



UNCHARTED

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Understanding, Capturing and Fostering the Societal Value of Culture



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1. INTRODUCTION

This research seeks to identify the plurality of social values of culture and the tensions, conflicts, and public controversies in the “valuation” of **cultural participation in live arts and culture**, as articulated by the practitioners themselves. What personal, social, and political values emerge from cultural participation? How is value constructed by the actors involved, according to their mode of participation (spectators, participants, artists, organizers) and their social characteristics? How does this valuation vary according to different degrees of the activity’s institutionalization/autonomy? What articulations and tensions exist between values, and between different levels of valuation (personal, social, political)? How did the COVID-19 pandemic and restrictions affect cultural valuation?

What is a value? In philosophy, it has long been customary to consider fundamental values around indisputable principles. The “beautiful”, the “true” and the “just” in Aristotle are precise values because they do not themselves refer to any higher principle; such values are said to be *autotelic* – each can only refer to itself. Muller (2018) speaks of value as **the most fundamental representation of what is good and desirable, or bad and undesirable**. The important point here is that a value is a *representation* (and not a fact), and it assumes to evoke the “good” or the “desirable” as levers of valorization, and not only “objectivist” or “positivist” criteria. Finally, Dewey (1944) uses the notion of **valuation** to underline that value is never more than a social construction, which is formed in a given context, by a given social group, at a given time. More empirically, Heinich (2017) considers value as **the principle by which acts, ideas, material and immaterial goods can be measured, justified, and appreciated**.

These questions of construction, of context, of distinction are addressed here through the method of case studies. The cases chosen don’t belong to the field of ‘legitimated’ culture, but are ‘on the fringes’ of it, and show different levels of institutionalization:

- **Culture-based creative tourism:** Loulé Criativo (organized by a municipality);
- **Community-engaged artistic project:** “De Portas Abertas” project, O Teatrão, Coimbra (theatre company);
- **Contemporary circus in Montpellier** (from informal to semi-institutionalized events);
- **Clandestine concerts during the COVID pandemic** (total autonomy); and
- **Rave-parties and DJ parties in the Languedoc hinterland** (total autonomy).

The case studies are based on a mix of methods, including participatory observation, semi-structured interviews, online questionnaires, and documental review. Even if the monographic approach does not allow us to generalize empirical lessons from the cases themselves, their comparisons provide a rich initial analysis to understand the social value(s) of culture.

2. CASE STUDIES

2.1. Culture-based creative tourism: Loulé Criativo

2.1.1. Setting, actors, configurations

Setting. Creative tourism is generally positioned in two ways: as a reaction against the massification of cultural tourism and as an evolution of cultural tourism toward more experiential offers. At its core, creative tourism involves active learning experiences enabling creative self-expression and skill development. The vision of creative tourism that has been developed in recent years in Portugal in the context of small cities and rural areas¹ is that of active creative activity encouraging personal self-expression and interaction between visitors and local residents, inspired by local endogenous resources (place and people), and designed and implemented by local residents.

Loulé Criativo [Creative Loulé] is a project established by the Municipality of Loulé in the Algarve region of Portugal. Loulé was once known as the “land of handicrafts” and home to a great diversity of arts and crafts until the end of the twentieth century. Many of these craft activities have disappeared in recent years. The municipality views Loulé Criativo as its obligation vis-à-vis its residents to preserve the local heritage, enhance its territory, and reinforce local identity. Loulé Criativo is the affirmation of an identity operationalized in multiple ways.

Project description. The Loulé Criativo programme has three main intervention areas: (1) **Creative Tourism**, offering a programme of experiences of immersion in the local traditional culture; (2) the **Network of Workshops**, with five workshop places: Casa da Empreita [palm weaving], Oficina do Barro [clay], Oficina dos Caldeireiros [copper], Oficina dos Cordofones [luthier studio], and Oficina de Relojoeiro [watchmaker studio]; and (3) the **Loulé Design Lab**, which supports the incubation of entrepreneurs related to production and design and hosts artistic residencies. Creative tourism activities are integrated into four areas: *Handicrafts, Art, Heritage, and Gastronomy*.

The Loulé Criativo programme provides a way to preserve local knowledge, train new masters, and restore spaces where arts and crafts are cultivated – nurturing a home for masters and craft workers in general. A guarantee of quality tourism aims to foster economic development in the region, supporting small entrepreneurs, craftspeople, and artists. Workshops are held in buildings restored for the development of specific historically important crafts – the doors are kept open and craftspeople can be seen at work at all times. Visitors have a unique opportunity to get to know the “person behind the craft,” to know their story, to experience their passion, and to learn traditional techniques directly through their hands and ancient wisdom – an opportunity for direct involvement in this strong component of Loulé’s identity.

Main actors, configurations. The Municipality of Loulé launched Loulé Criativo in 2015, involving an array of organizational partners. From 2017 to 2020, five workshops have opened involving 20 artisans. Loulé Criativo operates as an open network of partners, managed by a permanent team of the municipality. Different local partnerships have been made, involving a variety of local organizations, including: local professionals who have tourism animation companies or creative activity companies; cultural animation companies; accommodation units; retail shops; and photographers, artisans, artists, and gastronomes.

Participants in creative tourism activities include locally resident artists/artisans/designers, as workshop trainers/facilitators, and visitor-participants (locally resident or visiting, Portuguese or of other nationalities). Dedicated municipal employees facilitate the overall organization and operationalization of the Loulé Criativo project. Partner organizations assist to promote and support workshops and associated activities, providing additional skills, knowledge, and locations.

Fieldwork. Data collection involved document and data compilation and analysis (for contextualization); 11 semi-structured interviews (10 in-person and 1 online), plus 1 additional written response due to a language

¹ See CREATOUR project at: www.creatour.pt

barrier; an online questionnaire²; and observation in three “Oficinas” [Network of Workshops]: Casa da Empreita [palm weaving]; Oficina do Barro [clay]; and Oficina dos Caldeireiros [copper]. Interviews were conducted with different types of participants (participant/attendee, volunteer, and professional and amateur artists/artisans involved in training/leading the activities), plus the activity organizers/promoters for additional context.³

2.1.2. Main values identified

This case study illustrates the importance of the arts and crafts and traditional-based practices today, revitalized within a context of creative tourism, an importance that is reflected at different levels: *individual* (artists/artisans; local residents and visitors); *collective* (community); and *territorial*.

From the *individual* perspective, both facilitating/training artists/artisans and visitors/participants highlighted *social interaction* and the opportunity to know others and create a relationship. This social interaction dimension has a direct impact on the success of a creative tourism experience. Listening and sharing past experiences, stories of life, and ways of doing creates connections among participants (artisans–artisans, artisans–visitors and visitors–visitors), which “enriches the experience” and makes it “more memorable.” At the same time, it contributes to the sense of “integration” from the visitors’ point of view, the learning process, and “recognition” of the artisans.

The importance of *knowing and understanding the process of making* seems to be the most consensual aspect among all participants (i.e., older, younger, artists/artisans and visitors). It appears that by learning and directly experiencing the process of developing and making different forms of arts and crafts, participants bestow additional/higher value to the item(s) produced, the experience, and the artists/artisans. This combination brings together values across an array of dimensions: economic (product), emotional/attachment (experience), and recognition/respect (artists/artisans).

The different participants also emphasize the *learning* dimension. From the perspective of receiving knowledge, attendees/visitors note the importance of learning a new thing either for leisure, curiosity about “*how is the traditional way of making,*” or for developing a related professional occupation. From the perspective of giving/sharing knowledge and know-how, artist/artisans speak of feeling empowered through transmitting something useful; passing knowledge and experiences from the past to younger generations, thereby reinforcing identity and social responsibility; and demonstrating traditional practices that are now linked with environmental sustainability (“*respecting and using nature, through the traditional practices. I see an increasing interest from the younger generations*”).

Another important aspect of the overall experience seems to be the *replication and preservation of knowledge* outside the experience through bringing the knowledge back to one’s house or country and sharing it with family and friends – “*It’s interesting, the culture ends up not being only here. It’s from here, but then it goes out. Things move and spread.*” This idea of “spreading the word,” either through the experience itself or the product that is made, also seems to resonate as an important aspect for the artist/artisans, giving them a sense of pride, validity, and immortality.

Making things in the “traditional way” implies learning traditional techniques. Even though it is considered in a ‘lighter’ way, in a relaxed environment, learning how to do things “properly” and in “the right way” is an important aspect, often referred to by the artists/artisans. At the same time, having a space that allows things “just to happen” is also considered an important aspect for generating a “happy experience.”

² The online questionnaire (with some open-ended questions), in Portuguese, English and French, was developed to try to overcome difficulties in obtaining data due to COVID-19 closures, to develop an initial general characterization/profile, and to identify possible people to interview. It was promoted via the Loulé Criativo newsletter, Facebook page and mailing list. However, only two valid responses were received and included in the qualitative data analysis.

³ Due to pandemic restrictions, all activities were stopped and locales closed until mid-May 2021, which diminished access to live activities. Due to flight restrictions, few foreign tourists were in the region, so access to tourists/visitors (Portuguese or foreign) was not possible.

Related to this is the importance of *making with one's own hands*, connecting with the sensorial nature of the materials involved, stepping into another's shoes, and feeling and experiencing first-hand the joy, the "pain in the fingers," and what it feels like to make an object in traditional ways (cf. Dissanayake, 1995; Gauntlett, 2018). The emotional connection this facilitates, the "imprint in the memory," and "being therapeutic and relaxing" are all important aspects.

The *therapeutic* element is mentioned not only in relation to being active and "doing something," in the case of the older artisans, for instance, but also "escaping from everyday life and routine" ("*it is essential for my well-being, for my balance*") and "slowing down." In some cases, this also relates to the opportunity to freely work in an art that they are not allowed to do in their home country. At the same time, in some cases the traditional crafts featured in creative tourism activities were, in the past, socially diminished and associated with an origin of shame as they were a sign of poverty. The creative tourism experiences assist in changing these perspectives, contributing to a personal healing process, recovering identity and gaining pride – changing artisan-participants' view of a difficult past: "*she did it behind everyone's back, it was a shame, and now she's starting to change that.*"

Aside from a traditional focus for these activities, the importance of these culture-based activities as a personal space to be creative and innovate, to express, and to challenge oneself is also noticeable. This opportunity to create and to be inspired by traditional materials and practices triggers feelings of fulfilment, happiness, pride, and empowerment from both artists/artisans and visitors.

This flexibility in using traditional practices but allowing participants to move a little "outside of the box" is also a good mixture to "attract younger participants." From the artists/artisans perspective, the relations that have been developed between younger artists/artisans in residence at Loulé Design Lab with older artisans at the "Rede de Oficinas" (a dimension of Loulé Criativo) creates a beneficial partnership. Putting together practitioners of different ages and different ways of doing seems to contribute to a better acknowledgement of each other's value and provide opportunities to "*learn from each other's experiences and practices.*" For older artisans, these relationships contribute to their empowerment and recognition, while younger artists/artisans highlight the learning dimension and the access to "valuable knowledge" and a network of contacts that can differentiate their work.

At the **collective** level, both the participating artists/artisans (younger and older) and visitors (locals and foreigners) understand that these culture-based creative tourism experiences have an important impact on preserving traditions and reinforcing collective identity. In recent decades, with the growth of tourism in the region, some practitioners preferred to go to work in the hotels, aiming for better lives, earning more money than in the crafts, and these skills and traditions started to be lost. The creative tourism experiences and workshops are thus considered to contribute to the revitalization of (almost) lost know-how. These practices and memories – "*the soul of the Algarve*" – are viewed as what differentiates a group, a city, a region as well as what enables them to attract visitors and to increase local attention to one's arts and crafts.

By promoting local traditional practices, but with space for contemporary approaches, the Loulé Criativo project and all its experiences are seen by all the participants as highly important for local **territorial development**, conceived in multiple ways: helping to overcome tourism seasonality; giving renewed vitality and "*more dynamics to the city*"; attracting more visitors; contributing to decreasing local unemployment by promoting specialized workshops for possible professional work in arts and crafts, and giving space to younger artists/artisans to do and show their work and create partnerships; and promoting responsible and sustainable practices, using natural materials and handmade products (e.g., palm, clay, wool, vegetal ink, etc.).

2.2. Community-engaged artistic project: “De Portas Abertas,” O Teatrão

2.2.1. Setting, actors, configurations

O Teatrão. Founded in 1994, O Teatrão is a professional theater company, supported by the Ministry of Culture, creating original theatre performances. The company works with school communities in the district and the city of Coimbra, and seeks to advance the recognition of art as an essential practice. Since 2008, the organization has initiated several artistic projects based on explorations of the common territory. Artistic performances crossed popular and erudite theatrical forms and responded to the search for common places of belonging and action.

Project/case description. Launched in 2020, “De Portas Abertas” is a community arts intervention project, coordinated by O Teatrão, in Vale da Arregaça, Coimbra, Portugal. The project is designing and implementing collaborative, multidisciplinary performances with the community (i.e., residents, local associations, and local authorities). It began in 2019 with a public performance in September 2020, and 2021 marks phase 2 of the project. The project links social and artistic dimensions, reflecting on the locale’s past and present and instigating thinking about its future.

The locale. Vale da Arregaça is an urban area of Coimbra that includes a social housing neighbourhood and other residences, an abandoned green valley and a ruined industrial facility. It is a place marked by traces of urban and social transformations resulting from the city's growth processes over time. It is demarcated by emblematic spaces, such as the football field of União de Coimbra and the Coimbra porcelain company, founded in 1922 and deactivated in 2005, and crossed by a railway, abandoned in recent years. Since the deactivation of the porcelain company and the railway line, this former working area has been left abandoned as an urban enclave of post-industrial degradation.

Main actors, configurations. “De Portas Abertas” includes a strong collective mobilization of different types of locally relevant partners that contributed to the project in various ways – collaborating in the cultural mapping; enabling access to vacant houses in the neighbourhood; mediating access and facilitating relationships with local residents and other actors; giving interviews; supporting the public performance; providing spaces for activities; and participating at the public performance:

- *Local public authorities* – Coimbra City Council (Culture and Social Housing Departments)
- *Local associations* – Neighbourhood Association of Fonte do Castanheiro, Arregaça Sport Club, Salatina Artistic and Cultural Association, and football club União 1919
- *A public secondary school*, Quinta das Flores – Sociology students
- *The local Catholic Church*
- *A Union* (of Workers in the Ceramics, Cement, Construction, Wood, Marble and Similar Industries)
- *A civic movement*, Movimento pelo Ramal da Lousã, that fights for the recovery of the suburban railway line that crosses Vale da Arregaça
- *The public university* – University of Coimbra (Faculty of Economics and Centre for Social Studies)

Fieldwork. Data collection involved document and data compilation and analysis (for contextualization); an online questionnaire, and 15 semi-structured interviews conducted with different types of participants, including: local residents, former workers of the factory, representatives of the institutional partners, theatre students who participated in the performance, and the dramaturgist.

2.2.2. Main values identified

The main values identified were organized in three main clusters: individual, collective, and territory, based on their provenience and on the type of impact they have – internally for the individual himself, in relation with others, and on the territory.

INDIVIDUAL/INTERNAL

Personal well-being through participation and connection. Individual residents of Vale da Arregaça who participated in the project remark that their direct involvement brings “well-being and happiness” to Vale da Arregaça and to themselves. They feel directly connected to the artistic process through the creation of individual and collective spaces for sharing with others their life stories and local facts. This type of involvement promotes a feeling of togetherness. Interviewees highlighted the positive effect that the project’s cultural activities offer to older people who commonly live in solitude, encouraging them to socially interact and to participate as a break from routine and the isolation of everyday life.

Learning, in many forms. “De Portas Abertas” offers opportunities for many forms of learning. It brings together different perspectives on the locale and encourages a continuous process of learning with and from others, stimulating openness to other perspectives. Two main areas of learning were highlighted:

- *In the community* – through the project, participants learn about the local history and other neighbourhoods. Being involved in sharing stories, listening to others, watching or actively participating in the final performance promotes learning and collective reflections on local history and on its cultural, economic, and social importance for the city.
- *During the process of artistic creation* – the artistic team’s the learning through building the arts intervention project – improving knowledge about the locale (through interviews, site visits, documental analysis, and informal conversations with residents and partners) feeds the process of artistic creation, in particular the script-writing for the final presentation, “Onde fica a Arregaça?”. Artistic learning also happens when arts professionals and students from O Teatrão’s arts education programme perform together, enabling joint learning of artistic practices. Local residents and other project partners also took on various roles, stimulating their greater understanding of creative processes.

Reviving memories and assisting in healing. The process of participating was closely connected to individual healing processes. Sharing one’s life stories with the artists engendered a beneficial healing process relating to the (still-painful) factory closing in 2005 and the resultant transformations of workers’ lives. Interviews with porcelain factory workers revealed a strong emotional attachment to the factory’s history, directly connected with individual life stories in the “porcelain neighbourhood.” With the performance being based on references to local historical facts, participants’ memories were revived, strengthening their sense of belonging to the neighbourhood, and younger generations were inspired.

COLLECTIVE

“De Portas Abertas” reveals a set of values that tie different collectives associated through the project. Residents and the representatives of the local associations value the way the project helped nurture social relations and connections inside the community, the local associations, and their different generations, giving voice to their own lives, history, and traditions. Their voices, incorporated in the artistic creation and public performance, were given recognition, reinforcing their pride as local associations. O Teatrão valued this involvement as a way to build a relationship with this community. The members of the arts education program of O Teatrão highlighted the way participating in the performance built a sense of belonging to a group and reinforced their connection with theatre.

Nurturing social relations and connections. The artistic appropriation of the history of local associations stimulated the emotional attachment of their associates as well as their connection with that same history, contributing to sustaining this knowledge into the future. The play-development process promoted sharing information through life stories. Rehabilitating several traditional activities conveyed knowledge for future generations and promoted spaces for intergenerational exchanges. Both processes stimulated “neighbourhood spirit,” nurturing social relations.

Giving voice. Directly incorporating the words of interviewed residents and former factory workers in the dramaturgic text gave public voice to their stories and enabled a close identification and attachment

between the community and the performance. Media attention accompanied the project, with outside interest also propelled by postcards sent outside the neighbourhood. Residents felt they were invisible and through the participation process they felt recognized and heard.

Recognition, pride and validation. The activities developed – creating a dramaturgic text from stories and information collected through interviews, the public performance, self-portraits used to make Christmas cards, photos shared among neighbours of Arregaça, and organizing activities based on local traditions – brought recognition and an internal valorization to the resident community and to local associations.

Cultural organization–community relations. O Teatrão promoted involvement through direct, personalized, informal, ongoing relations with residents and their attendance in rehearsals, motivating people to participate and instigating curiosity for the public performance and cultural activities more generally. Activities developed after the performance – *Janeiras singing* and *Christmas postcards* – brought continuity and nurtured ongoing relations between the community and O Teatrão. Project involvement promoted familiarity with cultural activities among infrequent audiences for arts performances and cultural practices, through their direct involvement as protagonists of their life stories and not only as spectators. Overall, the project generated new relationships between a theatre company and community residents.

Subgroup identity-building. The participation of members of O Teatrão’s arts education programme in the production of the performance built a sense of belonging to a group with a shared goal, reinforcing their collective identity as art students and sustaining their relation to O Teatrão.

TERRITORY

Strengthening territorial assets/identity. There is a direct connection between “De Portas Abertas” and the urban territory where it is integrated. Urban growth, real estate construction, and degradation of more traditional urban areas directly influenced the Vale da Arregaça history and local civic associations. Participants revealed that through the development and presentation of the performance, the artistic team picked up on local themes and presented it in the União de Coimbra football field. One of the values associated with organizational participation in the project (as partner) is directly related to its contributions to advancing local associations such as sports associations (União de Coimbra and Arregaça Sports Group), reinforcing their connection with the city of Coimbra and to the youngest generation of future associates. The civic movement related to Ramal da Lousã and the Residents’ Association also valued project participation as a strategy for promoting their social causes.

External recognition/interest. The artistic process strengthens the link between the resident community and its urban area, and possibly influences connections to adjacent urban neighbourhoods. The project’s activities attracted residents of other neighbourhoods, who became visitors to Vale da Arregaça, curious about local activities. Within the broader city, the project put an abandoned urban area in the spotlight as an interesting locale, disseminating knowledge about the Valley and drawing media attention to the community. Through the project, residents’ voices were amplified and heard, and the long-anticipated urban rehabilitation of the social housing complex Fonte do Castanheiro, discussed within “De Portas Abertas,” was propelled and approved by the municipality in May 2021.

2.3. Informal to semi-institutionalized circus events in Montpellier

2.3.1. Setting, actors, configurations

Setting. This case study focused on an amateur collective of circus practices in Montpellier, which has gone from the organization of informal and spontaneous events to bigger institutionalized events. What drives a group of friends who love contemporary circus to organize themselves a circus festival – *Arlette ton cirque!*⁴?

A group of friends who practised circus as amateurs in a circus school, and trained together in their garden, decided to organize small events with other friends, including circus professionals: in 2018, the first “garden cabaret” took place. The event was friendly and required little organization. Amateur, semi-professional and professional circus friends were invited to present their circus act in front of other friends, while other types of arts (music, dance...) were invited to complete the programme. The event worked so well that a second and third edition were held. But as the events progressed (at the last edition, a few hundred persons were hosted), organizers needed to select the public invited to participate. They then had the idea to ask for permission to organize a festival in a public park in Montpellier. The group created an association - *Les Lanceurs d'Arlette* – with other circus friends. The festival was to start with an open stage and to continue with the creation of a company of circus artists who had just graduated from circus school. The venue and programme were set when the COVID-19 pandemic forced them to postpone their event twice.

Main actors, configurations. The organizers had to take steps with the Metropolis of Montpellier and the Prefecture⁵ to obtain an agreement to install the festival in a public garden in Montpellier and, at the time of the COVID-19 crisis, to put in place the sanitary measures requested by the Prefecture, measures which in the end did not enable them to maintain the festival. *Les Lanceurs d'Arlette* have also established a partnership with Mama Sound, an association which organizes concerts and festivals, created a cultural agenda in the city and started in private gardens too. In 2019, their events were so successful that they organized a two-day festival that welcomed 8,000 people. *Les Lanceurs d'Arlette* attended their events and then worked with Mama Sound to learn from their expertise and build their own event.

Fieldwork. Six semi-structured interviews were conducted, five with members of the association formed to organize the circus festival and one with a circus artist belonging to another network in Montpellier, who had also experienced “garden cabarets” in other shared accommodation. Interviewees were between 27 and 33 years old. Interviews with the leaders of the association in a radio show were also reviewed.

2.3.2. Key values associated

INDIVIDUAL/INTERNAL

Individual artistic reception. Generally speaking, the circus practitioners interviewed, when they are in the spectator’s position, seek to be emotionally touched by a show, whether it is circus, dance or theatre. They appreciate the sensuality of the gestures and the technicality as they might in a dance performance. The circus is also a way, like other art forms, to create a show, to invent something. What distinguishes the circus from other live cultural events seems to be the circus’ capacity for wonder (*émerveillement*). The circus allows us to rediscover a “childlike wonder.” It can “speak to the senses more than to the head” and thus can provoke “pure joy.” The circus takes you to another world and makes you dream.

Disconnection, escape, have fun. What comes up in all the interviews is the circus (and culture in general) as a way to escape from everyday life, to have fun, to enjoy and to motivate oneself. The informal nature of the circus events brings a lightness, a naivety that opposes both the values of competition (found in sport,

⁴ The festival’s name contains a play on words between “Arlette,” which is a reference to the French circus Arlette Gruss, and “Arrête” (Stop), since *Arrête ton cirque* can be translated as “Stop your nonsense!” The reference to the Arlette Gruss circus, which is a traditional circus, allows the members of the association to acknowledge their affiliation to a circus that may have made them dream as children, while at the same time distinguishing themselves from it, since the circus proposed by *Les Lanceurs d'Arlette* is a contemporary one.

⁵ Local representative of the State.

for example) and of career and money (found in the institutionalized and subsidized circus).

Risk-taking and well-being. Like any artist who takes the stage, the feeling of putting oneself in social danger is present – but this self-endangerment is desired by the interviewees. One of the particularities of certain circus disciplines is undoubtedly the double dose of adrenaline felt by circus performers in comparison to other types of performances, whether sporting or artistic. The circus, particularly the aerial and acrobatic one, is at the crossroads of a sport and a live art. Thus, the adrenaline felt and sought by professional and amateur artists has both a *social* dimension (presenting oneself in front of an audience, risking ridicule) and a *physical* dimension (putting oneself in physical danger). At the end of an act, artists feel a sense of euphoria and accomplishment. They are rewarded for their efforts. They feel alive.

Experimentation, creation, learning. The open stage of both the garden cabarets and the *Arlette ton cirque!* festival offers a space for experimentation that is highly desired by circus artists. The private framework of the garden cabarets, and the fact that the festival and the open stage are free, offer the right environment for budding circus artists not to be afraid of launching themselves into a creation. Experimentation and creation, whatever their aesthetic quality and whether or not they are fully achieved, have their place in this context. In the same way, budding organizers with no similar previous experience appreciate that they are gaining skills through organizing the festival.

COLLECTIVE/SOCIAL

Community, social link, sharing. At the heart of the values of the circus practitioners we met is the idea of friendship, social integration and community. The interviewees who entered the circus through sport expressed the joy of simply doing things together. In contrast, an interviewee who has a literary profile and a high level of cultural capital (long experience in theatre and festivals, studies in modern literature and the performing arts, bookseller, etc.) expressed a discourse on the collective value that is original. The importance of the collective appears on a larger level than the group of friends, when she goes to a show and feels a sense of communion with the audience. Here we can clearly see the difference in the way values are expressed according to previous practices and professional training, which relates to other social dimensions.

Pooling of know-how, learning. More marginally, the use of knowledge for the needs of the collective project and exchange of know-how between friends appears to be of value for the circus practitioners.

Integration into a group and into a territory. Organizing circus events is an opportunity to integrate both socially and in a territory. The woman and the man behind the garden cabarets were newcomers in Montpellier. Around the circus, they very quickly formed a group of friends. The organization of *Arlette ton cirque!* allowed also one of the circus practitioners interviewed, who had just arrived in Montpellier, to become more attached to the place, to the city. It gave her the feeling of having the opportunity to invest more in it. It enabled her to have a different relationship with the city.

Freedom, autonomy. Values of freedom and autonomy were associated with the practice of the circus as an artist, spectator or organiser at informal events. However, they were less associated with the organization of the festival, particularly in the relationship with public institutions, which put the organisers in front of institutional constraints and made them lose freedom (imposition of rules and limits of capacity, provision of a mature professional performance ...).

POLITICIZATION

Accessibility, democratization. The heart of the festival's organization is the social value of democratizing access to the circus, both for spectators and for artists of all kinds:

- **Democratization of access to circus for all audiences.** During the discussions about the choice of venue for the festival, the question of making the circus free and accessible to all segments of the population regularly came up. The organizers of *Arlette ton cirque!* felt that there was a lack of free circus events in the street of Montpellier. The festival is a way to make the circus world accessible

to as many people as possible, with the idea – promoted by the most professional circus artist of the group – that “if people don’t come to the circus, we’ll come to the people.”

- *Democratization of access to the stage.* The democratization of access to the circus is not only for spectators, but also for amateur, semi-professional and professional artists. The open stage that introduces the festival plays this role. It keeps the essence of the garden cabarets: the possibility to perform acts in the process and still in the experimental stage. It encourages the entry of young companies, experimentation and creation, without pressure on the final technical and artistic result.

In both cases, the event aims to integrate people without discriminating. It thus stands in opposition to cultural elitism and to the circus professionals’ “*entre-soi*.” The free nature of the event and the fact that the stage is open to experimental creations mean that aesthetic quality is not the focus of the event.

Giving, sharing, dreaming, healing, wonder. The idea of *Arlette ton cirque!* is to create a space for exchange and pleasure, where people can meet. With the restrictions linked to COVID-19, culture was perceived by the circus practitioners as “an escape” and “a space of freedom” which can “make people dream” and help them to hold on psychologically. Above all, the organizers want to share the capacity for “wonder” that they felt in front of circus shows; just like children, adults should not deprive themselves of dreaming.

Social issues tackled, critical view of society, resistance. The world of contemporary circus practitioners is organized around a critical vision of society. The flaws of society are reflected in their discussions and in the messages they wish to convey through their creations. They seek to disturb, to see or to make people see things differently, to “provoke through emotion to lead to reflection.” This is a fundamental difference from the traditional circus, where the acts follow one another and have nothing to do with each other. Contemporary circus shows generally unfold around a narrative, a subject that is tackled and that can have a critical dimension. In a context of government restrictions in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, this resulted in resistance to authority and the organization of clandestine events in the field of circus as well as for music.

2.4. Clandestine concerts during the COVID-19 pandemic

2.4.1. Setting, actors, configurations

In France, after a first strict confinement (spring 2020), new phases of measures restricting freedoms were imposed (from October 2020 to June 2021), which had repercussions on the broadcasting of concerts: cultural venues were closed, a 7pm curfew and a ban on gatherings of more than 6 people were imposed. In this context, from January 2021 onwards, clandestine concerts were organized by various informal groups: on one hand, concerts in private houses and flats; on the other hand, concerts or “mini festivals” in natural areas. These concert programmes were sometimes accompanied by little performances (circus, theatre, dance), small musical conferences, and DJ sets in the second half of the evening. The types of concerts programmed covered different aesthetics: Jazz, Rhythm’n Blues, Samba, Gnawa, Bossa Nova, Electronics, Foro, Cuban music, Antillean music, Hip-Hop... While some concerts were held with a small, seated audience, most had a festive dimension, with a dancefloor, and alcohol or drug consumption.

The organizers of these concerts are, for the most part, artists, workers or volunteers in the associative and cultural sector, between 20 and 40 years old. Faced with a “need” to meet and receive or broadcast live music, they took the risk to organize illegal events, open to small audiences in order to remain as discreet as possible. For security reasons, the venue of the concerts was given at the last moment to participants who had registered. These events were attended by between 15 and 100 people per evening. Some included a fee to pay the artists; others were free or by donation. The sociology of the spectators is difficult to establish exactly; they were mostly between 20 and 40 years old, urban, with a high level of cultural capital (not always inherited through the family) and dense cultural practices, but varying levels of education. The majority belong to the working or middle class, and have left-wing political ideals.

Fieldwork. Field research included observations at 3 clandestine concerts in private flats or houses, and 2 clandestine concerts in natural areas; 10 interviews were conducted, mainly with organizers, but also with musicians and spectators, sometimes people with two or three of these roles at the same time. The illegal dimension of the events made the survey more difficult, with some organizers refusing to testify, or doing so only under strong guarantees of anonymity.

2.4.2. Main values identified

INDIVIDUAL/INTERNAL

Vibrancy, sensation, closeness, emotion, energy. Individually, the spectators mentioned numerous values specific to the attendance of concerts *in presence*. Most are associated with proximity, of sharing the same space: the physical vibration of the instruments; the fact of being able to see the musicians in action in a precise, close and modular way, and thus to have the sensation of better grasping their intentions, the energetic and emotional power of their music, their looks and their interactions with each other. It is also the value of a unique, singular, ephemeral space-time that gives intensity to the experience. Proximity is notably evoked as “reception without intermediary,” where emotional effects are more direct, less altered, more powerful; and the interaction between spectators and musicians also produces unprecedented effects. Several people felt emotions of an intensity they had not experienced before, attributed to reconnecting with a forgotten sensation, and to the effect of ‘weaning’ from concerts due to the COVID-19 situation.

Discovery, openness, imagination, stimulation, intellectual nourishment, political shift. The programme of concerts, which the audience does not know in advance, invites one to discover in a privileged way aesthetics that one did not know, that one would not have discovered alone, or to which one would not necessarily have paid much attention without the presence of musicians in front of oneself. The content of artistic pieces is also mentioned as a mean to transform social representations: an invitation to intellectual, political or sensitive shift; to confront new ideas and different ways to think; to stimulate creativity and to broaden the imagination – as Jacques Rancière (2000) would say, the contribution of artistic practices to the “delimitation of spaces and times, of the visible and the invisible, of speech and noise, that simultaneously determines the place and the stakes of politics as a form of experience” (p. 13).

Individual empowerment. For organizers, realizing that they have the capacity to create events on their own, without financial or institutional support, can reinforce their motivations and confidence, for the benefit of other personal or collective projects. For some, who were no longer employed or active because of COVID-19 restrictions – particularly those in the cultural field – contributing to this concrete organization was a “lifesaver”: doing concrete things again, being proud of producing “things that actually happen”.

COLLECTIVE/SOCIAL

Meeting, relationship, community, social links. In a period of imposed “withdrawal” into the private sphere, clandestine concerts have been able to respond to the need to get out of the house, to break with solitude, to spend quality time with friends and to meet new people. For single people, it is also a new meeting place in a period of restricted opportunities in the matrimonial market. The organizers of underground concerts, aware of this need to meet people outside existing circles of acquaintance, have ensured that the audience is renewed by systematically favouring new people in the registrations. It is also an opportunity to “network,” to join friendly groups, to feel part of a “community” (all the more for those involved in the organization), responding to a need for reassurance through social support in a period of relative disconnection. From this sociability perspective, the concert is sometimes seen as a mere “pretext” for gathering or meeting people, whose socializing function could be provided by a non-artistic event – but this is not the majority view (see below).

Party, collective “letting go”, relational intensity, physical proximity. The closure of cultural and festive spaces, and the prohibition and repression of private gatherings, has led to the disappearance of most parties. This has led to the need for moments of collective “letting go” in which human relationships and interactions take on a different form from those of everyday life – more diverse, more intense, more

uninhibited. This is particularly the case on the dancefloor, a space-time in which relationships are fluid and direct, and which is the occasion for disinhibition of movements and expressions, sharing through smiles and laughter, games of questions and answers through dance, implicit or explicit seduction, and relative suspension of self-control – which can sometimes take on more importance than the artistic content. The particular context of the pandemic, with its limitations on social interactions, the wearing of masks and prohibitions gave a particular flavour to clandestine concerts as places in which these norms of vigilance are suspended, and which therefore allow for more direct, even physical, relations with others.

Sharing emotional energy, interaction rites, ceremony, communion. The opposite of the solitary online art reception, several values specific to collective reception in presence are evoked: common vibration, energy sharing, maximization of intensity, shifting of the gaze, diffusion of specific attentions, sensation of unity, effervescence, communion.... To qualify this sharing of collective energy, Collins (2005) describes how “interaction ritual chains” produce a particular “emotional energy” when several people present in the same place affect each other with their bodily presence, and concentrate their attention on a common object or activity. As a result, they transmit their attention to each other, which can lead to similar – or at least interdependent – sensations or emotions. Thus the group seems to ‘propose’, through the micro-interactions that unfold in a shared space-time, particular modalities of reception, sometimes new, spontaneous, changing in real time, and highly contingent (attention to a solo, way of dancing, levels of ‘letting go’, collective interaction with the artists...), which enhances the enjoyment of the participants, and which also influences the performance of the musicians through the interaction with the audience.

The artistic content of the concerts can be perceived as a social ritual that supports interactions; in addition to the festive dimension, there is the meeting around an artistic piece, a subject or an emotion produced by the performance. Some present the concert as a “ceremony” in which collective attention to an artistic expression transforms individuals and their interactions, and influences the atmosphere, discussions and collective emotions.

From the artists' point of view: interaction, feedback, stimulation, sense of creation. Musicians express the return of concerts as a need for expression, and for confrontation with an audience – to be able to test their creations, to get feedback on their work. It is also a potential gain of recognition and confidence that can motivate them to create again – or even, a stimulation to perfect their performances. Some of them, for whom the stage is at the heart of their practice, even consider that their creations only make sense in contact with an audience; thus, they find back the *raison d'être* of their musical practice and creativity.

Giving and counter-giving, generosity, empathy, gratitude, recognition. Organizers take pleasure in offering pleasure, but also in seeing and experiencing the pleasure of the spectators, affirming a strong empathy towards them. They believe that their donations, generosity, efforts and risk-taking provide them with symbolic benefits and rewards, such as recognition, gratitude and satisfaction of having contributed to collective happiness; they are aware that this is an informal exchange of generosity on a “give-and-take” basis. Feedback and thanks from the spectators also gives them motivation and courage to organize new events, and more widely, collective works.

Benevolence, vigilance, prevention of violence and sexism. Organizers are particularly vigilant that events are “safe spaces”: e.g., prevention of violent behaviour, sexism and sexual harassment; care for people on a “bad trip”... In this respect, they developed signage and intervention protocols in case of aggression, and people with violent or problematic behaviour have been evacuated from the evenings and blacklisted for future events.

POLITICIZATION

Health values vs. freedom and social needs, “living with the risk”. Organizers of underground concerts do not deny the health risks of their events, but develop different arguments to justify these risks. Some contest the measures taken in the name of the protection of biological life to the detriment of social life, in the image of the arguments developed by Agamben (2020). Others consider that the incoherence of the restrictive measures is unjust, contrasting the possibility of meeting in public transport or in shops with the impossibility of meeting for cultural events, or denouncing the responsibility of politicians for the spread of the virus. Most of them consider that it is necessary to “live with the risk” and that their social and cultural needs have more value than this risk-taking in the face of the virus: it is a question of individual freedom, of the right to take risks for oneself.

Resistance, disobedience, self-organization, autonomy, empowerment, collective hope. From their diagnosis of a “vital need” to meet around artistic expressions, organizers attribute political values to the clandestine concerts. For them, it is a question of resistance through self-organization, and a collective affirmation of their autonomy: disobeying the law, responding to their needs by their own means when the state denies it. Being able to organize these concerts without institutional or financial support and in a clandestine way, in a context of surveillance and repression, gives the organizers a sense of power, confidence in themselves and in their abilities.

Organizers also hope to spread hope, strength and confidence by offering an example that is “opening up possibilities”: cultural and social life is not over, state and police control can be circumvented, it is possible to organize autonomously and make beautiful things, even in a very constrained context. By organizing these concerts, they want to prove “by doing” that collective, autonomous organization and generosity are useful and effective values.

2.5. Rave parties and DJ parties

2.5.1. Setting, actors, configurations

Rave parties. A *rave party*, *rave*, or *free party* (*teuf* in French), is a gathering around underground electronic music, usually organized in the open air or in disused urban locations, illegally, for free or by donation. They date back to the late 1980s in the UK – due to the restriction of clubs closing at 2am, which led to the emergence of large illegal parties, and linked to the development of trance-oriented electronic music styles with increasingly fast tempos that were not played in clubs (Gelder, 2007). This type of event developed in other European countries at the beginning of the 1990s and gradually constituted an autonomous counter-culture associated with marginalization and social deviance, which reinforces their exclusion and stigmatization (Redhead, 1993). This partly explains the very strong repression faced by rave parties, particularly in France (Lafargue de Grangeneuve, 2010).

Rave parties are organized by collectives called “sound systems” (groups of organizers, DJs, visual artists, and technicians who have collectively invested in sound equipment) – some of whom have nomadic lifestyles in trucks. In a rave, powerful speakers are installed to play music at very high volume and ensure that basses are powerful enough to produce physical vibrations. The types of music played are all electronic, with a very high tempo (techno, hardcore, psytrance, tribe, drum and bass, jungle, breakbeat, industrial techno...) and sometimes slower tempo styles (dub, ambient, trip-hop). Raves are often associated with the use of drugs (alcohol, cannabis, LSD, ecstasy, MDMA, ketamine, and speed are the most common) and the establishment of a space of “total freedom,” without limits or controls, which often lasts several days in a row.

Little rave parties in the Languedoc hinterland. This field research focuses on small rave parties organized in natural areas in the Languedocian hinterland. These events usually gather 100 to 500 participants – no more than 200 during the period of COVID-19 restrictions. The location of the events is communicated at the last moment, in restricted networks of acquaintances, to prevent the police from intervening

beforehand. In the Montpellier area, about ten small sound systems are active. In normal times, there is at least one rave a week, but during the several months of confinement there have only been a few – organizers fearing repression, which has increased in France over the last 10 years, and even more so during the confinement, including criminal sanctions beyond fines and seizure of equipment. The sociology of the participants in these raves is not easy to establish. According to this research, they are between 15 and 40 years of age, with a majority of young people, often with low cultural capital, who tend to come from the working and middle classes (unemployed, workers or employees), but also students, and rarely executives. Although some of them have a “deviant” or nomadic lifestyle, they are in the minority.

Informal outside DJ parties. In the Montpellier area, small informal groups of DJs and friends are used to organizing parties in natural places, far from the city. These parties usually gather between 50 and 300 people, from small networks of acquaintances, without any public communication. On one hand, the idea is to offer free parties that can last until the morning, in an exceptional or charming natural setting (riverbanks, lakes, isolated plateaus); on the other hand, to offer a line-up of amateur, semi-professional or professional DJs, whose music is usually refused by club owners because of the need for profitability (non-commercial types of techno, house, afrobeat, afro house, world music, trap, hip hop, etc.). Because of their location in the middle of nature, the centrality of dance, and their informality and illegality, these parties look like raves, but the music played is very different (trance is not necessarily the objective) as is the sociology of participants, having usually more cultural capital, often being older (25-45 years), mostly urban, and better integrated professionally.

Fieldwork. Field research included observations in 2 DJ parties, 1 rave party, 2 sound-systems’ demonstrations against the repression of rave parties; and 10 interviews were conducted, with organizers, DJs and participants of these events. Most of the time, interviewees were able to express themselves from several positions at the same time (organizer, DJ, spectator). The interviewees are from 24 to 39 years old, with various social profiles (students; nomadic seasonal workers; urban executives; employees living in rural areas...).

2.5.2. Main values identified

INDIVIDUAL/INTERNAL

Trance, physical and mental pleasure, vibration, meditation, introspection, ritual. Through the practice of dance, and with the help of the physical vibrations generated by the bass, sometimes accompanied by the use of drugs, the participants seek to reach a state of trance. They describe a physiological and mental pleasure at the same time, sometimes close to meditation, allowing them to connect to their bodies, to “forget themselves,” and to live the present moment with great intensity. Some participants link this search for “trance” in rave parties to ancestral or pagan tribal rituals, to a “primitive need” which sometimes has a spiritual dimension.

Purge, outlet, disconnection, escape. These trance states are described as an outlet, an escape or a “purge” to evacuate torments linked to daily life (work, family, commitments), and to one's responsibilities, stress or tensions accumulated during the week. The rave party allows participants to “hold on” by suspending discipline and self-control, and forgetting their problems or anxieties – especially for those who feel bored or oppressed by their work.

Risk-taking, transgression, discovery, adventure. In the set of values expressed, we also find a particular pleasure linked to live illegal experiences in unknown or secret places, as ephemeral adventures where “everything can happen,” giving rise to emotions of “chosen insecurity” and high excitement. Taking risks is seen as a dimension of pleasure: whether it is linked to transgression and secrecy or in the way of “pushing one's limits”: dancing for a very long time, not sleeping for several days, taking multiple doses of different drugs...

COLLECTIVE/SOCIAL

Meeting, different relationships and interactions; non-control, non-judgement. The space-time of raves is

described as allowing for different encounters and relationships than elsewhere – easier contact, more direct interaction. Sharing an experience in which deviant behaviour is tolerated, as well as sharing a collective euphoria in the dance, produces particular socializations that are valued by the partiers. Unlike nightclubs or concert halls where behaviour is relatively controlled, in raves, the absence of authority and the collective disinhibition allows people to ‘let loose’ without judgement from others, to have ways of being and interacting that are not tolerated in the usual public social spaces. This can be in terms of dress, behaviour (eccentric dances, delirium, body games) and interactions, described as free from social control.

Common, belonging, community, collective energy. The awareness of having common practices and values, or simply the collective experience in a relatively hidden, marginal social space, cut off from society, produces strong emotional relationships and a feeling of belonging to a ‘community’. It is also linked to the development of a “counter-culture” of ravers, who are seen – and who see themselves – as a deviant, special group sharing lifestyles, clothes, values, practices, musical tastes, etc. During the rave experience, the presence of others influences individual emotions, accompanies them, reinforces them, increases them tenfold – as if the participants were producing a “collective energy” together, a sharing that produces greater intensity and joy in the individual experience.

Benevolence, mutual aid, care, responsibility, solidarity, trust, safety. Without any official rules or control, social relations in rave parties are supposed to be based on the responsibility and the solidarity of each individual. The values of mutual aid, care, benevolence (helping people on a “bad trip”; sharing food, drugs, water) and spontaneous contribution to the management of the event (conflict resolution, help with material problems, participation in cleaning up, etc.) are advocated. Collective responsibility and benevolence produce a feeling of “security” (“safe space”) which participants testify to.

Gift and counter-gift, gratitude, empathy, sharing, recognition. For organizers, the satisfaction of “giving pleasure” and the adherence to a process of “gift/counter-gift” are unanimously expressed. Many of them are aware of the emotional and social “return on investment” generated by their organizational efforts and risk-taking. The gratitude expressed through smiles, thanks, congratulations, admiration, respect, and affection is for them one of the driving forces behind their action, and often the main source of their pleasure. The perceived quality of the rave and of the mixes played are also a source of recognition and pride, of self-confidence building, and a way of finding one’s place in the group, in the community.

Participation, appropriation, collective empowerment. Participants explain that, unlike their “consumer” posture in a festival or concert, in a rave party the self-management of the event puts them in a position of “actor,” which gives them a feeling of belonging, ownership, and satisfaction linked to the realization of a collective work. Managing to organize “great things” without money, nor institutional support and professional skills gives the organizers confidence in themselves and in their abilities – a kind of collective empowerment.

POLITICIZATION

Autonomy, anti-authority, utopia, ecology, independence, non-profit, non-discrimination. A number of political values are explicitly advocated by organizers and participants: self-management, independence and autonomy; rejection of authority and control (social, police); ecology; benevolence and respect. Organizers hope that the practical implementation of these values in rave parties can be an example for society, and a proof that their political beliefs are not necessarily utopian, but already achievable, “here and now.” This is particularly relevant concerning ecological impacts (not leaving waste, taking care of the place, not damaging ecosystems), but also the valorization of self-management without money, allowing us to imagine a society emancipated from the state and from capitalism. The fact that rave parties are autonomous and free spaces is valued as evidence of a certain ‘purity’ with regard to market relations that govern nightclub parties, and the political implications of institutional or professional partnerships. Organizers claim a culture free from economic and political constraints, and open to all without discrimination.

Aesthetic diversity, programming freedom: “music shouldn’t be validated only by the number.” In the

particular context of DJ parties, criticism is expressed of the effects of profitability logic, which exclude certain music from nightclubs. In this context, autonomy is a necessity to allow the expression of musical aesthetics that do not find their place in the market – nor in cultural policies. Rave party DJs do not even ask themselves this question, refusing on principle to play in profitable or institutional spaces, and not seeking external legitimization.

Image 1. Oppositions of values as perceived by rave parties organizers and participants

Autonomous musical events (rave parties, DJ parties, underground and illegal concerts...)	Commercial musical events (profit-making festivals and concert halls, nightclubs...)	Institutional musical events (public or subsidized festivals and concert halls)
Freedom, suspension of social norms, self-regulation, no-limit	Discipline, control, surveillance, limits	
Free, non-discriminatory	Paying, discriminatory	
Selflessness, generosity, volunteering	Commercial interest, professional interest	Professional interest
Do it yourself, empowerment	Professionalization	
Responsible actor	Disempowered consumer	
Independence, freedom of programming, diversity	Profitability, market-oriented programming	Political or institutional influence

3. COMPARISONS AND VALUATION DYNAMICS

3.1. Articulations of values: Linking personal, social and political levels

Values, as fundamental principles of appreciation, judgment, and measure, can be perceived or expressed as *internal/personal* (for oneself), *external/social* (by/for the group involved), or *contextual/political* (for the society, at a larger scale). Using these frames to organize the values emerging from the five cases enables the articulation of the cases without losing their specificity (Image 2). However, a more abstract perspective is needed to identify clusters of values within each ‘level’, and to suggest valuation processes that are transversal to the three main frames, linking personal, social, and broader contexts (Image 3).

The three frames of *internal/personal*, *external/social*, and *contextual/political* are often dynamically articulated and interconnected, enabling “interstitial” spaces that may reframe “value” both conceptually and in practice.

Social and political values influence personal values, and vice versa. Individuals participating in live cultural experiences spoke of both their personalized, subjective, and ‘felt’ connections with their cultural participation as well as perceived impacts on the collective, attributing collective values to their experiences. From the collective perspective, the experience of individuals is often difficult to dissociate from group effects. The pleasure and individual emotions felt in the artistic reception, for example, are affected by the group’s interactions and collective energy, which are themselves the product of individual behaviours. In the social/external dimension, values relate to dynamics in the group’s interaction as well as beneficial outcomes for the collective. Both aspects are often linked to wider political values. Through individual and collective experience, participants can put political principles into practice, and sometimes think of this practice as an example for wider society.

Image 2. Values associated with each case study, by level

Cases	Internal/Personal	External/Social	Contextual/Political
Raves and DJ parties	Trance, meditation, introspection, physical well-being, mental well-being, pleasure, catharsis, purging, outlet, escape from routine, escape from responsibilities, travel, disinhibition, freedom, risk, adventure, pride, individual empowerment	Meeting, 'other' (different) relationships, collective experience (influence of the collective), community, love, sharing, benevolence, mutual aid, attention, care, trust, giving, empathy, gratitude, recognition	Freedom, suspension/reinvention of social norms, refusal of control and authority, transgression, collective responsibility, benevolence, collective safety ecological responsibility, collective empowerment, non-profit 'purity', generosity, autonomy, auto-organization, aesthetic diversity
Clandestine concerts	Fun, pleasure, letting go, vibration, emotion, energy, travel, imagination, individual empowerment (organizers), individual recognition (artists), escape from pandemic anxieties	Meeting, relationship, sharing, collective energy (cf. ritual interaction chains), giving, empathy, gratitude, recognition, collective hope	Freedom, self-determination of values (cf. social life > health risk), disobedience, resistance, autonomy, collective empowerment, auto-organization, collective safety (e.g. with regard to sexism), opening up of possibilities and imaginations, transformation of representations
Circus events	Pleasure, fun, routine breakdown, openness to new ideas, creativity, experimentation, risk taking, learning, being emotionally touched, wonder	Friendship, integration into a group and into a city, solidarity, lightness, collective relinquishment, freedom, autonomy, learning, sharing	Gift, integration (to the city), access/diversity of the audiences and artists, sharing, wonderment, healing, criticism, resistance
Community-engaged arts	Healing (through sharing of life stories), break from routine, fun, leisure, individual and artistic learning process, affectivity and emotional attachment, innovative perspectives, openness to new ideas, memory, well-being, happiness, individual valorization	Direct involvement and active collaboration, knowledge production, identity, sense of belonging to a group, differentiation, pride, recognition, community valorization, informal cultural training, audience development, institutional self-learning, nurturing and ongoing community relations, intergenerational connections, generational continuity	Connection to outdoor urban space, sense of belonging, giving voice, civic mobilization, political intervention through individual consciousness, collective empowerment
Culture-based creative tourism	Understand the process of making, learning, curiosity, aesthetics, technique, creativity, sensorial connection to materials, emotional connection, creating memories that last/ imprint in memory, revitalizing/recovering memories and connection to the past, pride, recognition, empowerment, healing, well-being, being active, joy/pleasure, slowing down, relaxing, distraction/escape from everyday life, self-development, challenge oneself	Social interaction, relationships, conviviality, creating partnerships, passing on knowledge, influencing others, preserving traditions, revitalize (almost) lost know-how, reinforce collective identity, integration, benevolence/kindness, gratitude	Territorial development - economic and socio-cultural, strengthen territorial identity, help overcome seasonality of tourism economy, city vitality, attract more visitors, contribute to a decrease of local unemployment, provide space to younger artists/artisans to work/develop/network show, promote responsible and sustainable practices using natural materials and handmade products

Image 3. Commonalities and thematic threads across cases

Internal/Personal	External/Social	Contextual/Political
Pleasure, fun, escape, break	Collective experience, collective memory, sociability, collaboration, belonging	Collective empowerment, agency, autonomy, mobilization, resistance
Individual empowerment, self-confidence	Doing things or making things together, collective hope	
New ideas/perspectives, learning, introspection, individual consciousness and awareness of local and societal issues Risk-taking, challenging oneself	Continuity - knowledge, know-how, stories, histories; preservation of traditions; pass-on to younger generations	<i>Space of ...</i> freedom, integration, vitality, wonderment, showcase Giving voice, imagination, criticism transformation of social representations
Giving, sharing, caring, empathy	Sharing, care, giving, exchange Gift/counter-gift, collective generosity, security	Non-market society, peaceful and safe society, more sustainable community
Creative self-expression, self-identity	Invention and imagination (creating the new) Reinforce distinctiveness, collective identity, integration	Reinforce distinctiveness of place, transformation of representation (group, territory, society)
Recognition, empowerment, pride Healing Emotional connections	Recognition by the community, the outside	<i>Space in ...</i> integrate in the city, external recognition, enhancing attractiveness of specific locales/neighbourhoods

Examples of cross-cutting themes:

- **Emotions, imagination and social representations.** The content of artworks can trigger effects at a personal level (new emotions, ideas, ways of seeing the world), at a collective level (new interactions, discussions, collective emotions, collective desires...), and at a political level (global transformation of relations, social representations, political desires...). Furthermore, cultural processes of exchange, creative self-expression and creation/making together can uncover sensitive topics and may provide channels for addressing personal and collective situations, providing platforms for discussion, reflection and healing.
- **The gift/counter-gift.** The generosity deployed by the actors within a cultural activity engenders a milieu of collective gratitude; it is a chain of gifts/exchanges that goes beyond individual cases. The values are therefore perceived in their individual impact (feelings of pride, gratitude, recognition, love), in their collective impact (giving as an act that will spread chains of gifts and counter-gifts within the group, “spreading generosity”), and even wider to putting into practice the principles of an alternative social order.
- **Practical values and social/political change.** The “practice” of political values within cultural activities, such as generosity, selflessness, individual responsibility, benevolence, ecology and self-management, can contribute to the conviction and appropriation of values by individuals within the group and, at the same time, to the hope of a wider diffusion of these practical values in society (i.e., the practical implementation proves that it is possible to create relatively selfless, non-monetary, self-managed, ecologically responsible social spaces...).

- **Sharing knowledge and know-how.** Through sharing personal stories, experiences and skills, at the individual level participants are engaged in a relationship of teaching/being heard and learning. These experiences generate threads of knowledge and connection that can contribute to personal recognition and validation, collective knowledge, intergenerational and other cross-group connections, community continuity, and the revitalization and preservation of traditions and know-hows. From a wider perspective it can lead to a process of ‘giving a public voice’ to particularities that collectively inform the generation (or reinforcement) of shared imaginaries/identities, shared resistances/social critiques and, potentially, transformations of social representations.
- **Empowerment.** Participating in a collective work or organization can produce personal empowerment (self-confidence, self-esteem, courage, motivation to invest in other projects...), contribute to a sense of collective agency and empowerment (the group becomes aware of its collective strength, its capacity for autonomy) and, ultimately, link to a socio-political objective (increasing collective autonomy, experimentation that can be an example for other groups...).

3.2. Variations in valuation

From an analytical perspective, valuation and evaluation processes can be seen through different angles depending on the subjects, objects or contexts. The complexity of attributing value moves from intrinsic to extrinsic dimensions (Heinich, 2020), with multiple matrices of evaluation co-existing together in the same society but also in possible conflict (e.g., market vs. solidarity [civic] domains) (Lamont & Thévenot, 2000).

The process of valuation thus assumes multiple pieces and dynamics with permeable boundaries (public and private) that influence each other. While social characteristics, individual repertoires and plural dispositions (Lahire, 2011) affect the valuation process. This also happens with the commercialization effects that homogenize collective identities, institutional mechanisms (Lamont, 2012) and political norms. However, as a plural, multilayered and continuous negotiating process there is also the space for “models of social organization that support broader social recognition and pluralistic definitions of social worth” (Lamont, 2012, pp. 202).

Taking into consideration the case studies, in this section we briefly discuss differences observed in valuation processes according to types of participation, social trajectories and degrees of institutionalization, reflecting on the patterns in and by which activities are produced and valued.

3.2.1. Differences according to types of participation and social trajectories

Roles and positions. The specific role assumed by a participant and the responsibilities of that role shapes what types of value are attributed to the cultural activity. For example, in the community-engaged arts case a resident who shares his/her own life story to feed into the dramaturgy of a play will identify more with individual values than an association leader, who will be more focused on promoting the development and recognition of the association for his/her associates (external and contextual). In most cases, spectators tend to affirm values through the subjective experience of the event, at an individual level (emotion, sensation, pleasure, pride...) whereas organizers tend to affirm values in the form of impact objectives on individuals, on the collective, and on society as a whole. For instance, in the case study on the contemporary circus in Montpellier, the professional members were the ones most valuing the challenges of social inclusion for different types of audiences. In a way, it is also a difference of intellectualizing, generalizing, or objectifying the values of cultural experiences.

Social characteristics and trajectories. Personal perspectives are shaped by one’s life circumstances, experiences, demographics, and other personal characteristics. In the culture-based creative tourism case participants expressed differences according to **generational perspectives** (with “eyes on the future,” younger practitioners with no connection with these ancient arts and crafts are focusing on local balance/equilibrium and sustainability using natural materials; on the other hand, with “eyes on the past,”

older generations, recovering memories and connections to the past, as a healing process, are recovering their identity and gaining pride); and **nationality or place of residence** (long-time local residents are more accustomed to these practices so, in general, have less curiosity and attribute less importance to learning these arts and crafts).

Differences are also revealed with regard to individuals' social trajectories: those who are better endowed with cultural capital, or who have incorporated the vocabulary of cultural institutions, also tend more to formulate values as social objectives. For instance, theatre students who encountered in "De Portas Abertas" the opportunity for an artistic experience with professionals expressed values connected to artistic learning and professional integration. Another example can be found in the resident-participant profile, where life trajectories, family traditions and strong emotional experiences related to professional transformations tend to direct the type of participation and the types of values discussed.

Different types of valuation are also linked to unequal relationships of individuals to the appreciation of the aesthetic experience. There are social conditions of access to the formulation of certain values. As Bourdieu (1984) demonstrated, the "**aesthetic disposition**" is an unevenly distributed "competence" linked to the "bourgeois way of life" (distancing oneself from the artistic object; being able to operate a pure gaze separated from everyday life; mastering codes of aesthetic appreciation...). This explains how differences in the endowment of cultural capital (through family; level of education; cultural practices; professional sector) often seem to determine certain differences in valuations. These variations can be observed both in individuals' ability to detail political values and in the originality with which they present the values they cherish.

3.2.2. Differences according to degrees of institutionalization of cultural projects

The degree of institutionalization of projects may influence the values among organizers. Partnership relationships with institutions, or the need for public subsidies, may lead them to formulate values according to the values advocated by the sponsoring institutions in order to "fit" their expectations, searching for validation and support. It is also possible that this analogy of values is the result of a professional or social incorporation of the values as defined by the cultural institutions (i.e., the use of vocabulary such as "social inclusion," "social links"). For example, in the case of the culture-based creative tourism project, artists/artisans (volunteers or professionals) express a sense of social responsibility, using expressions as "local development", "preservation of the local identity", "addressing tourism seasonality", "giving the city renewed vitality", and "and creating employment" when characterizing the importance of these arts and crafts experiences.

When autonomous projects seek institutional partnerships, financial support or public recognition, the values advocated are transformed. In the case of the circus, the autonomy and informality enables the deployment of values that are less common in more institutionalized events (e.g., experimentation). Institutionalization provides the opportunity to address other values (e.g., democratization) but in doing so, the organizers lose some freedom and autonomy (e.g., the need not to offer the public only unfinished acts; the choice of venue). In the case of totally autonomous projects, such as "garden cabarets," raves and clandestine concerts, we find more 'illegitimate' values from the point of view of institutions, values that would be risky to assert for organizations financially dependent on public institutions and policies (e.g., "having fun," "party," "trance," "friendship," "risk-taking," "experimentation").

These differences in valuation are also the result of **field dynamics** (professional or artistic). Values held by organizers are partly in reference to legitimate values in the field in which they operate, either to conform to them or to claim alternative values. Rave party organizers, for example, see themselves as acting in a totally autonomous field, in total opposition to external norms: independence vs. institution; free vs. market; freedom vs. discipline, surveillance, control; individual responsibility vs. consumer (see Image 1). Clandestine concerts or DJ parties, on the other hand, are carried out by 'outsiders' of the musical field, who claim values that are partly common (e.g., concert as a social link) and partly different, and plead for a redefinition of legitimate values in the field (e.g., legitimization of minority aesthetics; redefinition of

sanitary norms and of social control). In the case of the circus, professionalized members of the group claimed “experimentation” as a value, to counterbalance a professional world where circus performers have to spend most of their time on formalized production, touring and educational activities.

3.3. Tensions between values

Which values are the subject of the greatest tension and opposition between them? We noticed several “internal” tensions between values within the same case study; and “external” tensions between values promoted in the case studies and values promoted by external fields of cultural activity.

3.3.1. Aesthetic values in question

Analyzing the case studies, one specific value emerged as a subject of controversy among participants: the place of aesthetics as a value in participating in live arts and culture. As principles of judgment, aesthetic values are often related to the notion of ‘beauty’, to formal appreciation (technicality, excellence, artistic quality...) or to the place of the artistic object in a particular field (innovation, experimentation, authenticity...) (Heinich, 2014). In several of the cases studied, other principles were used to judge the artistic contents. In rave parties, for example, it is the physical sensation and effectiveness of the dance and trance that is the primary principle of judgement. In the community-engaged arts project, the possibility for recognizing community voices and problems through arts expressions was strongly invoked as a judgment principle by the members of the community. In this case, the aesthetic value was directly linked to the collective value of social intervention and community collaboration.

In many cases, it seems that collective cultural activity can be seen as a **“social pretext”** in which relationships, collective creative processes, pleasure, joy and happiness as well as healing through sharing memories and experiences are more important than the artistic content itself. For concerts, we see that in some cases it is a “pure pretext” – the artistic content doesn’t matter (e.g., “it’s a party, we meet new people and get drunk together, no matter what concert”) – but in most cases, the specificity of the artistic content is important in the experience of the values (e.g., a concert is perceived as a ceremony, a social ritual; particular relationships and emotions are triggered by a particular concert, a specific creative environment where one is able to feel inspired and create, or a particular theme of a performance that makes one go back in time and emotionally relate). The fact that the process is more important than the product, or that the social form is more important than the artistic content does not, therefore, detract from the specificity of the values of cultural experience. It simply invites us to **re-evaluate the place of artistic aesthetics in the hierarchy of experienced values**. For instance, in the culture-based creative tourism case, although the aesthetic is not the main focus of the experiences, as expressed by the non-artist/artisan participants, it seems to be something important for a sense of higher self-satisfaction and accomplishment. From the artists/artisans point of view, aside from sociability, aesthetics is the main focus: making something according to the ‘proper’ techniques (“as I was taught”); making something beautiful and pleasant that gives pride and recognition, honours memories, or gives joy (“when people see something beautiful they feel happier”).

Aesthetic values as defined in cultural policies and legitimate culture are not necessarily central in more autonomous areas or more distant fields (socio-cultural sector, social sector...), where values such as identity, social links – relationships, encounters – or pleasure may be prioritized in participants’ judging principles (DeNora, 1999; Acord & DeNora, 2008). This **non-centrality of aesthetics**, claimed by the participating actors, calls into question the theory of “artification” (Heinich et al., 2014): certain segments of artistic activity legitimize themselves on values other than aesthetics, and do not necessarily seek artistic recognition (e.g., rave parties). Others, on the contrary, seek a joint recognition of aesthetic and other values, for instance, community-engaged arts projects that seek to associate new forms of creative processes to social and political intervention and to strategies of audience development. In this case, the artistic agents and the artistic activities seek to cross different fields, (artistics, political, social), enacting

multiple orders of value and valuation. In the circus field too, aesthetic values and extrinsic values (e.g., democratization of access to culture) come together. Furthermore, aesthetic values are differentiated – while certain aesthetic values are not particularly sought after (beauty, quality, technicality), others are central for the circus performers and organizers (creation, experimentation, authenticity).

3.3.2. Hedonism, entertainment vs. politicization, emancipation

Another tension concerns the place of “hedonistic” values (physical pleasure, mental pleasure, joy, “fun,” etc.), which can be among the first cited in the hierarchy of values by participants. However, in the values of cultural policies, we rarely find any reference to these types of values; moreover, the world of legitimate culture sometimes rejects these values as “entertainment” or “leisure,” as opposed to “art,” which is said to have emancipating, civic, citizen-raising, reflective, etc. virtues. This contradiction also exists within our case studies: opposition between an art that must be “useful” and emancipating and an art that is viewed as a non-legitimate leisure activity. This may also be a division between defining values by immediate experience (the experience of a participant) and defining values by reference to broader, longer-term social or political goals (see section 3.2). The appearance of hedonistic values that are not legitimate in cultural policies invites us to reflect on the “top down” definition of values, imposing “virtuous” objectives on cultural activities without taking account of participants’ valuation principles.

3.3.3. Independence, freedom and autonomy vs. political and market influences

In the case of autonomous events, many values are claimed in opposition to the values of the institutional and market fields (see Image 1). This concerns, first of all, the value of freedom: a relative suspension of social norms and total individual freedom are advocated, in opposition to the norms of security, control, discipline or surveillance that exists, for instance, in nightclubs or concert halls. This ‘total freedom’ is linked to a value of responsibility and ownership, which puts participants in the position of actors rather than consumers. Free and non-controlled entry to the event is opposed to paid and supervised spaces, as a value of non-discrimination and openness to all types of public, even the most marginal and deviant. The opposition of values also concerns the independence of artistic programming and aesthetic diversity, which would be reduced in commercial and institutional spaces by the weight of profitability constraints or by political specifications and professional cultures in the institutional music sector. The values of disinterestedness, generosity and voluntary work are also opposed to the spaces in which the professionalization of actors and market logic create other types of relationships; the values of empowering people through the “do it yourself” philosophy are linked to this.

In more institutionalized and market-oriented activities, such as the culture-based creative tourism case, values such as freedom and creativity exist in the same space as market demands and sometimes in conflict. The urge to feel inspired, be innovative and creative versus traditional views defining craftwork leads to a constant dialogue between artisans who prefer “making creations rather than obligations” and others who don’t acknowledge this creativity. As well, the development of “meaningful work” doesn’t always align with the economic value attributed from the outside. The need for economic sustainability enhances the feeling of a lack of recognition for the importance of these arts/crafts, as it puts in conflict aesthetics, creativity, innovation and economy.

3.4. Effects of the COVID-19 pandemic

3.4.1. Online vs. in person: differences (artistic reception, relations, etc.)

Restrictions linked to COVID-19 (e.g., closure of cultural venues, bans on events and gatherings) severely impacted live arts and culture over the last year. During this particular time, our research allowed for the emergence of reflections on the **specificities of in-person collective reception**, linked to spatial proximity, the sharing of a unique and ephemeral time, and interactions with other participants.

The specificities of collective reception are linked to what Collins (2005) calls “**interaction ritual chains**”: when several people present in the same place and concentrate their attention on a common object or activity, they affect each other with their bodily presence, producing a particular “emotional energy.” They transmit their attention to each other, which can lead to similar – or at least interdependent – sensations or emotions. Thus the group seems to ‘propose’, through the micro-interactions that unfold in a shared space-time, particular modalities of reception, sometimes spontaneous, changing in real time, and highly contingent, which can enhance each participant’s enjoyment and also influence the artists’ performance through their interaction with the audience.

In the case of concerts, **spatial proximity** is evoked as a “reception without intermediary” which allows for more intense and powerful emotions, through the feeling of the instrument’s physical vibrations and the close and flexible view of the musicians, which makes it possible to better capture their intentions. Added to this, the interaction between audience and musicians, the spatial arrangement of the stage/audience, the fact of being in a **unique and ephemeral space-time**, seem to be conditions that favour an “individuating encounter” (Morizot & Zhong Mengual, 2018) between the artistic piece and the spectator.

In other art forms, similar remarks were heard. In craft-teaching and -making activities, the in-person experience is considered to be crucial and “the only way to feel the creative atmosphere.” The social relations, the connections to each other, and the feeling of integration and sharing are considered not to be possible other than in in-person situations (“*online all that would be lost*”). This is particularly the case for training activities conducted by elderly artisans. In the community-engaged arts project, these issues assume a particular relevance since the core of such projects focuses on connecting different sectors of a community through the use of public space. Although individualized activities and strategies of community connection were used, and adjustments to the final performance were made, pandemic restrictions directly impacted the number and the type of participation of local residents in the performance and other project activities. The mandatory reduction of group sizes was considered a loss for the experiences. Groups with less people represent less interaction, less sharing: “*if it’s a larger group, the interaction is different, you can share other experiences and know-how.*”

3.4.2. Political hierarchies of values? Health, economy, socialization, culture, freedom and risk

Policy choices made concerning which activities are permitted or prohibited reveal a particular hierarchy of values, sacrificing some to others. For example, certain sectors of activity have been considered ‘essential’, such as groceries and churches, while artistic and cultural activities have been considered ‘non-essential’. Many interviewees question this distinction, asserting the “essential” role of culture, and denouncing an “injustice” and a lack of recognition they have suffered.

In the case of rave parties and clandestine concerts, restrictions on freedoms in the name of health risks were challenged in the name of the values of individual freedom, the right to take risks and the need for social ties. Thus, some actors refused to “sacrifice” their social life in the name of protecting biological life (“zero risk is heresy, you can’t stop living to avoid dying!”), stating that a “naked life,” without social contacts, without cultural relations, was not worth living, and that risk-taking should be an individual right.

4. CONCLUSION

The case studies examined here show various articulations and tensions between the different types of “social” that affect us within three main dimensions: the individual, the group, and the polis. This distinction allows us, in a second analysis, to examine the relations which are formed between these frames. The individual is no more detached from society than institutions sheltered from individual problems – both nourish and challenge one another. The value of socialization can be seen as contributing to individual well-being. Likewise, the projection of cultural values, even controversial ones, into the political order

contributes to the autonomy of individuals, of groups, to social relations and to cohesion of society as a whole.

We may therefore be tempted to no longer show the different frames of social valuation of culture, but the different combinations that exist between these 'levels'. Thus, a vision of social valuation that will insist on the primacy of an individual conception of value, which also conditions the vision of the group and the role of institutions. And another one, implying a reverse movement, where the value of culture rests primarily on a collective mystique, which is supposed to spread to groups and to influence individuals. A democratic vision of the social value of culture is based on an ambivalence which makes it rich. On one hand, it bets on the role of "teacher" of political valuation, which is based on principles of emancipation, and caring for others from above (principle of democratization). On the other hand, it bets on the ability of individuals and groups to invent and nurture their own cultural horizon, and to promote their dignity (principle of cultural democracy).

Through the case studies examined, the self-determination of values by individual participants and collectives reveals a very wide spectrum of valuations, far beyond those usually advocated by cultural policies; perhaps this principle of self-determination of values could be an opportunity to rethink cultural policies at a time when they are experiencing a crisis of democratic legitimacy.

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