

LUQ – THE PROCESS OF ACCREDITATION OF REGIONAL MUSEUMS (4.4)

In 2018, the Italian Ministry of Culture established the National and Regional Museums Systems to create a new **Tripadvisor of Culture**. To be part of the systems, national and regional museums must comply with **uniform quality standards (LUQ)**. The Ministry designed the LUQ's evaluation process through an **online self-administered questionnaire** to be filled out by museums. It tasked the regional cultural offices to handle the questionnaire distribution and evaluation.

At the end of 2021, in Emilia-Romagna, the regional heritage agency **Servizio Patrimonio Culturale (SPC)** sent the questionnaire to the **500 regional museums**, and **157 museums** completed it. We observed the **9-week-long winding process of evaluation** performed by SPC, which eventually granted the "museum of quality" stamp to **100 museums**

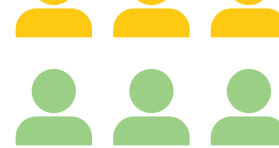
THE QUESTIONNAIRE

- The questionnaire allocates **80 points** to "minimum standards of quality" and **20 points** to additional, not crucial, standards called "improvement objectives." For a total score of 100.
- The questions are often procedural and are limited to assessing, regardless of effectiveness and efficiency.
- The scoring system is ambiguous. As a result, it remains difficult to understand the threshold that allows a museum to enter the national and regional museum systems if any.

6 museum directors



3 SPC employees



9 SPC meetings & 3 individual working sessions



Documents and paperwork



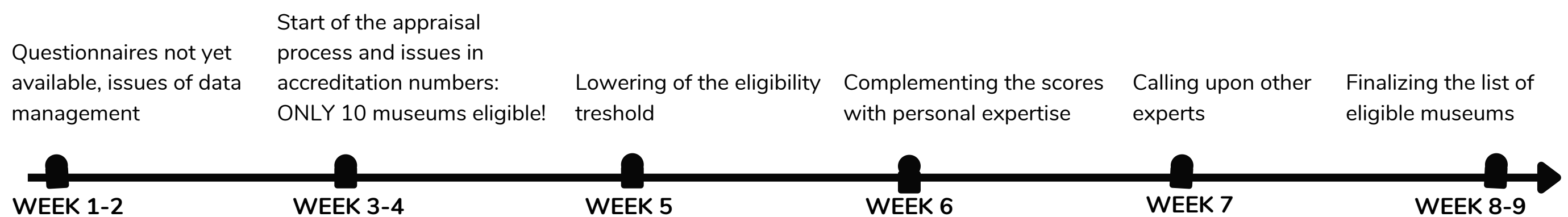
9 INTERVIEWS

24 HOURS OF OBSERVATIONS

129 PAGES OF FIELDNOTES

157 QUESTIONNAIRES

HOW THE EVALUATION PROCESS UNFOLDED IN EMILIA-ROMAGNA



WHAT WE LEARNT

Catching reality "on the flight":

- the questionnaires' scores provided a **picture of regional museums that no one was expecting**
- the **complex and multi-dimensional reality of local museums** was **hardly represented** by the questionnaires' results and the museum ranking quantification of the standards possessed

The **tensions** were mitigated by:

- making sense of the **shortcomings of the questionnaire**, considered biased towards state-level museums and unapt to assess regional ones
- introducing **additional evaluative devices** to counterbalance the questionnaire's quantitative rationale
- streamlining the **standards** needed to "pass" the selection, enabling the **evaluation** to be complemented by a richer understanding of the **regional museums' qualities**.



CAN MUSEUM QUALITY BE QUANTIFIED? YES, BUT...

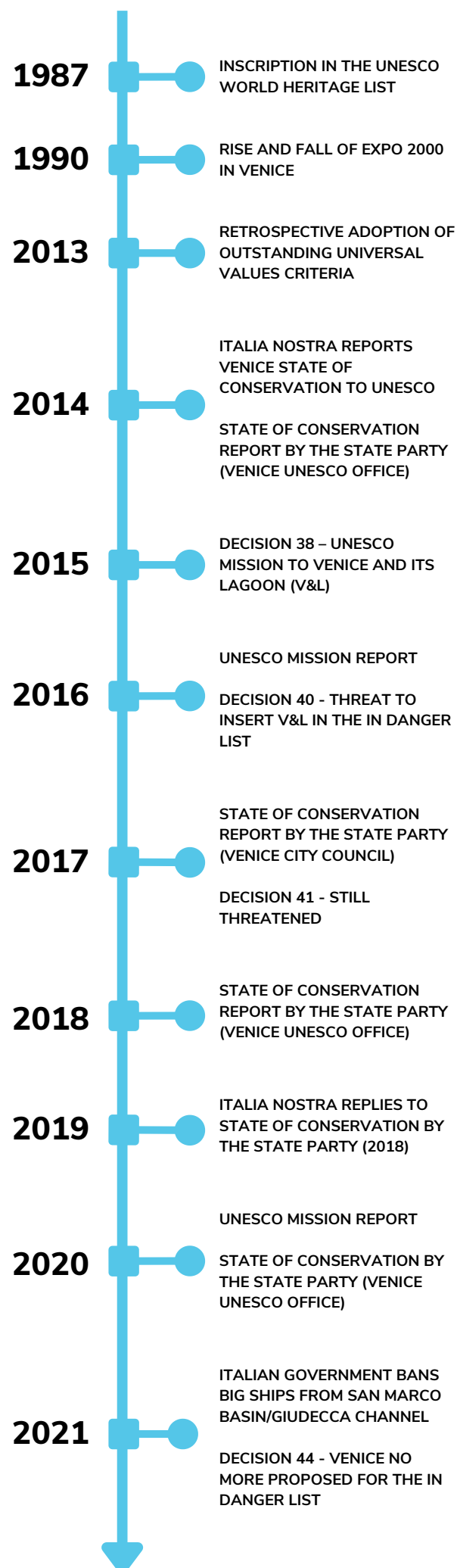
Two different evaluative logics clash and raise tensions:

- **Comparative ranking logic:** the possibility to use the scores to classify elements. Here the idea of attaching a score to each quality standard, and translating the possession of standards into a number, is pivotal.
- **Qualifying expertise logic:** the possibility to use professionals' expertise to qualify synthetic information. Displayed several times during the appraisal process, it was enacted to convert the score of each object in a consistent set of information about the actual possession of standards.

THREATENING VENICE AND ITS LAGOON (2.1)

This case study draws on documentary sources to investigate evaluative practices in the struggle over the safeguard of Venice and its Lagoon.

Venice and its Lagoon was listed as **World Heritage Site** in **1987**. After more than 20 years without any significant exchange between **UNESCO** and the site manager (the City of Venice), in 2014 the civil society addressed the poor **state of conservation** of the site, starting a **8-years-long debate** between local, national and international actors.



WHAT HAPPENED? 2014-2021

- 1** Italia Nostra denounces the poor state of conservation to UNESCO
Decision 38 programs a Mission (Ramsar, ICOMOS, UNESCO) to Venice and its Lagoon in 2015
- 2** **2016 Mission Report:** a severe state of degradation of material and intangible heritage
Decision 40 threatens to list Venice and its Lagoon in the In Danger
- 3** **Venice City Council 2017 Report:** an extensive document (636 pages long)
Politicization of UNESCO procedure, rhetorical exercise to justify the conditions of Venice
- 4** 2017-2020 back-and-forth of documents: UNESCO and Venice City Council
2020: **2nd Mission:** no real improvement implemented, proposes **Venice to be listed** in the In Danger List
- 5** Decree-Law 103 (20 July 2021) bans **Big Ships** from San Marco/Giudecca waterway (yet not from the Lagoon)
Decision 44 'saves' Venice and its Lagoon from the In Danger List



4 WH DECISIONS



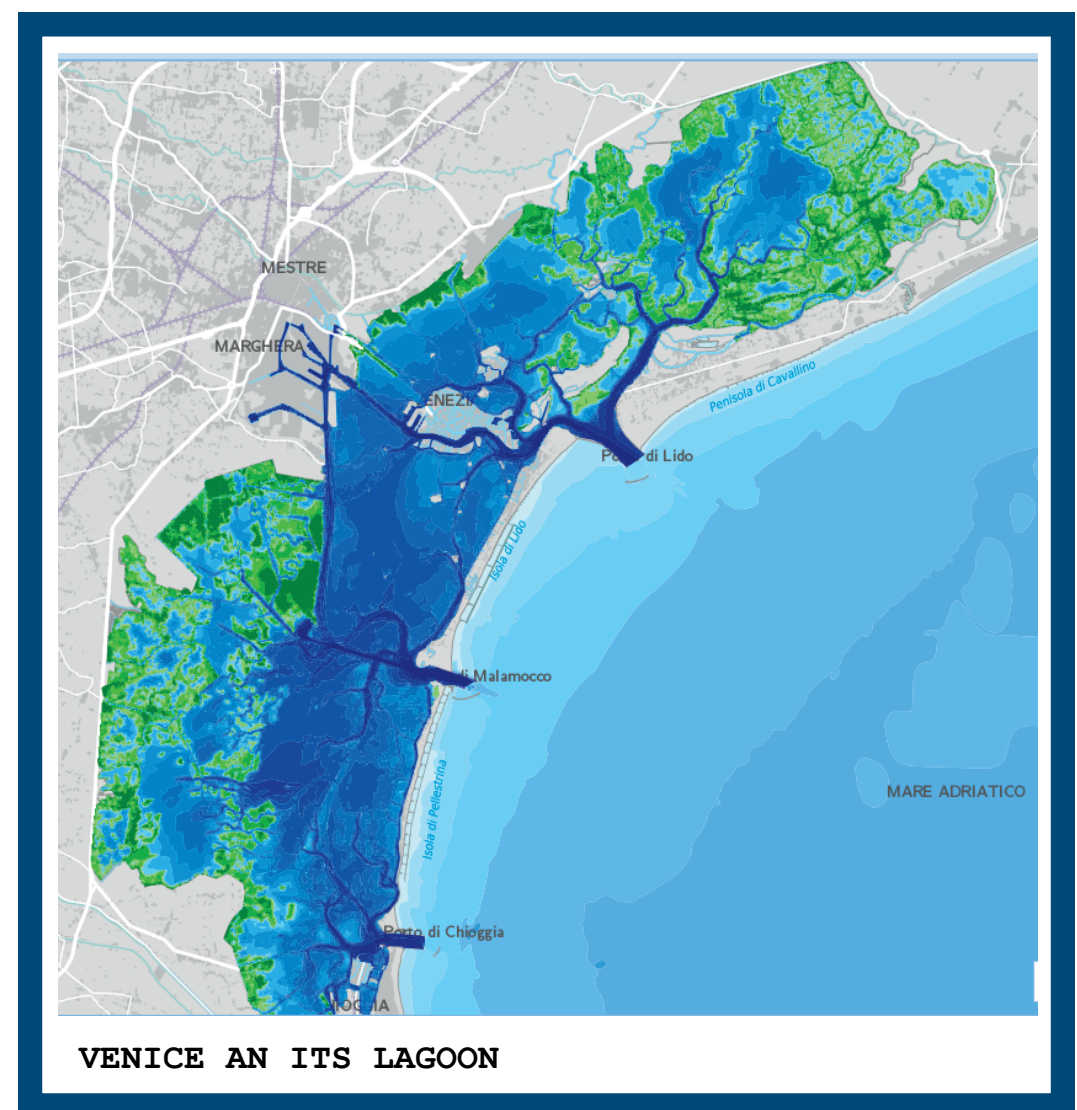
1,163 PAGES ANALYSED



7 REPORTS

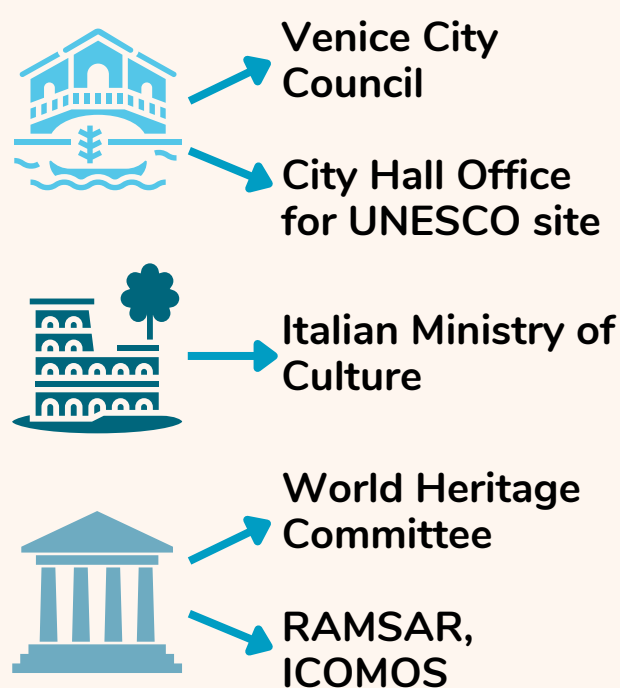


4 INTERVIEWS



TENSIONS AND THEIR DYNAMICS

ACTORS INVOLVED



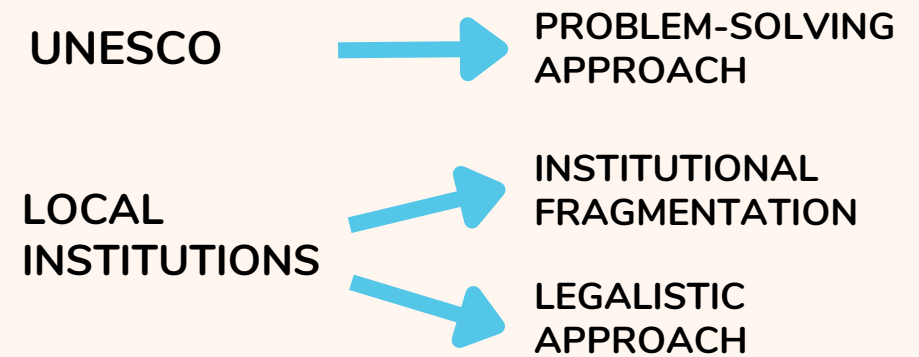
Sustainable Development vs Exploitation



Participation vs Delegated Authorities



Problem Solving vs Juridical Logic



Professional vs Political

	PROFESSIONAL BODIES	POLITICAL DIMENSION
LOCAL	Voicing interdisciplinary professional values (City Hall Office for UNESCO site)	Loyalty to exploitation whatever sustainable (Venice Govt)
CENTRAL	Voicing interdisciplinary professional values (ICOMOS& RAMSAR)	Loyalty to cultural diplomacy affairs (central Govt & WH Committee)

MUDEC: EVALUATIVE TENSIONS IN A MULTICULTURAL PARTICIPATORY INITIATIVE (2.3)

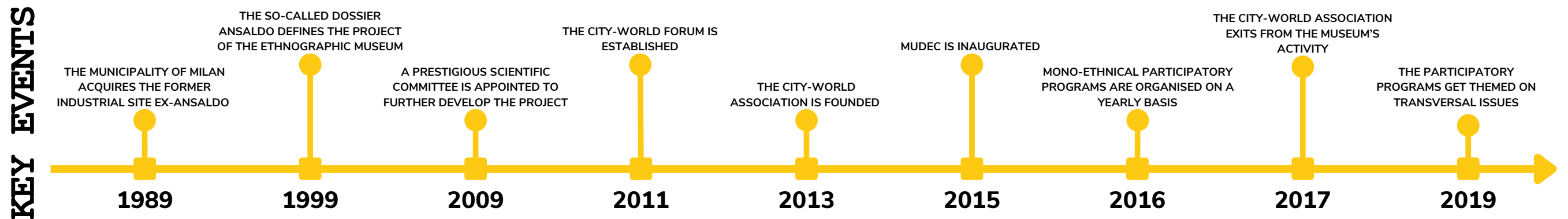
THE CASE STUDY

The study examines the intercultural participatory activities at the Museo delle Culture of Milan (Mudec). Mudec was originally envisioned as the civic museum that could conserve and display the rich ethnographic collections owned by the Municipality of Milan through an open museological approach targeting the migrant communities of the city.

A long time elapsed and multiple events happened before the museum could start its activities. Currently, the museum's identity is split in three components that do not frequently interact: the permanent ethnographic collection, temporary blockbuster exhibitions (organized by a private partner), participatory programs involving migrant communities.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

We focus on this third, and less visible, component of Mudec to investigate how evaluative tensions arising around the value of participation in cultural activities unfold and what effects they produce. We analyse diachronically these processes from the moment in which the first relevant organizational activities began (1999) until 2021.



PHASE 1: EARLY CONCEPTUALIZATIONS (1999–2010)

PHASE 2: BOTTOM-UP PARTICIPATION (2011–2015)

PHASE 3: STEERING PARTICIPATION (2016–2019)

PHASE 4: CRITICAL PARTICIPATION (2020– ONGOING)



TECHNOLOGIES OF EVALUATION AT MUDEC

Multiple actors gravitate around Mudec's participatory programs, bringing in different evaluative regimes to assess the appropriateness of the initiatives. In most cases, actors deploy informal evaluations, based on their expertise and sensibilities: Municipality administrators favour the principle of manageability; members of the migrant communities favour the principle of representativity; "experts" (both native Italian and with a migratory background) play a key role through their evaluations based on theoretically grounded knowledge of what "participation" entails.



22
INTERVIEWS



3
IN-SITE
OBSERVATIONS



650
PAGES OF
DOCUMENTS

STRUCTURE AND DYNAMICS OF EVALUATIVE TENSIONS

A dialectical process takes place at Mudec through time. Different groups of actors continuously learn from each other and eventually hybridise their roles: evaluative tensions enable different value regimes to interface and trigger change processes toward an increasingly sophisticated awareness of what participation means and what it ultimately implies.



REGIONAL CULTURAL OBSERVATORIES IN ITALY

(4.2)

A HIGHLY FRAGMENTED SITUATION

- We have found 27 cultural observatories in 20 Italian regions
- There are both general-purpose and specialised observatories
- Though often linked to the regional administrations, there are multiple governance models at work
- The majority of observatories exist formally, but perform very little and mostly non-visible work
- A few observatories are remarkably active

ISSUES IN OBSERVING CULTURE: Data availability, quality, and categorisation

- Regional observatories strain to harmonise data coming from different sources.
- The linkage between observatories and administrations potentially hampers their independence and the reliability of the data reported and publicly disclosed.
- Defining the boundaries of cultural sectors is methodologically challenging but essential to understand which organisations or ventures need to be targeted through cultural policies.
- Categorisation issues are oftentimes addressed through additional grounded, qualitative research work.

ANALYSIS: PROPORTIONS OF COVERAGE ACCORDING TO AREAS OF INTEREST

	APULIA	EMILIA-ROMAGNA	PIEDMONT	TUSCANY
CONSUMPTION	0%	17%	51.6%	31.5%
PRODUCTION	0%	55.4%	39.1%	52.6%
ADMINISTRATION	100%	21.5%	9.3%	15.9%
OTHER	0%	6.1%	0%	0%
TOT	100%	100%	100%	100%

Regional cultural observatories monitor cultural phenomena in a specific territory by collecting and analysing data of different kinds.

The case study explores the current situation of regional observatories of culture in Italy, to grasp the variety of approaches and internal structures that these organizations adopt for measuring and monitoring cultural phenomena. This analysis sheds light on the quality of data used, the categorization efforts exerted, and the scope of values captured by local cultural information systems.

SAMPLING AND DOCUMENTARY DATA SOURCES

REGIONAL OBSERVATORY	APULIA	EMILIA-ROMAGNA	PIEDMONT	TUSCANY
DOCUMENTS	3	56	67	11
PAGES (TOT)	83	~2,500	~4,000	507
TIME SPAN	2019-2021	1999-2021	1999-2021	2015-2021



The focus of regional observatories gravitates around two main value dimensions

Wealth creation ↔ Welfare creation

- Attention on consumption denotes the conception of culture as a marketable activity that generates economic wealth.
- Attention on administration implies the conception of culture as a public good that generates welfare.
- Attention on production implies that cultural activities are conceived as generating both wealth and welfare.

The propensity toward one of the two poles depends on the observatory's governance and on the Region's macro-economic background.