2013 interview with Ms. Eva Salvador, head of the Cultural Centre of the Philippines' Education Department and member of the organising committee of the first *ASEAN City of Culture* project, when asked about the initiative's funding schemes she confirmed that "while there is no budget coming from the ASEAN fund itself, the member states agreed to spend for it exclusively, or better yet, to combine it with some existing ASEAN events"¹¹. In an interview two years later with Mr. Nestor O. Jardin, former president of the same Cultural Centre of the Philippines, he acknowledged that among the biggest challenges to this project's success was the lack of funding from ASEAN, which made it difficult for proper implementation. Apart from ASEAN, Jardin also pointed at the different host countries that "should contribute with more resources (public and private) so that the project can achieve its objectives and become sustainable in a medium/long term"¹².

Unclear definition of what the title ASEAN City of Culture means

As previously mentioned, the *ASEAN City of Culture* for 2010-2011 was Clark, in the region of Pampanga (Philippines). However, during the biennium, several other Filipino cities were also awarded (in some cases unofficially) this title. In a January 2010 press release by the Philippines's own National Commission for Culture and the Arts (NCCA), two months before the official nomination took place, it was stated that "The Philippines [as a whole country] has been recognized as the 'cultural capital' of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) for 2010 and 2011" (IFACCA, 2010). However AMCA, in its official joint media statement, later underscored the appointment of Clark in Pampanga as "the host venue for the 4th AMCA meeting, [and] as the inaugural *ASEAN City of Culture*" (ASEAN, 2010).

Since then, the title changed hands (or was shared) several times before the end of the Philip-

pines' term: in July 2011, barely five months before the end of the allocated biennium, the Filipino press reported the news that Cebu, the Philippines' second city, had also been awarded the *ASEAN City of Culture* title "in lavish ceremonies (...) in various areas around the city" (Interaksyon, 2011). The solemnity of the act was validated by the fact that "Ambassadors of six Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) member states stood witness as Mayor Michael Rama accepted a certificate from ASEAN ministers of culture and the arts conferring the title 'City of Culture' for two years on Cebu City" (Codilla, 2011). Surprising as this may seem, the designation of Cebu as city of culture was not an isolated case. As recorded in the *Official Gazette of the Republic of the Philippines* of the 20 July 2011 and reported by several media outlets, not only Cebu was joining Clark in Pampanga but also other Filipino cities such as Manila (the country's capital), Angono in Rizal, Tarlac City, Batangas City, Roxas in Capiz, Tagbilaran in Bohol, Cagayan de Oro in Misamis Oriental and Dapitan in Zamboanga (Philippine Government, 2011)¹³.

While the Philippines decided to disseminate the title among some of its many cities, Singapore kept it tight within the city-state to the extent that the honour hardly left the island: Singapore *ASEAN City of Culture* 2012-2013 played a minor role in the country's otherwise rich cultural scene. Despite the fact that its original aims of "raising the profile of ASEAN in the region and internationally" and "promot[ing] the growth of the region's creative industries" remained unchanged for this biennium (ASEAN, 2012), Singapore chose to downplay the initiative, and its visibility was reduced to a logo designed to commemorate the occasion, as well as a Facebook page that struggled to go beyond the barrier of 100 "likes"¹⁴, and remained mostly dormant, with an average of 2-3 posts per month. There was also a modest range of events, some with a strong ASEAN component such as an ASEAN Puppetry Festival, an ASEAN Museum Directors' Symposium, and an ASEAN Youth Camp, but some others such as exhibitions or generic festivals that had little to do with the abovementioned aims for the initiative, or with little Southeast Asian content¹⁵. For the duration of the *ASEAN City of Culture*, Singapore remained ambiguous in its engagement and chose to keep a low profile for the regional cultural initiative, in spite of the country's considerable investment of 209.7 million Singapore dollars in the arts in 2012 (Singapore Government, 2012).

While Singapore opted to downplay the inherited *ASEAN City of Culture* title but nurtured it to keep it alive, the initiative visited Huê city in 2014 and left without leaving much of a trace. The designation was

11 Interview with Ms. Eva Salvador, Head of the Education Department, Cultural Centre of the Philippines (CCP), 20 August 2013.

12 Interview with Mr. Nestor O. Jardin, former president of the Cultural Centre of the Philippines (CCP, 2001-2009), 10 November 2015.

13 Apart from the cities listed above, other sources mention other cities such as Santiago City, in Isabela province, "which staged the Patarraday Festival" (The Manila Times, 2010).

14 See <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Asean-City-of-Culture/220972144680128>

15 A non-exhaustive list of events can be found at Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth Singapore (2014). mccy.gov.sg

mentioned in the joint media statement endorsed by the 6th AMCA meeting in April 2014 (ASEAN, 2014), received some initial attention by the Vietnamese press, and included the hosting of the *ASEAN Festival of Arts*, an event organised every two years alongside every AMCA summit. In Huê city, AMCA also promoted culture as a pillar of sustainable development and agreed in principle on the draft of the *Hue Declaration on Culture for ASEAN Community's Sustainable Development*. Despite this initial enthusiasm linked to the hosting of the AMCA meeting, very little more transpired of the type of activities Huê city attached to its designation as *ASEAN City of Culture* during the rest of its biennium.

East Asian Capitals of Culture (EACC)

Japan, China and South Korea have organised the Trilateral Culture Ministers Meeting since 2007¹⁶. It aims to promote trilateral cultural exchanges and cooperation on cultural activities among the three Northeast Asian countries (Trilateral Cooperation Secretariat, 2016). Among other objectives, it set out to "promote the peaceful coexistence, stability and prosperity of the three countries" (Trilateral Culture Ministers, 2007). The first of the meetings took place in Nantong (China) in September 2007, and to date another seven meetings have followed, the latest in Jeju (South Korea) in August 2016. In the framework of these meetings, the ministers of culture of the Northeast Asian countries signed the Shanghai Action Plan of the Trilateral Cultural Ministers' Meeting (2012-2014)¹⁷ to strengthen cultural exchanges among the three countries. One of the key initiatives outlined in the Shanghai Action Plan was the annual appointment of *East Asian Cultural Cities*. This materialised two years later when Yokohama (Japan), Quanzhou (China) and Gwangju (South Korea) were designated *East Asian Cultural Cities* (EACC) (The Japan Times, 2013), in an initiative that according to Mr. Cai Wu, then China's Minister of Culture, was meant to "boost cooperation (...) in multiple fields" (CCTV, 2013). Through the EACC initiative, Japan, South Korea and China committed to "upholding common values as East Asian countries and placing priority on exchanges, the convergence of cultures and the appreciation of other cultures" (Trilateral Culture Ministers, 2013). That translated in the year 2014 to a wide range of cultural activities initiated in each of the cities, which included a Sand Art Exhibition and a Geidai Arts Youth Summit (Yokohama), a Maritime Silk Road International Arts Festival (Quanzhou), and a "Banquet of Dreams" performance festival (Gwangju). While the cultural and artistic programmes of the three cities differed from

each other, the three cities coordinated to produce joint events for the opening and closing ceremonies of the cultural city events, Trilateral Art Festivals, an Arts & Culture Education Forum, and other culture and arts education exchange events.

The EACC initiative continued the following year and 2015 saw another three East Asian cities selected to represent their countries, engaging in "vibrant cultural exchanges and programs throughout the year" (Trilateral Cooperation Secretariat, 2014): Qingdao in China, whose most notable activity was a "Five Kings" Talent Competition (singing, dancing, theatre, music and performance) with contestants from the three countries; Cheongju, in South Korea, organised a "Chopsticks Festival"; and Niigata, in Japan, took charge of a Youth Exchange Programme. Ningbo (China), Jeju (South Korea) and Nara (Japan), received the baton in 2016, and Quanzhou (China), Daegu (South Korea) and Kyoto (Japan) are the three designated *East Asian Cultural Cities* for 2017.



FIGURE 2. LOCATION OF EAST ASIA CULTURAL CITIES (2014-2017)

Source: Author's own elaboration; map template courtesy of *d-maps.com*.

While the Northeast Asian initiative bears a similar name to other "sister" cultural capitals proposals worldwide, a few features underline Northeast Asia's EACC uniqueness, and to some extent help to differentiate it from the European and Southeast Asian counterpart initiatives seen above.

¹⁶ China is represented in the Culture Trilateral Ministers Meeting by its Minister of Culture; Japan by the Minister of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT), and South Korea by the Minister of Culture, Sports and Tourism.

¹⁷ 2012 marked the 40th anniversary of the normalisation of China-Japan diplomatic relations, as well as the 20th anniversary of China-South Korea diplomacy.

Competition

Contrasting with what happens with its Southeast Asian neighbours but closer to its European counterparts, the Northeast Asian cities compete among themselves to be awarded the title of *East Asian Cultural City*. In China, similar to what occurs in Europe, although without its complexity, the cities need to present their candidacies to a jury that votes to determine the winning city. In 2016, Ningbo, Jingdezhen and Changsha (eventually designated city for the 2017 edition) were the finalists for the honorific title, as chosen by a committee of officials from the Chinese Ministry of Culture and experts in the cultural field. The finalists had to defend their cases to the jury in Beijing, and ultimately the committee gave Ningbo the highest score. For the 2017 edition, Changsha along with Harbin and Sanya were the finalists for the title and a similar selection process took place (Crienglish.com, 2016).

The process is similar in the other two countries, where cities compete to be awarded the title. In South Korea, Daegu earned the title as the 2017 city of culture in a four-way competition with Changwon, Iksan and Jeonju. Jury members gave high marks to Daegu's experience of "successfully hosting many international events, its advanced transportation infrastructure and cultural facilities, and good record of cultural exchanges with foreign countries" (Yonhap News Agency, 2016). In Japan, regional cities have shown extraordinary motivation to be awarded the honour to be the *East Asian Cultural City*¹⁸.

Continuity, consolidation, coordination and accessibility

Changsha (China), Kyoto (Japan) and Daegu (South Korea) are *East Asian Capitals of Culture* for 2017. This marks the 4th consecutive year of an EACC scheme that seems to be in good health. Despite the latent regional tensions and repeated diplomatic cooling,

Northeast Asia continues its advancement as a geopolitical notion (Johnston, 2012: 65; Kang, 2005: 74; Yeo, 2005: 9). The different processes of dialogue and cooperation put in place in the region have also helped foster a stronger sense of regional identity (Dent, 2008: 15). The EACC scheme is the latest but already one of the most notable cultural mechanisms for dialogue and cooperation set up by the three countries in order to smooth relations, maintain ties and improve the region's image¹⁹. To this end, institutional backing and coordination²⁰, as well as the support and involvement of civil societies, is key²¹. Since its debut in 2014, the different EACC cities have organised many cultural activities, street exhibitions, workshops, festivals, exchange projects, art installations, forums and symposiums, with active citizen participation.

Among the over 100 art shows and cultural activities organised by Quanzhou 2014 (China), one of the highlights was a Lantern Festival, in which Quanzhou's main streets and cultural venues were decorated with more than "600 Chinese flower-shaped festive lanterns, Japanese-style Odawara cylinder-shaped lanterns and Korean lanterns with painted designs" (China.org.cn, 2014). In Cheongju 2015 (South Korea), a chopstick-themed festival was organised. The Korean city presented an assorted combination of exhibitions and performances to help represent this common cultural aspect among the three countries (e.g. competitions to show off chopsticks skills as well as gigs using the utensils as drumsticks). Also as part of the programme, the Cheongju National Museum presented an exhibition on the history of how chopsticks have evolved in the three nations²². Nara 2016 (Japan), with the theme "From Japan's Ancient City, to a Diversified Asia", chose to focus on the promotion of cultural affinity of Asian regions through performing arts, fine arts and food, as well as academic exchanges. The project "To build a ship", organised at Nara's Todaji Temple, saw ten ship carpenters from China go to Japan to construct a traditional wooden ship, similar to those which sailed the East Asian seas in the past. Other artists such as South Korean's Kimsooja had artwork installations at other temples around the city²³.

18 As highlighted by Ms. Mariko Konno, Senior Officer at the Arts Council Tokyo, during an interview on 23 October 2015.

19 "Even with Asian nations that share the common cultural lineage, Korea has not seen vibrant cultural exchanges, and further, it has shown little interest in cultures of different civilizations. Today, however, international exchanges of performing arts get invigorated throughout a wider variety of cultures and civilizations. (...) Shared sentiment with other neighbouring Asian countries will facilitate the transmission and understanding of messages and implications of performing arts between Asian nations" (KAMS, 2009: 1). This trend is also demonstrated with concrete facts: the recent Performing Arts Market (PAMS), which took place at the National Theatre of Korea in October 2014, had in China its guest of honour.

20 In Japan, the EACC initiative is framed within the actions promoted by the Agency for Cultural Affairs, under the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT). However, international cultural diplomacy actions and cultural exchanges have traditionally been implemented by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA). Coordination between these two key ministries is crucial if Japan wants to obtain positive results with this initiative.

21 In an interview with Ms. Mariko Konno, Senior Officer at the Arts Council Tokyo, she emphasised that the EACC initiative is one of the few proposals on regional cultural cooperation recognisable today by the Japanese civil society. Ms. Konno was nevertheless sceptical about the project's success in promoting cooperation and better understanding between civil societies, and termed the scheme a bit "chaotic" and without a clear vision. She however, admitted that in the complex regional context of Northeast Asia, the EACC represents a first step that has cultivated some interest in the other countries' cultures.

22 For more information about the "chopsticks festival" in Cheongju, see Yonhap News Agency (2015).

23 For more information on Nara 2016's EACC activities, see Culture City of East Asia 2016 – Nara (2016).



FIGURE 3. LOGOS OF THE THREE EAST ASIA CULTURAL CITIES 2016

Source: East Asia Cultural Cities' websites.

The EACC opens possibilities of participation for the cities' civil societies in accessible programmes open to everyone. As part of the EACC initiative, artists and cultural practitioners also have opportunities to present their works to wider audiences. In 2016, as part of the coordinated EACC programmes between Nara, Jeju, and Ningbo, a film exchange project was organised where three renowned filmmakers, Jia Zhangke (China), O Muel (South Korea) and Naomi Kawase (Japan) produced film stories featuring the EACC cities (Culture City of East Asia 2016 – Nara, 2016). Similarly, strong connections have been fostered at institutional levels, such as the coordination between the Yokohama Triennale in Japan and the Gwangju Biennale in South Korea in the year 2014, as well as among the two cities' museums of art. In 2014 too, a Memorandum of Understanding was signed to organise more tourism promotions in each other's cities; and in 2015, at Cheongju's closing ceremony, the three EACC cities signed a cooperation declaration to establish a long-term mechanism of exchanges (Qdshibei.gov.cn, 2015). EACC cities also coordinate and share resources for their opening and closing ceremonies. For instance, Gwangju's opening ceremony in 2014 featured

dance troupes and puppetry shows from its Chinese counterpart Quanzhou and performances by Japanese teenage pop group Denpagumi.inc, and in return it sent a dance company, S.Y. Dance Company, to perform in the other cities. EACC cities have also developed online platforms, websites and commemorative logos to support their cultural capitals (see figure 3)²⁴.

Soft diplomacy in a complex geopolitical context

The modern relationship between Japan, South Korea and China is rooted in a complex history. For decades initiatives stimulating cooperation between the three states were practically non-existent (Lee & Lim, 2014: 5). The wounds left by Japanese colonialism in the region and the conflicts experienced during the World War II continued to trouble the political relations between the three nations for years (Johnston, 2012: 67); the three countries took decades to restart the lost diplomatic contact²⁵. The "persistence of historical memory"²⁶ in the region and the consequent widespread distrust hampered communication and interaction between the three countries, and undermined the development of regional cooperation and integration²⁷. In the first half of the 2010s the mistrust in the Northeast Asian region was at its worst in decades. Japan and China experienced great diplomatic tension over the sovereignty of the Senkaku islands (in Japanese) or Diaoyu (in Chinese), located in the East China Sea²⁸. Diplomatic contact was kept at a minimum and the Foreign ministers of the three countries stopped their regular strategic annual meetings between 2012 and 2015.

Berry, Liscutin and Mackintosh affirm that "at its most ideal, culture is assumed to assuage historical grievance and to effect national reconciliation, regional peace, and global harmony" (Berry, Liscutin & Mackintosh, 2009: 2). Despite the majority of diplomatic tools being temporarily suspended in what Hughes called "the most serious [situation] for Sino-Japanese relations in the post-war period in terms of the risk of militarised conflict" (Hughes, 2013), the three countries' Ministers of Culture continued to meet regularly.

24 Not all EACC cities commit and invest equally to the scheme. Japanese cities, for instance, usually have their websites and resources translated into English, Korean and Chinese, apart from Japanese. On the contrary, traditionally Chinese and South Korean's EACC cities have kept their resources in their respective own languages.

25 Only in 1965 Japan and South Korea signed their Treaty on Basic Relations; Japan and China signed in 1972 a Sino-Japanese Joint Statement that was later ratified in 1978 with the signature of the Treaty of Peace and Friendship between the People's Republic of China and Japan.

26 "Many East Asia IR analyses emphasize the constraining effect of historical memory on foreign policy decision making. Whether it is because of the socialization of populations through education systems and popular culture or because leaders themselves genuinely internalize historical memories, there is a common view that constructed memories of nineteenth – and twentieth – century imperialism have hindered political cooperation. (...) In Northeast Asia (...) one of the toughest obstacles (...) is the persistence of historical memory and its role in cultivating hostile, even racist, images of the Other" (Johnston, 2012).

27 "Asia has seen a huge gap between different nations in terms of political and economic spectrum. Under the circumstances, lack of understanding and information about each other could lead to numerous trials and errors in the process of cultural and commercial exchanges" (KAMS, 2009: 2).

28 To know more about the Sino-Japanese conflict over the sovereignty of these islands, see Hollihan (2014).

In fact, they met in the years 2012, 2013 and 2014, the peak years of the dispute. Furthermore their 5th meeting in Gwangju in September 2013 constituted the first ministerial meeting between the three countries in that year²⁹. The *East Asia Cultural Cities* initiative, conceived in 2012, officially proposed in 2013, and first implemented in 2014, was accordingly part of an effort to draw on cultural matters to lessen tension in a period in which much of the high level regional political and diplomatic initiatives were halted. The EACC initiative was hence one of the few soft diplomacy meeting points found by the three Northeast Asian nations to enhance dialogue and cooperation.

Decentralising the power of culture

A key characteristic of the EACC proposal is its marked decentralising approach. While political and diplomatic initiatives often choose capital cities or financial hubs for their strategic actions and meetings, in the cultural realm the chosen locations are secondary cities. Out of the 12 designated cultural cities to date, and with the exception of Yokohama, neither capital cities such as Tokyo, Beijing or Seoul, nor large urban conglomerates or commercial hubs such as Guangzhou and Chongqing in China, Busan and Incheon in South Korea, or Osaka and Nagoya in Japan, have been chosen to represent their countries as EACCs. In the case of China, for instance, the four Chinese cities designated EACC rank 19th (Qingdao 2015), 20th (Quanzhou 2014), 21st (Changsha 2017) and 33rd (Ningbo 2016) in terms of metropolitan area population (National Bureau of Statistics of China, 2010).

“THE EAST ASIA CULTURAL CITIES INITIATIVE, CONCEIVED IN 2012, OFFICIALLY PROPOSED IN 2013, AND FIRST IMPLEMENTED IN 2014, WAS PART OF AN EFFORT TO DRAW ON CULTURAL MATTERS TO LESSEN TENSION IN A PERIOD IN WHICH MUCH OF THE HIGH LEVEL REGIONAL POLITICAL AND DIPLOMATIC INITIATIVES WERE HALTED”

Three schemes in comparison

The schemes chosen by ASEAN and the Northeast Asian countries to shape their cultural capital strategies in the 21st century bear similar names to their European counterpart. As seen in this paper, occasionally they might even have drawn some inspiration from it. However, the way the three regions define and implement their cultural capital scheme can be at times quite divergent, and only few resemblances connect them today. In that regard, it could be argued that what makes a cultural capital should only be determined by Asians and not measured by European parameters. Regional policy makers frequently claim that their efforts in the advancement of the Asian regional project should not be judged in relation to the Euro-

pean experience (Ravenhill, 2008). Indeed, there are more Asian voices advocating for localised proposals in the understanding and implementation of international relations and cooperation (Acharya & Buzan, 2007). In the case of the *ASEAN City of Culture*, Southeast Asian countries have largely not replicated the model proposed today by their European counterparts³⁰. While the 30 year evolution of ECoC has included new features, rules, and conditions³¹, some similarities with the rudimentary scheme put in place by the European countries in the early days of the scheme can be noted:

- As it was the case at the beginning of the ECoC initiative in the mid-1980s, the designation of *ASEAN Cities of Culture*

today lies mainly in the hands of ministers responsible for Culture/Arts, with little or no consultation with external parties. In fact, it was as late as 1999 when an international panel was set up to assess the suitability of the cities proposed by the European states, and until 2004 the ECoC designation was mainly an inter-governmental responsibility without

²⁹ Earlier that year, in May, the 15th Tripartite Environment Ministers Meeting took place in Kitakyushu (Japan). However, as a sign of the level of regional tension at the time, China only sent a vice-minister to the meeting.

³⁰ At the interview with Ms. Eva Salvador, Head of Education at the Cultural Center of the Philippines and member of the organising committee of the first *ASEAN City of Culture* project, she affirmed that although at the 4th AMCA meeting in Pampanga “there was some mention of initiatives taken by the EU (...) there was no benchmarking using these countries’ experiences”.

³¹ As an example, the 1985 European Commission resolution (85/C 153/02) concerning the launch of the *European City of Culture* scheme stated that “as a general rule, only one ‘European City of Culture’ should be chosen each calendar year” (European Communities, 1985). However this changed over the years: in 2000, the millennium year, was treated by the EU differently, and as many as nine cities were chosen, including two cities of states that were to join the EU only in 2004 (Krakow in Poland, and Prague in the Czech Republic), and two cities from outside the EU (Bergen, in Norway, and Reykjavik in Island).

“THE SCHEMES CHOSEN BY ASEAN AND THE NORTHEAST ASIAN COUNTRIES TO SHAPE THEIR CULTURAL CAPITAL STRATEGIES IN THE 21ST CENTURY BEAR SIMILAR NAMES TO THEIR EUROPEAN COUNTERPART. OCCASIONALLY THEY MIGHT EVEN HAVE DRAWN SOME INSPIRATION FROM IT. HOWEVER, THE WAY THE THREE REGIONS DEFINE AND IMPLEMENT THEIR CULTURAL CAPITAL SCHEME CAN BE AT TIMES QUITE DIVERGENT, AND ONLY FEW RESEMBLANCES CONNECT THEM TODAY”

the involvement of external experts or any formal assessments (European Commission, 2009: 5).

- While ECoC designated cities currently have at least four years to prepare, this was not the case earlier (e.g. the inaugural Athens 1985 only had seven months to prepare; and after a change in government, Dublin 1991 had little more than a year). This is in line with what designated *ASEAN Cities of Culture* experience today, as their nomination is usually only confirmed well into their official designated period.
- As with the current ASEAN scheme, the beginnings of the ECoC did not include much or any of the socio-economic angling commonly chosen today in many of the selected cities (e.g. social integration of minorities, urban regeneration, and development of new infrastructures, among others).
- As with the ASEAN scheme today, for years competition at the national level to become the designated ECoC was scarce, and only from 2013 the selection procedure was made more competitive at the European level.
- Currently the European dimension, citizen participation and long-term after effects are a precondition for obtaining the ECoC title (European Communities, 2006). However, for years, the ECoC designations lacked a real European dimension, with it being “often weak if not entirely absent” (European Commission, 2009: 8). This certainly resembles the *ASEAN City of Culture* scheme where to date none of the proposals have excelled in their promotion of the Southeast Asian dimension or identity.
- Designated cities do not compete among themselves for the title, and the award is mostly honorific.
- In general, the designation does not stimulate the creation of new cultural structures in the chosen city/cities, it does not boost urban regeneration and tourism, and few new cultural activities are fuelled by the fact that cities are awarded the title.
- Despite the initial institutional enthusiasm when the scheme is announced, nominated *ASEAN Cities of Culture* do not receive any core regional funding. This complicates the tasks of strengthening the association’s identity and of raising its profile regionally and internationally, something nevertheless still repeatedly outlined in the official statements.
- Seven years into its implementation, in Southeast Asia the scheme still lacks direction, monitoring and evaluation.
- The information on the *ASEAN City of Culture* initiative is also scarce and incomplete, and there are hardly any reliable sources with data, statistics or a basic compilation of activities.
- Southeast Asian countries do not appear to have seriously embraced the scheme and to date hardly any of the aims established in 2010 have been fulfilled. Today, the *ASEAN City of Culture* initiative remains vague and its impact in Southeast Asia’s cultural landscape is negligible.

In the case of the *East Asian Capital of Culture* scheme, while it is not replicating the model popularised by its European counterpart three decades ago, it might have drawn some inspiration from it:

While these constitute similarities between the ECoC and the *ASEAN City of Culture* schemes, it could also be argued that they are dated similarities. ASEAN could have certainly learnt from previous cultural capital models such as the ECoC, including its many mistakes and limitations, in order to prevent outdated repetition. Several fundamental differences separate the ECoC and the ASEAN scheme today, and here there is a list of these divergent features:

- The Northeast Asian cities enter into a competition among candidate cities, and a panel of experts (international in the European case, national for EACC) decides on the most suitable host.
- EACC countries receive time to plan ahead for their title year, although considerably less than in Europe, and there is some level of coordination among the

	EUROPEAN CAPITAL OF CULTURE (ECoC)	ASEAN CITY OF CULTURE	EAST ASIA CAPITALS OF CULTURE (EACC)
Competition to be the chosen city at the national level	√	X	√
Long-term planning	√	X	X
Substantial financial support from regional institutions	√	X	X
Supervision and monitoring	√	X	X*
Potential for socio-economic development and/or cultural transformation of the city	√	X	√
Instrument to foster tourism	√	√*	√*
Tool of soft diplomacy	√	X	√
Participation of civil societies	√	X*	√

TABLE 1. COMPARISON BETWEEN THE ECoC SCHEME AND THE TWO ASIAN CULTURAL CAPITAL/CITY SCHEMES

* With caveats, as discussed in the text above.

Source: Author's own elaboration.

selected cities which implies basic monitoring and supervision.

- Both schemes understand boosting of cultural tourism as a top opportunity for the cities.
- The Europe of the 1980s and the Northeast Asia of the 2010s are two very different geopolitical realities that however coincide in one fundamental aspect: the usage of culture as a tool for soft diplomacy. In pre-Berlin wall fall Europe, culture, art and creativity were stimulated to stand as equals in front of technology, commerce and economy, as advocated by Ms. Mercuri (Palmer/Rae Associates, 2004: 41); but in a then particularly divided Europe, culture was also seen as a tool to help bring the peoples of Europe together (European Communities, 1985). In a very different time and context, today Japan, China and South Korea are also resorting to the arts to promote knowledge of each other's culture and foster mutual understanding in a period of political pressures. As in mid-1980s' Europe, today's Northeast Asian cultural diplomacy remains one of the main reasons for the EACC scheme to exist.

Conclusion

"Different cities define culture differently" (European Commission, 2009: 6), and this should certainly be taken into consideration when establishing a comparison between these models. Indeed the three cultural

capital/city schemes analysed above are very different from each other. This is normal considering their very disparate geopolitical contexts as well as their dissimilar lifespans: over three decades in the case of Europe and barely eight and four years in the Asian cases.

While some similarities have been noted between ASEAN and ECoC in the modest initial stages, by and large the *ASEAN City of Culture* scheme has not tried to replicate the European model. In spite of this, eight years into its implementation, the *ASEAN City of Culture* has not yet successfully carved its own consolidated and sustainable model, and it requires re-thinking if it is to avoid involution or obsolescence.

On the contrary, while the differences among the European and the Northeast Asian cultural capital/city schemes are pronounced, the EACC scheme has drawn some inspiration from its European counterpart. Despite its short life, it can be concluded that EACC has created a hybrid model with its very own characteristics, but it has also adapted some of the European model's features to better suit its unique and complex geopolitical landscape. This combination has laid a foundation that could lead to strengthened ties between regional civil societies, improved perception of the regional "other", and provide sustainability and potential long-term success to this scheme.

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Checkboxes and radio buttons: metrologies, cultural policy, and the *dispositif* of art management

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ABSTRACT

Cultural policies will be analysed as producing what Bruno Latour calls "metrologies"; that is, measuring devices and valuemeters, and by extension, concepts and instruments that contribute to the progressive socialization and naturalization of art effects such as social sustainability, community cohesion, social capital, and innovation. The case analysed will be the art scene of the city of Malmö, its policies and metrological devices, with a focus on one community theatre project as an exemplary case. The metrologies, we claim, are the ways in which the policy apparatus opens up to larger concerns of what Michel Foucault calls *dispositifs*, linking art policy to other policy changes and societal concerns in general, and making art respond to those concerns in managed ways.

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Keywords:

Cultural policy

Performance
measurement

Participation

Art funding

Governmentalisation

Introduction

This paper analyses the funding process of a play called *Drömmarnas väg* ("The Road of Dreams") and is part of a larger project, "Art and Governmentalisation: Actor-Networks and Urban Governance in the City of Malmö, Sweden". The paper is meant to be an initial and *reorienting* description of one of the most important policy instruments for governing the arts, namely the funding mechanisms that surround publicly funded art. In our case, the transactions occur between three state funding agencies – the Swedish Arts Council, Region Skåne and Malmö city Department of Culture – and a community theatre group called JaLaDa that staged *Drömmarnas väg*¹. The transactions consist of application forms, performance measurements and reports of various kinds, and are analysed as part of what we call "the art management *dispositif*", which combines, for example, discourses on aesthetic value, regulatory decisions on governing culture, administrative measures of handing out funds, philosophical and moral propositions on equality and diversity, scientific centres of monitoring culture, and the coordinates of knowledge on which they base their work.

By using Foucauldian and Latourian frameworks in our description of the funding mechanisms, we aim to shift the analysis from causal, linear and rational understandings of the policy process to a much more mundane and humble level of recording of transactions brought about by the policy apparatus. The transactions in the funding process are analysed as the capillary ends of cascading metrologies: assemblages of policy instruments, such as cultural policies, funding application forms, evaluation reports for funders, contributing to the progressive socialisation and naturalisation of contemporary policy agendas for art. However, we suggest that this socialisation cannot really be understood with a notion of evidence-based policy, which is often an assumption of the stakeholders in the policy process.

As Sara Selwood notes, in the British context, "evidence-based policy" came to be synonymous with "modernisation" in the day-to-day work of the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) in the 1990s (Selwood, 2002: 17). The DCMS directed a lot of energy into the development of evidence-based policy, for instance, by initiating QUEST (the Quality, Efficiency and Standards Team) to improve the quality of the data that went into the analysis so that "'greater accuracy to activity, measurement, evaluation and research' (...) could be developed" (Selwood, 2002: 66). Although QUEST existed only between 1998-2003/2004 (Selwood, 2002: 69), "evidence-based policy making" (EBPM) gained an almost sanctified status in policy circles, delivering metaphors such as "cycles", "chains", "stages", "paths", "phases", "streams" and "rounds" to

describe what Paul Cairney argues is the EBPM ideal, an "ordered process of decision-making (...) beginning with an evidence-based debate about policy problems and ending with an evidence-based evaluation of (...) solutions" (2016: 14). This sense of causality is the very heart of the science of evidence-based policy, splitting the policy process into clearly defined segments with causal or logical relationships, such as "agenda setting", "policy formulation", "legitimation", "implementation", "evaluation", "policy maintenance", "succession", or "termination", which together form a harmonious, cyclical image of the policy process (Cairney, 2016: 18). This ideal picture, although recognised as problematic, arguably still haunts the policy process, especially when "specific problems" are targeted, and there is "greater expectation that the evidence-policy link is direct and linear" (Cairney, 2016: 51). In a study on "the use of performance information by ministers, parliamentarians and citizens", Christopher Pollitt argues that we need "to reconsider what it means to use performance information. It could be argued, for instance, that the regular production of these various reports is more important than their regular consumption by end users" (Pollitt, 2006: 38 & 49). Similarly, Peter Dahler-Larsen points out that "for some years the most important observation within the field has been that, considering the large number of evaluations carried out, there are very few cases of intentional, instrumental use of them" (Dahler-Larsen, 2012: 22-23). EBPM is idealised as highly structured, but is in practice a fuzzy process; an integral principle of "good governance", rarely, if ever, materialised in the work of policy.

Rather than seeing the work of policy as the result of causal processes (which have to be inferred based on metaphorical and metonymical extrapolations), we suggest that a greater focus on the mapping of the networks of human and non-human agents will produce *thicker descriptions* of the "social lives" of policies, their methods and assumptions, and that this in turn will lead to a better understanding of the stakes of what we call the arts management *dispositif*.

Swedish cultural policy

In the official report of the Swedish government from 1972, *Ny kulturpolitik*, which is part of the legislative history of the 1974 bill of culture (Sverige, 1974) – Sweden's first bill of culture – all the public actors involved could be neatly fitted into a horizontally laid out diagram, including cultural institutions presided over by other departments than the department of culture². The diagram lists the various governmental agencies involved, dividing them into central and regional gov-

1 Official English names of the organizations are used. Region Skåne, for example, is the official English name of the organization. All translations from the Swedish sources are ours, unless otherwise stated.

2 In Sweden, the arts belong within the purview of cultural policy and are regulated through the bill of culture; no strict separation is made between art and culture.

ernment bodies, where the central ones are divided again into "government bodies", "institutions" (such as "trusts", "corporations" and "academies") and "educational institutions". In the diagram, the number of employees of all but 11 of the agencies are listed and divided into three categories: "category h" (case workers), "category a" (artistic personnel, administrative personnel, and teachers), and "category ö" (others). In the diagram, the total number of people working on art and culture within a specialized administration under ministerial authority is 3,422, plus the employees of the 11 agencies whose workers are not listed (Kulturutredningen, 1972: 32).

When the government rewrote the cultural policy in 1996 (Sverige, 1996), the new official report made no effort to map all the individual participants involved, nor to delineate their expertise. The bill was based on two extensive reports which together spanned 2,198 pages. One of the reports has a discussion and an appendix which might be understood as attempts to map the efforts to effectuate the goals of the national cultural policy. It contains a section entitled "Follow up and evaluation" where the governmental institutions within the purview of the department of culture are listed in a diagram, dividing them horizontally into "Sector agencies", "Central authorities and institutions", and "Regional institutions", and dividing these vertically into "Academies", "Mass media", "Artists", "Film", "Heritage", and "Theatre, dance, art, museums, exhibitions, literature, peoples' libraries and peoples' education" (Kulturutredningen, 1995: 658-659). In total, the list consists of 91 authorities and institutions of varying sizes. This diagram is based on what the report refers to as a "narrow" definition of state-sponsored cultural activities, which includes all the allocations overseen by the ministry of culture (Kulturutredningen, 1995: 17 & 775).

The appendix of the same report aims to be more evaluative and springs from what the report identifies as a "broad" definition of state-sponsored cultural activities, which also include activities that have cultural or artistic content but are under the purview of other ministries. The appendix lists 13 such activities spread over five ministries and the Royal Court of Sweden (Kulturutredningen, 1995: 550-551). In the appendix, references are made to a "genealogy of allocations" ordered by the government in its Committee Directives (Riksdagsförvaltningen, 1993 & 1994). Although the directives contain no references to a "genealogy", they speak of the need to evaluate the "government supported cultural activities from scratch, including the motives for government responsibility [in the arts and culture sector]" (Riksdagsförvaltningen, 1994: 146). The report responds to this need by producing "a family tree of the development of the now existing allocations" irrespective of their ministerial affiliations (Kulturutredningen, 1995: 770). To reduce the complexity of the overall budget for the arts and culture, the genealogy categorizes the appropriations into four groups: "decentralization", "gov-

ernment responsibility", "cultural areas", and "purpose" (Kulturutredningen, 1995: 772). These groups roughly correspond to some of the demands proposed in the Committee Directives, notably the focus on "decentralization" and "government responsibility". Both these groups are constructed with the aim of measuring the degree of decentralization, the first one in geographical terms, the second in terms of how allocations are shared among national and regional authorities. The "cultural areas" and "purpose" categories are there to map the spread of sponsored activities across the 13 arts and cultural areas identified in the report, and to pigeonhole allocations into five main "purpose" categories with 17 subcategories. The resulting catalogue of tables gives an overview of the allocations based on the categories explained above, but there is no discussion of these results.

When it was time for the second overhaul of cultural policy in 2009 (Sverige, 2009), the official report of the government gives up on listing the government agencies involved in the management of art and culture. These have, according to the report, become too many, too diverse and too specialized in relation to different areas of art and culture, for any overview to be possible (Kulturutredningen, 2009a: 238). Instead, the report presents a "cultural policy matrix" by means of which the different budgetary allocations could be classified in accordance with what kind of allocation they were listed as in the budget bill and government appropriation directions (Kulturutredningen, 2009a: 248). The point of this move, the report argues, is that a focus on the type of allocation could complement the prevalent area-logic of the allocations (the what-is-financed) by also including what the report refers to as "the how" of cultural policy. This is understood as "the forms that policy takes in action", which is further defined as the "pathways" and "tools" through which cultural policy is applied within the different art and culture areas (Kulturutredningen, 2009a: 239). These "forms" are seven in number, divided into 15 subcategories (figure 1). The allocations have 11 "purposes" and are recognizable as a condensed list of the arts and culture areas in previous governmental reports and bills.

With the cultural policy matrix, there is a shift in the way that the government accounts for how cultural policy works, emphasizing the "how-it-is-financed" rather than the specific areas of the arts and culture that had provided the orientation previously. We believe that this signals a novel way for policy to address art and culture in Sweden. Prior to the official reports of 2009, the evaluative focus was on the compartmentalized areas of art and culture, which had been fairly set since the government bill of 1974. When the 1995 report divides these into 13 arts and culture areas, with 5 main "purposes" and 17 "sub-purposes", it basically follows the division set by the stipulations of the 1974 bill. In the 2009 report, these are condensed into the 11 "purposes" of the matrix. In a sense, this is both a compression of how cultural policy addresses the dif-

	Purpose:
	1. Radio, TV
	2. Newspapers
	3. Film
	4. Periodicals literature and libraries
	5. Theatre, dance and music
	6. Culture, general
	7. Image and form
	8. Crafts and design
	9. Museum and exhibition
	10. Cultural heritage
	11. Archives
Forms of activity:	
1. Government agencies & institutions.	
a. Government agencies with med administrative mission.	
b. Government agencies with institutional mission.	
c. Central institutions.	
d. The three R.s	
e. Regional and municipal institutions	
f. Semi-institutions and academies	
2. Sectoral subsidies	
3. Artist support	
4. Project and directed allocations	
a. Research	
b. International and Nordic cultural exchange	
5. Allocations for associations and organizations	
a. Running allocations for associations	
b. Popular movement associated cultural activities	
c. Support to popular movement education	
6. Special recipients	
a. Children and youth	
b. Disabled persons	
c. National minorities	
d. Multiculturalism	
7. License-fee resources for public service	

FIGURE 1. THE CULTURAL POLICY MATRIX

Source: Kulturutredningen (2009a).

ferent art and culture areas, unifying them into fewer distinct posts, and an increase in the attention on what the 2009 report calls the “how” of cultural policy, the “forms” of governmental activity.

This change is in line with a broader set of accounting and control principles that have affected the ways in which Swedish government practices are managed. The 2009 report speaks of “a clear trend in government administration” to establish independent policy evaluation authorities and lists several recently created organizations (Kulturutredningen, 2009b: 135). What they all have in common is that they produce statistics, evaluate reforms, conduct research and develop new knowledge, provide support to local, regional and state government agencies – they are basically authorities which provide knowledge and information for decision-makers³. This type of governance has a long history in the economics, education, and health sectors, but comes thus relatively late in culture. This grey, dry and mundane manipulation of administrative categories may lack artistic lustre, but it is a game-changer for the arts, and changes the game down to the details.

Dispositif and cultural policy

As stipulated in the 2009 bill on culture *Tid för kultur*, a separate agency for the analysis of cultural policy was established in 2011 (Sverige, 2009). The Swedish Agency for Cultural Policy Analysis (*Myndigheten för kulturanalys*) is tasked “to evaluate, analyse and present the effects of proposals and measures taken in the cultural field. This is to be done based on the cultural policy objectives” (Myndigheten för Kulturanalys, 2016). The agency is responsible for official statistics of culture, monitoring the cultural sphere, analysing trends, understanding and explaining how events in the “horizon of culture” may affect cultural policy, evaluating state reforms and measures, and producing broad syntheses and situation assessments in relation to cultural policy objectives (Myndigheten för Kulturanalys, 2016). At the inception, the agency took over the official statistics production and cultural habits and trends analysis from the Swedish Arts Council (*Statens kulturråd*), which could now focus more on funding activities in accordance with the national cultural policy objectives; the new agency became an independent auditor of the penetration and impact of those policies.

The move towards a more intensified and centralized monitoring of art and culture is by no means simply a Swedish development, nor a very recent one. According to Eleonora Belfiore, “[t]wo of the defining issues of contemporary cultural policy debates” are “cultural value and the challenge of its measurements” (2015: ix). Lachlan MacDowall captures the tension of the debate critically: “On the one hand, initiatives to make culture count can have an active and positive drive to include a cultural perspective, and to have it be made visible and taken into account in broader decision-making. On the other hand, too often, culture is *made* to count, in the sense that it is forced unwillingly and unhelpfully into systems of measurement, from where it can be pressed into the service of divergent agendas” (2015: 5). But what is really going on with this move of counting culture and making culture count? We suggest that behind the urge to make culture count and counting culture is not some nefarious political agenda, but an intensification of a mode of governance which is predicated on what Michel Foucault calls “veridiction” (Foucault, 2008)⁴ along with the “crisis of causality” which the focus on veridiction brings about (Valentine, 2007: 101). One crucial motivation for the changes in Swedish cultural policies, for example, is the desire to better identify and account for the effects of policy. Jeremy Valentine argues that because of this urgent problem of causality, the “objective

³ The report lists quite a few: Institute for Evaluation of Labour Market and Education Policy (IFAU), Swedish Agency for Development Evaluation (SADEV), Swedish National Council of Crime Prevention (BRÅ), Swedish Agency for Health Technology Assessment and Assessment of Social Services (SBU), Swedish Institute for Transport and Communications Analysis (SIKA), Swedish Institute for European Policy Studies (SIEPS), Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth (*Tillväxtverket*), and Growth Analysis (TUA).

⁴ “In this sense, inasmuch as it enables production, need, supply, demand, value, and price, etcetera, to be linked together through exchange, the market constitutes a site of veridiction, I mean a site of verification-falsification for governmental practice” (Foucault, 2008: 32).

“WE SUGGEST THAT BEHIND THE URGE TO MAKE CULTURE COUNT AND COUNTING CULTURE IS NOT SOME NEFARIOUS POLITICAL AGENDA, BUT AN INTENSIFICATION OF A MODE OF GOVERNANCE WHICH IS PREDICATED ON WHAT MICHEL FOUCAULT CALLS ‘VERIDICTION’”

and independently verifiable observations” about art and its effects “have become politicized, embedded in political and aesthetic projects as solutions to the problems that such programs exist to solve, and in so doing are the means with which these projects can become solidified and maintained” (Valentine, 2007: 98). The launch of the Swedish Agency for Cultural Policy Analysis is a direct response to this perceived “crisis”, tasked to produce objective and verifiable observations about the state of culture, purportedly lifting at least the facts of culture outside the murky goals of politics. However, we see this as a new and powerful dimension of calculative governmentality and a new organising *dispositif* for the arts.

We suggest that a productive way of dealing with this perceived crisis is to understand it in terms of the Foucauldian concept of the *dispositif*. Although there is considerable theoretical debate over the translation of the concept of *dispositif*, for us the translation issues are of less significance compared to the concept’s methodological utility (for a discussion of the issues of translation, see Bussolini, 2010). Foucault’s own understanding of the term is primarily developed in his technical analyses of the productivity and positivity of power and how these “positivities” in turn relate to the main theme of the analysis of liberal and neo-liberal governmentality, namely the practices of veridiction. *Dispositif* is, in this context, a term with at least four methodological functions (Foucault, 1980):

- *A combinatory function*: the *dispositif* brings together “a thoroughly heterogeneous ensemble consisting of discourses, institutions, architectural forms, regulatory decisions, laws, administrative measures, scientific statements, philosophical, moral and philanthropic propositions”, and so on (Foucault, 1980: 194). As such, the *dispositif* functions as a kind of set theory, allowing disparate and dissimilar elements to be brought together without formally sharing any identity. In terms of cultural policy, the *dispositif* brings together discourses of aesthetic value, institutions such as arts councils, regulatory decisions such as the “arm’s length principle”, laws on transactions between individuals, associations and the state, administrative measures such as government appropriation directions, scientific statements about the impact of the arts and their spillover effects, philosophical, moral and philanthropic propositions of the value of the arts, their benefits in terms of individual development, identity and social cohesion.

Formally, these elements do not share an identity but the notion of *dispositif* allows us to think them together.

- *A networking function*: the *dispositif* allows our analysis to focus on the links between elements, both discursive and non-discursive, and to register how these links shift and modify the functions of the elements over time and in a variety of contexts, producing “a sort of interplay of shifts of position and modifications of function” (Foucault, 1980: 195). A Foucauldian example of this shifting function is when the *Sâlpêtrière* clinic could combine observation, examinations, interrogations, experiments, public presentations, theatre, dialogues, palpations, laying on of hands, and postures, which ultimately combined in constructing “around and apropos of sex an immense apparatus [*dispositif*] for producing truth” (Foucault, 1990: 56). In our case, there is no one institution like *Sâlpêtrière*, which links elements in a similarly concentrated fashion. Arguably, cultural policy networks function in similar albeit more dispersed fashion. They typically produce links between large statistical frameworks, such as Eurostat, UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS), Statistics Sweden (SCB) and their local and regional equivalents. They organize meetings between administrators and cultural actors, fund artistic activities, engage in public debates, formalize application forms and procedures, all of which contribute to producing truths and realities about art.
- *A strategic function*: the *dispositif* “has as its major function at a given historical moment that of responding to an urgent need” (Foucault, 1980: 195). In this, the *dispositif* is “strategic”, deployed where there is controversy and is in this sense the foundation of the “problematizing activity” which Nikolas Rose and Peter Miller claim to lie at the heart of modern government (Rose & Miller, 2008: 61). Arguably, cultural policy is born out of a set of specific urgencies after World War II. Swedish cultural policy, for instance, comes about to enlist the cultural sector as a contributor to the development of the Welfare State, first in terms of addressing the lack of democratic access to excellent art, and more recently in terms of contributing to the development of economic and social wellbeing.

- A *genetic function*: the *dispositif* is the handmaiden of a particular form of modern "genesis" which has "two important moments", one which engenders "the prevalent influence of a strategic objective" (for instance, the strategic objective to produce a sustained and coherent policy for enlisting the arts into the welfare project), and a second moment where the *dispositif* is created "and enabled to continue in existence insofar as it is the site of a double process" (Foucault, 1980: 195). The double process is neatly elucidated by Rose and Miller when they argue that the "problematizing activity" of modern government is simultaneous with the solutions and measures with which the identified problems are rectified: "The solidity and separateness of 'problems' and 'solutions' are thus attenuated. Or, to put it differently, the activity of problematizing is intrinsically linked to devising ways to seek to remedy it. So, if a particular diagnosis or tool appears to fit a particular 'problem', this is because they have been made so that they fit each other" (Rose & Miller, 2008: 15). In the context of cultural policy, this explains how both the urgent needs (the strategic functions, the problematizing activities of cultural policy) and the solutions proposed by cultural policy are modified over time (Menger, 2014).

The *dispositif* is thus a methodological device with which we can bring together the genesis of cultural policy, its combination of problems and solutions, the links that are established in the process of its development, and the disparate elements that constitute it. The shift in Swedish cultural policy to what we here call veridiction is an example of the development of a *dispositif*. As we have seen, the *dispositif* of arts management is heavily imbued with monitoring processes of various kinds, and presided over by a governmental scientific authority, the Swedish Agency for Cultural Policy Analysis.

Cultural policy and metrology

Following the terminology of Actor-Network Theory, the Swedish Agency for Cultural Policy Analysis is a "centre of calculation" (Latour, 1987). For Bruno Latour, a centre of calculation is a place where information is gathered, where "specimens, maps, diagrams, logs, questionnaires and paper forms of all sorts are accumulated and are used by scientists and engineers to escalate the proof race; every domain enters the 'sure path of a science' when its spokespersons have so many allies on their side" (Latour, 1987: 232). Latour introduces the idea of a centre of calculation to explain how observations and experiments in science turn into facts: what scientists actually do with experiments, what graphs they produce with what machines, what printouts are passed on where, what instance collects and collates the printouts, what is said about

those printouts in what contexts and so on. For Latour, centres of calculation produce the proofs and observable facts of a verified science. Rather than ideas, John Law argues, it is these printouts and other "inscription devices" that travel (Law, 2004: 33).

In their post-Foucauldian work on governmentality, Rose and Miller transpose Latour's idea of centres of calculation into the field of governmentality (Rose & Miller, 2010; Rose, 1999). Following Foucault, they see knowledge and expertise as central to the activities of modern technologies of government, and identify centres of calculation as crucial components of those technologies, doing the work of "cognition, calculation, experimentation and evaluation" (Rose & Miller, 2010: 273). According to Rose and Miller, then, "government is intrinsically linked to the activities of expertise, whose role is not one of weaving an all-pervasive web of 'social control', but of enacting assorted attempts at the calculated administration of diverse aspects of conduct through countless, often competing, local tactics of education, persuasion, inducement, management, incitement, motivation and encouragement" (Rose & Miller, 2010: 273). The key expression for Rose and Miller is not "social control", or even "calculated administration", but rather "assorted attempts" at calculated administration: there is no single unifying logic or strategy to this administration, but it is always justified by a reference to a limited set of controversies and to a body of knowledge gathered at the centres of calculation to address those controversies.

How does a centre of calculation do its work? A centre of calculation first makes value judgments by using what Bruno Latour and Vincent Antonin Lépinay call "valuemeters": "devices which make value judgments visible and readable" in the avalanche of data that is collected at the centre (Latour & Lépinay, 2009: 16). This can be something as simple as an Excel file containing, for example, the number of tickets sold to a performance, the number of men, women and children attending the performance, and the ratings they give to the performance. When many valuemeters are connected, comparisons between items become increasingly precise: the number of tickets sold can be divided by the number of men, women and children, the ratings can be related to the number of tickets sold, and so on. Eventually, new objects worthy of serious scientific attention come into being; for example, a new object called "audience" that can now be analysed through many interlinked valuemeters such as class, gender, age, ethnicity and disability. The collections of interlinked valuemeters form "metrological chains" when they are transposed from one context to another (Latour & Lépinay, 2009: 19). An example of such a metrological chain in the cultural policy field is the recent race to develop standards and instruments of cultural value indicators on global and local scales (Madden, 2005).

Metrology concerns itself with the scientific organization, standards, and instruments of measure-

ment that range from the most scientifically important ones on which many other standards depend (for instance the atomic beam standard of measuring time) to the mundane acts of checking the temperature outside. As Latour puts it, "[m]etrology is only the official and primary component of an ever-increasing number of measuring activities we all have to undertake in daily life. Every time we look at our wristwatch or weigh a sausage at the butchers [sic] shop; every time applied laboratories measure lead pollution, water purity, or control the quality of industrial good" we make use of metrologies (Latour, 1986: 28). In a more fundamental sense, metrology is "the name of this gigantic enterprise to make of the outside a world inside which facts and machines can survive" (Latour, 1987: 251); that is, to expand the science outward so that the world becomes knowable by measurable experiments, develop and expand both theoretical and practical models of measurement so that we know what we are measuring and we know what the margins of error are in the devices doing the measurements. Or, as Latour puts it: "What we call 'thinking with accuracy' in a situation of controversy is always bringing to the surface one of these forms. Without them we simply *don't know*" (Latour, 1987: 252). This interplay of controversy and accuracy of measurement is a site of intensified veridiction. This explains the constant call in the Swedish official government reports (which in Sweden are part of the legislative history of its bills) for more accurate data for policy evaluation. These forms of knowing through collecting valuemeters in centres of calculation, gathering them into metrological chains to make value judgments about, for instance, art policies, have become an essential, unavoidable (and eventually uncontroversial) part of art and culture management. Of course, policies get done without sufficient accurate data, or by ignoring data (policies are also political), but nevertheless more data is collected, more analyses of data are reported, and these cannot simply be ignored, either.

The Swedish Agency for Cultural Policy Analysis is thus tasked to bring the world of art and culture into metrological account: to develop those valuemeters and metrological chains needed to make policy value judgments, create new entities of scientific policy attention, and make the policy effects knowable and analysable by measurement. Part of the metrological work of the agency is to develop quantitative measurements of art and culture: gather data, develop new data for art and culture. The other part of the work of this agency is to develop qualitative data. This is where the work with developing indicators is at its most intense, not only in Sweden but globally, because there is no agreement on the best set of qualitative indicators. In fact, the grey literature of art and culture management and governance is awash with competing producers and developers of indicators of quality: AEGIS, Arts Council England, the Cultural Development Network, Interarts, the International Federation of Arts Councils and Culture Agencies (IFACCA), UNE-

SCO, and so on. In the Swedish context, we can clearly see how the focus of cultural policy has shifted from governing the arts and culture to governing the governance of the arts and culture. This can be illustrated by respective emphases of the three government bills on the arts and culture in Sweden (the bills from 1974, 1996 and 2009). It is a history of increasing emphasis on veridiction, with its emphasis on problematisations and controversies. The solution so far has been the production of ever more advanced and cascading metrologies.

The theoretical methodology we have presented above makes quite a few demands on cultural policy research: we suggest that cultural policy research should pay closer attention to linking conceptual networks to skeins of practices and "technological" devices such as centres of calculation as central to policy. The scope of this paper is not enough to offer a detailed account of the avenues opened by the suggested framework, nor is the empirical scope of the case we offer below. The case clearly covers only a detailed space in the framework we presented, but nevertheless highlights the importance of metrologies for cultural policy research.

How does a cascading metrology appear at the capillary end of governance? How does it materialise as part of the *dispositif* of arts management? As an example, we present a case involving a community theatre group seeking funds for a play. The example is random and one among many we could have chosen. The idea is to let the example illustrate the process of veridiction, its metrologies and the intensification of veridiction involved in the context of arts management in Sweden.

***Drömmarnas väg* and cascading metrologies**

In the autumn of 2014, JaLaDa – a Malmö-based community theatre group with a focus on multilingual theatre for children and young people – applied for funding to put on a play called *Drömmarnas väg*. The play was about refugee children on their way to seek safety in Sweden. JaLaDa applied (and received) funding from several government agencies, among them a national funding agency (Swedish Arts Council), a regional funding agency (Region Skåne), and a municipal funding agency (Malmö city's Department of Culture, Cultural Grants section). A year and a half later they reported back to the funders on how the project had run and how the funds had been spent. All the applications were submitted in the autumn 2014 and all the evaluation reports were submitted in the spring 2016. All the three applications under analysis were filled in online, and the forms contain a variety of html-form elements such as checkboxes, radio buttons, and text boxes with maximum character limits.

By looking at the applications and evaluation reports we can glean some of the ways in which national cultural policy goals are transformed and cascade in Swedish public funding as metrologies, and how the forms themselves add slight but not insignificant variations, emphases and interpretations to the goals. Applications and reports are policy instruments in the traditional policy research sense that they are pragmatic tools with which other policy instruments (such as funds) are delivered. They are also policy tools in the more sociological sense in that they produce a particular relationship between "the governing and the governed" and constitute "a condensed form of knowledge about social control and ways of exercising it" (Lascombes & Le Galès, 2007: 3). Perhaps even more crucially, they are policy instruments that structure a possible "field of action" for individuals (Foucault, 1997: xxii; Rose & Miller, 2008: 147), that is, ways of identifying individuals who are eligible to do art, ways of imagining what counts as art, possible ways of doing art, necessary ways of accounting (for) art, and so on. They also constitute an idea of "good governance", and can be read as a condensed theory of the right form and the right amount of arts management. The applications and evaluation reports are the capillary ends of policy instruments, asking for certain very definite figures to be stated, prompting reflections to be entertained by art actors, circulating concepts, identifying objects, defining practices, dividing roles and responsibilities.

First a word of caution: the national, regional and municipal funding agencies mentioned above are of course not the only funding agencies in Sweden. There is a plethora of state and non-state agencies and foundations and private sector actors. JaLaDa also secured funding from these other sources for *Drömmarnas väg* (Gertrude and Ivar Philipson Foundation and The Swedish Savings Bank Foundation). *Drömmarnas väg* is thus a typical Swedish art project: it applies for funding from several different kinds of funders, receives money from some of them but not all of them, and usually the biggest amount of funding is from state agencies. JaLaDa clearly has considerable administrative resources to write applications, and write them successfully. In some other ways, *Drömmarnas väg* is not a typical project: its theme of unaccompanied refugee children coincided with the Syrian refugee crisis of 2015, the project caught an unusual wave of interest and grew to be the largest project of JaLaDa's to date, employing as many as 30 people. In what follows we will describe 1) the application forms as policy instruments for each of the funding agencies; 2) the presentation of the project in the application forms; 3) the evaluation report forms as policy instruments, and 4) the presentation of the project in the evaluation reports.

The Swedish Arts Council application form

The first information that the Swedish Arts Council application form asks for concerns the identification of the actor applying for funding. This is a legal framework; the applicant must provide details, documentation and proof of certain administrative criteria that allows the state to have dealings with the applicant. The applicant must be registered as a corporation of some kind (many are registered as "economic associations"), but the critical point is that they must have an organization number, address, and give the name of someone who can represent the corporation. One might say that already at this point considerable administrative requirements must be met for someone to be eligible for a publicly funded art project.

A second framework is the framework of artistic activity. Here, the applicant is required to tick boxes indicating the area of the arts their activity belongs to (dance, theatre, etc.) and to select the type of activity they engage in: 1) "productions and presentations of original art work", 2) "presentation/collaboration art work", and 3) "promotional art work" (*främjande arbete*). Although the expression "promotional work" does not specify what is promoted, it nevertheless carries in Swedish a strong connotation of promoting core values and of doing this in a pedagogical way. All relevant boxes can be ticked. The applicant can then describe the artistic idea of the project and the concrete things the project intends to do. Interestingly, here, the art work is divided into three different conceptualizations of art: "original art production", "collaborative art production", and "promotional art production". This division neatly illustrates the recent changes in the artistic field: collaborative and pedagogical dimensions (explicitly stated value dimensions) can no longer be considered as simply extraneous to art; rather, they have become obligatory elements of contemporary artistic production (Ruffel, 2014).

A third framework is therefore not surprisingly a collaboration framework. Here the people working in the project are named and their CVs should be attached to the application (such lists are rarely complete, since the project is not yet under way, and not all people can be listed). However, the application form expects collaborators to be organizations, not individuals. Therefore, collaborators should be listed as "collaborator institutions", and following this logic, the division of labour should also be expressed in terms of institutions.

A fourth framework is the audience framework: this is where the applicant is prompted to give the longest account. Measured in pure space for writing, this is the most important framework. Here the applicant is asked to describe the intended audience, how the project plans to work with "audience development" (*publikutveckling*, e.g. widening the public, attracting new groups as audiences) and how the project considers the perspectives of equality, diversity and cultural difference, and how it works to increase

access for disabled people. The applicant is further asked to tick boxes about the age and geographical distribution of the intended audience.

Lastly, the application form asks the applicant to submit more details about several aspects of the art project: the gender of the artists and their professional roles (director, actor, etc.), and the planned event locations.

Region Skåne application form

The regional art application form contains much the same frameworks as the national funding agency application. The initial legal framework is almost the same, as is the artistic activity framework. One difference compared to the national funding agency application form is that the regional form asks for an explicit account of how the project will create surplus value (*mervärde*) for the region and how it contributes to the region's development. Here we see the effects of the emphasis on "policy attachment" (Gray, 2002) made in the 2009 bill on culture. The regional emphasis on spillover effects also corroborates Pierre-Michel Menger's historical account of the development of cultural policy in Europe, where the gradual decentralization of public support for the arts has led to an increasing policy attachment, especially towards social and economic concerns (2014). This explicit development is further corroborated by interviews we made with Region Skåne administrators (interview, 23 February 2016; interview, 9 March 2016; interview, 16 March 2016).

In the audience framework, the concern for the age of the audience is present, but the region also adds the dimensions of gender and ethnicity, which are not present in the national agency application form. The national agency is interested in the audience age (but not gender) and performer gender (but not age). Within the audience framework, the region focuses on the results and evaluation of the proposed project much more than the national agency. It asks how the audience is involved in the planning, implementation and follow-up of the project, but in particular it is interested in knowing the impact of the project in terms of certain valuemeters: equality, cultural diversity, and access for disabled people, but also how the project is marketed and how the results and experiences of the project are disseminated. While the national funding agency form asks the project applicants to posit possible ways in which the art project works with equality, diversity, cultural difference and disability, the regional form asks for specific "impacts" in relation to these same distinctions. It is arguably also more decisive in its requirement for the art project to be "participatory", making it hard to see how art projects that are not participatory would be eligible for funding.

Overall, Region Skåne's application form encourages the applicant to think of their project as open

at both ends: there is a greater requirement to situate the project in a chronology of before-during-after: a planning-implementation-evaluation model governs the logic of the application form. This also shifts the focus from art as an art work or activity (usually defined in terms of artistic innovation and excellence) to a more "planned" form of art. What is planned is evaluated, and what is evaluated is not the art itself, but the effects of art, and not just any effects, but effects that prioritize the surplus values of social cohesion and economic development.

Malmö city Department of Culture application form

The application form of the third funder, the city of Malmö, follows the same logic. The legal framework is the same as the Swedish Arts Council and Region Skåne. The artistic activity framework asks the applicant first to describe the organization submitting the application, then to state the project content and aim, what the projects wants to achieve, but also give locations and times of performances. The collaboration framework asks for names, roles, and division of labour. The audience framework consists of expected number of performances and expected number of people in the audience divided into age categories, and specified as audiences inside Malmö and outside Malmö. In general, the Malmö application form is the shortest and the most loosely framed. There is an emphasis on the city of Malmö, in particular when it comes to stating the composition of the audience. Somewhat surprisingly, prompts for equality, diversity, and cultural difference are entirely lacking from the application form.

To summarize: the Swedish Arts Council form subtly changes the understanding of the art activity to include dimensions of collaboration and pedagogy. The Region Skåne application clearly pushes the understanding of art as having spillover outcomes. While both the Swedish Arts Council and Region Skåne use the application instrument to advance particular ideas of art, it is more difficult to see any such agenda in the Malmö city application form. At the same time, the similarity of these forms is remarkable, and are a testimony of at least two significant trends. The first one is the networked (and to an extent, scaled) character of these agencies: clearly the valuemeters asked for in these forms are not locally produced, but are connected to larger (international) discussions of cultural value, at the same time as they display awareness of different localizations of those values. Secondly, these forms reveal the hierarchy of quantitative and qualitative valuemeters; they collect data that reflect current values and emphases of arts management, which are strongly oriented towards quantifying social diversity and economic growth.

Contents of the applications

The applications of *Drömmarnas väg* are clearly aligned with the perceived areas of focus of each application form. In the Swedish Arts Council application, the emphasis is on the artistic specificities of the project. In the Region Skåne application, the emphasis is on the spillover effects of the project. The Malmö city application flags the connections to the local neighbourhoods and schools. Much of the content in the applications seem to be copy-pasted from one application to the other. The focus on audience development, equality, diversity, cultural difference and access for disabled people is present in all applications as required by the application forms.

Interestingly, *Drömmarnas väg* own separate project description, which had to be submitted as an attachment to the applications, is also modelled on the application form (all the frameworks we delineate above are present in their project description in the same order). The Region Skåne form stands out as most closely matching *Drömmarnas väg* own description. It seems that Region Skåne's emphasis on the project as open-ended provides the most powerful formula with which to describe the project. It certainly has the effect of obtaining the most science-like formulations: terms and expressions such as "pre-study", "collecting empirical material", "interviews", "workshops", and "focus groups" populate the project description. This is not an accidental effect, we argue, but the product of a particular instance of metrologies realised at this particular juncture of the policy network. And of course, it is no surprise that the demand for knowledge through centres of calculation, metrological chains, and valuemeters are best satisfied through ideas and practices of art that can call on veridiction.

This is perhaps the most significant effect of the cascading metrologies of Swedish cultural policy: art is increasingly asked to account for itself as research, because research, much more than art, is able to count on veridiction. To put it more poignantly, art is becoming research not because research would produce better art, but because art as research can better supply the data the metrologies are asking for.

Evaluation reports

In general, the evaluation report forms are very closely aligned with the application forms: applicants are asked to report back on the issues which they were asked to write about in the application (re-describe the project, explain how it was implemented, report on changes, report on the audience development, and what they learned in the process). The evaluation report to the Swedish Arts Council focuses on the details of the output: the number of performances made, the size of the audiences at each performance, the age and gender composition of the audience.

The evaluation report to Region Skåne emphasises not only the output, but also the outcome (referred to as "results"). The most distinctive feature of the evaluation report is, again, the above mentioned *researchification*. This *researchification* is also visible in the evaluation reports to the Swedish Arts Council and Malmö city, even though their evaluation forms do not explicitly elicit such responses. In the Malmö city evaluation report, it becomes clear that the project depends on local administrative connections. The sway of the metrologies is looser at the capillary end of the policy network.

We have spent considerable time delineating the contents of the application policy instrument for one art project. Presumably, a lot of energy has gone into the design of the forms, their alignment to policy goals, and their function as instruments to measure effects of various kinds. On the other side of the policy instrument, energy has been spent in filling in the forms and aligning the content to perceived demands. Surprisingly, we learned in the interviews with the administrators that the results of these efforts go into a national database (*Kulturdatabasen*) where they are stored without much analysis. In the interviews, several administrators expressed a certain degree of frustration over the fact that there were no proper routines for consistently taking into account the evaluation reports. In fact, they admitted, the contents of the evaluation reports did not really matter; what mattered was that they were submitted. This contradiction is a salient feature of the art milieu in Malmö. Based on our case, the cultural policy emphasis on cascading metrologies have effects which have less to do with what is measured than the act of measuring itself. This is in line with the research of Dahler-Larsen, Pollitt and Cairney referred to above, which argues that evaluations and audits rarely influence the actual decisions or practice of policy.

"THIS IS PERHAPS THE MOST SIGNIFICANT EFFECT OF THE CASCADING METROLOGIES OF SWEDISH CULTURAL POLICY: ART IS INCREASINGLY ASKED TO ACCOUNT FOR ITSELF AS RESEARCH, BECAUSE RESEARCH, MUCH MORE THAN ART, IS ABLE TO COUNT ON VERIDICTIOIN"

Conclusion

In this paper, we have described cultural policy in action. We have analysed the mundane technical features of a milieu in which contemporary artists in Malmö and Sweden find themselves. We have also demonstrated how this milieu is produced through metrologies of global reach and on scales quite different from the unassuming play about unaccompanied refugee children fleeing war and finding safety in Sweden.

The change from "what" is funded towards "how" it is funded is, we think, a less well researched and understood part of neoliberal governmentalisation: too often, the focus is on some dimension of deregulation or privatization. What we are really observing here is not a deregulation, but another mode of institutional self-regulation: externalising a part of that regulation and bringing it into the folds of digitised, calculative accountability. On one hand, this move opens a governmental system to a greater transparency of actors and processes of decision. On the other hand, it produces new experts of governance, new systems of veridiction, new objects of veridiction and knowledge, and new objects of governance. However, as Frank Pasquale recently has pointed out, "transparency may simply provoke complexity that is as effective at defeating understanding as real or legal secrecy" (Pasquale, 2015: 8). For example, in the case that we have looked at, the institutional self-regulation of cultural policy produces new institutional entities (the Swedish Agency for Cultural Policy Analysis), new experts (cultural metrologists; theatre group funding managers), new forms of art (*researchified*, collaborative, audience developing, inserted into the social field as calculators of ethnicities, disabilities, spillover effects), and ultimately, a new kind of managerial objectivity which replaces aesthetic judgement as an arbiter for funding. Funding, thus, selects the kinds of artistic practices that have a chance at producing what Latour calls "the durability of social assemblage" (1991: 129). The socio-technical-aesthetic assemblages producing the contemporary art milieu in Malmö are, it turns out, complex "black boxes" of historically layered *dispositifs*, where veridiction and the cascading metrologies produced by centres of calculation are among the important actors. On the capillary ends of governmentalisation, these human and non-human agents are visible only as the banal and mundane checkboxes, radio buttons, and text boxes of application forms.

The fact that things are measured seems to be what matters, not the facts that are established through measuring. The progressive socialisation and naturalisation of spillover effects such as social sustainability, community cohesion, social capital, and innovation may therefore be less a question of measurable content than of the process of measuring itself. However, they are forming a new milieu for the arts, where art is governed through metrologies, via ex-

perts of systems of governance rather than experts of the arts themselves, where the arts are embedded in the milieu as calculable effect generators. This is a new global governmental constraint to art. The challenge for cultural policy research and art research is to locate in this new governmental constraint not just another nefarious program damaging the arts (the ghost of neoliberal expansion to build a past of liberal freedoms lost), but to describe the new situation for the arts, the new conditions under which art develops, and of course, the new types of art that the changed conditions already produce.

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Factors affecting strategic management attitudes and practices in creative industries organisations

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ABSTRACT

Organisational performance measurement is essential for the competitiveness of organisations – however, measuring performance is not widely used among Estonian cultural and creative industries organisations (CCIOs). This study aims to indicate the factors that influence strategic management attitudes and activities within CCIOs. Factor analysis is used to detect those factors affecting the internal and external environment of CCIOs. Cluster analysis leads to establishing differences between five identified clusters of Estonian CCIOs. As a result of the study, the following potential critical success factors for the competitiveness of organisations in cultural and creative industries were mapped: the lack of financial resources, a highly competitive environment and orientation to international co-operation. The study distinguishes those features contributing to organisational performance measurement and specifies “evaluation-friendly” and “evaluation-hesitant” CCIO characteristics. Some implications for managers of CCIOs and a future research agenda are also offered.

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Cultural and creative industries

Strategic management

Performance measurement

Factor analysis

Cluster analysis

Introduction

The cultural and creative industries organisations (CCIOs) are the fastest growing sector of the world economy (UN Industrial Development Organisation, 2013). Since the sector has an important role in the creation of employment and added value in the economy (ASEF, 2014), it is in the interest of the state and the CCIOs themselves to work as efficiently as possible. However, there are claims that the industry does not work as effectively as it could. This brings us to the central question of the current paper: which factors affect strategic management attitudes and practices in cultural and creative industries organisations?

In the Baltic States, it is evident that there are three types of "logic" for developing a coordinated approach to the creative industries: commercial logic, professional logic and cultural logic (Lassur, Tafel-Viia & Viia, 2010). In the context of the current research, commercial and professional logic play a key role, as these aim to improve leadership skills in the sector and build a larger skills base (Lassur, Tafel-Viia & Viia, 2010). However, there are only a few studies related to creative industries management in Estonia. Therefore, the managerial issues in Estonian CCIOs are still more or less an undiscovered territory. The current article targets the managers of CCIOs of all organisational types and has its focus on both creative enterprises and public arts organisations. The purpose of the current paper is to define the factors influencing the performance measurement mindset and implementation in CCIOs. This leads to the following research questions, which we will aim to address:

- *What are the main external and internal challenges according to CCIO managers in Estonia?*
- *What factors make some CCIOs think and act strategically and some not?*
- *What features characterize a CCIO with a strategic mindset and orientation toward organisational performance measurement?*

So far, the issue of what motivates a CCIO toward a strategic mindset has not been researched in Estonia. This study will specify how "performance evaluation"-friendly or hesitant CCIOs are. This kind of characteristic could have practical implications for CCIO managers by helping them raise the effectiveness of their organisations. To identify whether organisations actively evaluating performance are more successful than those who do not could be seen as input for future research (outside the scope of the current article).

The paper is organized as follows. The next section will present a brief overview of the key concepts in the field of CCIOs with a focus on factors, challenges, strategic management and performance evaluation. Section three outlines the research sample and methodology. The fourth section presents our results and main findings. Finally, section five presents some

concluding remarks on the factors that influence managers of Estonian CCIOs in regard to specific management practices, including strategic management and performance evaluation.

Theoretical framework

In this section, we outline four main conceptual approaches to measuring organisational performance in CCIOs.

Key concepts in CCIO strategic management

There are tens of definitions about the *cultural and creative industries*, and as an industry it has become one of our most vibrant and engaging in the early 21st century (Editorial, 2013). Most existing definitions focus on "the creative" content or some kind of "mysterious" phenomenon related to the cultural and creative field, or the "specifics of the objects" of the cultural and creative industries. One of the most dynamic definitions comes from Keane, who called the "creative economy a mysterious animal" and paid attention to the fact that it seems to have many heads and appendages (Keane, 2013). Therefore, a double-edged sword might be needed to target this kind of animal. Consequently, the current article addresses the concept of the "measurement of organisational performance" in CCIOs from strategic management and strategic planning perspectives. We will now define the following key concepts of the article: challenge, factor, performance, organisational performance measurement and strategic planning.

As the current study is framed by *challenges*, it is important to define those challenges. Phillip J. de Prez sees a challenge as an important motivational factor based on an organisational setting. He has also stressed that a challenge comprises numerous components, which together are grouped into four distinct elements based on the individual's perception of the challenge as temporal, emotive, achievable and motivational (de Prez, 2016). The definition of the latter is the most appropriate in the current setting, with "motivational challenges" being more than "ordinary" or day-to-day tasks, they are obstacles to overcome with a reward that is meaningful (de Prez, 2016).

To general knowledge, the organisations are not environmentally independent. For the development of the evaluation of knowledge management and innovation management factors and determining organisational performance, the internal aspects and external factors of the management have to be taken into consideration (Dickel & de Moura, 2016). However, it is important to keep in mind that the distinction between

environment and the organisation itself is relative to the goals and actions of organisational decision-makers (Child, 1972). *External factors* are the key factors in accounting for different decision frameworks and resulting strategies in the same objective environment (Anderson & Paine, 1975). The current article analyses the influence of a selection of internal or external factors (referred to as independent variables) in organisational performance evaluation.

The common understanding is that the final outcome for a CCIO is known as *a performance* – concert, film or artwork. However, organisational performance is difficult to define due to the multidimensionality of the performance concept (Verweire & Van den Berghe, 2004). Lönnqvist (2004) has distinguished three aspects of performance: first, performance can refer to the results or outputs of the actual activities; secondly, performance may refer to the quality of the activities carried out; third, performance may also refer to the ability or potential to achieve results. Hence, performance may be seen as actual or potential results or activities. Rumelt (2011) has claimed that “performance is the joint outcome of capability and clever design”. This argument plays a central role in the context of the current article. It is possible to conclude that CCIOs need both a good plan (strategy) and know-how (strategic management skills) in order to run their organisations well.

Organisational performance can be measured in relation to goals, resources, stakeholders, multiple criteria or as a system evaluation. The idea of equifinality suggests that similar results may be achieved with different initial conditions and in many different ways (Roberts, 1994). In the context of the current article, this means that the cultural and creative organisations might just follow their intuition, plan their goals and learn from mistakes. This kind of organisational learning is essential not just for development but also to stay competitive. Therefore, it is important for organisations to learn how to use small changes with regard to large consequences (Morgan, 1997). The main reason why organisations in the cultural and creative industries need to measure their organisational performance is because it helps both the funder and the organisation itself to ensure the maximum efficiency of their operations (Birnkraut & Heller, 2005).

In the current context, *measuring organisational performance* is seen as one of the most important elements of strategic management, since it makes it

possible to identify the gap between the current situation of an organisation and “the level of excellence to be considered, by proposing goals that are aligned with strategic planning and the use of indicators” (Hill & Jones, 2012). It is nearly a synonym for managerial performance that has been less addressed in the CCIO context so far (Hadida, 2015). While Marshall et al (1999) define performance measurement as a process for working out the indicators and collection of data in order to analyse performance, Towse (2010) has also pointed out that performance indicators build a bridge between cultural economics (the goals of arts policy) and arts management. The objective of the authors

of the current article is not to study how artistic quality or purely financial performance of CCIOs is measured, the focus is on the general “organisational performance” of cultural and creative organisations. However, effective organisational work might be a prerequisite to commercial performance, artistic merit and societal impact (Towse, 2010).

Strategic planning is usually seen as a prerequisite for strategic management. Evaluation might be seen as the final stage in strategic decision-making or as one autonomous system within the management system (Colapinto & Porlezza, 2012). In the following subsection the relations between these concepts are explained.

“MEASURING ORGANISATIONAL PERFORMANCE IS SEEN AS ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT ELEMENTS OF STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT, SINCE IT MAKES IT POSSIBLE TO IDENTIFY THE GAP BETWEEN THE CURRENT SITUATION OF AN ORGANISATION AND THE LEVEL OF EXCELLENCE TO BE CONSIDERED”

The main factors influencing CCIO management

According to neo-institutionalism, institutions consist of both informal constraints (sanctions, taboos, customs, traditions, and codes of conduct) and formal rules (constitutions, laws, property rights) (North, 1991). All of them affect both the attitudes and the activities within organisations. Ménard (2014) described “organisational arrangements” as rules that may develop internal rules, codes, and conventions that define the content of their governance (e.g. the internal structure of the firm). Those arrangements might influence the strategic management of cultural and creative industries both internally and externally, and therefore special attention was paid to the habits, plans and written documents guiding the daily routine of CCIOs. As a result of this argument, the current study examines organisational performance measurement among other factors, through attitudes (e.g. organisational values)

towards strategic management and the real performance evaluation activities carried out by organisations (e.g. evaluation routines) and formal rules (mainly seen as the external environment).

Therefore, in order to have a complete picture of the organisational performance evaluation of CCIOs, both the internal and external environment with its challenges and other factors influencing the organisations have to be taken into account. On the one hand, the analysis of the internal environment (Ahmad, 2012; Cocca & Alberti, 2010; Ehtesham, Muhammad & Muhammad, 2011; Epstein & Mcfarlan, 2011; Lin, 2015; Saulais & Ermine, 2012) of CCIOs aims at mapping the strengths and weaknesses of the organisations. On the other hand, the study of the external environment (Gkritzali, Lampel & Wiertz, 2016; Jones et al, 2004; Menguc, Auh & Ozanne, 2010; Morgan et al, 2009; Noyes, Allen & Parise, 2012; Parkman, Holloway & Sebastiao, 2012; Perry & Porter, 1982; Seifert & Hadida, 2006; Turbide & Laurin, 2009; Wu & Wu, 2016) seeks to identify the strategic opportunities and threats (Hill & Jones, 2012). Zorloni (2012) suggests that organisations in the cultural and creative industries should analyse at least the following areas: public value, internal learning and growth, external relationships, and resources and finances. As suggested by Florea (2016), this study uses the following list of internal factors: setting goals, designing strategies, financial force, feedback from different people or organisations work programs during the day, performance assessment, etc.; and external factors such as the degree of competitiveness, external challenges, etc. These factors are not considered to be challenges, as they are constantly present and can be seen as the natural setting for organisations.

The questionnaire for this study was composed using three sources. To map challenges, the study by Tscherning & Boxenbaum (2011) targeting creative enterprises was used. A self-assessment tool introduced by BTW Consultants (2010) in the USA was used to measure strategic planning and management practices. Additionally, Birnkraut's (2011) suggestions for evaluation practices were drawn upon to map the regular organisational performance practices. The full questionnaire is included as annex 1; in short the questionnaire consisted of the following five sections:

- *Profile of the organisation* (subsector, number of employees, legal form and age of the organisation);
- *Organisational values* (education of employees, orientation to creativity, development orientation, enthusiasm, competition oriented mindset, etc.);
- *External environment* (competitive environment, uniqueness of products, and a wide list of challenges);
- *Internal processes and analytical mindset* (regular analysis of performance, existing system for analysing performance and individual activities, existence of well-established methodologies for performance measurement, planning and an analytical mindset,

types of indicators used);

- *Organisational performance measurement* (frequency of collecting customer feedback, frequency of comparing plans with results, tools and/or methods used for collecting and/or analysing the feedback and/or performance).

CCIOs face numerous challenges daily, both internally and externally. When planning the study, the idea that an "organisation's greatest challenge may not be external threats or opportunities, but instead the effects of entropy and inertia" (Rumelt, 2011) was kept in mind. Therefore, both types of challenges were paid equal attention. The internal aspects were targeted via mapping the strengths and weaknesses and also the plans and attitudes of the organisations. The study by Tscherning & Boxenbaum (2011) identified key challenges that affect the daily existence of organisations in the cultural and creative industries. According to their study, the following internal factors affect the daily performance of cultural and creative industries organisations:

- the educational profile of employees;
- the balance between the creativity and profit-seeking aspirations, daily activities based on the written mission statement, vision, strategy, and innovation;
- the uniqueness of production compared to competitors, and financial management (Tscherning & Boxenbaum, 2011).



FIGURE 1. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OF FACTORS INFLUENCING THE ORGANISATIONAL PERFORMANCE EVALUATION OF CCIOs

Source: Authors' own elaboration.

The study of external factors focused on identifying the strategic opportunities and threats (Hill & Jones, 2012). Figure 1 illustrates the layers of the study.

Therefore, these (sets of) aspects are expected to influence organisational performance evaluation in CCIOs. Additionally, different internal and external challenges might have a certain impact as well. Based on the literature review, these challenges are caused by different factors – managerial, content, funding and external. In the following subchapter these challenges are discussed in more detail.

Challenges for CCIOs

When trying to understand how organisations in the cultural and creative industries work, the constantly changing internal and external environment needs to be taken into consideration. Faulkner & Anderson (1987) already described the “cultural industry” in the 1980s as having great unpredictability – which means they have to face different challenges on a daily basis. Even today, the cultural and creative industries form a significant and rapidly growing set of different industries with the continuous emergence of new sub-industries; in other words, a remarkable sector but not one that is cohesive (Potts & Cunningham, 2008).

The way CCIOs function differs from how the other business sectors function and the challenges managers in the sector face also differ. Often CCIOs do not even have a horizon for long-term commercial planning, as a Danish study revealed, they still face major challenges concerning strategy and business development (Tscherning & Boxenbaum, 2011). This may be caused by the fact that managers in CCIOs often have an educational background in the arts and are not formally educated to manage organisations. Jeffcutt & Pratt (2002) also agreed that in practice most managers of CCIOs do “not have either a core task or a core competency in management”. Therefore, the first challenge the industry faces is the competence of its managers. The research by Tscherning & Boxenbaum (2011) showed that there is a great need for the development of support services within the creative industries sector that would concentrate, among others, on the strategy and business development of creative organisations. The same study also stressed that one barrier that CCIOs face daily is a lack of business competencies.

Perhaps the most widespread challenge concerns the managerial process. Berziņš (2012) found that the strategic management process is more complicated in creative than in traditional industries. One of the reasons for this is that when implementing classical management functions – planning, organisation, motivation and control – the managers in creative organisations must consider additional factors and parallel functions (Berziņš, 2012).

Different financial factors form another group of challenges for CCIOs in terms of the lack of both financial resources and financial literacy. The analysis by Tscherning & Boxenbaum (2011) revealed that there was a special need for attention to the areas of finance, marketing and strategic development, where creative companies lack competencies, and according to Noyes, Allen & Parise (2012) financial resources shape the survival and innovation capacity of players in creative industries. A Baltic-Nordic comparative study also revealed a lack of knowledge in all areas of the most important entrepreneurial competencies; for example, working with numbers, accounting and financial planning were especially difficult for creative people (Küttim, Arvola & Venesaar, 2011). Moreover, planning and decision-making on whether to prefer artistic aims over financial ones (doing what one likes or what earns income) were outlined as well (Küttim et al, 2011).

Probably the most difficult challenge to overcome is related to the performance (products and services) of CCIOs. Many of the services provided by cultural institutions are of an intangible nature or functionally creative (Towse, 2010). CCIOs are all involved in the production of goods and services with cultural value that is sometimes called “symbolic value” (O’Connor, Cunningham & Jaaniste, 2011).

The challenges discussed above are caused mainly by internal factors. However, perhaps the most important challenge that CCIOs have to overcome on a daily basis is the constantly changing competitive environment. One might ask how this is different from other industries. In addition to the typical competitive business environment, there are more competitive aspects for CCIOs. As stated in the study by Benghozi & Lyubareva (2014), CCIOs have to handle dematerialized transactions, market extensions, new offerings and new customer relations. Another important aspect that differentiates the CCIOs is that they belong to a highly specialized and highly skilled industrial sector “that is based around individual expertise, individuals can be “leached out” of firms, or lost altogether, through employee migration and poaching” (Jeffcutt & Pratt, 2002).

Therefore, we can conclude that the factors influencing strategic management within organisations may be external or internal, but may also be characterized in terms of attitudes and real activities. After analysing the challenges, it is possible to clarify how changes in some factors may radically alter the mix of efficacious strategies (Rumelt, 2011), or more relevant in the context of the current article, to understand the essence of strategic management in Estonian CCIOs. This leads us to the first research question: *what are the main external and internal challenges according to CCIO managers in Estonia?*

“THE FACTORS INFLUENCING STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT WITHIN ORGANISATIONS MAY BE EXTERNAL OR INTERNAL, BUT MAY ALSO BE CHARACTERIZED IN TERMS OF ATTITUDES AND REAL ACTIVITIES ”

Strategic management attitudes of CCIOs' managers

CCIOs are usually considered to be creative by nature, and therefore supposed to be managed differently. Caves (2000) has paid attention to the fact that employees in the creative industries often care mainly about originality and do not perhaps pay so much attention to the practical side of their production. The research by Berziņš (2012) showed that creative organisations use the same strategic management methods as traditional organisations, but with two exceptions. The strategic planning period in cultural and creative industries organisations is shorter and strategic flexibility is correlated with the compliance of management decisions with the external environment of the organisation and the specifics of the creative industry (Berziņš, 2012). Furthermore, other studies have indicated that the focus of management issues in CCIOs is usually “here and now” and not dedicated to the future (Jeffcutt & Pratt, 2002). Tafel-Viia et al (2011) revealed that 62% of creative enterprises were lifestyle oriented, while only 19% were “growth-oriented” and 19% were creative enterprises with “features of growth orientation”. This central finding contradicts the overwhelming business logic that companies are usually growth-oriented (Tafel-Viia et al, 2011).

Therefore, the management of cultural and creative industries is usually considered complex because creativity and innovation are managed in a context of diverse and fast-changing knowledge flows (Jeffcutt & Pratt, 2002). However, there seems to be an understanding that the field could be characterized by controversies (Banks & O'Connor, 2009) and it is necessary to understand the organisational phenomena of CCIOs (Pick et al, 2015) before making any conclusions. Pick et al (2015) claim that the development of a theory for creative industry management requires new thinking. The authors of this article were eager to identify the driving forces behind current thinking and so the study that forms the basis for the current article aims at establishing the factors that influence managers of Estonian CCIOs when selecting specific management practices, including strategic management and performance evaluation. This leads us to the second research question: *what factors make some managers of CCIOs think and act strategically and some not?*

Measuring success, efficiency and effectiveness in CCIOs

The central question in strategic management is how organisations can identify whether they are successful or not. There are different approaches concerning the relations between success and strategic management. For instance, Andrushkiv & Fedyshyn (2013) have stated that a “key prerequisite for successful strategic management improvement is organisations ability to quickly and efficiently connect market requirements with the potential of new technologies and integrate the results into their own products and processes development”, while Rumelt (2011) has claimed that the core of strategy work is in “discovering the critical factors in a situation and designing a way of coordinating and focusing actions to deal with those factors”. Turbide & Laurin (2009) have paid attention to a slight contradiction in CCIOs – even though non-government organisations (NGOs) in the field of performing arts have acknowledged artistic excellence as their most important success factor, their performance measurement systems focus more on the financial indicators than on the non-financial ones. Therefore, they identify their success through financial performance indicators.

Pfeffer, Salancik & Leblebici (1976) claim that “organisations survive to the extent that they are effective and their effectiveness derives from the way they can handle demands of different interest groups upon which the organisation depends for resources and support”. Neely, Gregory & Platts (1995) also state that effectiveness is related to customers; according to them, this refers to the extent to which customer requirements are met. Neely et al (1995) point out that efficiency indicates the economical use of the firm’s resources. Gilhespy (1999) finds that efficiency is related to socially desirable aspects of performance while effectiveness is more about the output of achieved objectives. Therefore, in order to find out if the organisation is effective or not, its actions need to be analysed, and special attention is focused here on the external environment – clients. According to the guidelines of the “quality framework” in Scotland, the importance of audience information is stressed for forming overall planning and decision-making in arts organisations (Scottish Arts Council, 2009).

Therefore, there is a clear link between success and performance measurement. However, there is still a certain resistance towards performance evaluation

in CCIOs. Birnkraut (2011) stresses that conducting an evaluation has very much to do with the psychological ability to recognize errors or weaknesses and the potential for change. Therefore, it is also important to consider changes and optimisation options as something positive. Birnkraut (2011) admits that one reason for the reluctance to evaluate is that cultural institutions defend themselves by saying that artistic quality cannot be measured. But even if the artistic quality is not evaluated, functioning processes, effective use of resources and good internal and external communication are involved in the success of an organisation.

According to common sense, analysis/learning and improvement/development (that might lead to success) go hand in hand. Consequently, in order to develop, one needs to analyse the current situation. However, people and organisations do not often make rational choices. Rational choice-driven approaches emphasize the logic of consequences. This means that actors identify their goals and then choose the most efficient way to achieving those goals (Morgan et al, 2009). In order to do that, the organisations need to plan their goals and later analyse whether these have been achieved. Still, the choices of CCIOs are not always very rational. This leads us to the third research question: *what features characterize a CCIO with a strategic mindset and orientation toward organisational performance measurement?*

Sample and methodology

Estonian creative industry organisations

Discussions about the creative industries agenda in the Baltic countries began in the 2000s. The first state level steps involved statistical mapping surveys of creative industries in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania in 2010 (Allikmäe, 2011). The Estonian definition of creative industries addresses "collective creativity", and the official definition is as follows: "Creative industries are industries that have their origin in individual and collective creativity, skill and talent and which have the potential for wealth and job creation through the generation and exploitation of intellectual property"¹. In 2013, the Estonian Institute of Economic Research (Eesti Konjunkturiinstituut, 2013) mapped the Estonian creative industry organisations and concluded that based on their objectives they can be described as follows:

- creative businesses with clear business goals (revenue, profits, employment);
- creative businesses and institutions that organize cultural events mainly using the state or local government funding;

- creative businesses and institutions that enhance culture in the region and/or public awareness and bring indirect foreign investment and promote international business;
- creative people who do not have a commercial objective, and who enjoy the creative process, and do not care about the market and consumers (Eesti Konjunkturiinstituut, 2013).

According to the Overall Global Creativity Index (Florida, Mellander & King, 2015), Estonia is ranked 33rd in the world, while other Nordic Countries (Finland, Sweden, Norway) are ranked 5th, 7th and 11th, respectively, and neighbouring Latvia 40th, and Lithuania 51st. Estonia seems to be doing slightly better in terms of creativity than the other Baltic States, while the high level of creative know-how in the Nordic countries seems to be out of reach. The reasons for that are not clear yet.

Sample description

The aim of the study was to determine the factors that influence strategic management practices in Estonian organisations in the cultural and creative industries, and as a result, analyse different organisational clusters based on the latent tendencies. Proceeding from the purpose of the study, our research was designed as a systematic sampling survey to provide inferences for the whole population of cultural and creative industries in Estonia on the basis of a carefully selected subset. According to the latest available data, the number of CCIOs in Estonia in 2011 was 7,066 organisations (Eesti Konjunkturiinstituut, 2013). The final sample used for the current analysis included 460 managers of different CCIOs, representing all 13 cultural and creative industries subsectors.

The representativeness for each cultural and creative industries subsector was guaranteed by the fact that all five most common organisational forms were well represented – private enterprises (45%), NGOs (17%), public sector institutions (16%), municipal bodies (17%) and foundations (5%) as presented in table 1. The table also illustrates the number and percentage of the subsectors and organisational form of participating organisations. All responses in the survey were weighted in order to achieve the same proportion of organisations in different subsectors as in the study of 2013 (Eesti Konjunkturiinstituut, 2013), which currently provides the latest available statistical data on CCIO indicators in Estonia.

¹ For more information, see <http://www.kulee/en/activities/creative-industrie>

Subsector of CCI	Number of respondents	Valid % within the sample	SHARE OF OWNERSHIP FORMS WITHIN THE SUBSECTORS				
			PUBLIC %	NGO %	PRIVATE %	FOUNDATION %	MUNICIPAL BODY %
Architecture	58	12.60	0.00	1.70	98.30	0.00	0.00
Design	34	7.40	0.00	11.80	88.20	0.00	0.00
Performing arts	26	5.70	0.00	65.40	3.80	26.90	3.80
Film and video	25	5.40	0.00	16.00	80.00	4.00	0.00
Publishing	29	6.30	10.30	6.90	79.30	3.40	0.00
Art	10	2.20	10.00	40.00	50.00	0.00	0.00
Entertainment software	4	0.90	0.00	0.00	100.00	0.00	0.00
Museums	19	4.10	57.90	0.00	0.00	31.60	10.50
Music	69	15.00	1.40	56.50	31.90	8.70	1.40
Libraries	129	28.00	44.20	0.00	0.00	0.00	55.80
Advertising	38	8.30	0.00	5.30	92.10	2.60	0.00
Broadcasting	3	0.70	66.70	0.00	33.30	0.00	0.00
Handicraft	16	3.50	0.00	43.80	56.30	0.00	0.00
TOTAL	460	100.00	16.00	17.00	45.00	5.00	17.00

TABLE 1. SUBSECTOR AND ORGANISATIONAL FORM OF THE RESPONDENTS

Source: Authors' own elaboration.

The data was collected using the Google Forms online platform. In total, 2,001 organisations were targeted and the final sample of 460 respondents was achieved – which makes the response rate approximately 23%. The survey environment was accessible for the participants during 2.5 months (from mid-January until the end of March 2016).

Data analysis

Analytical framework

Data analysis was conducted using SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences). The questionnaire including 35 questions targeted organisational performance measurement issues, strategic management and the external environment of organisations in the cultural and creative industries.

First, simple descriptive analyses were used in order to understand the scene and identify whether there was any correlation between the variables. It was considered useful to base the analysis on sets of variables and not operate with single items. In order to move from data to information, complexity was reduced at the variable level using factor analyses and at the case level using cluster analyses. Factor analyses were chosen in order to highlight the connections among the long list of variables based on the latent variables. In the subsequent analysis, cluster analyses were used in order to identify homogenous groups among the CCIOs.

Factor analysis

Factor analysis is only significant if the variables involved are sufficiently correlated to one another. Therefore, the pre-analysis started with a Pearson correlation in order to identify whether the correlations were sufficiently strong to apply factor analyses. The Pearson correlation was applied to all the statements of the questionnaire. Factor analyses were considered to be reasonable, since the Pearson correlation coefficient was greater than 0.30 for 26 out of 34 variables. The strongest correlation coefficient occurred for evaluation-related statements. The KMO and Bartlett's Test indicated that 82.9% of the content could be described using factors; therefore, it was concluded that the data was suitable for factor analyses.

The results of several types of factor analysis were compared to identify the best possible solution for summary variables. Finally, the factor analysis using the Principal Component Analysis method was selected. The analysis produced three initial factors with eigenvalues over 1. As the principal components extraction using Varimax rotation produced a set of factors that were the easiest to interpret, and were also superior according to the statistical parameters, it was decided to persevere with this type of factor analysis. The statistical parameters considered were the commonalities of the initial variables, the cumulative proportion of variance described by the factor model, the evenness of the distribution of initial variables between factors, and the proportions of variance described by each factor. To see whether merging some factors would increase the reliability, Cronbach's alpha

as the most suitable reliability test for a Likert scale was calculated for every set of variables forming the basis for the 3 factors.

Cluster analysis

Cluster analysis is a method "for displaying the similarities and dissimilarities between pairs of objects in a set" (Romesburg, 2004). In order to better understand the latent tendencies illustrated by factors, a cluster analysis on the basis of the same factors (F1, F2 and F3) was conducted. The goal of the cluster analysis was to divide the weighted cases into groups so that a high degree of similarity exists between cases in the same group, and a low degree of similarity between cases belonging to different groups. Before starting with the cluster analyses, the correlations of the (remaining) variables were measured again. The correlations were especially high among the evaluation subsection variables, but nonetheless no collinearity was discovered between the variables.

A two-step procedure was used for clustering the CCIOs. First, the hierarchical clustering method was used in order to define the number of clusters. Ward's method as a variance method was selected – the means for all the variables were computed for each cluster. The distance between the clusters was calculated using Absolute Euclidean Distance. Various models were calculated and compared to find the best solution. Based on the agglomeration schedule and dendrogram, 4-7 clusters appeared as the suitable model solutions. This result was used as an input for the K-means method.

In the next research phase, the cases were weighted and data was analysed using the K-means cluster analysis. The following statistical criteria were considered: the reasonableness of cluster sizes, the f-values of the variables within the model (=10-161) and the clear difference between clusters as described by cluster centre values. The most suitable model appeared to be the one with five clusters produced by the K-means cluster analysis. The distribution of the organisation numbers within the 5 clusters is described in table 2.

		Unweighted	Weighted
Cluster	1	81	93.88
	2	162	130.80
	3	63	62.99
	4	78	90.56
	5	76	80.51
		460	458.74

TABLE 2. DISTRIBUTION OF 5 CLUSTERS

Source: Authors' own elaboration.

Results and main findings

When analysing the responses of organisations in the selected sample, it appeared that all types of cultural and creative organisations shared the following characteristics: innovative mindset, creativity-focused approach and uniqueness of their services or products. A more precise description of organisations could be formed based on organisational type and age – both variables correlated with the competition and challenges related variables, but as it was just the start of the study it will not be elaborated further here.

The main external and internal challenges of strategic management

In order to understand what kinds of factors influence the strategic management in CCIOs, a factor analysis was applied. First, the latent variables describing the scene were indicated in order to identify the key factors that influence the operational performance of the CCIOs. It was expected that both internal and external challenges played a central role in influencing the daily strategic management practices and attitudes. However, the actual results formed three slightly different factors: evaluation practices (F1), strategic challenges (F2) and mindset (F3). Therefore, these factors describe the latent trends that have a major impact on the strategic management of the organisations in the field. These three factors will now be analysed in more detail.

Evaluation practices (F1). The first factor mainly indicated the regular evaluation practices and partly the attitudes towards the “evaluation-culture”. The strongest correlation besides the factor-variables could be found with the factor and the following statement: “Analysis of the performance and current activities is a natural part of our daily work”. This rather surprising result might be explained by the fact that the Estonian CCIOs measure their organisational performance for two reasons, to ensure the maximum efficiency of their operations both for the founder and the organisation itself. In the current Estonian context, where remarkable EU funding is contributing to developing the infrastructure of CCIOs, the CCIOs have a special interest in meeting the evaluation criteria set by the EU. However, the factor is also weakly correlated to learning and development values within organisations and with a written mission statement, vision and strategy governing the organisations.

Strategic challenges (F2). The second factor indicated the main challenges that organisations face in their daily existence. Based on the strongest correlations besides the factor-variables, the following aspects seemed to be the most challenging for organisations: analysing and reporting on activities

and acting in compliance with laws. The Danish study cited above also revealed that the major challenges of CCIOs concern strategy and business development (Tscherning & Boxenbaum, 2011). The following weak correlations indicate more moderate challenges that the organisations face in their daily activities: being innovative, making profit, having no confidence in terms of income, receiving external funding, finding customers and obtaining new orders.

Mindset (F3). The third factor described the attitudes concerning creativity and enthusiasm, but also the dependence on the state budget. The factor is weakly correlated to the statement concerning the existence of a written mission statement, vision and strategy that govern the organisations. This finding corresponds well with the study by Tscherning & Boxenbaum (2011), where the Danish researchers stated that one of the challenges that CCIOs face is seeking a balance between the creativity and profit-seeking aspirations, daily activities based on a written mission statement, vision and strategy. Negative correlations could be found with the following statement: “We operate in a field/market with strong competition”. Therefore, the sense of high competition seems to limit creativity and enthusiasm.

What factors make managers of CCIOs think and act strategically?

In order to understand what makes some managers of CCIOs think and act strategically and some not, a cluster analysis was used. This made it possible to describe the character of the CCIOs that do and those who do not think and act strategically. The analyses resulted in five clusters and the formal characteristics of the clusters are described in table 3. Same clusters are content-wise described in annex 2.

The main informal aspects that differentiated the clusters included level of competition and existing evaluation practices. The significant differences between the clusters indicate that there is no single and uniform strategic mindset in the cultural and creative industries – strategic management traditions are different and depend more on available resources and attitudes towards the enthusiastic mindset.

The cluster analyses revealed that when describing organisations based on their performance measurement practices and strategic attitudes, approximately 18% of the organisations in the cultural and creative industries consider organisational performance evaluation important and practice at least some elements of it on a regular basis (cluster 1). Conversely, 14% of the respondents of the survey did not consider performance evaluation important and avoid it even though they are among the most eager to collect feedback from their target groups after each activity (cluster 3). Approximately 52% of the organisa-

CRITERIA	CLUSTER 1	CLUSTER 2	CLUSTER 3	CLUSTER 4	CLUSTER 5
Number and % of cases in total	94 (18%)	131 (35%)	63 (14%)	91 (17%)	81 (16%)
Type of organisation	private enterprises (73%)	mixed – mainly NGOs, public sector and foundations	mixed – mainly private enterprises and NGOs	private enterprises (91%)	private enterprises (74%)
Typical field of activity	mixed	mixed – dominated by music organisations and libraries	mixed	mixed – dominated by architecture and advertising	mixed – dominated by architecture and music
Age of the organisation	over 10 years	over 25 years	over 10 years	6-25 years	over 10 years
Share of employees with higher education	lowest	high	high	high	highest
Dependence on state/local funding	low	highest	high	lowest	low
Market competitiveness	high	lowest	low	highest	low

TABLE 3. FORMAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE CLUSTERS

Source: Authors' own elaboration.

tions (clusters 2 and 4) do collect and analyse feedback from their target groups, but not as systematically or consciously as the organisations belonging to cluster 1 (18%). The members of the fifth cluster do not employ systematic or conscious evaluation practices and from the managerial perspective are weaker than the rest of the participating organisations.

Features characterizing the CCIOs with strategic mindset and orientation to organisational performance measurement

The most evaluation-friendly (cluster 1) and the most evaluation-hesitant (cluster 3) clusters have rather opposite positions – this indicates that a more challenging environment leads to less performance evaluation practices and vice versa. The external environment of the organisations in the first cluster is competitive and they are willing to improve their international competitiveness and to expand into foreign markets. The managers of these organisations do not consider strategic planning challenging and their performance measurement attitude is very positive. Their activities are based on a written mission statement, vision and strategy, while their organisational culture supports learning and development values. The organisational performance measurement practices of these organisations are systematic – they claim to have an effective system for analysing the performance and this is integrated into the daily working process. However,

it is not just the existing performance measurement system that characterizes them formally, but also the practical implementation of the plans and processes. The achieved results are then compared to core goals, and the annual planning is related to the analysis of past performance. However, organisations belonging to this cluster do not seem to face any challenges, neither financial nor challenges in their daily activities that might limit the performance of other organisations.

The key feature of organisations belonging to the third cluster is uncertainty concerning income. They seem to struggle a lot with finances – both earning a profit and receiving external funding but also financial management in general is seen as a challenge by those organisations. CCIOs belonging to that cluster seem to struggle more than other organisations with recruiting qualified personnel, which might influence the rest of the challenges they face; for instance, being in compliance with the law or being innovative. The managers of these organisations do not see performance measurement as valuable and do not practice any kind of organisational performance measurement – they do not collect or analyse any kind of data concerning their performance. They consider strategic planning, analysing and reporting very challenging, and therefore difficult. Their activities do not follow a written mission statement, vision or strategy. They seem to be "lost" since they do not have a strategy that could guide them out of the jungle of challenges.

“THE MOST IMPORTANT CHALLENGES FACED BY THE CULTURAL AND CREATIVE INDUSTRIES ORGANISATIONS IN ESTONIA ARE RELATED TO FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT AND STRATEGIC PLANNING”

Discussion

As our analysis in the previous chapter revealed, the most important challenges faced by the cultural and creative industries organisations in Estonia are related to financial management and strategic planning. Similar results were found in the Danish study that targeted only the private creative enterprises (Tscherning & Boxenbaum, 2011) and which revealed that organisations in the creative industries have acknowledged the need for new know-how in regard to strategic planning. In the current study, not all aspects of evaluating organisational performance differentiated the respondents. The core aspects concerned annual planning, comparison of goals with actual performance, managerial attitudes towards the benefits of performance measurement, learning from previous experience and the existence of performance measurement systems and methodologies.

As a result of the analyses, the following modified conceptual model can be presented. Based on the empirical data from this study, the model was modified and, as presented above, strategic challenges (both internal and external), mindset and competitive market indicate the attitudes and activities related to organisational performance evaluation.

The data also indicated that the organisations belonging to the most evaluation-friendly cluster do not face any challenges, while the evaluation-hesitant organisations struggle with all possible challenges. In order to find an explanation for this, one has to look at cluster number 4. Organisations belonging to that cluster practice organisational performance measurement but also struggle with some challenges. They are not as eager of evaluation practices as the organisations in cluster 1 and their orientation to learning is at an average level. The biggest difference between cluster 1 and cluster 4 is that the CCIOs belonging to cluster 4 are not oriented towards development and expansion and they have difficulties with financing. However, more interestingly they face most of the challenges that limit the third cluster but do not limit the first cluster. These are future oriented challenges: expansion to foreign markets, being innovative, justification of their existence to funders and strategic planning. Their daily challenges are related to the following fields: analysing and reporting, finding customers and obtaining new orders, recruiting qualified personnel and laws-related challenges.

The general findings indicate that the organisations that depend on external funding were more enthusiastic about what they did. Whether state-funded organisations are more enthusiastic about what they do because they do not need to worry about income, or whether there are other reasons needs further investigation. However, the organisations that are already active in organisational performance measurement do not seem to have any shortage of know-how or lack of qualified personnel. While organisations that are evaluation-hesitant could benefit from training in the following fields: strategic planning, analysing and reporting, and financial management. They could also benefit from an infrastructure that supports them with development and expansion, finding customers, obtaining new orders, recruiting qualified personnel and finally, but most importantly, receiving external funding. However, their central struggle seems to be coping with their daily activities.



FIGURE 2. FRAMEWORK OF FACTORS INFLUENCING ORGANISATIONAL PERFORMANCE EVALUATION OF CCIOs

Source: Authors' own elaboration.

Conclusion

The article discusses the results of a survey conducted among Estonian cultural and creative industries organisations. A diverse set of topics focusing on the evaluation of organisational performance and managerial attitudes in these organisations was explored. The central question the paper proposed was: which factors affect strategic management attitudes and practices in creative industries organisations?

First, the main strategic challenges of CCIO managers in Estonia are analysing and reporting on activities and acting in compliance with the laws. CCIOs also face the following challenges in their daily activities: being innovative, making profit, having no confidence in terms of income, receiving external funding, finding customers and obtaining new orders.

Second, CCIOs are driven to think and act strategically by three closely linked factors: challenging environment, willingness to increase international competitiveness, and willingness to expand to foreign markets. However, organisations that think and act strategically barely face any challenges – internal or external. It is also important to stress that they are also coping well with their finances. The managers of such organisations do not consider strategic planning challenging and their performance measurement attitude is positive.

Third, the CCIOs that are evaluation-hesitant avoid comparing their goals with actual results and do not consider evaluation activities useful or beneficial. The most remarkable fact is that they display the greatest difficulty with regard to different external challenges even though they consider their business environment the least competitive compared to the other organisations.

Fourth, based on the results, it is possible to conclude that organisations that have a strategic mindset do not face any of the challenges listed in the questionnaire. Further research is required to investigate whether sufficient resources cause the strategic mindset or vice versa.

The current study has its limitations, since the number of respondents in some subsectors of cultural and creative industries was insufficient for statistical interventions, thereby preventing us from drawing any conclusions from the subsectors. However, there is reason to believe that the organisations from different subsectors represent different strategic management attitudes and activities. Further exploration of this topic using a larger sample is definitely necessary. Therefore, future research plans are to conduct a study to investigate whether the regular practice of organisational performance evaluation leads to better financial performance.

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ANNEX 1

QUESTIONNAIRE

How many paid employees does your organisation have?

What is the juridical form of your organisation?

What is the age of your organisation?

Please choose the field of activity of your organisation.

ORGANISATIONAL VALUES AND OPPORTUNITIES

- 1) Employees higher education rate in our organisation is over 75%.
- 2) Creativity and creativeness play central role in our organisation.
- 3) Our organisation is oriented to the development and/or expansion.
- 4) Our organisation is governed by the written mission statement, vision and strategy.
- 5) The employees of our organisation could be characterized rather by enthusiastic acting than striving for results or profit.
- 6) Our organisation's earnings depend directly on the state/local grants.
- 7) Our organisation has no confidence in terms of income.
- 8) For our organisation it is more important to do something that really interests us than earning revenue.
- 9) Our organisation is innovative.
- 10) We want to increase the international competitiveness of our organisation.
- 11) We operate in the field/market, where there is strong competition.

ENVIRONMENT

- 12) The services offered by our organisation do not differ significantly from those offered by the competitors.
- 13) Making profit is challenging for our organisation.
- 14) Protecting copyright and other intangible rights is challenging for our organisation.
- 15) Expansion to foreign markets and/or international cooperation is challenging for our organisation.
- 16) Being innovative is challenging for our organisation.
- 17) The justification of our own existence for funders or the public is challenging for us.
- 18) Recruitment of the qualified personnel is challenging for our organisation.
- 19) The financial management and keeping the budget balanced is challenging for our organisation.
- 20) Strategic planning is challenging for our organisation.
- 21) Being in compliance with laws is challenging for our organisation.
- 22) Receiving external funding is challenging for our organisation.

- 23) Analysing and reporting on the activities is challenging for our organisation.
- 24) Finding customers and obtaining new orders is challenging for our organisation.
- 25) Daily analysis of the performance and current activities is a natural part of our work.

INTERNAL PROCESSES

- 26) Our organisation has developed an efficient system for analysing the performance and individual activities.
- 27) Our organisation values learning and development.
- 28) Our organisation has well-established methodologies for analysing and assessing the work performance.
- 29) When planning new activities, we take into account the analysis results of the current activities.
- 30) The managers see performance evaluation as an important input to improve employees' performance and activities.
- 31) In our organisation, not only will the performance be measured, but the achieved results will be compared with the goals planned.
- 32) In drawing up the annual plan the quantitative indicators to measure performance are planned.
- 33) In drawing up the annual plan the qualitative indicators to measure performance are planned.

PERFORMANCE EVALUATION

- 34) How often do you collect feedback from your visitors, and/or target groups?
- 35) How often do you analyse if the planned goals have been achieved?

ANNEX 2 – 5 clusters of cultural and creative industries

Organizations

The symbols used in the following table are as follows:

++ the most positive result

+ above average

A average

- below average

-- the lowest result

	Cluster 1	Cluster 2	Cluster 3	Cluster 4	Cluster 5
DEVELOPMENT & COMPETITION					
Orientation to development and expansion	++	+	--	-	-
Willingness to improve the international competitiveness	++	+	--	+	-
FUTURE-ORIENTED CHALLENGES					
Expansion to foreign markets as a challenge	--	+	++	+	-
Being innovative as a challenge	--	+	++	+	-
Justification of own existence to funders as a challenge	--	+	++	+	-
Strategic planning as a challenge	-	+	++	+	--
DAILY CHALLENGES					
Analysing and reporting as a challenge	--	-	++	+	--
Finding customers and obtaining new orders as a challenge	--	+	++	+	--
Recruitment of the qualified personnel as a challenge	-	+	++	+	--
Financial management as a challenge	-	A	++	+	--
Being in compliance with laws as a challenge	-	-	++	+	--
Protecting rights as a challenge	-	++	+	+	--
FINANCES AND UNCERTAINTY					
Uncertainty concerning the income	--	+	++	+	-
Earning profit as a challenge	--	+	++	+	-
Receiving external funding as a challenge	-	+	++	+	--
RATIONALISM vs EMOTIONS					
Activities based on a written mission statement, vision and strategy	+	++	--	-	-
Employees' level of enthusiasm vs strive for profit	--	++	+	-	+
Preference for interesting activities over profit earning	--	++	+	-	+
EVALUATION					
Daily analysis of the performance integrated to the work process	++	+	--	+	-
Effective system for analysing the performance	++	+	-	+	--
Learning and development values	++	A	--	A	A
Existing methodologies for analysing the work performance	++	+	--	+	-
Planning related to the analyses of past performance	++	+	--	+	-
Managers' positive attitude towards performance evaluation	++	+	--	+	-
Achieved results being compared to set goals	++	+	--	+	-
Using quantitative indicators in planning process	++	+	--	A	-
Using qualitative indicators in planning process	++	+	-	+	--

Foreign cultural policy in processes of transformation: perceptions of German-Tunisian cultural exchange

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ABSTRACT

Within the concept of German foreign cultural policy, this article investigates the engagement of the Goethe-Institut in transitional Tunisia through the eyes of cultural activists on the ground. Since the Arab uprisings, the new policy framework of the German-Tunisian "Transformation Partnership" has been established, and extended approaches of the Goethe-Institut have been defined. The starting point of this article is to analyze how local cultural activists on the ground perceive the Goethe-Institut, and whether the engagement of the Goethe-Institut responds to the identified local needs. By taking the theoretical concepts of public diplomacy and soft power, the study examines policy and practice of the Goethe-Institut in times of the Tunisian transition, its role as well as its partnership approach and engagement in the fields of qualification, participation and networking. The main findings are that the Goethe-Institut contributes to the development of the cultural scene in Tunisia mainly through supporting cooperation-based projects, qualification and cultural management training as well as supporting international exchange.

Keywords:

Public diplomacy
German foreign cultural policy
Goethe-Institut
Transformation processes
Cultural relations

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Introduction

[T]he arts have their significance as a part of culture, even though this might be indirect. For when we talk about individual freedom and dignity, demand them, portray them in all their contradictions and display them in symbolic forms to enable other people to think about them more deeply and above all experience them directly, we do so mainly in the arts. The arts enable people to take up themes of individuality and social interconnections. In this way, the arts have an effect on society far beyond the sphere of artistic communication because they help to give people a meaning in life and determine human intents and purposes. This is why we need a cultural policy which sees itself as a social policy and thus enables, defends and plays its part in shaping art and culture (German Bundestag, 2007: 49-50, translated into English by Schneider, 2014: 19).

This quotation from the final report "Culture in Germany" edited by the German Bundestag in 2007 illustrates the rich variety of facets inherent in art and its influence on societies. Furthermore, using the arts as an instrument of public diplomacy and soft power in external relations bears the opportunity to promote social development and positive change through music, literature, theatre, dance or visual arts (Schneider, 2014: 23). Accordingly, the UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions, adopted in 2005, emphasizes the developmental components of culture (UNESCO, 2005). Both Germany and Tunisia were among the early signatories of this Convention in 2005, "which underlines the role and legitimacy of civil society in arts and culture as a central means for achieving the Convention's objectives" (Merkel, 2012: 8). These objectives include the formulation of national cultural policies as well as the adoption of measures to implement them.

In Tunisia, the momentum of the societal upheaval in late 2010 and early 2011, followed by a political change, transformed the possibilities for civil society engagement. In this process independent artists, cultural producers, activists and intellectuals played their role, for instance by rediscovering the public space for artistic actions (Hasenkamp, 2012: 109f), but also by asking "fundamental questions about the role of government in the field of culture and vice versa" (Merkel, 2012: 8). At the same time, external actors such as Germany also reinforced their foreign cultural policy towards the country and the MENA region in general to support these local movements as a part of international cultural relations. The "Arab Spring", as a historic caesura thus opened up new approaches and challenges for international cultural relations and an intensified dialogue within the cultural scene in Tunisia. In 2012, the German government responded to the democratic change and transition with the so-called German-Tunisian "Transformation Partnership". Through this partnership, since 2012, new priorities in foreign policy have been developed and additional fi-

nancial resources have been made available for German cultural quasi-autonomous non-governmental organizations (quangos)¹ like the Goethe-Institut, in order to develop and implement new culture-specific programs aiming at encouraging and strengthening democratic practices and actors within the cultural sector. As the German Parliament argues, "[i]n order to do justice to the importance of art and culture for the individual and society, we need cultural policies which give a particular boost to cultural participation" (German Bundestag, 2007). Therefore, developmental processes and framework measures in cultural policy are important fields to be addressed by German foreign cultural policy engagement. The current state of the transition in Tunisia, however, creates great uncertainty in the local Tunisian cultural policy debate as the Ministry of Culture is in a period of internal restructuring and a new cultural policy concept does not exist yet (Helly, 2014: 4).

Against this backdrop, by using the theoretical frameworks of public diplomacy and soft power, this study investigates the engagement of the German quango Goethe-Institut as a main implementing actor of German foreign cultural policy in Tunisia under the framework of the German-Tunisian "Transformation Partnership" (Federal Foreign Office, 2015b). In order to examine what needs Tunisian cultural activists perceive and how the Goethe-Institut addresses these, the study applies a qualitative approach based on in-depth expert interviews with Tunisian cultural activists of independent initiatives, associations and the Ministry of Culture as well as representatives of the Goethe-Institut. After introducing the qualitative methodology and the theoretical frameworks of public diplomacy and soft power, some background information is provided in order to clarify how German foreign cultural policy is generally organized, and the framework of the "Transformation Partnership" in play since 2012 is introduced. Hereafter, ongoing processes in Tunisian cultural policy development and relevant players are portrayed. This is followed by a presentation of the

1 Other quangos of German foreign cultural policy are the Institute for Foreign Cultural Relations (ifa), the Humboldt Foundation, the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD), the German UNESCO-Commission and the German Archaeological Institute, among others.

Goethe-Institut as an actor before and after the revolution with its extended approach. In the core of the article, the perceived needs of Tunisian cultural activists are presented, and how they are addressed by the Goethe-Institut is also analysed.

In general, the engagement of the Goethe-Institut is greeted as it is seen to contribute towards the development of the cultural scene in Tunisia through supporting projects and capacity-building for local cultural activists. The cooperation and implementation of projects between the Goethe-Institut and Tunisian local activists is perceived on partnership level, with the Goethe-Institut being a facilitator which offers immaterial support and expertise as well as financial resources for cultural projects. However, the German-Tunisian "Transformation Partnership", as a new policy framework with its aims and extended work approach, lacks public communication, and a certain in-transparency in strategy and work approach is perceived.

Qualitative methodology: investigating perspectives of Tunisian cultural activists

In order to investigate the engagement of the Goethe-Institut with cultural development in transitional Tunisia, it is essential to know how its efforts are received and evaluated by the Tunisian cultural activists. The research starts from the hypothesis that the work of foreign actors should be guided by the local context, the interests of the local players and the support of local movements as central points of reference in order to effectively address local needs. Therefore, the views of Tunisian cultural activists are crucial to evaluate the German engagement. Thus, this paper applies in-depth expert interviews as a tool to provide insights about not only the results of the work of the Goethe-Institut in the field, but also on how the very target actors view the latter. The research follows two main questions: what needs do Tunisian cultural activists perceive and how does the Goethe-Institut address these?

The analysis focuses on one case study, the Goethe-Institut as a main player in German foreign cultural policy in terms of budget and the number of institutes around the globe². As a German cultural quango it is mostly responsible for cultural programming as an instrument of public diplomacy and soft power. Decidedly, the promotion of the arts in a narrower sense is a core area of the work of the Goethe-Institut (Federal Foreign Office, 2013). In Tunisia, it is

the main actor of German foreign cultural cooperation (Federal Foreign Office, 2015b). Limiting the analysis to one case study further allows gathering more focused data during the field research phase and conducting a precise analysis of the work of one institution.

Methodologically, this study follows a two-step approach. After introducing the theoretical concepts of public diplomacy and soft power, it presents a content analysis of publications related to the issues of German foreign cultural policy and the "Transformation Partnership". To this end, publications, policy papers, academic and journal articles, media and conference reports as well as websites relevant to the subject are analysed. These documents explicitly refer to the "Transformation Partnership" and the engagement of the Goethe-Institut, and were researched by using websites which are relevant in the field of German foreign cultural policy: Goethe-Institut, German Foreign Ministry, Institute for Foreign Cultural Relations (ifa) and German Commission for UNESCO and other initiatives. Furthermore the "ifa library" in Stuttgart, a scientific special library for foreign cultural and educational policy, was used for the research. It runs the online information portal "Culture and Foreign Policy", which assembles a constantly updated selective bibliography on the thematic of the "Transformation Partnership"³. Additionally, in order to gather further and up-to-date background information regarding the cultural engagement of the Goethe-Institut in Tunisia since 2011, two representatives from the Goethe-Institut were interviewed. These interviewees were chosen according to their institutional responsibilities within the "Transformation Partnership" projects. The guideline for these two interviews focused on: 1) the German engagement in Tunisia since the Tunisian Revolution; 2) the different programs of the Goethe-Institut in "qualification", "participation" and "networking" within the "Transformation Partnership", and 3) their evaluation of the Goethe-Institut's engagement in the Tunisian transition process with a focus on cultural development processes.

As a second analytical step, six one-to-one interviews with actors in the field were conducted based on a semi-structured guideline and analysed via content analysis⁴. The choice of the Tunisian interview partners working in independent initiatives, associations and the Ministry of Culture was done according to two criteria: they were identified on the basis of past cooperation experience with the Goethe-Institut and of engagement in relevant initiatives, associations or institutions in the field that are active in projects supported by the "Transformation Partnership". With the help of these criteria, six local interview partners were chosen from different initiatives, organizations

² The Goethe-Institut operates 159 offices worldwide (Goethe-Institut, 2015b).

³ For further information, see Institute for Foreign Cultural Relations (2015).

⁴ All eight interviews were conducted in German, English and French between June and October 2014 (six interviews were conducted during the field research in Tunisia in October 2014, two others via telephone). For the evaluation of the interviews, the authors used content analysis as according to Mayring (see Gläser & Laudel, 2010, and Mayring, 2010). All interviews were recorded and transcribed, while all interviewees were guaranteed anonymity. Both audio and text material have been retained by the authors.

“GERMAN FOREIGN CULTURAL POLICY OPERATES WITHIN THESE THEORETICAL CONCEPTS OF PUBLIC DIPLOMACY AND SOFT POWER. ALONGSIDE SECURITY AND ECONOMIC POLICY, CULTURAL POLICY IS THE THIRD PILLAR OF GERMANY’S FOREIGN POLICY ”

and institutional bodies⁵. The guideline for local Tunisian interview partners included three question blocks concerning: 1) their experience with the German-Tunisian “Transformation Partnership” since the Tunisian revolution; 2) the support of cultural activists or initiatives by the Goethe-Institut, and 3) their evaluation of the Goethe-Institut’s engagement in the Tunisian transition process.

The results of the interviews’ content analysis is presented in the last section before the conclusion. The four main identified local needs and the Goethe-Institut’s engagement responding these are analysed: 1) the need for transparency in framework conditions and policies, 2) the need for a mutual partnership approach, 3) the need for cultural management training as capacity-building, international exchange of artists and networking, and 4) the need for concepts for local cultural policy. The field research timeframe was 2014 to 2015.

Public diplomacy and soft power in processes of transformation

Basic principles of German foreign cultural policy

The concepts of public diplomacy and soft power are key issues in international relations. The focus of both is non-governmental organisations and citizens as actors of policy making. On the one hand, public diplomacy is a way of communication of international actors, aiming to build relationships and to influence the perception of a country abroad. This targets the strengthening of the relationships, by following and implementing own interests. Post-9/11, the concept of public diplomacy changed towards the development of mutual, long-lasting relationships, according to Auer et al (2015). On the other hand, the concept of soft power of Nye, which includes the components of culture, political values and political actions, aims to manipulate the “preferences of other actors (...) without [exercising] military or economic power (hard power)” (Auer et al, 2015). Influence of one country over another is at the core of both concepts.

German foreign cultural policy operates within these theoretical concepts of public diplomacy and soft power. Alongside security and economic policy, cultural policy is the third pillar of Germany’s foreign policy (Federal Foreign Office, 2015a). It aims to support cultural exchange between Germany and foreign countries. The general organization is decentralized, meaning the German Foreign Office initiating, coordinating and financing measures in the fields of culture, education, research and social welfare for instance. German foreign cultural policy is mainly implemented through quangos which are legally independent non-governmental organizations that are in charge of conceiving programs and projects. However, this stands in a certain contradiction to the framework contract with the German Foreign Office which pre-sets strategic guidelines. This system of outsourcing state cultural work in quangos was designed in order to decentralize decision-making in German foreign cultural policy after World War II, so to avoid imposing culture for the sake of state propaganda (Auer et al, 2015: 44; Federal Foreign Office, 2014a). According to Schneider, a challenge of German foreign cultural policy is that it operates between two poles at all times: the promotion of arts and culture for the sake of the autonomy of arts, on the one hand, and the promotion of cultural processes as a political instrument to further economic interests, on the other. The latter points to the economic self-interest, since political, social and cultural development in developing countries bears vast economic potential (Schneider, 2014: 23).

[Germany] wants to secure German influence in the world, and to use education, exchange and dialogue to persuade people to view Germany in a favourable fashion, and adopt our values and ideas (Schneider, 2014: 23).

Maaß argues likewise that there are clear non-altruistic interests in supporting aims of foreign policy in the partner countries as well as promoting German values, norms and principles by using instruments of soft power (Maaß, 2015: 47f). Pamment adds that the promotion of the influence of Germany in foreign countries through cultural campaigns and projects is quite high on the agenda (Pamment, 2013: 5ff).

⁵ These were: the Cultural Innovators Network (CIN, a program by the Goethe-Institut); the *Forum des associations culturelles tunisiennes* (FACT, a Tunisian initiative); L’art vivant (a Tunisian association); the Ministry of Culture as Tunisian governmental body; the National Cultural Policy Group (NCPG, a Tunisian initiative); Tun’Act (a Tunisian association); the *Kulturakademie* (a program by the Goethe-Institut), and the *Centre des Musiques Arabes et Méditerranéennes* (CMAM, a Tunisian cultural institution).

Apart from the status quo of German foreign cultural policy, the recent processes of transformation in many countries, like in Tunisia, require practitioners and policy makers to rethink the international supporting concepts, frameworks, structures and aims. Local needs are changing due to altered political and social environments, caused by uprisings and civil society movements. Particularly in a process of transformation, specific attention and support from foreign actors is needed, apart from own interests and securing influence. The outstanding features of foreign actors in these situations are a relatively high flexibility of action and a possible prompt reacting time, compared to local established supporting structures.

This article argues that in processes of transformation the concepts of public diplomacy and soft power need to be reconsidered. In accordance to this, the strategy adopted by the Goethe-Institut in Tunisia and the findings of the case study are analysed in the light of these theoretical concepts.

The new policy framework of the Transformation Partnership

Reacting to the Arab uprisings spreading from Tunisia to North Africa and the Middle East, the German government announced support for democratic movements and a peaceful transition (Federal Foreign Office, 2014b). A policy document on German foreign cultural policy from 2011 (see Federal Foreign Office, 2011) set up a new focus on countries in transformation, in reaction to the incidents of the time. The support of "a solid democracy in a strong civil society" (Federal Foreign Office, 2011: 5; own translation) was stated as a main field of engagement. In 2012, the so-called "Transformation Partnership" between Germany and Tunisia provided a legal basis to this endeavour and intended to underline a strong German commitment to the Tunisian transition. This partnership also entailed regular government consultations, common memoranda of understanding and the implementation of key projects. Particularly, it provided newly defined working areas and additional financial resources for the political, economic and cultural sectors (Federal Foreign Office, 2011). The following priority topics and aims were defined: support of democratization

and rule of law, constitutional reform, strengthening of civil society and human rights, economy and employment, education, and culture and media (Federal Foreign Office, 2015c). For the Goethe-Institutes⁶ in

"IN 2012, THE SO-CALLED 'TRANSFORMATION PARTNERSHIP' BETWEEN GERMANY AND TUNISIA PROVIDED A LEGAL BASIS TO THIS ENDEAVOUR AND INTENDED TO UNDERLINE A STRONG GERMAN COMMITMENT TO THE TUNISIAN TRANSITION"

the region, each year about two million euros were allocated as additional funding (Federal Foreign Office, 2013: 74; Ebert, 2012: 11). In the public budget of the Federal Foreign Office, the subsidies for German-Tunisian "Transformation Partnership" in the cultural field were assigned to the quangos for the design and implementation of specific projects (Federal Foreign Office, 2014c). In the current legislative period, the funding is so far confirmed until 2017 (Federal Foreign Office, 2014b). Furthermore, the German Embassy in Tunis launched a website providing information in both Arabic and French about

the different projects that are implemented in Tunisia within the framework of the "Transformation Partnership" (see German Embassy Tunis, 2015).

Trends in Tunisian cultural policy development since 2011

With the beginning of the uprisings, independent, that is to say, non-governmental initiatives⁷ emerged which are, on the one hand, "still redefining their roles and strategies while struggling with the acceptance of new practices" (Helly, 2014: 4) but, on the other hand, have started working on a new cultural policy concept. At the same time, state institutions like the Ministry of Culture, Houses of Culture (art and social centres), museums and theatres remain structurally unchanged in many ways, working in the pre-revolution fashion which used to focus on "nation branding abroad and patronage networks and the priority given to heritage, tourism and large-scale cultural promotion events" (Helly, 2014: 4). This asynchrony between novel and progressive movements and political stasis is contributing to the "fragmentation, transformation and uncertainty" (Helly, 2014: 4), as main issues that need to be addressed. Since January 2014, during the term of the second technocrat government and the delegation of Mourad Sakli, a musician, as Minister of Culture (from January 2014 till February 2015), the cultural policy situation developed progressively⁸. Al-

6 In total there are 18 Goethe-Institutes in the region North Africa/Middle East, in the following countries: Egypt, Algeria, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Oman, Palestine Territories, Saudi-Arabia, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, and United Arab Emirates.

7 For instance: Ciné Mad'Art, Art Solution, Muzaq/Dream City, Laaroussa, Lefest, B'Chira Art Center (see Helly, 2014: 6f).

8 This idea emerged in interviews 1 (12 June 2014), 3 (10 October 2014), 4 (12 October 2014) and 7 (15 October 2014).

though a new government was democratically elected in February 2015, cultural activists still feel that it remains uncertain if the ongoing law reforms and the new state support for the arts and cultural sector will progress "because it depends on the person" (interview 4 with cultural activist, 12 October 2014)⁹ of the Minister of Culture and his goals and strategies.

To illustrate the current evolutions in the cultural policy, three very visible actors are portrayed: the Ministry of Culture, the National Cultural Policy Group (NCPG) and the Forum of Tunisian Cultural Associations (FACT) to represent both the state and the independent scene¹⁰. There is no single leading group or player operating in the redefinition of Tunisia's cultural policy for the cultural sector today; rather, there are several, like the above mentioned local groups and personalities that are working on this issue¹¹.

First of all, the Ministry of Culture as a Tunisian state body is searching for ways to reform the cultural policy and to address issues like the "effective structural reform of the culture sector and its workers, as well as [advocating] for cultural rights, freedom of expression and freedom of media" (Aboudi, 2015).

In order to develop a cultural policy strategy, central elements and goals were identified, as stated in the Cultural Policy Profile of Tunisia in the International Database of Cultural Policies: legislative reforms, "[d]evelopment of partnership mechanisms with civil society [and the Ministry of Culture] towards empowering NGOs (associations) participation in elaborating programs (such as international events and festivals)", as well as the qualification of cultural professionals "and the enhancement of conceptual and executive knowledge and skills of cultural action" (Aboudi, 2015). Further key aspects, such as the decentralization of culture, means to provide access to culture in the whole country and not predominantly in the capital, and the strengthening of economic engagement within the cultural sector through, for example, the establishment of public-private partnerships, as well as structural improvement of cultural organizations, are also on the agenda¹². One achievement in this regard so far is a new law adopted in September 2014 making investments in culture tax-deductible¹³. Furthermore, civil society actors are increasingly involved into the cultural policy making by figuring as consultants in the Ministry:

I am an independent artist, I am not from the Ministry of Culture and I will leave this Minister. I am just here for that period. (...) We are a group of artists now working in the Ministry and it's important to make these connections (interview 3 with cultural activist, 10 October 2014).

This new cooperation has benefitted from the independent, non-party political government between 2014 and 2015, as the interviewee explains:

It is important to work in a non-political government and after the elections it will be a political government. It is important to work with this Minister because I know his strategy, his vision and I believe in it and I can work at the same time with an artist, because he is an artist too (interview 3 with cultural activist, 10 October 2014).

The Minister of Culture Mourad Sakli thus ended a tradition of artists seeing themselves instrumentalised by political parties, acting within the restricted governmental framework, true to the party principles instead of freely expressing themselves. For example, the independent artist Cyrine Gannoun was nominated in 2014 consultant to the Minister of Culture¹⁴. This participatory approach includes alternating guests, experts, artists and cultural policy actors who have been invited to a regular exchange of ideas about a future strategy in cultural policies – a method to guarantee mutual acceptance of the implemented policy:

Because it is important to not separate the Ministry and the artists. And we have so many bad experiences in other countries. When the Ministry makes its own cultural policy and doesn't let the artists participate, they will refuse it. They will say: "I am not considered by this proposition. I don't feel comfortable to work with that/them". It happened even with us before (interview 3 with cultural activist, 10 October 2014).

Besides the state bodies, independent advocacy groups for cultural policy within Tunisia's civil society are still continuing to emerge¹⁵. Whilst many newly formed associations are active in the cultural field, only a few are working directly on cultural policy issues. One example is the Tunisian NCPG that is part of

9 This idea emerged also in interviews 1 with representative of Goethe-Institut (12 June 2014), 3 with cultural activist (10 October 2014), 4 with cultural activist (12 October 2014) and 7 with cultural activist (15 October 2014).

10 NCPG and FACT have been chosen because they are umbrella organizations for cultural policy advocacy which involve a wide range of representatives of cultural associations and players from all artistic sectors. The first FACT forum in 2013, for instance, involved 120 participants (see German Commission for UNESCO, 2014b).

11 Interviews 2 with cultural activist (27 August 2014), 3 with cultural activist (10 October 2014) and 4 with cultural activist (12 October 2014).

12 Interview 3 with cultural activist (10 October 2014) and Aboudi (2015).

13 Interview 3 with cultural activist (10 October 2014).

14 Cyrine Gannoun is also the Tunisian coordinator of the National Cultural Policy Group (NCPG) under the program of Al Mawred Al Thagafy.

15 Interview 3 with cultural activist (10 October 2014).

the Arab Cultural Policy Group. Founded in 2011 by Al Mawred Al Thagafy in Egypt, the group works to support the development of governmental structures in cultural policy across Arab countries¹⁶. It also focuses on cooperation and exchange with the Tunisian Ministry of Culture, through delegating civil society representatives as consultants to ministerial decision-making processes, for instance. The initiative in Tunisia is still defining itself by "discussing different mechanisms to establish a lobbying group supervising the cultural policies" (Ettijahat, 2013: 9). Instead of institutional continuity through regular reunions with a stable number of participants, the NCPG rather follows a flexible way of working¹⁷.

A third player is the initiative Forum of Tunisian Cultural Associations (FACT)¹⁸, established in 2012 as an umbrella organization for cultural initiatives and associations, in cooperation with the German Commission for UNESCO under the project CONNEXIONS¹⁹. FACT was initially conceived as a conference that took place in June 2013 for the first time, with the German Commission for UNESCO as a partner, and produced recommendations for concrete work goals in cultural policy, later transmitted to the Minister of Culture (German Commission for UNESCO, 2014b). The purpose of FACT is to support networking and self-organization in the cultural field while also professionalizing as an independent organization (German Commission for UNESCO, 2014b). First steps were implemented to determine the NGO's legal status as an association in November 2014, thus enabling it to gain more credibility towards possible local and international sponsors. So far, the FACT's engagement entails the construction of a website, training for cultural associations to professionalize their work, artist residencies, cooperation with universities, extension of the NGO's relations with the European Union and international cooperation partners²⁰. This also includes finding a partner who supports the sustainable structural development²¹. Furthermore, FACT started the initial cooperation with the Ministry of Culture. An intended convention between the two is underway, representing another step toward the involvement and support of civil society actors with a public body²². The president of FACT stated that "it is a historical thing that an NGO and the Ministry work together. It is the first time in our history"²³.

16 Culture Resource (Al Mawred Al Thagafy) is an Egyptian NGO founded in 2004 by Basma El Hussein which supports artistic creativity and cultural exchange in the Arab region. It is one of the leading independent Arab cultural organizations advocating for cultural policy. It established a General Assembly and an Artistic Board (see Al Mawred Al Thagafy, 2012).

17 Interview 3 with cultural activist (10 October 2014).

18 The NGO has its president in Tunis and three decentralized regional representatives (North, Central and South Tunisia) for coordination and administration outside Tunis to promote the decentralization.

19 CONNEXIONS is a project dedicated to the Arab region to support democracy and cultural participation. It facilitates capacity-building, encourages the exchange of experiences and knowledge-transfer as well as networking (see German Commission for UNESCO, 2014a).

20 Interview 4 with cultural activist (12 October 2014).

21 To this end, FACT is negotiating with the Norwegian organization Mimeta. Mimeta was founded in 2006 and operates in 20 different countries in the field of culture and development aiming to give access to free artistic expression. For further information, see Mimeta (n.d.).

22 Interview 4 with cultural activist (12 October 2014).

23 Interview 4 with cultural activist (12 October 2014).

24 As there is only scarce material available concerning projects and work of the Goethe-Institut before the revolution, this article will put a stronger emphasis on the period after 2011.

25 This idea also emerged in interview 1 with representative of Goethe-Institut (12 June 2014).

The Goethe-Institut and its intensified engagement

Before the uprisings: classical cultural exchange

The Goethe-Institut has a long tradition in Tunisia starting in 1958 with the opening of its Tunis office. Since then, its activities mainly focused on language courses and cultural activities with Tunisian partner organisations such as the organisation of exhibitions and films, music and theatre cultural programs, as well as thematic discussions (Junghänel, 2008)²⁴. Before the revolution, the possibilities for initiatives and campaigns of the Goethe-Institut were limited due to the restrictions imposed by the political regime, and the co-operation with Tunisian partners or the work in public space were difficult to implement. Accordingly, co-operation with Tunisian partners as well as working in public space were difficult to realise. Therefore, the work of the Goethe-Institut was limited to using its own building as a politically neutral ground. This confined space offered a place for dialogue and free expression for repressed artists under the Ben Ali regime which was, although only accessible for a small audience, of high relevance in a country where censorship prevailed (Bohrer, 2013). The Goethe-Institut's director Christiane Bohrer (2011-2016) declared that the cultural program work before 2011 focused on German contributions for big film and theatre festivals mainly organised by the Tunisian state (Bohrer, 2013) – it thus followed a tradition of cultural representation.

After the uprisings: extended approach within the "Transformation Partnership"

With the Tunisian Revolution and the establishment of the German-Tunisian Transformation Partnership, the quango Goethe-Institut set up new cultural programs and received additional resources from the German Federal Foreign Office (Ebert, 2012: 11)²⁵. In this respect, the Goethe-Institut published a conceptual framework paper on the institute's management in the Middle

East and North Africa (MENA) region in 2011, and the publication "Transformation and Partnership" in 2012 which presents different projects within the "Transformation Partnership" (Goethe-Institut, 2011b & 2012b). Both indicate an extended approach and a strategic development of the policy of the Goethe-Institut's work in the region. On a strategic level, the "Transformation Partnership" not only means an additional budget deployed for projects relevant for transformation. The specific task of the Goethe-Institut within the "Transformation Partnership" is generally integrating in its educational mandate (Goethe-Institut, 2011a). The newly extended approach is the support of democracy through culture. This is stated in the document dating from 2011 which presents a regional policy paper that defines the extended approach of the Goethe-Institut, aiming to "identify and follow culture-specific ways for the promotion of democracy" (Goethe-Institut, 2011b: 1, own translation). In this document, five fields of activity were defined to implement these program lines: participation in cultural policy, qualification and training in the area of culture and education, support to civil society, support of extracurricular education as well as support of creative production and documentation (Goethe-Institut, 2011b: 1). The overall concept is to enter into a dialogue at eye level to implement fair, cooperation-based partnerships through the projects. The Goethe-Institut seeks to support local groups and movements which are working to establish cultural projects and infrastructure on the ground through grassroots movements (Goethe-Institut, 2012b: 11). Hasenkamp, former head of arts MENA region at the Goethe-Institut Cairo, points out that the involvement of civil society acts as a self-evident, essential corrective – and requirement – for social stabilization in transformation processes (Hasenkamp, 2012: 110). In 2012, a new online presence, "Transition and Partnership", accessible in French and Arabic, was launched by the Goethe-Institutes in Egypt and Tunisia in order to provide information about the new initiative, highlighting programs developed in the fields of participation, qualification and networking (Goethe-Institut, 2015c). Since 2012, the Goethe-Institut Tunis releases an annual review of its program's work, including a statement on the program lines and the general approach²⁶.

A compilation of the specific engagement in the field

Within the "Transformation Partnership" programs in the fields of "qualification", "participation" and "networking", the Goethe-Institut has both supported particular outstanding events, like the first human rights film festival "Human Screen Festival" in 2012, and sharpened its profile, above all in edu-

cation and training in cultural management under the program line "qualification" (Goethe-Institut, 2012a: 34). Several capacity-building measures were conducted in the framework of the program *Kulturakademie* ("Cultural Academy") with young cultural activists as a main target group. Between 2012 and 2013, the project *Théâtre Demain* trained young theatre technicians (Goethe-Institut, 2012a: 38 & 58f; 2013: 18f & 30f; 2014: 8f). *MezmarouN'*, a long-term project that started in 2012, supports the preservation and integration of the ancient Tunisian architecture. To this end, German and Tunisian experts cooperate to develop recommendations for the architectural cultural heritage and make use of it for cultural and educational purposes (Goethe-Institut, 2012a: 46f; 2013: 32-35; 2014: 34-37). In order to contribute to work mobility, intensive language courses in German were provided to specific target groups such as Tunisian engineers in 2012 and 2013 (Goethe-Institut, 2012a: 40; 2013: 40).

An example for the program line "participation" is the women's radio program *gattelhom osktou* which was supported in its initial phase from 2013 to 2014 (Goethe-Institut, 2013: 42f; 2014: 18f). Exchange and encounter are linked to the program line "networking", which stimulates mobility as a main focus within the "Transformation Partnership". In this regard, the Goethe-Institut is active with the mobility fund Moving MENA that enables artists to travel to Germany by providing travel and accommodation expenses, daily allowance and VISA assistance (Goethe-Institut, 2012a: 54f; 2014: 28f). Another project initiated in 2012 in the field of culture is the Cultural Innovators Network (CIN), which encourages young activists from the civil society sector of the whole Mediterranean region to engage in mutual exchange and discourse for the development of sustainable processes of social change (Goethe-Institut, 2015a).

Responding to local needs: insights and perceptions of Tunisian cultural activists

To answer the research question of this paper, this part of the article investigates the perception about the Goethe-Institut as described by Tunisian local cultural activists and stated by representatives of the organization. Emerging from these inside views, local needs are presented and aligned with the responding engagement of the Goethe-Institut²⁷.

The need for transparency in framework conditions and policies

The autonomy of the Goethe-Institut and its independence from the German government is generally viewed as positive by Tunisian cultural activists²⁸. Still, however, the interviews with Tunisian cultural activ-

26 Interview 1 with representative of Goethe-Institut (12 June 2014).

27 The order in which the identified needs are presented does not imply any hierarchy related to their significance.

28 Interview 4 with cultural activist (12 October 2014).

“ACCORDING TO THE GOETHE-INSTITUT, THE APPROACH FOR DEVELOPING PROJECTS IS PRIMARILY TO ASSESS THE DEMANDS AND NEEDS IN THE TUNISIAN CULTURAL SECTOR. LOCAL ACTORS CRITICIZE THAT THIS APPROACH OF ASSESSING NEEDS AND DEVELOPING COOPERATION AND PARTNERSHIP WITH CIVIL SOCIETY ACTORS LACKS TRANSPARENCY”

ists unveil a discrepancy in the public communication of the new policy framework of the German-Tunisian “Transformation Partnership” in general and regarding additional financial resources for projects: “I don’t remember that I heard that they increased the budget. I don’t feel that they have more projects and more money” (interview 3 with cultural activist, 10 October 2014)²⁹. In the same vein, the Goethe-Institut’s extended approach after the Tunisian Revolution has not been clearly perceived by Tunisian cultural activists: “I don’t think that there is any new change” (interview 3 with cultural activist, 10 October 2014); while others consider the Goethe-Institut to be “really active since the revolution” (interview 5 with cultural activist, 13 October 2014)³⁰.

According to the Goethe-Institut, the approach for developing projects is primarily to assess the demands and needs in the Tunisian cultural sector through meetings and “based on discussions with partners” (interview 1 with representative of Goethe-Institut, 12 June 2014, own translation) and familiarisation with the cultural infrastructure. NGOs and actors then considered “interesting” (in the words of the same interviewee) by the Goethe-Institut representatives are given the opportunity to collaborate. Local actors criticize that this approach of assessing needs and developing cooperation and partnership with civil society actors lacks transparency³¹. Additionally, some interviewees suspected the institute to have an approach based on strong personal interests, and suggested to rather involve “a kind of commission including Tunisian researchers, Tunisian artists and independent Tunisians” (interview 3 with cultural activist, 10 October 2014)³² to identify needs and set up programs. On the other hand, they perceive that access and participation become easier once a relationship with the Goethe-Institut has been established³³.

The need for a mutual partnership approach

In general partnerships with the Goethe-Institut are greeted. An interviewee summarised that as “a new NGO/association, we were really lucky that they [the Goethe-Institut] believed in us and helped us start” (interview 5 with cultural activist, 13 October 2014). Once partnerships are established, Tunisian cultural activists laud the equality in the approach to developing joint projects for implementation³⁴. This goes hand in hand with one of the biggest needs identified by Tunisian actors in terms of international cultural exchange: the establishment of a sustainable and long-term mutual partnership approach that creates a win-win situation³⁵. Due to the good international reputation of the Goethe-Institut, these partnerships are perceived as particularly attractive by local actors since they increase their credibility before other potential partners³⁶. Likewise, a credible belief in the cooperation and the actors is seen as important³⁷. In this respect, especially against the background of the colonial history, Tunisian interviewees emphasize the importance of interaction between European cultural institutes and Tunisian civil society at the eye level, with interests and ideas coming from both sides to establish a “two-way, not one-way exchange” (interview 7 with cultural activist, 15 October 2014). The interviewee further stated that he endorses the “approach that goes towards encouraging real exchange projects where for instance young people from Germany and people from Tunisia work together on one project” (interview 7 with cultural activist, 15 October 2014).

The self-perception and aspiration of the Goethe-Institut is to be a facilitating and moderating partner who primarily provides immaterial support and expertise, as stated by a representative of the institute³⁸. In contradiction, Tunisian cultural activists perceive the Goethe-Institut’s role primarily as an additional

29 This idea emerged also in interview 7 with cultural activist (15 October 2014).

30 These ideas emerged also in interviews 2 with cultural activist (27 August 2014), 3 with cultural activist (10 October 2014) and 5 with cultural activist (13 October 2014).

31 Interviews 2 with cultural activist (27 August 2014), 3 with cultural activist (10 October 2014) and 5 with cultural activist (13 October 2014).

32 This idea emerged also in interview 2 with cultural activist (27 August 2014).

33 Interviews 5 with cultural activist (13 October 2014) and 8 with representative of Goethe-Institut (15 October 2014).

34 Interviews 4 with cultural activist (12 October 2014) and 5 with cultural activist (13 October 2014).

35 Interviews 2 with cultural activist (27 August 2014), 3 with cultural activist (10 October 2014), 4 with cultural activist (12 October 2014) and 5 with cultural activist (13 October 2014).

36 Interviews 8 with representative of Goethe-Institut (15 October 2014) and 5 with cultural activist (13 October 2014).

37 Interview 4 with cultural activist (12 October 2014).

38 Interview 1 with representative of Goethe-Institut (12 June 2012).

or only financial resource, as a sponsor that "just (...) give[s] money for projects and the result" (interview 3 with cultural activist, 10 October 2014)³⁹.

The need for cultural management training as capacity-building, international exchange of artists and networking

As noted by both the Tunisian and the German interviewees, qualification and professional training, particularly in fundraising, proposal writing and project planning, are two of the most crucial needs for newly established cultural associations and artists in Tunisia: "The main point is how to give training to the young associations, because training it's the most important thing, to build our [cultural infra]structure" (interview 4 with cultural activist, 12 October 2014)⁴⁰.

[W]e started from the idea that, for the last maybe 10 or 20 years, this particular subject, I mean, training a cultural manager, has been neglected in Tunisia and we are now getting aware of the need to have more support, particularly to young people who are willing to engage in cultural projects. So this is quite a positive initiative taken by the Goethe-Institut. And I think it's opening the eyes of our rulers and our Ministry to this lack (interview 7 with cultural activist, 15 October 2014).

The engagement of the Goethe-Institut in capacity-building is positively perceived, particularly in relation to access to international funding and its facilitation through know-how and professionalization⁴¹. Nonetheless, a representative of the Goethe-Institut still sees a strong need on the ground to simplify access to local and international funds⁴².

One of the qualification programs of the Goethe-Institut is the *Kulturakademie*, which offers a demand-orientated cultural management training for "multipliers" (in the words of interviewee 8, a representative of Goethe-Institut) each year, aiming at contributing to their professionalization in project management and implementation⁴³. With this academy, the Goethe-Institut thus addresses the lack of training opportunities in the Tunisian academic, art and cultural sector

identified by the interviewees. Furthermore, a representative stated that "[a]bove all we strengthen the role of the cultural activists (...), we encourage them to develop their ideas and projects and shape their country" (interview 8 with representative of Goethe-Institut, 15 October 2014). According to the Goethe-Institut, ideally, professional cultural managers are taking an active part in shaping the local cultural sector with their own project ideas, with growing autonomy and independence in project management⁴⁴. Both Tunisian and German interviewees particularly saw the focus on the promotion of young target groups as a crucial and an important task⁴⁵. Furthermore, they stated that young artists and managers bear the potential to become future leaders, which is of particular significance against the backdrop of the Tunisian demography: around half of the population in Tunisia is under 30 years old and well educated⁴⁶.

Aside from practical training, academic training and research in cultural management and cultural policy are urgent needs in Tunisia and the MENA region: as the interviewees explained, most of the people working on issues of cultural policy in Tunisia are professionally trained in arts but not in cultural management and policy, also due to the absence of relevant bachelor or master programs at local universities⁴⁷.

Local cultural activists pointed at international exchange projects as another need. Therefore, the Goethe-Institut's initiatives in creating networks such as the implemented Moving MENA program and the Cultural Innovators Network (CIN) are seen as particularly positive, seeking to address a deficiency through the creation of sustainable artist networks. This practice helps raise awareness for cultural diversity and supports international cooperation between cultural activists⁴⁸.

The need for concepts for local cultural policy

For Tunisian cultural activists, a crucial basis is the re-definition and embedding of their local conceptual cultural policy which is a prerequisite to implement local structures supporting the cultural scene in the long term. This requires mutual exchange, coopera-

39 This idea emerged also in interviews 1 with representative of Goethe-Institut (12 June 2014), 3 with cultural activist (10 October 2014), 4 with cultural activist (12 October 2014) and 5 with cultural activist (13 October 2014).

40 This idea emerged also in interviews 1 with representative of Goethe-Institut (12 June 2014), 4 with cultural activist (12 October 2014), 8 with representative of Goethe-Institut (15 October 2014) and 7 with cultural activist (15 October 2014).

41 Interviews 4 with cultural activist (12 October 2014), 5 with cultural activist (13 October 2014) and 7 with cultural activist (15 October 2014).

42 Interview 1 with representative of Goethe-Institut (12 June 2014).

43 Interviews 1 with representative of Goethe-Institut (12 June 2014), 4 with cultural activist (12 October 2014), 7 with cultural activist (15 October 2014) and 8 with representative of Goethe-Institut (15 October 2014).

44 Interview 8 with representative of Goethe-Institut (15 October 2014).

45 Interviews 2 with cultural activist (27 August 2014), 4 with cultural activist (12 October 2014) and 8 with representative of Goethe-Institut (15 October 2014).

46 Interviews 2 with cultural activist (27 August 2014), 4 with cultural activist (12 October 2014), 6 with cultural activist (14 October 2014), 7 with cultural activist (15 October 2014), 8 with representative of Goethe-Institut (15 October 2014). See also German Corporation for International Cooperation (2015).

47 Interviews 2 with cultural activist (27 August 2014), 3 with cultural activist (10 October 2014) and 4 with cultural activist (12 October 2014).

48 Interviews 4 with cultural activist (12 October 2014), 5 with cultural activist (13 October), 6 with cultural activist (14 October 2014) and 7 with cultural activist (15 October 2014).

“THE GOETHE-INSTITUT’S WORK AFTER 2011 SHOWS THAT CULTURAL EXCHANGE HAS BEEN RETHOUGHT AND A NEW FOCUS ON PARTNERSHIP-BASED APPROACHES HAS BEEN DEVELOPED, WITH THE AIM OF BOTH SIDES BENEFITTING”

tion, knowledge about best practice examples and evaluation⁴⁹. In this respect, the Goethe-Institut is not the most visible actor providing support, which is attributed to the fact that most current initiatives in the narrower cultural policy context are so far not directly supported by the local Goethe-Institut as in the case of the *Forum des associations culturelles tunisiennes* (FACT) and the National cultural policy group (NCPG)⁵⁰. In general, some Tunisian actors would like the Goethe-Institut to support these initiatives⁵¹. This would enable the Goethe-Institut to play a more significant role regarding cultural policy initiatives, especially since its 2011 conceptual framework paper mentioned participation in cultural policy as one field of engagement. In order to put this into practice, the common way of cooperating with the local Ministry of Culture on the basis of a standard framework between the Ministry and European cultural institutions is practiced⁵². The collaboration between the Goethe-Institut and the Ministry of Culture takes mainly place in joint projects and by providing advisory service. The Goethe-Institut intends to give further support, assisting in cultural infrastructure reforming measures of the Ministry and consultancy for cultural policy reforms in the public sector, as stated by a representative of the Goethe-Institut. One example for the latter are the state-wide large-scale “lighthouse projects” of the Ministry of Culture, which intend a reform and strengthening of public Houses of Culture, public libraries and public cultural heritage projects⁵³.

Conclusion: potentials of the Goethe-Institut in promoting cultural exchange in times of transition

The Goethe-Institut is a visible actor in the cultural scene in Tunisia. Since the Tunisian Revolution, its engagement has been reinforced under the new German-Tunisian “Transformation Partnership” leading to an extension of its work. It has been reacting to local needs and the altered political and social context to encourage democratization through culture-specific

engagement. Therefore, new cultural programs have been created that extend far into the civil society sector. Comparing with the pre-revolution activities, a shift from classical contributions by German artists in Tunisia, or vice versa, to cooperation with Tunisian partners can be observed. The continuation and extension of its endeavours since 2011 is especially based on a support of local actors through qualification, training and networking.

In the eyes of Tunisian cultural activists and German actors on the ground, current needs in the Tunisian cultural sector include cultural diversity, long-term eye level partnerships with international organizations and empowerment of local actors. Furthermore, concepts of local cultural policy, decentralization, reallocation of and access to resources, cultural infrastructure, redefinition of government structures, capacity-building, youth and education are evaluated as issues to be addressed in Tunisia. In general, the engagement of the Goethe-Institut addressing these needs is being welcomed and appreciated by the local cultural activists. By offering professional cultural management training as capacity-building, supporting international exchange of artists and networking, the Goethe-Institut is playing an important role in strengthening and empowering Tunisian cultural activists, especially young target groups. This approach is positively perceived as a contribution to transition. Particularly as a self-defined mediator and facilitator, as a partner who offers immaterial support and expertise, the Goethe-Institut is able to be a strong player in facilitating knowledge and consultancy for local cultural activists, although it is also perceived as a sponsor that provides financial resources.

The equal partnerships are built on dialogue at eye level with both the Tunisian as well as the German side benefiting whilst developing joint projects. Tunisian actors laud the freedom in their work without a foreign actor imposing them content-wise. As the interviewees stated, the Goethe-Institut is seen as able to be a reliable partner in transformation processes not only because of its longstanding experience and expertise, but also because it enjoys a good reputation resulting from its independent status. In conclusion, parameters identifying fair international cultural coop-

49 Interviews 2 with cultural activist (27 August 2014), 3 with cultural activist (10 October 2014), 4 with cultural activist (12 October 2014) and 7 with cultural activist (15 October 2014).

50 Interviews 1 with representative of Goethe-Institut (12 June 2014) and 4 with cultural activist (12 October 2014).

51 Interview 4 with cultural activist (12 October 2014).

52 Interview 1 with representative of Goethe-Institut (12 June 2014).

53 Interview 1 with representative of Goethe-Institut (12 June 2014).

eration and culture-specific support in times of transition are transparency, flexibility, openness, mutual dialogue and frank debate. However, the interviewees state a discrepancy in the public communication of the new policy framework of the German-Tunisian "Transformation Partnership", as they could not well observe the change and extended work approach after the Tunisian Revolution. The assessment of needs, and the strategy of developing cooperation and partnership are thus not perceived as transparent.

Putting the findings of the case study of the Goethe-Institut in relation to the concept of public diplomacy and soft power in the context of the "Transformation partnership", a shift from the classical concept of expanding and securing influence of Germany in another country can be observed. The Goethe-Institut's work after 2011 shows that cultural exchange has been rethought and a new focus on partnership-based approaches has been developed, with the aim of both sides benefitting. Local ideas, interests and needs, like cultural management training, are the principles of the work of the foreign actor. Putting the focus on capacity-building and self-empowerment is a strategy that supports local developments, apart from own interests. On the other hand, the strategy adopted by the Goethe-Institut in Tunisia does contribute effectively to the exercise of soft power, bringing benefits to the funding state like expanding a positive image of the Goethe-Institut's work as well as of the country. The latter despite not being very transparent in the communication of aims and agendas of the "Transformation Partnership" and in the selection of partners, as well as being primarily perceived as a sponsor. Nevertheless, the case study shows that the perceptions are slowly changing towards a more partnership-based public diplomacy and soft power. Supporting transformation processes can hardly be effective when own interests are predominant, but a notable shift in the practice is still to be achieved.

Reflecting, after four years of implementation, on the overall effectiveness of the new policy framework of the "Transformation partnership", which includes also the sectors of economy and security, Asseburg et al state that the influence in Tunisia is quite minor and mainly based on support in budget and equipment. They particularly claim a new focus and a reorientation of the policy framework giving priority to civil society actors and to focus on specific groups rather than supporting widespread actions. A more specific political exposure of Germany would increase sustainable support and stabilization (Asseburg et al, 2016: 38ff). Also, Maaß argues, on the impact of the cited policy document on German foreign cultural policy from 2011 (Federal Foreign Office, 2011), that notable change in the practice has not really been achieved (Maaß, 2015: 51). This shows that there is the need of adopting policy concepts, especially for processes of transformation, and formulate new criteria and rethink the existing working paradigms. The questions on how policies are set up, how coopera-

tion is built and how exchange with foreign partners is practiced are not yet answered. This is also stated by Hampel, who claims for the implementation of principles for a "fair cooperation" which are not yet practiced, even though often declared by German actors working in the field (Hampel, 2015). Applying the argument of Asseburg et al (2016) on German foreign cultural policy in processes of transformation, cultural activists as a strong civil society group can be one of the focuses of Germany's engagement. Also, Hasenkamp envisions a crucial role of civil society for social stabilization (Hasenkamp, 2012: 110).

In conclusion, this research can be seen as a first step towards an idea of rethinking German foreign cultural policy in processes of transformation and developing new, transparent and partnership-based concepts of international cultural relations with transformation countries that are based on local competences, local needs and managed by local actors. Lastly, apart from international cultural cooperation and support, a redefinition and embedding of local conceptual cultural policy, which is a prerequisite to implement local structures supporting the cultural scene in the long term, is of high relevance for a local framework enabling cultural, social and democratic transition.

INTERVIEWS

Interview 1 with representative of the Goethe-Institut via telephone between Tunis and Marseille, 12 June 2014.

Interview 2 with cultural activist via telephone between Tunis and Dresden, 27 August 2014.

Interview 3 with cultural activist in Tunis, 10 October 2014.

Interview 4 with cultural activist in Tunis, 12 October 2014.

Interview 5 with cultural activist in Tunis, 13 October 2014.

Interview 6 with cultural activist in Tunis, 14 October 2014.

Interview 7 with cultural activist in Tunis, 15 October 2014.

Interview 8 with representative of Goethe-Institut in Tunis, 15 October 2014.

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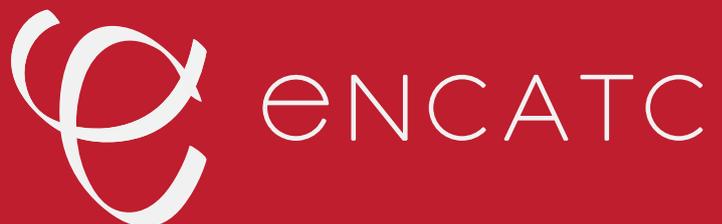
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