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UNCHARTED

Understanding, Capturing and Fostering the Societal Value of Culture



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1. Introduction

The series of the three policy briefs of UNCHARTED aims to offer ‘food for thought’ to policy makers who have a stake in formulating or influencing policies about future research and valuing culture in all its forms. These briefs are based on the evidences coming from the research work carried out in the project, where the mechanisms of creation of cultural values from complementary perspectives are investigated.

The research of UNCHARTED is articulated on four work packages

WP1 Understanding the societal value of culture

WP2 Identifying the emergence of values of culture

WP3 Measuring and imagining the plurality of values of culture

WP4 Analysing political intervention and impact

The first policy brief focused on the shift in the values of culture that is occurring today in Europe. The document, published by the UNCHARTED project at the conclusion of the first year, was based on the analysis conducted mostly in WP1, which demonstrated the need to contrast the risk of applying unidimensional foci. Even if a general normative perspectives was not yet possible to be derived from the research conducted until that time, a wider set of recommendations has been proposed to policy makers, to ponder about not-resolved tensions.

This document is the second policy brief. It focuses on evidence and analysis of the emergence of values linked to culture in **practical contexts**. The document is submitted after two and half years of project’s lifetime. It is based mostly on the results of the investigation carried out in WP2 and the six deliverables produced in the framework of it¹, as well as on the content of the co-creation workshop held in Porto on 16-17 September 2021².

On the basis of the outcomes of the case studies conducted in WP2, the recommendations proposed in Chapter 3 focus mainly on the field of cultural production and heritage management.

Key messages

Researchers, experts and stakeholders who have engaged in the case studies and in the co-creation activity carried out in the project, agreed on the importance of adopting a pragmatic view of values as opposed to essentialist positions. This brings to a deeper comprehension of the role that the values of culture play in the social constructions within different types of contexts. Reflections that are more critical and a broader approach can allow taking into account macro and micro perspectives that enable to address better multiple valuations and their tensions.

The notion of national cultural policies is internally complex and could bring to hide the multiplicity of paradigms that exist, both at regional and territorial levels, as well as in different sectors of cultural production.

¹ <https://uncharted-culture.eu/research-fields/wp2-identifying-the-emergence-of-values-of-culture>

² <https://uncharted-culture.eu/events/co-creation-workshop-in-porto>

Two key factors demonstrate to have a strong role in shaping the valuation of culture in Europe and, eventually, in conditioning the development of cultural policies at various levels: on one hand, the rise of **diversity** as a value, motivated by important changes that are occurring in European societies; on the other hand, the generation of **new marks** created, for example, by digitization, by spatial segregation and by ethnic stigmatization in urban spaces - among several other processes -. In this light, it would be important for policy makers to have a clear understanding of the various representations of recognised **diversity** and **new marks** in their respective areas of intervention, because these two factors condition distinct configurations and contexts that, in turn, may affect cultural valuation.

2. Evidence and Analysis

Four fields of research have been investigated through a wide range of case studies, conducted in various European countries and regions, and further discussed at the co-creation workshop in Porto. The four fields are:

- cultural production and heritage management
- cultural participation in live arts
- cultural participation through media
- cultural administration

The details of the research are provided in the deliverables produced in the frame of WP2, namely: D2.2 Report on the emergence of values in cultural participation and engagement, D2.3 Report on the emergence of values in television and new media, D2.4 Report on the emergence of values in cultural production and heritage and D2.5 Mapping of the values of culture in cultural policy objectives.

For each field of the research, a number of critical values and their tensions emerged in the studies.

The investigation about critical values in **cultural production and heritage management** has been centred on actors (core teams, support teams and external) and their context of practice (creation & design and development & support), with the aim to identify valuation affinities among cases that refer to common value principles and where tensions may occur.

Three levels of valuation were identified and adopted in the case studies: i) product, ii) type of organization, and iii) societal impacts. Using these three levels of valuation, **two typologies of conflicts** have emerged in the studies: on one hand, the conflicts that raise within each level of valuation (further referred as 'internal tensions'); on the other hand, the conflicts between levels that occur when values emerging at one level conflict with values emerging at other levels (further referred as 'external tensions').

It has been observed that diverse views concerning values at different levels can bring to conflict, among public and private partners. For example, at product level, the historical significance of the cultural intervention can be stressed by public partners, while private partners can value more hedonism. Similarly, at organisation level participation can be at the core of the valuation for public partners, while financial sustainability can be at the core for private partners. Eventually, at societal level, while urban regeneration can be the driver for the public partner, economic return is the driver for private partners.

When conflicts occur within the same level, they are often the consequence of **power imbalances**, for example of economic or political kinds.³

When values at one level conflict with values emerging at other levels, tensions are often linked with **different valuing of cultural memory or the cultures of ethnic groups** and with the limited capacity of cultural policy to act beyond traditional cultural institutions.⁴

With regard to critical values **in cultural participation in live arts**, the work started from the analysis during the pandemic. Specificities of in-person and collective reception were taken into account, where values of aesthetics, hedonism and individual freedom appear to be in contrast with other principles existing in the cultural policies. In the context of the pandemic contingencies, the institutionalized culture and the political definition of priorities demonstrated a difference in the values as opposed to individual valuation.

In the field of **digitally mediated cultural participation**, the case studies focused too on the pandemic situation. Tensions were identified between virtual and co-presence experiences, between educational offer and audience demand, among music genres in online concerts, and between aesthetic and non-aesthetic values.

The cases that investigated values **in cultural administration** took into consideration local, regional and national administrations, with the aim to identify the values that administrations integrate into policy design and how they prioritize them. Several cultural policy models and orientations were analysed, including twelve local, regional and national administrations in six different countries. The studies show that often conflicts occur between the values embodied in the political discourse (laws, programs and objectives) and the values embodied in actions and budgets. Strong and very explicit dissonances have been identified in some cases. Beyond explicit tensions, concealed tensions appeared, too. For instance, a diffused inclination to prioritize external cultural actors would mirror an undervaluation of local artists and associations when supporting creation and payments or to acknowledge roles in events' programming, demonstrating value tensions also at this level. In other cases, tensions between values occur between actors (e.g. between opposition politicians, or between high-level professional and technical staff) who have different characteristics linked to specific values, inside and outside the administrations.

Valuations

Seven valuation have been identified in the four fields.

Principles for valuation	Where the valuation appears mostly
Aesthetic	Transversal to all fields
Democracy and Participation	
Authenticity and Identity	
Sustainability	Dominant in cultural production and heritage management
Technical efficiency	
Economic	Dominant in cultural administration

³ The case studies addressed in the project are those of MUDEC in Milan and Buda Castel in Budapest.

⁴ A typical case is that of the Bragança case study that provides an example of these value tensions.

Democracy and Participation	
Democracy and Participation	Dominant in cultural participation through media
Emotions	
Democracy and Participation	Dominant in cultural participation in live arts
Sustainability	
Hedonism	

Table 1 – Plurality of valuation

Table 1 indicates that there are valuation principles that are transversal, applying to different domains, while others are dominant in different fields. Subsidiary valuations by domain have been observed as well. In particular:

- In the field of cultural production and heritage management, aesthetic and economic valuations are predominant.
- In the field of cultural participation, the valuations associated with hedonism, well-being and emotions are especially relevant together with democratic valuations, linked to participation and social integration of different types of audiences and publics.
- In the field of cultural administration, economic valuations are central in terms of promoting excellence and innovation, territorial growth and investments in the cultural field.

At local level, participatory and democratic valuation emerges, associated with the design and implementation of cultural public policies or actions that pursue social cohesion through cultural activities

Tensions

The studies carried in WP2 demonstrated that tensions between different valuations depend very much on the **context**, such as territorial and local factors, and on the valuation carried out by the concerned **actors**, including their practices.

For example:

- In the case of cultural production and heritage management a series of tensions have been detected between the valuations in the contexts of creation and design (associated with aesthetic issues, sustainability, authenticity and participation) and the valuations that emerge at the moment of materialization of a cultural proposal or project (more associated with technical, economic and wellbeing issues). This situation is reflected at the product level, at organisation level and at social level.
- In the case of cultural administration, values behind the same policy demonstrated to be framed more positively or negatively depending on the kind of narrative, accents and associations established within the valuation process performed by each actor.
- Tensions have been observed at national and regional levels, between aesthetic and identity values where, at national level, identity nationalisms generate an appreciation of heritage that is opposed to aesthetic values, and, at local level, participatory valuations is opposed to the aesthetic one.

With regard to the emergence of **internal and external tensions**, it was observed that, in the case of cultural participation via new media as well as in live arts and culture, a low level of internal tensions is detected, while tensions are mostly due to external oppositions. This can be interpreted as resulting from the smaller range of interacting social actors.

It should be taken into account that the case studies about cultural participation addressed mostly less institutional culture. Implicit value tensions between aesthetic and entertainment principles are expected to emerge more clearly in case studies related to participation in institutional culture (that however, were not part of the studies run in WP2, which are at the basis of this Policy Brief).

In the fields of cultural production, heritage management and cultural administration, the cases with a more institutional character demonstrated stronger internal tensions.

Tensions between values associated with hedonism, identity and aesthetics have been observed in several cases. For example:

- In the field of heritage management, valuation about identity, linked to the representation of different ethno-cultural groups and their expressions, enters into tension with values associated with hedonism, linked to entertainment.⁵
- In the field of cultural participation, hedonistic valuation linked to entertainment and to the pleasure associated with artistic and cultural experiences, enters into tension with values associated with aesthetics or with values associated with identity, linked with a social or emancipatory vision of art.⁶
- In the field of cultural participation, hedonistic valuation is central for audiences, users and citizens, while aesthetic valuation is central for creators and producers in the ambit of professional cultural production, and these different foci can produce tensions.

Values have been aggregated in two sets: (i) aesthetic, economic and social values; (ii) authenticity/identity, hedonism/well-being and sustainability.

It was observed that valuations linked to the two sets have a different centrality, depending on the field:

- in the fields of participation, cultural administration and more professional cultural production, aesthetic, economic and social values emerge as central
- in the fields of less professional cultural production, cultural participation, heritage management and cultural administration, authenticity/identity, hedonism/well-being and sustainability emerge as central

The following paragraphs present the evidences gathered in the case studies, with regard to the tensions that have been observed in the two sets of values.

Tensions between economic, social, and aesthetic valuations

Aesthetic and economic values may appear in tension and conflict, because of their nature, being the former associated with formal aspects (artistic language) and the latter with organizational aspects (costs and benefits). For example, this is reflected in the sphere of cultural administrations, where, in the development of policy agendas, promotion of artistic excellence comes into tension with expected economic impact.⁷

Tensions between aesthetic and economic values reduce when we move to the field of less professional cultural production. Here, democracy, participation and social valuation gain protagonism vs questions of economic sustainability.

⁵ This tension was observed in the case study on MUDEC.

⁶ This tension was observed in the cases of the clandestine raves, or the digitally mediatized experiences of participation

⁷ The cultural policies focused on cultural creativity implemented by the Barcelona City Council are a clear example of this kind of tensions.

The following figure excerpted from D2.7 illustrates the articulation of the tensions between economic, social and aesthetic valuations, in the three mentioned fields.

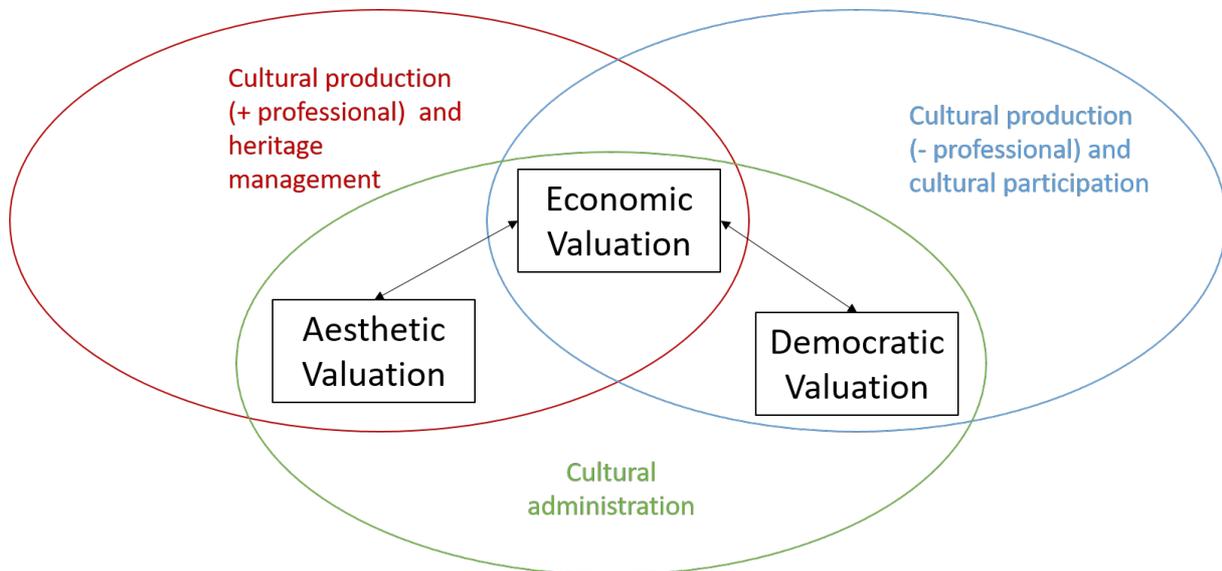


Figure 1 - Analytical tensions by values

Tensions between authenticity/identity, hedonism/wellbeing and sustainability

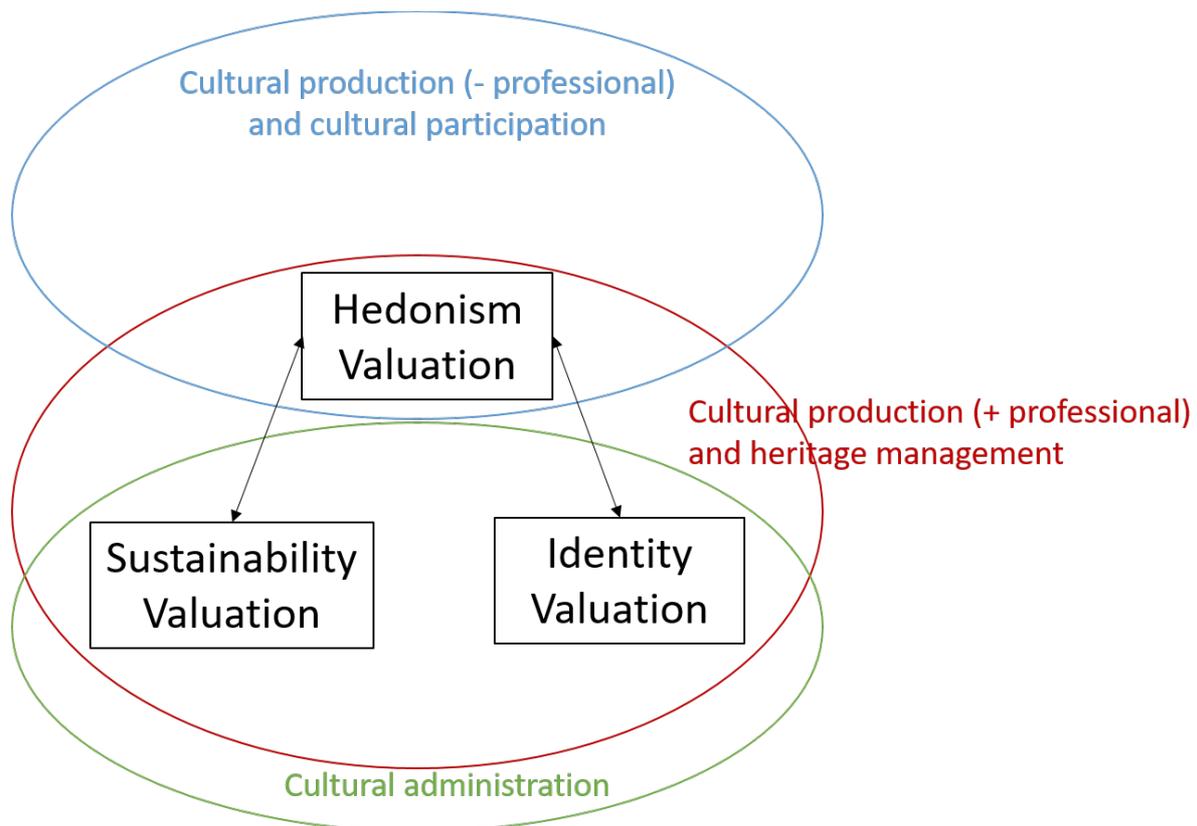
From the **users'** point of view, tensions have been observed among these valuation principles, in the different fields.

In the field of cultural production, different valuations apply to less professional and more professional creators and producers. For less cultural production, valuation associated with leisure and well-being is central, while for professional producers, aesthetic valuation is central. Taking into account these differences, valuation about hedonistic/welfare aspects often comes into tension with sustainability and identity aspects.

Similarly, in the field of **cultural participation**, hedonistic valuation comes into tension with sustainability criteria and valuations about identity aspects.

In the field of **cultural administrations** valuations associated with well-being is often used, while valuation in terms of entertainment is not, creating as a consequence tensions between the two values.

The following figure excerpted from D2.7 illustrates the articulation of the tensions between economic, social and aesthetic valuations, in the three mentioned fields.



3. Policy Implications and Recommendations for Cultural Production and Heritage Management field

On the basis of our research five policy implications are provided in this second Policy Brief for cultural production and heritage management field:

1. Actors and contexts

The design of new cultural products should be based on sound understanding of the conditions where the future implementation is expected to take place.

Who are the actors is a key question to be addressed, e.g.:

- who are the members of the core team and which are their requirements and desires
- which skills are needed to be represented in the support team and which competences cannot be externalised
- who are expected to be recruited as external providers and which are the basis of the collaboration

Which is the contexts of reference, e.g.:

- which are limitations and potentials of the surrounding environment
- what are the aspirations of stakeholders and local communities
- which is the political situation (historically, in place, and in perspective)

Clear comprehension of actors and contexts will allow to produce less contested valuations, to manage cultural interventions with a better awareness of potential tensions, to develop on time the capacity to address conflictual situations, and eventually to deliver stronger impacts.

2. Multiple visions

Cultural projects should progress taking into account multiple visions about several impacting factors, at each stage of development:

- At the creative and design phase, it will be important to reach an agreement among the actors involved in the project, about what the cultural product should be, encompassing both internal and external views. Different visions can adopt different valuation that, in turn, can produce a range of tensions between the principles adopted for those valuations. Common understanding can reduce tensions and support the management of conflicts of interest when they cannot be avoided.
- At the start of the development, it should be agreed what the involved organisations are expecting to deliver and what they can gain. Clear and shared expectations could help to reduce tensions among actors, stakeholders, owners of common heritage and local communities
- At the beginning to the implementation stage, the demand of the society should be re-assessed, and the impact that the cultural product should produce should be part of a participatory phase of confrontation between the concerned different fields, including producers, participants and administrations.

3. Power imbalance

Power imbalance, at different levels and between actors and fields, is bound to explode into conflicts among valuations. Avoidance or reduction of power imbalance should be sought.

4. Trade-off different values

Different values can be in conflict. An emblematic case is the tension between aesthetic and economic values that appear often confronted during culture valuation. Preliminary evidences gathered in the research seems to suggest trading-off different values as a way to achieve better balance of different issues between levels, and mutual satisfaction between stakeholders after discussion and adaptations of the project.

5. Portfolio approach

A portfolio approach maybe useful to manage conflicts. By investing in multiple solutions, the chances are increased of getting valuations in different fields that are not conflictual, results that are useful for different users and outcomes that are satisfactory for different stakeholders. In particular, for innovative projects, where the context and the operating environment could be uncertain, a portfolio approach could be beneficial.

Remaining knowledge gaps

The third policy brief of UNCHARTED is expected by beginning of 2024. It will recapitulate evidences and recommendations distilled from the investigation conducted in WP3 and WP4 and reflections gathered in the frame of the experimental demonstrations of WP5.

This work will allow to examine, on one hand, how certain value configurations and antagonisms between value configurations explain cultural policy orientations (the value-action relationship) and, on the other hand, how values contribute to shape cultural policy design and public action. Furthermore, variables beyond the cultural policy field will be studied to try to explain how hegemonic values are created and how they are aligned to policy models. These variables include state policy regimes, identitarian processes, political actors, economic and social crises (e.g. immigrants' and refugees' presence in a territory). Finally, the hands-on dimension of the work in WP5 will contribute to assess how the research outcomes are reflected in real-life experiences and which is the actual impact that the theoretical investigation can deliver to policy makers, as the basis for the future exploitation of the project's results.

4. Project Identity

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