

Cultural grant making in Spain, the cases of Barcelona and Santiago de Compostela

The influence of public administration evaluation methodologies on cultural production (Case 3.3)

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INTRODUCTION

In UNCHARTED (Topic 3 and Deliverable 3.8), we analyze the methodologies of evaluation used by cultural administrations and address the question of their influence over cultural actors and cultural institutions located in the fields of cultural production.

These issues are studied through the case of cultural grant policies designed and implemented by the administrations of **Santiago de Compostela** and **Barcelona** since 2015.

THEORETICAL APPROACH

Cultural policies are looking to better capture specific social groups and complex cultural practices through grant provision (Wimmer, 2016; Mangset, 2020; Urfalino, 1996; UNESCO, 1969).

Still, divergences in grant-making have remained:

- Artistic excellence (meritocratic approach) vs social inclusion/diversity under the liberal model (Wyszomirski & Mulcahy 1995; Chartrand & McCaughey 1989; O'Brien, 2014; Hewison, 1995; Vestheim, 2012).

- Procedural dimension of evaluation methodologies vs regime of justification- objective, outcome-oriented and transparent (arm's length) basis (Gattinger, M., & Saint-Pierre, 2008: 170).

When approached from the policy influence perspective, interactions involving these actors can be seen as part of three main processes:

- Recognition (Bourdieu & Passeron, 2018).
- Promotion.
- Legitimation (Dubois, 2010).

METHODOLOGY

The methodological strategy used for these cases combined:

- In Depth semi-structured interviews** were set from an open and exploratory approach addressing value configuration and practices in specific evaluation methodologies.
- Focus groups** were designed to contrast and triangulate elements obtained from interviews in

the second fieldwork stage, focusing on value tensions and disruptions among participants belonging to different organizations.

Purposive non-probability sampling was made use of. A total of **10 interviews** and **two focus groups** were conducted with the following actors:

LIST OF INFORMANTS' CATEGORIES AND NUMBER

CATEGORY	BARCELONA INTERVIEWS (Nº)	SANTIAGO INTERVIEWS (Nº)	BARCELONA FOCUS GROUP (Nº)	SANTIAGO FOCUS GROUP (Nº)
Administration agents, such as politicians and technical staff involved in grants design, evaluation and execution	1	1	1	1
External actors and advisors taking part in the evaluation and decision process	2	1	1	1
Users of the grant system, including artists and other members of local cultural organizations	3	3	2	1
Total	5	5	4	3

RESULTS 1

Evaluation practices and regimes of value. Policy orientations implicitly affect the evaluation methodology.

- The **centrality of the social value principle** in Barcelona, entailing redistributive and pro-equity policies, acts as a driver of evaluation methodology and is at the center of tensions concerning the grant system's artistic, economic and participatory goals.

- Instead, Santiago's methodology is **ritualistic** including social impacts as secondary criteria.

Evaluation practices are also affected by **exclusionary practices**. For instance, the installed capacity of applicants and limitations in the presentation and communication of projects in represent an obstacle for economically weaker actors.

Moreover, **informal and no written practices** become "institutionalized" as implicit strategies

for legitimate and smooth evaluation.

- For instance, in Santiago, these informal strategies support the historical corporate and clientele system; however, with less legitimacy than in the Barcelona case due to the lack of participatory and arms' length instruments.



RESULTS 2

Tensions in evaluation processes

BARCELONA



Generally, the **ICUB** grant policy can be characterized as a **low-tension field** having achieved different consensual formal and informal mechanisms. Still, three primary types of value-related and interrelated tensions have been identified in culture grant making concerning values, actors and evaluative practices:

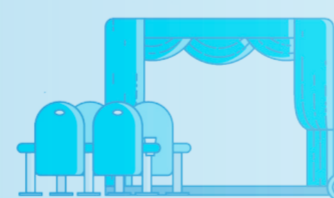
- Values: Artistic quality vs values and criteria related to social inclusion.**

"Social values are intended to be very inclusive in all aspects, especially in minorities, and in the end, they end up being exclusive within the framework of culture and the artistic interest they may have. And they can also pervert some artistic projects so that they fit so that they can fit into that channel well." (B3).

- Actors: ICUB and corporate partners vs some evaluators/beneficiaries.**

- Practices: Official vs evaluation practices.**

This concerns aspects such as the interpretation of official criteria by each evaluator or methodological aspects raising tensions such as the lack of evaluation feedback regarding obtained grants.



SANTIAGO



In **Santiago**, also three central tensions have been identified concerning dominant values, actors and evaluation practices:

- Values: artistic excellence/ technique vs economic (as achievement of co-financing and timing in the sense of financial efficiency)**

This tension relates to political and technical evaluators' interpretation of official value configuration, often seen by all actors as affecting aesthetic assessment due to the need to comply with socio-economic goals.

- Actors: political decision makers vs cultural civil servants/ applicants-beneficiaries.**

Actors' disputes often relate to the clientele system established between the same cultural industry organizations and the SCQC favoring automatic annual repetition of grants, is exacerbated by the required economic installed capacity needed to advance the funding.

"In order to be able to apply for these aids, you must have a reserve fund that allows you to advance the money... which is complicated for small companies. And, at the same time, at least in the 2021 call, this policy does not contemplate the formulas associated with social economy either" (B5).

- Evaluation practices: beneficiaries and opposition councilors vs political decision makers**

RESULTS 3

Mitigation and resolutions

BARCELONA

The ICUB strengthening of participatory dynamics in the evaluation methodology (including the intervention of the Council of Culture and final evaluation session) has supported a certain convergence concerning the social value framing of grants and projects.

- This mitigating strategy includes tools for reaching consensus within Commissions, such as studies on average scores by experts or improvement of communication with evaluators.

SANTIAGO



The conflicting character of clientele and exclusionary dynamics in Santiago policies are not addressed by the administration, which has not established participatory processes with affected stakeholders regarding evaluation methodologies.

- Still, as in Barcelona, further redistribution of resources without affecting big cultural players (i.e. direct grants to concrete projects) has allowed the administration to stabilize the system.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

How do evaluation methodologies in grant making influence cultural actors?

- We have identified that evaluation methodologies play an important role in shaping artists and other cultural field actors' behaviors.
- There is a noticeable link between evaluation methodologies and legitimization requirements

- In grants and arts project evaluations subjected to open competition, the focus is on experts' agency and capacities,

Which are the specifics of grant evaluation methodologies as (e)valuation practices?

- Evaluation integrating further peer review and short-term performative protocols (working sessions, informal conversations, etc.) in the case of projects.

- For instance, the creation of the Conseil de Cultura in 2007 as a mediator in Barcelona's cultural policies sought to enhance such legitimacy from an arm's length approach.

- The evaluation processes are characterized by a combination of **formal and informal practices**, organized through annual phases of preliminary evaluation and sorting, screening and informal peer discussions, and subsequent decisions to produce a final selection.

- Tension mitigation goes through improving **participation, accessibility and resource increase/redistribution** without affecting key players.

The expert-led evaluation:

- As a result of our inductive analysis, we identified grant making cases as part of an **Experts-led evaluation** aimed at cultural resources/status allocation.

- Such evaluation is reactive to cultural and artistic projects, and it develops a more project-oriented, shorter term and informal perspective when compared to other types such as heritage.

- The weight of evaluation outcomes in terms of their legitimacy is also placed on **mediators and mediation mechanisms**.

- In project-based resource allocation, other mechanisms are used to build legitimacy and guarantee administrative assessment principles and legal requirements, such as objectivity and transparency, which are not at the core of official heritage evaluation.

SUBVENCIÓNS PARA O PROGRAMA CULTURA NO CAMIÑO



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