Realising the Value of Culture

The Value-Based Approach

Edited by Lyudmila Petrova, Arjo Klamer, Christian Handke, Valeria Morea and YounSun Won

ROUTLEDGE

Realising the Value of Culture

Realising the Value of Culture brings together international scholars to explore how values shape economies, organisations, and societies. It provides conceptual framing and tools for those seeking to align their practices with economic, cultural, and societal values.

The chapters in this collection bridge cultural economics, sociology, cultural studies, and urban studies to present an alternative to standard economic perspectives centred on price, profit, and efficiency. Foregrounding qualities – the quality of work, environment, and community – this book offers new methods to evaluate and realise cultural and social values. Its theoretical and methodological contributions include the conceptualisation of value realisation, the commons as shared practices, and the evaluation of impact through qualitative dimensions. Drawing on examples from the arts, crafts, cultural heritage, education, management, and urban development, it demonstrates how the value-based approach can inform circular, creative, and sharing economies.

Aimed at undergraduates, postgraduates, scholars, and practitioners – such as cultural managers, creatives, urban planners, policy-makers, and organisational leaders – this book offers an insightful framework for understanding the dynamic interrelations between individuals, institutions, and the communities they serve. The book functions as both a practical manual and an inspiration for continued research and application.

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Introduction

Value-Based Approach in Making

Lyudmila Petrova, Arjo Klamer, Christian Handke, Valeria Morea and YounSun Won

Why a value-based approach?

"Doing the right thing is more important than doing the thing right."[1] That seemingly obvious insight has near universal appeal. But how do we learn what that right thing is? This volume comes from a community that dared to answer that question for themselves and stakeholders in the cultural sector and beyond.

Recently, we have witnessed a major transition within the practices of organisations, communities, and governments, namely a shift towards pursuing sustainability, justice, and creativity within both our economies and societies more broadly. The cultural and creative sectors are a case in point here. While the cultural and creative industries (CCI)[2] have long been viewed as a source of economic growth and urban development, as well as identity anchors and drivers of qualitative changes, recent research suggests, however, that merely focusing on the economic benefits of the CCI can serve to undermine the social and cultural values of the communities they either serve or work with. Another strand of analysis and policymaking concerns the so-called social impact of the arts, an approach that considers the contribution of the CCI and cultural heritage to individual well-being, health, social cohesion, community development, diversity, and inclusion.

Both of these aforementioned approaches consider the arts as being instrumental for other outcomes, namely those that are economic or social in nature. In so doing, they both overlook the cultural impact, that is, the artistic and cultural values that the arts generate, not to mention the intrinsic value of artistic practices themselves. It is evident that a musician makes music not necessarily merely for the sake of financial gain, or to help people with dementia, for that matter but above all to make music, to be a musician. The value-based approach (VBA) sets out to recognise the cultural values of artistic practices themselves and do justice to them. By doing so, we can gain insight into the interactions between the cultural and creative sectors and the economy and society at large.

The VBA ought to be especially relevant for people in cultural organisations as well as artists and craftspeople, insofar as it encourages them to look beyond

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their financial accounts and quantitative indicators and to instead articulate their values and be clear about what their purpose is. Our framework will help them to figure out their values and purposes, as doing so alone can often prove challenging. Specifically, the VBA-based quality evaluator enables them to reflect upon their practices in order to determine whether they are "doing the right things"[3] or not.

The transition from a quantitative focus to a qualitative one is far from straightforward. Indeed, both practitioners and policy makers are struggling to adapt and to determine what practices are relevant to them and other relevant stakeholders (e.g. funders, communities, audiences, visitors, peers, etc.) and what the qualities of these are, alongside trying to figure out how they can know that people, organisations, and policies are doing the right thing and that their purpose is being realised? When can a museum be said to be doing the right thing? Does a public broadcasting company succeed in bringing the news to the public and, in so doing, contribute towards sense-making practices among the populace? Is it actually helping to reduce the polarisation and fragmentation that we are currently experiencing in society, as it purports to be doing? Does an energy company actually contribute towards building a sustainable society? How can we determine social and cultural impacts?

Scholars like us are working hard to keep afoot with these developments and provide the required knowledge that can then be transmitted to the practical fields. We point out that values are context-sensitive and can be experienced differently by diverse stakeholders. The interrelations between values, context, and stakeholders translate into different social relations and practices, which have a complex and dynamic nature. The analysis of these requires a systemic approach that involves both sense-making and interpretation.

This volume aims to advance the aforementioned goals of the VBA. Above all, the authors of this book show how to work with values. They conceptualise new concepts, adopt critical and heterodox perspectives, and offer innovative ways through which to interpret the realisation of values. They show how disparate yet kindred disciplines such as economics, sociology, cultural studies, and urban studies can work together to further the VBA and extend its application to a wide range of practices.

The ambition of the authors is not only to advance the theory of the VBA but also to demonstrate its practical significance. They all aim to raise awareness of both values and their subsequent realisation within different contexts. Most of the authors insist that the focus should be upon practices and the qualities thereof. They also all acknowledge the urgency of looking beyond the economic impact of artistic and creative practices to instead also consider the social and especially cultural outcomes.

How the value-based approach has taken shape

The VBA is the outcome of 25 years of research under the umbrella of professor Arjo Klamer, the Chair in Economics of Art and Culture at Erasmus

University. We both acknowledge and wholeheartedly welcome connections with similar approaches developed by other economists and social scientists within the healthcare and business sectors with respect to "purpose", social enterprise, social corporate responsibility, and so on.

The VBA has gradually taken shape around weekly (back then) seminars at Erasmus University, Rotterdam. During these meetings we – PhD students (both former and present at that time), faculty members and guests – discussed topics that we believed matter. It took us a while to realise that we were unintentionally, but nevertheless consistently, working on and putting together a common research project grounded in understanding the values and processes of valuations that underpin both humans' actions and societal well-being. It was only in recent years that we were able to articulate both our ambition and commitment towards sharing our version of the VBA with peers and practitioners.

An important aspect of VBA is engaging practitioners in structured yet open conversations about their values, purpose, and how to realise these through new practices. In 2014, the foundation CREARE[4] applied VBA with social innovators in Turin, Italy – such as S-NODI,[5] Fa bene,[6] ASAI,[7] and *Costruire Bellezza*.[8] Initial discussions revealed that these organisations focused mainly on measurable outputs such as number of beneficiaries, sessions, hours, and so on. For example, participants in the volunteer organisation ASAI initially defined success as reducing dropout rates. Through the VBA – especially using "quality evaluator" – they discovered that their core purpose is different, that is, helping students flourish by fostering a sense of belonging, empathy, care, and reciprocity. This insight let them to redesign their interventions and strengthen collaborations with schools, peer organisations, and the students themselves. Inspired by the VBA they began complementing conventional output indicators with a qualitative assessment of its practice. Both ASAI and the other organisations we worked with in Turin realised that their activities shaped a specific community practice, beyond individual project timelines.

By now, the VBA provides an alternative perspective on the economy. It above all stresses qualities, that is, the quality of work, the quality of the environment, the quality of society, the quality of a performance, as well as the public values that corporations try to realise. It attempts to provide a conceptualisation of circular, creative, and sharing economies, has a keen interest in the crafts economy, the arts, and cultural heritage, reconsiders the principles of policy, and supports the emergent interest in "purpose". Among its chief outcomes is a new method of evaluation, directed towards values and qualities, the conceptualisation of the process of values realisation, the conceptualisation of the commons as shared practices, as well as an interest in other measurements of welfare.

Main themes and the structure of this volume

Many good ideas require the right timing and environment for them to evolve and be developed further. The plan to collate this VBA volume formed in and around the COVID-19 pandemic and emerged from the dust of many ideas that came out of the various symposiums we organised in Rotterdam (2019 and 2021), Venice (2022), Hilversum (2023), and Cambridge in 2024. The anchors of this project are those people who remain committed to its goals, that is, those who have gathered, discussed, argued, probed, and consolidated around the following points: first, what exactly does a VBA mean to each of us, to our academic community, as well as to artists, (creative) practitioners, and policy makers?; second, how does the VBA align with similar approaches and in what ways is it distinct from different disciplines?; third, what does the practice of the VBA mean within different contexts? While each chapter tells a different story, they nevertheless all complement each other, insofar as they allow us to imagine the world we are living in through different lenses, namely, via the artistic, social, cultural, and moral values to which we aspire.

Critical reflections: different discourses related to the value-based approach (Part I)

At the core of the VBA are values, and this concept is central within almost all of the contributions in this volume. Part I features chapters that discuss how to come to terms with this challenging subject in general terms, emphasising how values persist and come about through meaning and relationships over and above financial transactions, market logic, and organisational efficiency. The authors share the conviction that in order to truly understand why people do what do they at home, in social situations and within sense-making practices, we need to understand the values that motivate them.

In Chapter 1, Klamer redefines economics as the discipline that studies the realisation of values. He narrates how the VBA developed over time and how this led him to distinguish the human economy from the market and organisational practices that constitute the subject of standard economics. Introducing the new seven-sphere model as an evolving one from the five-and three-sphere models, he shows how the human economy is fundamentally different. Market and organisational practices are instrumental, insofar as they produce goods and services that people need to generate important and substantial goods. When people work together to make music, generate knowledge, inspire others with events and performances, they create substantive goods like music, knowledge, and a meaningful experience. When they do so, they are driven by a logic that is altogether different from the logic that guides market and organisational practices. The logic of the human economy, as he defines it, is relational, based on care, and depends upon the willingness-to-contribute. It is a logic predicated upon values and their realisation. Whereas the standard economy pivots around market and organisational practices, the human economy instead comprises practices of the home, social and societal practices, cultural, or sense-making practices, and personal practices, each of which represent a sphere within his model. It is within these latter practices that people generate what is important to them, such as, for example, art, knowledge, and a sense of belonging. They do so by engaging in practices that they share or have in common with others, which, in turn, generate shared and common goods. The human economies thus can be said to constitute a moral economy in the sense that its activities are directed towards the realisation of some good. Acting within the human economy is thus about "Doing the right things"[9] for individuals, communities, and societies.

In Chapter 2, Trimarchi adds to Klamer's perspective by providing a historical account of the evolution of economics and culture, arguing for a reimagined framework that reflects the dynamic, complex, and human-centred nature of both domains. Historically, culture justified the power of the elites during industrialisation, while economics became a rigid, predictive science. The author critiques these traditional paradigms and explores the need for a VBA that helps to unveil the complexity of modern society by focusing on pluralism, creativity, and emotional richness. The chapter advocates for integrating cultural insights into economics in order to foster shared values, collaboration, and human-centred growth that reflects evolving societal needs as well as the interplay of economics and culture.

In Chapter 3, Wincewicz-Price takes this argument further, by critiquing modern economics' reliance upon rational choice theory, which assumes stable, predefined preferences. She highlights the moral dimensions of human decision making that were already outlined in the preceding two chapters. Her chapter contrasts rational agents to "aspiring agents", who make decisions based upon an incomplete understanding of their goals, referring to the example of how people pursue the realisation of parenting to illustrate her point. Inspired by Agnes Callard's concept of aspiration, the chapter describes value formation as a process through which agents learn through their experiences and reflections to appreciate values over time. Proleptic reasoning allows agents to act towards ends they do not fully understand yet, which, in turn, serves to foster self-improvement and growth.

Petrova's Chapter 4 presents a framework of cultural valorisation within the arts based upon a complex interplay between individual creativity, institutional practices, and shifting values. It frames valorisation as a socially embedded, iterative, and transformation-driven process that occurs across three stages: (1) articulation of (shared) values among all actors involved; (2) realisation of values through concrete practices; (3) assessment of the value shifts that bring about a transformation. Using both Kuhn's paradigm shift theory and the VBA, she argues that while (artistic) innovation begins with individual artistic discoveries, it only evolves as a common practice of groups when artists and creatives are deliberately co-designing a new culture (of co-creating, producing, appraisal, etc.) that sustains their fundamentally different community life in the long term.

In Chapter 5, Handke seeks to disentangle a thicket of incompatible jargon and categorisations in debates on value and values. The author calls for a deliberate distinction between different value-related themes, such as *what* people value, *how much* they value, or *how values take shape*. He then positions VBA in relation to other research traditions than cultural economics (including cultural sociology), addressing VBA's interdisciplinary relevance, as well as some of its persistent challenges. The chapter praises VBA's emphasis on value formation in interdependent learning processes. It also welcomes VBA proponents' contribution to promote qualitative, user-centric methodologies on economic issues. On the other hand, the chapter criticises VBA for alleged, superficial criticisms of economics and a lack of deliberate and critical engagement with other influential disciplines. The chapter concludes with some constructive suggestions on how to further develop VBA and related work on value(s) in the cultural sector.

Values and valorisation: applications of the value-based approach (Part II)

Many VBA proponents focus on practices of all kinds, because when you observe what it is that people actually do, their values show in the process. The chapters in this part use the VBA as a framework and method for studying the world of the arts, crafts, urban development, the operation of social and cultural organisations, and government policies. Almost all chapters provide illustrations of the way this heuristic works through the analysis of different practices.

The two concepts of common goods, of shared goods, and how agents engage with them play a central role. Within economic thinking the concept of value is typically related to specific goods. In other words, a book can be said to have value insofar as people are willing to pay a certain price for it. A book, therefore, can be privately owned. When the buyer is willing to pay the price that the seller is willing to accept, then she can acquire ownership by buying the book. Standard economists recognise that there are also goods that although people ascribe value to them, they are not willing to pay the price for them. For example, some people value having clean air to breathe but are unlikely to pay the costs associated with maintaining the quality of the air. Even if some people were prepared to pay those costs, they cannot exclude others from breathing this air. People also cannot compete for inhaling clean air in the same way that they can for a loaf of bread. Economists call clean air a public good and propagate for collective action to secure it. People pay indirectly by paying taxes. The costs are included in GDP. Other public goods are public roads, general education, public health, fire protection, and security.

Recently, another good has come to the forefront, however. In part, thanks to the work of Elinor Ostrom (2010), economists have come to recognise and identify common goods. The notion dates from the times that villagers had the surrounding fields in common. All villagers had access to these fields, and would let their sheep loose on them. The consensus among economists was that such common goods are untenable, because if we assume that all villagers would optimise the use of the fields by maximising the number of sheep, then the result would be rivalry. But lacking discipline overgrazing would be the result. Privatisation of the fields or collectivisation would be the solution. However, this is not necessarily the case, according to Elinor Ostrom, who altered the discussion by pointing out that the discipline might be social: villagers can rebuke those who keep too many sheep, or they can get together and agree upon how to manage the field. Ostrom demonstrated that the commons are thus sustainable through the practice of stewardship, trust, and cohesiveness of a group of individuals whose lives, for generations, depended upon the produce yielded by the resource. This is also what often occurs with so-called common pool resources.

The social regulation of common pool resources provides a conceptual starting point for the VBA. Without being too explicit, Ostrom highlights the social practice of governing a common pool resource (see also Euler, 2018). The notion of practice figures prominently within the VBA. The practice of the commons can be social but is often cultural as well (in the sense of sense-making). Knowledge commons are a good example of the latter. Cultural economics could also be considered such a commons. Those scholars that consider themselves cultural economists contribute with their work, their participation within conferences, and their teaching to that commons. When people do not contribute, or do not qualify for a contribution, then they are excluded. The exclusion prevents a common good to be public. Rivalry, however, does not apply here, in that it is not that people compete with each other to be part of the commons, but rather work together to improve the qualities of the commons. Other examples of cultural or knowledge commons are Wikipedia and open-source software. A commons is therefore not a public good. Neither is it a private good. In fact, it is not subject to market logic either. The people that contribute usually do not pay and do not get paid for doing so. They are producers as well as consumers.

Within the VBA, we also distinguish between common goods and shared goods and tend to emphasise the practices that each of these goods entails. Whereas common goods and common practices bring people together who may not know one another, shared goods and shared practices involve people who know each other. Friendship is a good example in this regard, as are family and clubs for that matter. Just like in the case of common practices, shared practices require contributions from those who share the practice, such as friends in the case of friendship. A friendship can be said to be a good because "owning" it takes effort and because it generates all kinds of benefits. In that sense, friendship can be said to be like a book. The only difference is that you cannot buy it, or sell it for that matter (friendship and books both require practices to realise their value). Friendship is, therefore, a good but not a commodity. Its distinctive characteristics are shared ownership – you share ownership with your friend – and you both need to contribute to the friendship in order to keep it alive. Other people are excluded from the friendship. If friendship can be said to be a shared good, then so can a community, a family, a conversation, a church community, or a department at a university.

These goods do not figure into standard economics, but they do within the VBA. Whereas standard economists tend to view all the unpaid work that musicians do, as well as the generosity of friends, as anomalies in the world of homo economicus, the VBA instead sees that people are contributing towards a practice and, in so doing, are realising something that is important to them, that is, social and cultural values. The specific contributions are the following.

Craft/art-related practices

Consider the world of crafts as it is presented in Hofland-Mol's Chapter 6. The heuristic of standard economics points the investigator towards the products of crafts, the prices they fetch, and the income earned by craftspeople, for example. Moreover, it gets them interested in people's preferences of people as well as whether they have preferences for craftwork. The inevitable conclusion here is that the crafts are a dying industry and can be sustained only if they are supported as intangible practices.

In contrast, the heuristic of the VBA directs investigators to explore cultural influences upon the appreciation and valuation of creative crafts, using the goldsmith sector as a case study. Marleen underscores the social construction of the value of handmade goods, like jewellery, bringing out emotional, symbolic, technical, and authenticity-related factors in the process. The author refers to the goldsmith sectors in Germany and the Netherlands, drawing upon her own experiences as an artisan as a case study through which to examine how societal values and interactions shape the perception of artisanship and reflect the different qualities of the culture of craftmanship.

Similar insights are generated when researchers as well as practitioners apply the VBA to the world of the arts. Artists and artistic organisations turn out to be focused upon the realisation of artistic values and seek to contribute towards common practices.

Morea and Dekker, for example, show that public art is better viewed as a common good rather than a public good, say, as it is regarded within the standard economic perspective. In Chapter 7, they shed light upon how the meaning and values of public art are actively shaped and contested through social practices. Initially considered to be controversial due to its modernist aesthetic, Zadkine's sculpture *The Destroyed City* in Rotterdam, created to commemorate the 1940 Nazi bombing of the city, has since become an appreciated symbol of resilience and identity. After initial resistance, the citizens of Rotterdam gradually began to embrace it, giving it nicknames and even advocating for its repositioning or enhancement. Its societal appreciation thus extended far beyond war memory and, in fact, came to encompass anti-war protests, peace demonstrations, and reconciliation efforts. Its aesthetic and transcendental values were later widely recognised as a poignant representation of human suffering.

Similarly, Sabatini's Chapter 8 explores the potential of shared cultural resources, that is, cultural commons, for bridging both social divides and the cultural appreciation of heritage. Using the case of the mobile opera project *OperaCamion* in Italy, which invites local communities in marginalised areas to co-create, the author demonstrates through the lenses of a VBA and commons theory how accessibility to shared cultural resources can redefine the cultural values of a community. The chapter advocates for greater collaboration between cultural professionals, policy makers, and researchers to design sustainable governance systems.

Ferero and Pinto continue the discussion of the importance of cultural practices within urban commons in Chapter 9. Specifically, they apply the VBA to community-driven practices within shared physical spaces for culture and activism in Italy. Focusing upon three case studies – Asilo Occupato (Turin), Ex Asilo Filangieri (Naples), and Labàs (Bologna) – they underscore the ways in which these community practices reclaim urban spaces for community-driven cultural and social activities. They do so by applying different governance strategies to build community ties and sustainable institutional collaborations. Both studies reinforce the need to sidestep traditional market-state models and instead argue for institutional support and adaptive policies to sustain these community-driven initiatives.

Dalla Chiesa's Chapter 10 adds another dimension to the analysis by exploring the valorisation of digital culture. In her chapter, she studies practices that are shaped by the interplay between market and non-market values, such as, for example, knowledge, entertainment, sociability, and information. Platforms like TikTok, YouTube, and Twitch are enabling diverse creators to access audiences and foster creativity. However, challenges like intellectual property, fake news, and ethical concerns arise. The chapter argues that digital culture expands participation and redefines valuation through shared practices, which in turn, makes it essential to study how digital tools reshape cultural boundaries, consumption patterns, and value creation within a hybrid, post-digitalised world.

Governance practices

Leaders and managers learn that they need a vision and can answer the why of their organisation: why does it exist, what good does it do? It is understood that companies need to strive for more than merely the maximisation of profit. The VBA can make an important contribution in terms of helping organisations and companies to specify their purpose and supporting them to articulate it.

Mantoya's Chapter 11 blends literary analysis with economic and political theory, positing that George Orwell's thoughts on James Burnham's *The Managerial Revolution* remain relevant for critiquing modern technocratic and managerial ideologies. The chapter introduces the "fairy" as a metaphor for figures who disrupt singular realities, urging for a pluralistic and VBA to economics. It critiques the dominance of technocratic logic and advocates for integrating creativity and alternative perspectives. Orwell's insights remain crucial for challenging modern populism, automation, and technocratic elites that serve to marginalise diverse realities under the auspices of achieving pragmatic progress.

Dempster argues in Chapter 12 that cultural leadership is crucial for fostering resilient and sustainable cultural organisations. By drawing upon the VBA framework and its application to chamber music, the author illustrates how leaders can navigate the complex demands of their roles, in order to ensure the creation of lasting cultural values. The detailed analysis of the Pro Corda case – a chamber music education organisation – illustrates the practical challenges faced by cultural leadership to balance the creation of symbolic, societal, and personal values with financial and strategic pressures. The author draws upon an analogy of the chamber music as a leadership model based upon adaptability, mutual respect, collaboration, and co-creation, while, simultaneously, contrasting it with the hierarchical model of a conductor-led orchestra.

DoCarmo's Chapter 13 examines the organisational sustainability of small museums during the COVID-19 pandemic. Unlike large museums, small museums are community-oriented, specialised, and reliant upon volunteers and modest budgets. The closures during the pandemic forced them to focus upon internal improvements, like cataloguing and professionalisation, while, simultaneously, balancing cultural activities (exhibitions, education) with support tasks (management, fundraising). Strong communication helped retain volunteers, while financial resilience was bolstered by municipal subsidies and support packages. Despite limited resources, museums highlighted their dual roles as cultural stewards and social spaces, reinforcing community ties in the process. Interviews with Dutch museums revealed adaptability and commitment to purpose as key factors in overcoming these challenges, emphasising the need for diversified funding and audience engagement in order to ensure long-term sustainability.

Educational practices

The VBA has also been applied within the educational sector. Garst and Lavanga's Chapter 14 discusses how academia has been transformed through the Design Impact Transition (DIT) platform at Erasmus University Rotterdam (EUR). DIT experiments with new academic practices that emphasise transdisciplinarity, reflexivity, engagement, and mission-driven approaches in order to tackle sustainability challenges. It highlights tensions between traditional academic norms (e.g., disciplinary focus, individual excellence) and the collaborative, reflexive practices DIT advocates for. The chapter emphasises the importance of embedding these new values within academic structures in order to foster societal impact, while, simultaneously, preserving academic integrity.

The topic of integrity also informs Yalcintas, in Chapter 15, who utilises the VBA in order to explore the concept of academic inflation, criticise the dominance of market and governance logics in higher education, and discuss prioritisation of economic and political gains over academic integrity, which collectively leads to the commercialisation of knowledge production. The chapter calls for a value-based redesign of academia in order to restore trust, accountability, and balance among market, governance, and cultural spheres, ensuring that universities prioritise intellectual growth over profit-driven practices.

Value-based assessment and evaluation (Part III)

The VBA not only offers a fertile perspective for cultural economists and other social researchers, but also a pragmatic guide for practitioners. Specifically, it provides artists, craftspeople, directors of museums, theatres, and orchestras with a new vocabulary that does greater justice to the qualities they are seeking than the standard economic approach does. People from funding agencies should also pay close attention here, insofar as once cultural impact becomes a recognisable form of value, then people will invent ways to engage in culture washing in precisely the same way as people are now engaging in greenwashing. They will need quality-based evaluations, precisely like the one VBA provides.

Reflecting upon their longstanding experience with quality-based evaluations, in Chapter 16, Petrova and Klamer outline the main steps to be taken when engaging in this type of evaluation. Their objective in the chapter is to present both a practical guide to organisations and funders to help them articulate their relevant values, purpose, and stakeholders, and a methodology to determine whether the practices of the organisation serve its purpose and realise its values. The methodology is exceptional insofar as it is able to expose the changes in values of the stakeholders that a cultural organisation may be seeking.

Chapter 17 by Coate, van Loon and Weber explores how to articulate values in a meaningful way. Arguing that the Australian publishing sector has been undermined or is undergoing a "crisis of confidence", the authors illustrate how new value can arise when applying a VBA evaluative framework to an analysis. It provides a useful set of value dimensions or proxies for each core value (artistic, symbolic, etc.) while, simultaneously, underscoring the fact that stakeholders' value perceptions can show in different relative weight (on a particular scale of measure). In this way, they promote the VBA as a people-centred approach.

Another useful tool to support the operation of cultural managers is proposed in Chapter 18 by Vermeulen and Loots. The authors address strategies for measuring and achieving social impact within arts and cultural organisations, with an especial focus upon Diversity, Equity, Accessibility, and Inclusion (DEAI). The chapter highlights challenges in aligning organisational values with measurable impact goals and introduces a decision tree based upon Ebrahim's (2019) framework. The tree categorises strategies into four types – Niche, Integrated, Emergent, and Ecosystem. Case studies, such as the Van Gogh Museum, illustrate the practical applications of the framework.

Bille's Chapter 19 examines the non-market value of Danish theatres, proposing the VBA as a means through which to reinterpret findings from a contingent valuation study. It highlights that non-users' willingness-to-pay (WTP) for theatres via taxation reflects a willingness-to-contribute (WTC) towards a perceived cultural common good rather than a calculated utility based upon benefits. Non-users value theatres for their symbolic and communal roles, enhancing identity and community cohesion, whereas users assess value based upon direct benefits and externalities. The chapter challenges traditional economic assumptions of rationality and preferences, suggesting that VBA provides a better framework through which to understand both the perceived and societal values of cultural institutions like theatres.

Won's Chapter 20 presents a VBA evaluation of a South Korean urban regeneration project in order to illustrate to architects and developers that their projects can go beyond merely maximising financial returns to instead also seek to generate cultural and social impact. Using big data in combination with focus groups and survey data, the chapter argues that interventions within the urban area can also bring about social and cultural changes. An urban development project can thus serve the ambition of engendering a creative environment, by virtue of creating spaces that attract creatives who then in turn attract creative businesses.

Conclusions

The ambition of this edited collection is to position the VBA as a novel framework that emphasises the subjective nature of value within different contexts, in an attempt to broaden traditional economic approaches, while, simultaneously, acknowledging the importance of relational aspects which foster individual and community reflection upon values. Each chapter acknowledges the role of social interactions and common practices in shaping values and decisions, rejecting purely individualistic or transactional perspectives. It is for this precise reason that the VBA points towards the need for a quality-based evaluation that does justice to the qualitative objectives of companies and organisations. Ultimately, it is cultural impact that they are seeking to realise rather than merely social impact and economic impact that subsidising organisations tend to emphasise.

The collection balances critique with constructive engagement, advocating for a VBA as a more comprehensive framework for interpreting cultural valuation. We are convinced that the perspectives outlined by the different authors in this edited volume collectively enrich the VBA discourse – as well as wider engagements with value and values throughout society – by addressing theoretical foundations, interdisciplinary relevance and practical applications.

Notes

1 This exact formulation is often attributed to business guru Peter Drucker. The original source is nowhere to be found. It may simply be a proverb of unclear origin and in the public domain.
2 Throsby's (2008) model incorporates both core sectors (literature, music, performing arts, visual arts, heritage and museums, film industry) and related industry sectors (advertising, broadcasting, video games, publishing, music recording, architecture, and design) and as such is used as a starting point to understand the concepts of cultural industries and cultural good and their relations.
3 Here we refer to Klamer's book *Doing the right thing* (2016, 2017).

4 CREARE is a Dutch centre for research in arts and economics, co-founded by Arjo Klamer, Lyudmila Petrova and Anna Mignosa, www.crearesocial.nl
5 https://www.s-nodi.org
6 https://www.fabene.org
7 https://asai-terremondo.it/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/2017_Giovani_Investimenti_Toolkit.pdf
8 http://www.antropologiaapplicata.com/portfolio/costruire-bellezza/
9 Klamer (2017).

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Part I

Critical Reflections: Different Discourses Related to the Value-Based Approach

1 From the Value of Culture to the Human Economy

The Development of a Research Programme

Arjo Klamer

Introduction

The idea that you and I, and virtually everybody else for that matter, operate within a human economy above all, rather than within the economy of markets and organizations, emerged out of a series of confrontations between myself as an economist and artists. I use the term ‘confrontation’ here intentionally, in as far as these interactions between myself and artists were frequently acrimonious. Within this chapter, I will attempt to characterize the human economy, demonstrate its relevance not only for artists but for all humans, and show that this human economy is altogether different in terms of its logic, modus operandi, and substance from the economy that economists, not to mention many politicians, civil servants, managers, and the public at large, are used to imagining.

Above all, the human economy is about values. The value-based approach (VBA) that we develop within this book is therefore best suited to exploring the practices that constitute the human economy.

The exercise of imagining the human economy, or economies even, is deeply relevant, or at least I believe it is, because it provides possibilities for realizing a good life and a good society other than via the means of the transactional logic of markets and the rule-based logic of organizational practices. The key insight here is that while markets and organizations are instrumental to the realization of a good life and a good society, by themselves they fall short. Rather, other spheres are essential for, and, indeed, constitutive of, the human economy. The conceptualization of the human economy should contribute towards all ongoing attempts to envisage a new, thriving, meaningful, doughnut, community, social, or whatever other type of economy (Jackson, 2009; Castells, 2017; Raworth, 2017; Trebeck and Williams, 2019; Klomp and Oosterwaal, 2021).

This chapter provides an overview of the research that I myself, colleagues and PhD students have engaged in at the Erasmus University in Rotterdam from 1995 up until the present, which led to the development of the VBA. This research sometimes goes under the name of the Rotterdam school of cultural economics.

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Although I myself have concluded that artists primarily operate within the human economy, and argue that economists would benefit from paying attention to the practices of artists rather than the other way around, not all partners in this research endeavour (many of whom are contributors to this book) go along with this. Indeed, Hans Abbing and Olav Velthuis, and perhaps all of us, tell a different story. Perspectives differ you see, which is also an important insight for the narrative within this chapter.

Perspectives differ

The idea that perspectives differ is a readily acceptable notion for students of the philosophy of science, such as myself. For example, Deirdre McCloskey (1985) has shown that economists practice rhetoric and plaster their discourse with rhetorical tropes such as metaphors and narratives. Following on from this insight, in my work I have long attempted to show that economists practice different research programs, engage in different conversations (a favourite expression of mine), and therefore often misunderstand each other (Klamer, 1984, 2007).

The rhetorical perspective makes us realize that not only economists, but also other people, imagine the economy in particular ways. Many people follow economists in their own imaginations, in as far as they tend to see the world in terms of 'markets', 'money', 'prices', 'businesses', 'transactions', 'profit', 'freedom', 'greed', and so on and so forth. All of this is taught in the introduction to economics courses (which I have been teaching all along). Artists, and subsequently in their wake other people, make us rather think about other economies within which cultural and social values are accorded greater importance than financial values, where people interact with each other more than they transact. That is why the conventional economic apparatus—such as supply and demand, price elasticities, public goods—simply does not make much sense when we economists try to figure out artistic practices (see, for example, Susana Graça, 2017). This is why the VBA presented itself as an alternative perspective through which to imagine the economy altogether differently than we are used to.

The first period: the economic impact of the arts

In 1994, I was appointed to the chair of economics of art and culture after a career as a macro economist, historian, and philosopher of economics in the US. I felt it was my task to make sense of how the artistic community sees economic logic. Joining the association of cultural economists was the obvious next step, as they were now the relevant academic community for me. It was a small group, no doubt, but it nevertheless had quite a few interesting sparring partners, such as David Throsby, Michael Hutter, Ruth Towse, Bruno Frey, and Victor Ginsburg (I was unaware at that time of the existence of other cultural economists who were focusing upon the role of culture within organizations and the economy). It was also clear from the outset that the work of a cultural economist should focus upon cultural policy. As I was embarking on this journey within the Dutch context, this meant that I would have to deal with the heavy subsidization of artists and artistic organizations by the Dutch government, with a clear understanding that I was not to criticize and reject this practice.

Walking to the interview for the position in Rotterdam, I realized that one question could be about my intended research program. It occurred to me that very moment that my focus should be upon the value of culture. Although I now would pluralize this—that is, the values of cultures—I still think the title remains pertinent to what I have been doing ever since. Values can be financial, but also social and cultural in nature. Cultures refer to artistic practices, other sense-making practices as well as to its anthropological meaning (Dutch versus American culture, for example). The first revenue from this way of looking at the arts came out in an edited collection of essays in *The Value of Culture* (Klamer, 1996). A lot of work followed, conducted by people from all over the world, which subsequently culminated in what we now refer to as the VBA. This is the theme that all the contributions in this book have in common.

The insights came embarrassingly slow, though, I have to say. The notion of value had popped up, but being economists, we taught our students about the logic of the market, about the pricing of goods, public goods, and externalities, and so on, and had to work hard to overcome resistance. The instructions made them sceptical of the subsidization of the arts. After all, what economic justification exists for the subsidization of 9 out of every 10 euros that artistic organizations like museums, theatres, orchestras, and the opera spend. This becomes even more problematic when one considers that it is mainly wealthy Dutch people and academic students who benefit from this. As economists, we have the conviction that those who benefit should ultimately pay. After all, that is the logic of the market. However, in the case of governmental subsidies, everyone pays but only a few benefits. The argument that the arts constitute a public good fails to make sense, because exclusion is built into them, not to mention the fact that there is also some rivalry at play. Although, perhaps, externalities could provide a justification here, this still raises the question of what are they and how significant are they? Similarly, throwing in the notion of the respective merit of art evokes the question of who determines the merit of the arts (hint: those who benefit from it). It was not so difficult to sway my students in this regard. I merely had to point out that their parents receive hefty subsidies for their pleasures (such as a visit to the Concertgebouw), whereas they have to pay almost the full price to attend a festival or football match.

Although we were unaware of the neoliberal spirit of the time, we nevertheless contributed to it by introducing the notion of cultural entrepreneurship (Klamer and Velthuis, 1999; Klamer, 2011; it is only fair to note here that others, like Giep Hagoort, claim to have been the first to use the notion, a now dubious honour). We saw the cultural entrepreneur as a new character in the theatre of the arts. That is to say, the cultural manager who is skilled in both the professionalization of artistic organizations and the formulation of plans and budgets that are needed for subsidies, was to make way for people who specialized in increasing the income of artistic organizations and other financial support via the form of sponsorships, crowdfunding, and donations. In this respect, it should have served as a warning that the Dutch ministry of culture quickly adopted the strategy in order to reduce the subsidies and make artistic organizations independent from the (local) government as part of the neoliberal program of budget cuts and privatization.

In the interim, doubts set in. I ran into quite a bit of resistance amongst the students, but I attributed this mainly to a lack of education in economics. Even more confronting in this regard was the reactions of artists, and especially art students. I was regularly invited to talk about the economy of arts and the role of money with the arts. I recall one particular session at the art academy in Arnhem, a Dutch town, where I was explaining the logic of markets and how this could be applied to the arts. I may even have introduced the notion of cultural entrepreneurship as well. While I was talking, a student interrupted and said ‘bullshit’. Slightly taken aback, I asked her what motivated her to say this. She told me straight out that I had no clue about how the world of the arts worked. Others quickly piled on. They were not becoming artists to get rich. My market logic was spoiling their world. I completely ignored this fact, so they told me. This was nothing new, I should say. In fact, I had heard these arguments many times before, and would continue to. At that time, I tried to be polite and rephrase my point, all the while thinking ‘how stupid can they be?’ It took me too long—six years is my best guess—to realize that I in fact was the stupid one. My economic vision had blinded me both to the realities of artistic lives and the other economies in which artists operate in. At least I became aware of that part, I guess.

Economic impact studies were popular at that juncture, as were contingent evaluation studies. The former intended to show the impact that the arts have upon the economy, while the latter was a method for determining the prices of goods that lack sufficient markets, including, among other things, cultural heritage and museums.

A study of the economic impact of Dutch museums, in which I myself participated, showed that the economic impact was relatively small, whereas consultant firms had shown there to be a significant impact (with some double counting I noted). The question then became why restaurants and hotels that benefit from blockbuster exhibitions in museums and festivals do not pay for them, thus shooting down the argument that economic impact justifies governmental subsidies.

Contingent valuation studies soon lost their appeal when it became clear that policymakers did not pay any attention to them and when its scientific novelty wore off.

Thinking of values

Sometimes new insights appear in a flash, like when I came upon the topic of my research—the value of culture. Ordinarily, they come about in response to anomalies. Within the research group, we began to see the need to think in terms of values because of the clash between the economists' worldview and that of artists. That clash continued to gnaw away at us until it became an anomaly. Something just was not right, and that something may in fact have been our own way of thinking rather than that of artists. In other words, we began to see the consequences of Oscar Wilde's famous statement: cynics see the price of everything and the value of nothing; romantics see the value of everything and the price of nothing. Considering this juxtaposition, we saw culturalists like art historians and quite a few artists discussing solely artistic values to the neglect of financial values, while economists dealt only with the financial values of art.

Irene van Staveren (2001) and Wilfred Dolfsma (1999) made the notion of values central within their research. Van Staveren developed an Aristotelian approach, while Dolfsma figured out the values at play within pop music. We slowly came to recognize that values provide the key to understanding the actions of artists, and everyone else for that matter.

It took me several steps before I ultimately reached the conclusion that values are the answer to what is important for a person or a group of people (Klamer, 2002, 2003a, 2003b, 2013, 2017). A value can refer to the quality of an action or behaviour; such a value is also called a virtue. Think of 'honesty', 'prudence', 'temperance', 'customer oriented', 'teamwork', 'friendly'. Deirdre McCloskey dedicated three volumes to the subject of bourgeois virtues within market economies (2007, 2011, 2016). When people determine the values of their organization, they ordinarily articulate their virtues, or behavioural values. However, when culturalists, including artists, speak of values, or qualities, they typically refer to either the qualities of artwork or the social conditions in which the art comes about. Artists can thus be said to be focused on the realization of artistic and social values.

Looking beyond the market

Although we were still economists at this stage, we began to deviate from the focus upon market logic and instead began to argue that the mode of financing matters. While most sponsors adhere to the transactional logic, people also donate money simply because they care. Once Mecenasses began to support the arts for the sake of the arts or their own status, we argued that a new form of mecenat, with many contributors and foundations that would take care of the allocation, might have been called for. With P. W. Zuidhof, I wrote an article on the third sector for the Guggenheim Foundation (Klamer and Zuidhof, 2007). We borrowed the term from sociologists in order to indicate the sphere of giving, as something distinct from the market sphere (there is even a foundation on the third sector, connected with the John Hopkins University). We spelled out a three-sector model consisting of the market, government, and third sector, which we employed in order to show that the mode of financing the arts was distinctly different within each sector.

Ludmilla Petrova, Mignosa and myself conducted a study for the European parliament (2006) in which we applied this three-sphere model (Figure 1.1) and distinguished between financing through M (earned income, including sponsorship deals), financing through G (subsidies, tax benefits), and financing by way of the third sector (donations, gifts, volunteers). Both myself and Petrova (Klamer and Petrova, 2007) later stressed the consequences of these financial strategies. Each sphere has its own logic and specific corresponding values. The logic of the market is transactional, based on the quid-pro-quo principle—those who benefit, pay—and can be viewed as the sphere of freedoms (freedom to choose, freedom of enterprise). The logic of the government is political and bureaucratic in nature, with the dominant values being justice and equal treatment, while the logic of the third sector is relational and based upon the value of care (those who benefit are those who care). Cultural organizations need to take these logics into account. For instance, managers may be best equipped in the logic of the government, while cultural entrepreneurs may do better within the market sphere. The third sector requires the right motivation and inspiration; for these qualities, cultural leaders are needed, that is, people with the right vision and the ability to inspire and persuade. We claimed, in short, that the mode of financing matters (and I still hold to that position).

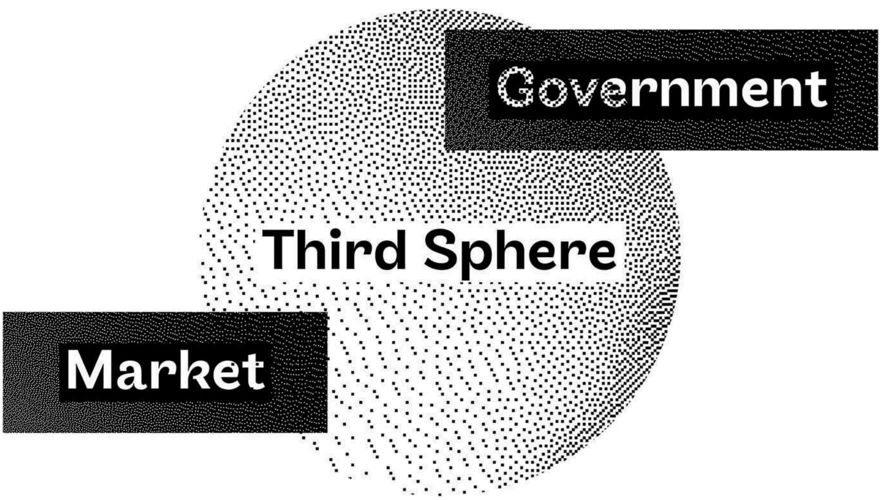

Figure 1.1 Three-sphere model consisting of the market (M), the government (G) and the third sector (S)
Source: Author's elaboration.

Within our research group, we began to speak of the essential tension between market logic and artistic logic. We adopted Bruno Frey's notion of crowding out, that is, the phenomenon whereby increases in financial value crowd out artistic or cultural value (Frey, 1997). It served as a warning to (local) governments seeking tourist expenditure in order to capitalize on their cultural capital. Cities like Venice, Barcelona, and Amsterdam are the quintessential examples of such crowding out effects. On the other hand, crowding in effects can also occur as in the work of Andy Warhol, Damien Hirst, Jasper Koons and the like, when inflated prices increase the artistic value of a work. The greatest concern, however, is that the encroachment of market and commercial practices leads to a decrease in artistic values or qualities.

We wavered between market logic on one side and artistic logic on the other. It would be only too fair to say that we still had to figure out at that stage what that artistic logic was exactly. We also had to deal with artists who had made serious work of the market logic, such as the aforementioned Andy Warhol, Jasper Koons, Damien Hirst, Joep van Lieshout (who was interviewed for the book *The Value of Culture* (1996)). Hans Abbing insisted then, and indeed continues to insist, that artists tend to romanticize their work and their lives and that they are much more financially minded than they pretend.

In the interim, Ruth Towse who was a professor at the Erasmus University at that time, continued to defend the neoclassical approach to the study of the arts (2019). Both she and Christian Handke (2010) contributed towards a cultural economic perspective on copyright. Corina Dalla Chiesa (2021) studied crowdfunding in order to finance the arts, following up on our earlier research that argued that people from artistic organizations should look beyond the market and the government to secure financial resources.

Where to go from here? At that juncture, the chief question was whether we should pursue the more conventional economic route and continue to explore the financial side of the arts, or should we take the risk and expand upon our perspective? That is to say, should we give a broader, more human reading of the market in order to acquiesce and reassure artists? Or were we missing something? We were stuck. We were experiencing what is called an aporia.

Within the community of cultural economists, David Throsby, Michael Hutter, and Bruno Frey, among others, opened up windows to another perspective. Throsby introduced Bourdieu's notion of cultural capital. Together with Hutter, he edited the book with the telling title *Beyond Price: Value in Culture, Economics, and the Arts* (2008) in order to shed light upon the complexity of value formation with various (historical) cases. Bruno Frey (1997), for his turn, brought in psychological insights and showed that commercial practices can crowd out cultural practices.

More in accordance with conventional economics was the incorporation of creative and cultural industries into the discussion by the economist Richard Caves, in his book *Creative Industries; Contracts Between Art and Commerce* (2000). Although a sociologist by trade, Richard Florida (2002) shook things up with his research program that demonstrated the economic impact of the arts and other creatives through their role within the regeneration of urban areas. All this work served to reinforce the idea that the market economy is all that matters and that the arts are important for their impact upon markets, either via the means of creative industries or their importance for urban economies.

Within our own research group, Anna Mignosa (2005) brought in public economics in order to study the support of cultural heritage within both Sicily and Scotland.

So, what was the way forward? Where did we end up going with our research?

Expanding the number of spheres

My own thinking received a fresh impulse from an attempt to found and develop a new university, which we named Academia Vitae. The idea was that an academic education should be accessible throughout one's life course and that it is people in the middle of their professional lives that are most in need of the lessons of the humanities. Conversations with philosophers, professionals and quite a few artists as well, based upon canonical texts, affirmed the idea that it makes sense to think of people acting for the sake of a good life and a good society, and that it is by virtue of seeking a good life and society that they can be said to be realizing, or valorizing, their values. Of course, people become distracted, get greedy, may overpower others in the pursuit of power, but the striving is ultimately about trying to do the right thing. Artists seek to make good art, and they want to be good artists, just like many of the people who are reading this book are seeking to be good scholars, or students.

However—and this insight emerged slowly but steadily—artists cannot realize their artistic and social values within the spheres of the market and the government. If they cannot do it there, then which sphere can they do this within then? The third sector? That did not make much sense either. A series of interventions within the three-spheres model were needed.

The first intervention was to change the term 'third sector,' into the 'social and societal sphere'. It is within the social and societal sphere that artists socialize. This also remains the sphere of gift giving, because the giving of gifts is social in nature.

Michael Hutter referred me to the work of the German sociologist Niklas Luhman (1995/1984) and suggested that we add the intimate sphere of the oikos, or home. That was the second intervention. In order to realize their art, artists need to persuade others in their household to forsake an income, especially during the initial stages. We saw that we had missed this dimension entirely previously, and therefore overlooked a significant financial source of the arts. Artists are willing to forsake income in order to practice their art.

The third intervention concerned a change in the characterization of G, the sphere of the government in the picture above. I now refer to this, following Foucault and Senellart (2008), as the governmental sphere, that is, the sphere of the logic of organizations. These include organizations of the state—think of them as organizations of the collective—but also other organizations like small and large firms, churches, and sport clubs. Whenever people form, join, or deal with organizations, they can be said to be dealing with the organizational logic of the G sphere.

The fourth intervention was possibly the most significant of all. It took a while to see the elephant in the room. We missed a sphere that is so obvious once you see it. It is the sphere in which you, the reader, and I are currently operating. It is within this sphere that artists do most of their work, as do scholars, teachers, film makers, authors, journalists, politicians, and consultants. This sphere is not social, even though social interactions do take place there, and it is certainly not the market sphere or the governmental sphere, even if market transactions and organizational logics do play a role. You will look in vain for this sphere within the models of Kate Raworth (2017), Karl Polanyi (1944) or Zelizer (2005), all of whom explore alternative spheres. The sphere that I am evoking here is the *cultural sphere*, or the *sphere of sense making* (Klamer, 2019). It is the sphere in which humans communicate, share ideas, create concepts, images, and music. It is the sphere of meanings, of interpretations, of metaphors, narratives, theories, faith, the transcendent, and the sacred.

When artists paint, perform, play, they are participating within the cultural sphere, as do scholars such as myself when we write, read, converse, conduct seminars, and teach. However, that is also what two people do who meet each other on the street and talk about the weather, gossip about the neighbours, or complain about politicians. All sense-making activities, including the sense making of us as Dutch, American, or Korean, constitute the cultural sphere.

The cultural sphere dominates, or at least embraces all of the other spheres.

These interventions led to the five-sphere model (Figure 1.2). This model figures prominently in several contributions to this book.

In a more recent version of this model (Figure 1.3), one other circle also embraces all: the sphere of nature. We humans all are part of nature and relate to nature in one way or another. Within the logics of M and G the relationship is exploitative, in the sense that people treat nature as a source. We can also seek a harmonious relationship with nature as propagated by the Australian aboriginals, Buddhists, spiritual and religious thinkers, and quite a few artists.

The seventh sphere in this recent model is the personal sphere. It is at the base of all other spheres. Again, artists inspired the visualization of this sphere. When a musician says that she is doing music because that is what she is, she reveals that making music is important for her personally. Being a musician is part of what to her is a good life. All of us face the task to make a good life for ourselves. We do so by participating and contributing in all the other spheres. But some practices are personal, like when we care for ourselves, practice what is important to us, and try to be aware of our values.

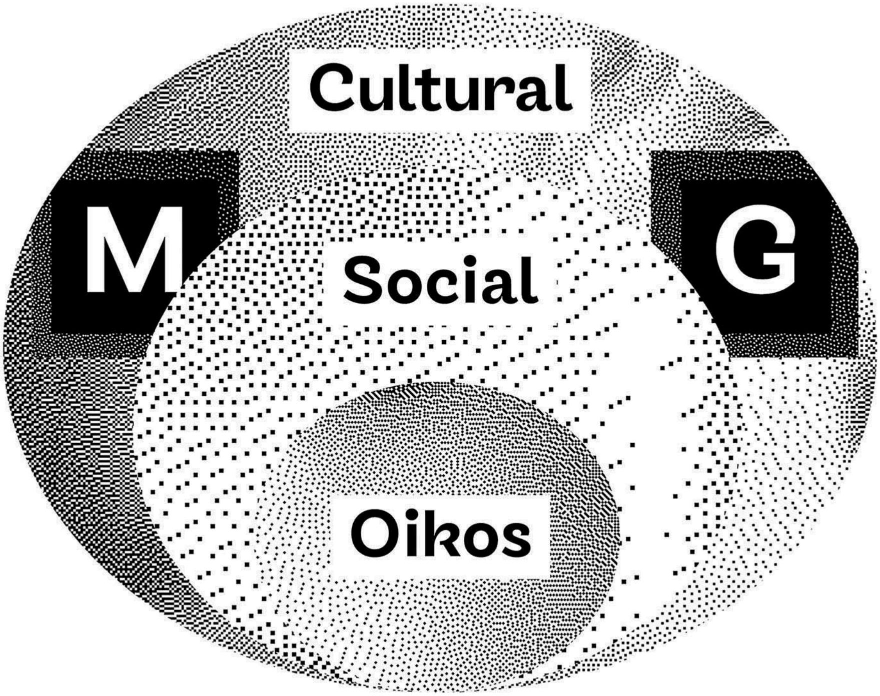

Figure 1.2 The five-sphere model with the spheres of the market M, governance G, the oikos (O), the social (S) and the cultural spheres (C)
Source: Author's elaboration.

Now you can clearly see how economists tend to focus upon the sphere of M, with market logic being the be-all and end-all. It is the logic that cultural economists apply when making sense of the activities of artists and that Gary Becker uses to analyse the economy of the oikos. The picture calls for a change of perspective to see distinct economies within each sphere. Within each of these spheres, people strive to realize a good life and a good society in distinct ways. Within the M sphere, for example, the ideas of scarcity and rational choice that economists are so fond of, make a great deal of sense. However, they make less sense within the other spheres and, in fact, can even become nonsensical. M is the sphere of transactional logic. Within the G and S spheres, power plays a significant role as sociologists are all too eager to point out. Within organizations, people must deal with rules, hierarchies, procedures, accounting, supervision, budgets, and politics, which are altogether quite different from the transactional logic of the M. G stands for the organizational economy. Within the S, we form friendships, find colleagues, join groups and communities to realize social, cultural, and sometimes financial values. Within that sphere, the social or community and the societal economies manifest themselves. Within the O, people produce and enjoy

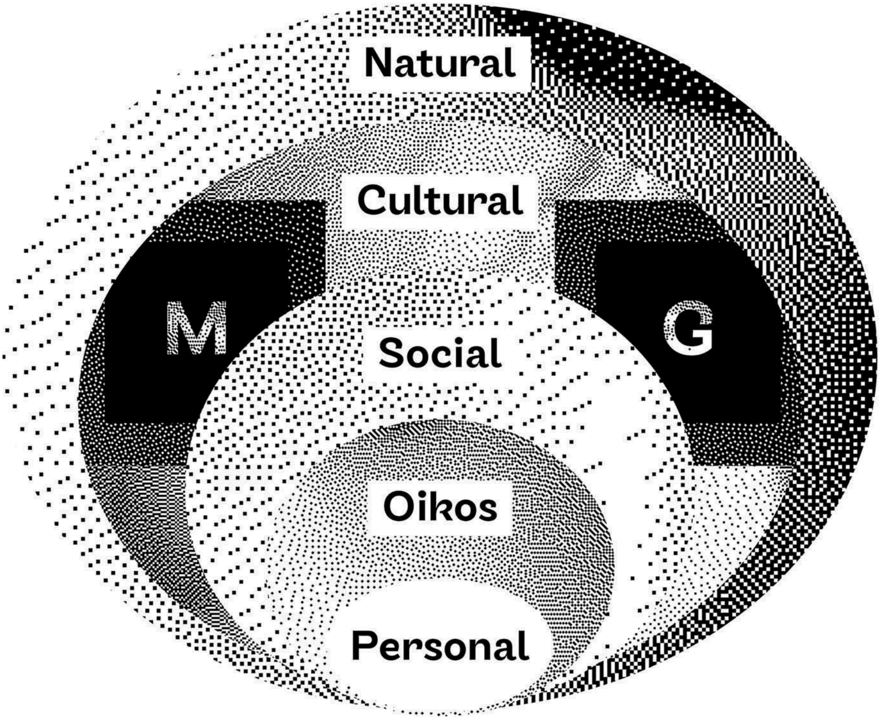

Figure 1.3 Seven-sphere model with the personal sphere (P) and the sphere of nature added (N)
Source: Author's elaboration.

intimacy, mutual support, and the basics of living. This is the economy of the oikos. Within the C, people produce and share meanings of all kinds, including, amongst other things, art, and music. Call it the cultural economy if you will. The interactions between humans and nature are what constitute the natural economy. Within the personal sphere we are dedicated to making a good life for ourselves.

> *The personal, social, societal, oikos, cultural and natural economies combined constitute the human economy.* At least, that is the proposal.
>
> (Klamer, 2023)

Within our research group, Petrova applied the five-sphere model to investigate the impact of a revolution within the governmental sphere in Bulgaria during the transition from communism to capitalism upon the world of the arts in Bulgaria (Petrova, 2020). Although she mainly wondered what the impact would have been upon the cultural sphere, she found the most significant effects within the social sphere, and to an extent within the organizations of the art world. In a similar vein to G. Peter Booth (2018) discovered striking parallels between art practices within C (cultural sphere) and S (social sphere) and the practices of the financial world, which demonstrates that bankers also operate within the cultural and social spheres.

The need for new concepts: shared goods, common goods, and the willingness to contribute

The work of Petrova and Booth made it abundantly clear that in order to make sense of the other economies we needed other concepts. Although the concepts of private goods and public goods may suffice within an analysis of market and governmental economies, they become highly problematic when we try to make sense of the human economy. When I go to the market to buy groceries, I look for the best deal. When I bring the groceries home, I take the time to prepare and share a meal with the other members of my oikos; we talk, share stories, discuss issues, and often lose our sense of time. The value of efficiency that is so prominent when I am operating within the M (market) sphere (and to a certain extent within the G sphere, too) gives way to the values of cosiness, care, enjoyment, support, and love.

What exactly do we do at home, then, if we are not 'economising'? I suggest that we are contributing towards a practice that constitutes a good that is called home. Having a good home is important to virtually all humans. When we are young, we simply cannot survive without one. People in most parts of the world are also in need of others within the household when they grow old. In between, households enable us to be mothers and fathers, to have a family, to share intimacy and so on and so forth. The good that we call home thus can only come about, become ours, by practicing it. When I go out to buy groceries, then, I can thus be said to be contributing towards that practice, and even more so when I am also preparing the meal and participating in conversations. I share the good home with other members; it is ours. And it is so because we all are willing to contribute to this good. When my willingness to contribute falls short of what is expected from me, then I risk finding the locks changed.

A home is a shared good that comes about within a shared practice (Klamer, 2017). A practice is relational in that it comes about when people interact socially and form relationships. In other words, it is not the willingness to pay (as is the cases within the market economy) but rather the willingness to contribute that is critical for both its quality and sustenance.

Art is a shared good as well, and with that a shared practice. Part of the sharing is social and takes place within the social sphere. This is where artists and their entourage form relationships and networks, go to school together, join groups and communities. But the relevant shared practice is cultural in kind. The work that artists bring in is their contribution towards that shared practice in the hope that others take notice, start citing and referring to the work, get inspired by it, and recognize its artistic qualities. Scholars will immediately realize that they themselves can be said to contribute, too, when they produce articles, referee other articles, and present papers at conferences. Like artists, they both participate in and contribute towards the cultural economy.

When we share activities with people that we do not necessarily know, we can thus speak of common practices (Won, 2020; Morea, 2020, see also Won's contribution to this book). Dance is a common practice in the city of Rotterdam thanks to the participation of a variety of studies, an academy, and several professional dance groups. Morea shows that public art can generate a common practice when people relate to it in all kinds of ways. Won brings out the common practices that constitute neighbourhoods in both Amsterdam and Seoul and has developed a method through which to assess the qualities of these practices.

Common practices are akin to the commons that is currently in vogue thanks to Elinor Ostrom (2010). The difference here is that the commons ordinarily signifies a resource—Ostrom speaks of a common pool resource—or a shared space, whereas a common practice implies the involvement of numerous people and organizations, all of whom contribute towards that practice and, in so doing, sustain or strengthen the practice. Without these contributions, the practice would die whereas a commons may continue to exist.

Accordingly, the human economy entails social and cultural practices that are all intended to realize social and cultural goods.

Artists operate primarily within the human economy, when they realize cultural values within C, social values within S, and make a living at home. While they also have to operate within the market economy, and some even may need to operate within the organizational economy, as those students told me at that time, those economies are merely instrumental, and the substance of their work takes place within the spheres of the human economy. If only I had that picture at that time.

These concepts proved to be most relevant in the research into the crafts. Several PhD projects applied the VBA approach and showed that a craft is a practice that enables people to realize social, cultural, personal values besides financial values (Jiang, 2018; Kotipalli, 2018; Stasiewicz 2024; Hoffman 2025, see also the contribution of Hoffman in this volume). Mignosa and Kotipalli (2019) edited a volume on the values of crafts.

We furthermore developed the quality evaluator in order to both assess qualities and determine impact (see, for example, Do Carmo, 2020; Won, 2020; Klamer et al., 2022, and the contribution of Petrova and Klamer in this volume). The idea here is that impact requires a change in values. The organizers of a festival may seek to contribute towards more inclusive and diverse practices by prioritizing music from a variety of cultures, but the real question is whether the festival goers will change their values because of what they experience? Do they consider the appreciation of music from other cultures more important than they did before they came? Establishing whether people got what they came for or otherwise, as most evaluation methods do, does not truly indicate impact. Rather, the evaluator needs to be able to record substantive changes. Values, again, are critical in this regard.

The outcome: a moral economy

Good artists seek to make good art, in the same way that good craftspeople seek to make good work. Of course, lots of art is no good, and craftspeople can also deliver bad work. People can be sloppy, lazy, or driven purely by making easy money, for example. However, as experience teaches us all, only doing the right things will make us truly happy, in the sense of feeling satisfied with our lives.

In this specific respect, the good that we are striving for answers the why question. Why do we do what we do, ultimately? What are the endless hours that I spend behind the computer really good for? Why am I travelling so much? Why am I engaging in endless conversations and am reading until late at night forsaking household duties? Ultimately, I do so because I want to do the right things, which in my case involves conceiving the human economy and by doing that contributing towards the common practice that is (cultural) economics. Similarly, artists seek to contribute towards the common practice that is art, while craftspeople strive to contribute towards the common practice that is crafts. The good that we are striving for is what gives us a sense of purpose (Klamer, 2021).

That sense of purpose is lacking, or simply assumed, in the instrumental world of the market and organizational spheres. That is to say, it is simply assumed that people seek to maximize utility and within the context of organizations to maximize profit. Within the human economy, these pursuits simply do not make any sense whatsoever. Within our oikos, we seek intimacy, good care, cosiness, and good fun. As friends, we seek to be loyal to each other, to share good times, to engage in rich conversations. Within the common practices that constitute a society, people seek justice, freedom, a shared story, national pride even. Within the cultural sphere, we are all seeking meaning, sense making, inspiration, faith, to experience transcendence. It is through engaging in such practices that many people pursue the ultimate good.

The why question—why do we do what we do?—thus compels us to ask ourselves and others: what is important to you? Asking this question forces people to articulate their values as well as the values they share with groups of people. It is for this precise reason that values play a prominent role within the various spheres that constitute the human economy. It is for this very reason that our research group has embraced the VBA.

Ultimately, it was artists themselves who showed us that their economy is above all a moral economy. When they forsake income, struggle, seek to realize themselves as artists, struggle with the content of their work, take risks, ignore commercial gain, or make money making into an artform even, they can be said to be seeking to do the right thing. But that is also what scholars are doing. And why would not everyone seek to do the right thing? That is what Aristotle presumed and that is what Adam Smith implied in *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*. That is why Keynes claimed that economics is a moral science. With this in mind, the task of economists then should not be to simply model the world based upon the presumption that people are rational calculators, greedy and self-centred, but rather should be about exploring what is needed in order to enable people to do the right thing.

Conceiving of the human economy and interpreting it as above all a moral economy forces us scholars to approach the world differently. We should not merely be trying to extract lessons that benefit policy makers, but rather should also be striving to gain insights into the conditions and practices that contribute towards a good life and a good society. This book provides a series of illustrative examples of where such an approach takes us.

Conclusion

Research is an ongoing process. It is also a shared practice. That characteristic has been especially clear within the research that we present here in this collection. People from all over the world have joined in this practice and contributed to it. This does not mean that we all agree on everything. Indeed, our seminars regularly end up in heated discussions. However, what we do share is, first, the conviction that the study of the world of the arts provides new insights, and second, a desire to extend these insights to other areas. Most importantly for us, our common practice has proven to be good for productive and inspiring conversations. By bringing out this book, we are therefore expressing hope as well as a desire to extend the conversation and involve more and more people. Who knows, artists and craftspeople may in due time experience the impact of these conversations.

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2 Neither Special Nor Ordinary, Simply Specific

Cultural Values Within the Human Ecosystem

Michele Trimarchi

Culture and economics: maps, glossaries, and values

Words are powerful. Their accepted strength reflects widely diffused value hierarchies, and their consolidated use may help to engender social cohesion; however, their abuse is a clear symptom of resistance towards any changes: when simple and useful definitions become dogmatic labels, then this is a clear indication that society is afraid to cast doubt over both the consistency and effectiveness of the prevailing cultural, social, and economic paradigm. It is my contention that this is precisely what we are living through at the present moment.

Among the many uncertainties that characterise the transition between the late-industrial system and the as yet undefined emerging paradigm, 'economics' and 'culture' have been subjected to a gradual re-interpretation in an attempt to overcome their respective textbook logics. Within manufacturing capitalism, serial mechanisms and homogeneous actors were granted consequentiality, with dimensional accumulation being intrinsic to the system itself.

What we today define as culture actually derives from the Latin word '*colere*' (to cultivate, both a field and an interest, almost 'to take care of'); being its past participle, it literally means 'the things that will have been cultivated', which implies that its value arises out of a process. Such a definition perfectly fits the anthropological definition of culture as the evolving set of knowledge, beliefs, traditions, practices, art, and such like that serves to define people as members of a given society.[1]

When the industrial revolution erupted, the newly ruling bourgeoisie required their own form of 'objective' endorsement in much the same way that monarchs had been granted by popes and bishops who were acting on behalf of God.[2] In the absence of any such divine authorisation, the industrial class understood that the appropriation of the past could be useful. In this respect, the Mediterranean basin was replete with the suggestive remains of prior civilisations: Egyptians, Greeks, Romans. Consequently, culture became both a label and an object of social and economic exchange.

Absorbed by both the structure and expected dynamics of the industrial economy, the cultural realm was promptly framed within a hierarchical and

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taxonomical perspective: museums were created, in order to serve as the institutional depots of the forced past of the ruling class; in theatres, stalls became the most prestigious seats, since from there the spectators could be seen by everyone; cultural enjoyment thus became a form of social acknowledgement, predicated on the pleasure of being members of the right club.

Within such an approach, the value chain of what we today define as culture simply derived from its power to endorse the industrial milieu. Hence, it became relatively natural to interpret culture (actually, a list of paintings, sculptures, stories, musical pieces, etc.) as an objective 'message', a form of ethical constraint that culminated in a selective view of society: the cultivated versus the ignorant; the initiated versus the barbarians; in short, the powerful versus the excluded.

Within such a framework, cultural values (i.e., the values generated by culture) are deemed to be objective. Only experts and scholars can understand their meanings, which implies that society at large can only absorb these meanings passively, and the dimensions of cultural enjoyment prevail over any other arguments. Artworks are listed adopting conventional ranking systems, with those evaluated as less important subsequently buried within underground depots. Here, culture is being accumulated. It is *homo economicus.*

Around the same time that culture was being adopted as the endorsement of power, economics as we now know it was invented: prior to this, it was simply viewed as philosophy, with its principal orientation being to craft questions that were potentially controversial. At that juncture, the world was in a process of rapid transformation (also on the other side of the Atlantic), and, therefore, some pointed questions would certainly have been helpful. However, in practice, the direction that economics took was the opposite one: in a relatively short period of time, economics strove to be recognised as an exact science within a 'if-then' framework.

The dynamics of time can serve to engender a different and continually evolving (sometimes involving) value hierarchy. For centuries, the prevailing values had been spiritual, religious, and esoteric in nature, norms were rigid, and subjectivity was punished. Even in instances in which the religious rug made the dust that lay under it visible, this simply took the form of a direct exchange between, on the one hand, the convenience of being protected, and, on the other hand, the benefits of being served.

With the advent and subsequent growth of manufacturing capitalism, the emergent individualism simply could not be allowed to craft heterogeneous value hierarchies. Consequently, the search for the good that had formed the backbone of philosophy was converted into how material choice was constrained by limited resources. Monetary metrics were subsequently adopted, while the formerly rich spectrum of values were distilled into a wholly one-dimensional and homogeneous goal: accumulation.

The impact of 1789 upon society and its value hierarchies

The French Revolution constituted a radical break with the status-quo at that juncture. The feudal system, however one wishes to define it, had started with the introduction of agricultural technology many millennia before. The relationship between society and space was clearly defined: production could occur anywhere, in light of the fact that only a few 'ingredients' were required and the basic technology needed could be assembled even in a small village. Trade could only occur in towns, where duties were paid for the local Lord's permission.

After the introduction of widespread serial technology, only towns were able to bear the burden of industrial production (which also institutionally facilitated the urban concentration[3] of the workforce), but mass production could no longer be constrained by territorial duties, and thus had to be allowed everywhere ('laissez faire, laissez passer'[4]). This radical change within the spatial dynamics of society and production exerted a profound impact upon the prevailing value hierarchies at that juncture.

Although an extensive discussion of this lies well beyond both the scope and orientation of this chapter, suffice to say that societal priorities had clearly shifted from mere survival (and the required solidaristic chain) to unconstrained accumulation and its attendant individualism. The benefits generated as a result of this transition from uncertain agriculture to reliable industrial slavery provided the pretext for the historicistic narrative of a finally conquered 'golden age'.

This brand new interpretation of society, with its attendant productive and commercial dynamics, was strongly reflected within the arts and what we would now today define as cultural values: since art, archaeology, opera and many other creative goods and actions were utilised in order to justify the capitalistic power framework, cultural spaces thus came to be conceived as ritual sanctuaries that were isolated within ivory towers, accessible only to the few, eloquent in terms of their ethical messages and compulsory enjoyment.

This view, paradoxically both mechanical and messianic at the same time, focused upon an imaginary 'objective' meaning of the arts: within such an interpretation, the cultural value chain arises from the marriage between aesthetics and ethics, which, in turn, unavoidably generates ideology. This implied that the only source of value is the artwork, that this value cannot be subject to any evolution, and that visitors and spectators can (and in fact, must) accept and digest the 'message'.

The prevailing weight of ethical expectations on the part of the cultural milieu, allied with the symmetrical duty on behalf of the audience to accumulate and learn, introduced a strongly hierarchical and taxonomical approach to arts management, which was essentially curatorial in nature and, as such, not yet worried about any financial issues. The conventional ranking system that logically arose from the adoption of this type of approach underpinned every decision about which art was exhibited or staged and which art was deposited or neglected.

With respect to this period that preceded the present one in which legal ownership serves to restrict the widespread enjoyment of art, and the subsequent shared cultural value chain, the industrial society and its orientation towards the sanctification of art actually ended up violently de-contextualising artwork, whose conception, creation, and production had been designed for different walls, spaces, lights, colours, and beneficiaries. Can we be sure that artists from the past would accept the musealisation of their art?

Textbook wisdom: stones for clones

The cultural framework that was crafted within the industrial paradigm can be interpreted as a clear metaphor for the manufacturing system, where competition dominates choices, both in terms of production and consumption. This view requires a homogeneous set of objects and subjects. Within such a framework, cultural supply generates value as the almost mechanical consequence of its solid labels, while, in turn, cultural demand benefits from this value via the process of accumulation: someone appears to be 'more cultivated' than somebody else.

Here, cultural supply can be said to become iconic, in the sense that its conventionally prominent parts become concentrated within those places capable of consecrating their institutional value. From this perspective, the Elgin marbles (and the myriad other pieces from archaeology and art that were stolen from other countries) should not be returned to Athens, when their present location in the British Museum allows a much wider audience to acknowledge its own 'membership' to the culture club: after all, what the audience is interested in is the direct enjoyment of the icon, for the express purpose of improving their own cultural checklist. Consequently, the cultural system is here slavishly devoted to the financial level of the number of tickets that are sold.

(Not so) incidentally, we can perhaps understand why institutional discussions around sustainability[5] are so focused upon the material dimension of the heritage that we are able to transfer to future generations. The question of whether or not this cultural heritage can be studied, interpreted and connected with their *genius loci* and the spirit of their time, is viewed as a wholly binary issue, which can be sustained if the heritage is not reduced over time. Ultimately, what matters is the quantity of stones.

This dimensional interpretation of cultural heritage raises many consequences with respect to itself. The principal focus here is upon protection, in light of shared concerns over those dangers that are the consequence of human action,[6] and the fear that there are barbarians who are inclined to harm artworks out of sheer ignorance (i.e., not being sufficiently cultivated). Only experts can make choices, while the information that is provided to the public is strictly limited to name, date, and technique (oil on canvas, and such like).[7]

The opposite end of the cultural value chain, the audience, is similarly viewed within a typical textbook framework: rational, fully informed, inclined to prefer monetary convenience and to avoid inefficiencies. Cultural consumers are considered to be accumulators/collectors. This has long exerted influence over which artists are selected for temporary exhibitions, as well as which stars appear in opera and theatre seasons, within a hard-competitive ecosystem. Investigations into the profile of cultural consumers have been driven by this perception of cultural exchange. The predominant socio-demographic profile of those who visit museums and attend live shows as old, well-educated, from high-income groups have been interpreted as motivations, thereby excluding the young, poor, and less-educated segments of society from being potential cultural consumers. In this regard, economic weakness serves as a powerful deterrent to cultural experience.

If cultural supply essentially comprises (normally dumb) stones, then cultural demand in turn can be said to be made up of (normally acritical) clones. The recurring common features between them led many scholars to believe that visitors and spectators are homogeneous. When viewed from a non-prejudicial perspective, rich people simply manage their time in a more flexible way; educated people do not feel like they are being observed as some type of suspect when they are in a museum or a theatre; old people are more experienced (and more likely addicted[8]).

The outcome of this static (and unfounded) interpretation of the arts as being the sole province of a select few groups has diffused the conviction that the cultural system is endemically bound to failure. Of course, if we adopt a budget-cantered framework, then only market revenues are deemed capable of revealing the value of cultural production and exchange. This forced interpretation has led economists, professionals, and politicians to underscore the crucial need for public subsidies as the solution to any financial weakness. This resulted in the preference for regulatory capture, which stands in marked opposition to innovation and experimentation. As a result, cultural supply was drained of both its approach and content, combining an everlasting block of formats on the one hand, and a short-term horizon for actions on the other, replacing the search for quality with cheap special effects. This bias affects many areas of the knowledge-based industry, including the arts, research, and education, and serves to drain the value chain in favour of a steady bureaucratic compliance (for further discussion, see Altug Yacintas (2026) in this volume).

This diffused interpretation of cultural organisation as being akin to manufacturing companies has reinforced the perception of competition amongst cultural producers. In the 1990s, the Italian theatre suffered a serious reduction in attendance. Refusing to acknowledge the possible low quality of the shows that were being staged, television was instead deemed to be the lone culprit. As a consequence, someone had the clever idea to involve a television actor within a production to attract people, which actually worked. After a short while, many theatres hired television actors, their fees were promptly raised, and the audience asked for even more television actors. Consequently, the content of the productions was irredeemably ruined: the competitive option proved itself to be utterly wasteful.

The search for homogeneity led to the expansion of manufacturing capitalism, albeit its real power has gradually dissipated over time as a result of the growth of complexity within society generally, and, by extension, the market. Both within the 'short century' and even more painfully in recent years, the managerial quest for solid guidelines, and the associated preference for business models to copy-and-paste, is dangerously leading us along the road to absolutism and dictatorship, a process that Orwell presciently observed in his critique of Burnham (as Montoya (2026) in this volume).

Within such a framework, textbook wisdom not only served to emphasise and consolidate the prevailing mainstream view, but also ended up encouraging the survival of the mechanical approach, despite the fact that society is now more complex, sophisticated, pluralistic and delicate than ever before. The adoption of 'mission' and 'vision' statements as established orientations is evidently far removed from the value-based backbones of cultural institutions specifically as well as enterprises more generally, whose strategic trail is continually being crafted upon the backbone of their identity and their related overarching purpose (see Aldo do Carmo (2026) in this volume).

The ability to interpret changes is therefore of critical importance for our societies as well as their institutions and organisations (see Petrova (2026) in this volume), if they are to craft new and more appropriate value chains that are reflective of their orientations, and potentially anticipate emerging trends by breaking from consolidated views whose former eloquence has now became atrophic and obsolete: 'Orders of worth are not set in stone', and values cannot be sculpted upon bronze (see Erwin Dekker and Valeria Morea (2026) in this volume). Among the many challenges we face, the cross-fertilisation of values carries particular weight and importance.

The audience: subjective, evolutionary, and unpredictable

Conceptualising the audience as a homogeneous army of already cultivated people serves to drain the cultural value chain, whose activation and consolidation is ultimately dependent upon the acritical acceptation of the 'message' on the behalf of consumers. This implies that value arises from the mutual ownership of the following notions: that each consumer recognises what they already know, and that shared value is steady, and institutionally virtuous. Against this backdrop, innovation is both feared and wholly rejected.

Why do we read a book for the second time? Whatever reason we might come up with (e.g., the story is intriguing, many details appear clearer, and such like second time around), the substantive answer is that while the book remains exactly the same, the person who reads it for the second time is hopefully different from who they were when they read it the first time. This may sound like an obvious point (indeed, it is), but I would contend that it fits our cultural experience, whose value is continuously and irregularly evolving across time. Simply put, taste plus experience is what underpins our interpretation. Within the cultural realm, the source of value is in marked contrast to the rule pertaining to manufacturing goods, that is, value derives from their functional capacity to satisfy material needs. The orientation of the economy at this juncture opens up greater space for non-functional purposes, thus emphasising the ability of identity-based narratives to generate value; in this particular respect, exchanges thus can be said to comprise subjective factors, whose dynamic exerts a visible influence upon price setting and the many symptoms of value. This process is precisely what is referred to as co-creation (see Klamer (2026) in this volume).

The process of co-creation helps us cast reasonable doubt over the presumed 'objective' value of cultural heritage, as well as the corollary of being either 'right' or 'wrong' in its appraisal and appreciation of the part of demand. The cultural value chain is a complex process that is fuelled by the intensive exchange between supply and demand, and, hence, is strongly affected by discourses pertaining to the dialogic eloquence of supply as well as by the personal experience/desire of consumer demand.

From this perspective, we can therefore posit that the approach to cultural value that prevailed throughout the 19th and 20th centuries, which was based upon taxonomical and hierarchical conventions, was wholly simplistic and static. Considering the general value hierarchy of a society where dimension, accumulation and competition are the prevailing rules, we must admit without hesitation that both the shape and dynamics of the cultural system have reproduced the manufacturing glossary and its hierarchy of values.

Today, the capitalist system is evidently undergoing profound changes. Until now, its phenomenology appeared systematic and somehow consistent, even in the face of unexpected actions and events that could be comfortably explained away as mere 'anomalies'.[9] The economic discipline has continually struggled to promote its interpretation of the world to the status of an exact science via its ability to predict consumers' choices and actions within the marketplace. Recently, the economics of the arts has also succumbed to this same temptation, whereby someone attempts to build algorithms aimed at predicting future auction values for contemporary art, thus showing complete ignorance towards the manifold variables that impact upon auction outcomes.

The perception of 'objective' supply and rational demand put forward an interpretation of cultural experience as akin to a basic consumption model, where convenience is regarded as the main driver of choice. Within such a framework, each single cultural organisation finds itself operating within a competitive battlefield, based upon the biased perception that both supply and demand are homogeneous, and that either price or sale conditions are crucial. In actual fact, although heterogeneous and diversified in various respects, cultural consumers do primarily strive towards exploring and discovering. The main driver here is curiosity, whose strength is fuelled by versatility and unpredictability; rather than accumulation they are naturally bound to diversification. Value cannot be predicted here, it is simply perceived in real-time during the experience itself, and this will progressively consolidate over time (see Coate, VanLoon and Weber's contributions to this volume).

This implies that we look for further cultural experiences on the basis of our previous experience, within a value-production process *à la* Stigler-Becker.

The cultural value chain, here, can be properly interpreted in light of both the shared and inclusive nature of cultural experience; it is not only non-rivalrous: its value chain is generated by emotional, cognitive, and intellectual metabolisms, which can be focused upon the characteristics of the commons. This serves to widen and deepen the intensity of their involvement, whose perception and appreciation are also related to both the presence and experiences of other consumers. Culture does not satisfy a need, then, but rather responds to a desire (showing strong similarities with many aspects of manufacturing consumption in recent times), which suggests that signals of such values are beyond the monetary level of ticket prices, and that we are inclined to donate, participate, contribute through actions, both with respect to specific projects and general purposes (see Bille (2026) in this volume). Sharing cultural experiences provides a powerful response to the urgency pertaining to the representation of the self, strengthens the sense of belonging to a place and a community, and, in so doing, consolidates one's social capital (see Hofland-Mol (2026) in this volume).

Within such a framework, where value is generated via a continuous flow of exchanges between supply and demand (i.e., between artwork and visitors/spectators), the principal focus of cultural heritage, be that material or intangible, is no longer related to the assessed 'importance' of each piece, but rather to the way in which cultural supply itself is structured, that is, by virtue of the degree of its eloquence as well as the spectrum of emotional and cognitive reactions of consumer demand. Both the depth and scope of cultural discourse serve as the source of a solid and sustainable cultural value chain when they clearly express the genius of place and the spirit of time (where and when artworks were conceived and crafted). When we admire a Renaissance painting, for example, we are not somehow transported back to that age. Rather, it simply expresses the universality of its value, and its evolution across the various layers of the stratification of time (history, beliefs, atmosphere, interpretations, urgencies, etc.) between it and us. This is the definition of cultural eloquence.

Real humans versus rational icons: wrong expectations

A cultural audience cannot be predictable, given the complexity of cultural heritage, on the one hand, and the taste formation process, on the other. Its trail is dependent upon (too) many variables related to each individual consumer's personal history as well as some untested factors, such as, for example, atmosphere, empathy, emulation, and, above all, the evolutionary, indefinite, and often erratic nature of cultural appraisal and appreciation. Cultural experience, in other words, is made up of stumbles and improvisations.

The prevailing view, strongly influenced by textbook logic, believes that cultural consumers are oriented towards thematic specialisation, which is to say that they pursue a linear path of accumulation where value is generated via a vertical trail. Moreover, this presumed thematic orientation of cultural consumers also implies a low degree of critical interpretation. The reality is quite the opposite, as Blaug (1978) clearly demonstrates in defence of both the variety and irregularity of our tastes. The complexity of cultural choices casts light upon many structures and dynamics of consumption that are gradually emerging in other areas, since they reflect a wider value hierarchy shaped by the prevailing (and shared) views, practices, and orientations of society. The unusual rapidity and intensiveness of the social changes we have undergone in the 70-year period from the 1950s to the present juncture, can be decrypted by examining our approach to travelling, a commonly shared cultural experience that helps to reveal our views.

The post-war society was focused upon production and exchange, blue- and white-collar workers predominated, and vacations (which literally means 'being empty' in Latin) were associated with oleographic images like 'switching off energy-wise' and 'recharging one's battery'. Such characterisations of vacationing serve to illustrate how unpleasurable ordinary life was often deemed to be, so much so that it necessitated the idea of having somewhere else to escape to. This goes some way to explain why Club Med was so iconic for a period time, as along with many other less sophisticated holiday destinations for the less affluent.

From the 1980s onwards, even prior to the diffusion of the internet, the approach to vacations changed quite substantially (the first Lonely Planet publication dates back to 1972). Not only did the choice of destination become the source of long investigation, but before taking off to the given location, people would extensively study subjects that they often hated at school: form of government, extraction of metals, agricultural products, and so forth. We simply would not entertain the idea of landing somewhere with no information about the place we wished to visit and enjoy. Once we landed, we would then explore the place, and acquire (normally via buying) novels and poetry, music, cookbooks, spices, clothes, objects, that extend beyond simple 'souvenirs'. In so doing, I would argue that we are trying to extend indefinitely our sentimental relationship with the place we are visiting, as well as its community, practices, and culture. Through adopting this sort of approach, what we are experiencing is no longer just our mere presence within a special place, but rather a much broader spectrum of emotional and cognitive integrations with our trip.

The transition from being merely a tourist to becoming a voyager is gradual and slow, but somehow irreversible once it has been undertaken. It reflects our approach to knowledge, and the related value hierarchy. In the post-war boom years, museums, archaeological sites, and theatres were the means through which we acknowledged our belonging to a club. They served as comfort food if you will. However, in recent decades, our cultural experience – just like our trips – is now aimed towards exploring, discovering, and both extending and deepening our critical views.

In this respect, the value chain is not at all mechanical and predictable, while its dynamics (for culture, travelling and many other areas) are driven by a complex set of information, interpretations, and evaluations that are evidently not dominated by material convenience and presumed rationality, but rather influenced by human fragility (the right to cry as Rigoletto claimed within Verdi's opera), reasonable doubt (the human feature *par excellence* for René Descartes), and indefinite desires (as the name of Erasmus himself from Rotterdam suggests) that clearly define our views.

Labels, illusions, and traps within the cultural debate

The change in social orientations that we are currently witnessing is associated with many important transformations within the economy. Of course, it is far from straightforward to identify unequivocal cause and effect relationships, since economic dynamics and social intuitions feed each other within a sort of unregimented spiral. Much of today's cultural debate, however, is shaped by persistent labels and illusions that distort our understanding of these changes and their implications for cultural value. Similar to what we see with many other types of change across history, there is strong and rigid resistance to the potential transformations due to fears over the changes they might engender.

The cultural system is still documenting and capturing this uneasy stage, whose semantic and managerial uncertainties are made sharper by the complicated coexistence of the analogical and digital dimensions. This uneasy coexistence illustrates one of the key traps in the cultural debate, the illusion that analogue and digital belong to separate worlds, rather than to a continuous and mutually enriching creative ecosystem. The solutions that are often comfortably adopted serve to keep these channels separated and detached, with the effect of generating some kind of prosthetic special effects. This dissonance is fuelled by the (improper) perception of superficial and hasty views on the part of contemporary society. In fact, when one looks at the issue of languages, channels, and toolboxes, we should acknowledge that culture has continuously crossed evolving and sometimes conflicting forms of expression, and that the digital dimension in this respect represents just the latest new area for creativity, production and exchange (see Dalla Chiesa (2026) in this volume).

Choices are unavoidably driven by the basic *weltanschauung*: while Anglo-Saxon cultures prefer empiricism to prejudice, and are inclined to both experiment with new trails[10] aimed towards reflecting a new (maybe unexpected) spirit of the time and capture more versatile and curious new audience members, Latin cultures prefer conservation to heresy, and attempt to maintain some sense of solidity thanks to systematic public support (at the risk of Stockholm syndrome, the form of regulatory capture focused upon in Textbook wisdom: stones for clones). These cultural preferences reveal enduring labels – 'empirical' versus 'traditional', 'innovative' versus 'conservative' – that often oversimplify the complexity of cultural development and obscure the shared anxieties behind both approaches.

Now, despite the varying viewpoints and levels of fear that social and cultural change implies, the prevailing view of the cultural value chain still considers it to be anchored to a world that it is slowly heading towards extinction, where culture was once considered 'priceless', 'immeasurable', 'incomparable', 'diffused', and in some instances the flagship of a country, at the same time it was evaluated in monetary terms, engaged in senseless competition, was isolated in ivory towers, and protected from imaginary enemies. Here we encounter some of the most pervasive illusions in the cultural debate, that is, the belief that culture is both 'priceless' and yet can be fully priced, that it thrives through competition when in fact it resists commodification, and that protection ensures vitality. Against this cultural landscape, the cultural value chain remains conventional and static. Not only does it reflect a vintage form of Eurocentrism whose backbone is fading away, but it also appears to happily be the preserve of a club comprising solely of the initiated few. The development of a more effective and consistent value chain is actually prevented by the prevailing weight of monetary subsidies as well as by the perception that cultural institutions are in reciprocal competition with one another, which in turn induces them to avoid any radical innovation. Conversely, within a cultural district logic, the only competition would be focused upon quality, while magmatic methodological and narrative exchanges among creative agents would serve to benefit the whole community as well as its financial solidity.

The cultural value chain is being generated as the evolving outcome of a long, undefined, and subjective process where heterogeneous experiences, with no particular sequential order, create a sort of neural network whereby their value is reciprocally multiplied within a unique process of cross-fertilisation alchemy. In this way, individual intelligence (i.e., the ability to connect in depth, from *intus ligere* in Latin), and its continuous exchange with other views, generates critical thought. This, in turn, requires the broad diversification of cultural supply, in order for each single consumer to enrich and deepen their knowledge and strengthen its value. If we adopt the textbook glossary, then competition cannot occur, in as far as its features (the homogeneity and atomisation of supply and demand, indifference of consumers, price wars) simply do not appear within cultural markets: cultural value is instead generated through uniqueness and incomparability.

Moreover, each cultural institution would strongly benefit from the active presence of a diffused cultural supply: the process of critical accumulation à la Stigler and Becker (1977) that posits at some stage that further consumers will come. None of us buy books, cinema, theatre, or museum tickets to be 'faithful' to only one author, one publisher, one producer, and so forth. Simply put, there is no threat on the part of other cultural markets or institutions. Competition does not exist. These misconceptions – the labels of value, the illusion of competition, and the trap of subsidy-dependence – continue to constrain a genuinely plural and relational cultural economy, one that could otherwise thrive on diversity, cooperation, and shared meaning.

Time for change: can culture reshape economics?

In the 1970s we used to play pinball. It was a sort of acrobatic, physically engaging, sometimes quite violent game. James Dean, Marlon Brando, the Hell's Angels were the models of worn and torn lives, just like the blue jeans that we used to spoil in order to appear cool and experienced. Culture also underwent conflict during this period, ranging from the birth of social centres to the eggs that were thrown to the 'furred bourgeoises' at the opera premières.

After both workers and women's protests, the conventional compass appeared weak and uncertain. Towards the end of the 1980s, we began to hide: the preferred games after this (Super Mario Bros, Pac-Man, etc.) required only one eye and one finger, while the rest could remain steady. Blue jeans were offset by branded clothes, whose '*griffe*' could protect us. Cultural initiatives allowed us to hide amongst the masses, introducing blockbuster events such as the three tenors' concert.

The 1990s and the entry into the new Millennium specialised in the notion of culture as a mass phenomenon. The Sony PlayStation and Nintendo Wii started to extract us from our comfortable isolation; fashion experienced a visible diversification among layers of consumers; impressionist exhibitions kept us firmly located within the safe domain of what-others-do. Although the internet was viewed as an ambiguous tool, which aimed to facilitate manifold actions and relationships, it was still presumed to be the enemy of conventional culture.

Over the course of the last decade, games and work have become defined by the dimension of touch, one which is infinitely more sophisticated and delicate than the rudimentary Commodore 64. While fashion maintains its appeal amongst the super-rich, the majority of consumers appear to ever-more turn towards 'fast fashion', in order to craft unusual and subjective clothes, which signals a radical shift from the club-based identification provided by branded clothes towards the specific representation of the self via ad hoc crafted apparel.

The aforementioned touch dimension is also reflected in cultural phenomena: our finger and our black mirror allow us to perform a sort of delicate exploration. In the analogical twin of our digital sphere, this mild stumble appears in festivals, new monuments,[11] social practices and some (still) isolated initiatives that seek to unbox deposited artwork and relocate them within municipal areas. We are finally reconquering the urban fabric, and the conventional format finally appears to be obsolete.

In the meantime, the economic paradigm is exhibiting clear signs of humaneness: the binary separation between the centre and the suburbs leaves room for many creative peripheries in which ferments and talent are emerging;[12] consumers are exercising a more responsible approach to their choice of food, clothes, and other commodities, with reference to sustainability, respect for workers, protests against war, and conflict. Consequently, price is no longer the main driver of consumer choice.

It may have once been logical for culture as a newly conventional system to adopt methods, tools, and evaluations from textbook economics. This decision profoundly impacted upon the views and decisions of many cultural institutions and organisations, whose urgency to do so appeared to be no less important than the manufacturing industry, alongside granting themselves a decent chance of survival via public subsidies and a consolidated audience. Ultimately, however, this prevented the analysis of the complex cultural phenomenology.

At this juncture, characterised by an economy that is radically changing and shedding its industrial anchors, the uniqueness of cultural products, the heterogeneity of cultural consumers, and the crucial pluralism that serves as the indispensable engine of cultural value all afford many useful insights through which to re-interpret the economy in such a way that individual and shared desires, social practices, and multiple relationships constitute the pillars of the value chain.

In this respect, the analysis could focus upon the expanding area of manufacturing goods in which the narrative and dialogical factors are increasingly contributing towards the generation of value and exerting a visible impact upon producers' strategies and consumers' options. Cultural dynamics are relatively eloquent when it comes to underscoring the importance of awareness, responsibility and curiosity as drivers of individual and collective choice, when one adopts a multidisciplinary value-based approach (VBA) (see Handke (2026) in this volume).

The economic system desperately needs more versatile perspectives: the conventional hierarchies based upon functional and dimensional taxonomies have proven to be obsolete, and wholly incompatible with the emerging spirit of the time. New approaches need to be and indeed are being developed which are underpinned by both an integrated strategy between research and education and asymmetrical and participatory processes that seek to craft an eloquent value chain. Within such a framework, the Design Impact Transition at Erasmus University (see Garst and Lavanga (2026) in this volume) can show its power as a Socratic perspective capable of critically interpreting cultural, social and economic dynamics, and, therefore, capable of building consistent strategies.

Concluding remarks: towards a plural and humane economics

Textbook economics was developed based on the comfortable assumption of homogeneity. The logic of models aimed at describing and often predicting the choices and actions of consumers was undoubtedly useful in the early stages of manufacturing capitalism, when focusing upon the serial production of commodities and the symmetrical dimensional accumulation on the part of growing demand. Such a solid and rigid approach may have served to keep its usefulness concentrated within a limited framework, whose weaknesses and contradictions began to progressively emerge as more evidence was accumulated.

On the one hand, culture, society, and the economy have gone through various complex stages, from the steady order established via the Congress of

Vienna, through two World Wars, the acquired independence of former colonies, the eruption of digital technologies, to a magmatic framework where migration, conflict, and uncertain relationships have resulted in a stumbling system; on the other hand, the conventional pillars of economics were predicated on a euro-centric backbone, whose features and expectations were then extended to what were once defined as ‘advanced’ economies, while completely ignoring the social ecosystems, the productive practices, and the social dynamics of the rest of the world.

In this respect, *homo economicus* is not singular, but rather many: evaluations, choices, and actions are not only simply manifold and diverse, but also wholly unpredictable. This implies that societies (*rectius*: communities) design and pursue various value hierarchies, whose dynamics are induced by frictions and contradictions that may clash and generate the energy of more consistent and eloquent value hierarchies. In other words, there are no more ‘right’ choices, and the multiplicity of values is a powerful filter with respect to the moving structures of institutions and markets.

In recent years, the trail towards new value hierarchies is being defined by the parallel growth of the osmotic synergy between, on the one hand, the analogical and digital dimensions, and, on the other, the growing weight of non-functional (i.e., narrative, symbolic, imaginative) features among the relevant ingredients of goods and services.

While this proves uncomfortable for those who erroneously considered their power to be sculpted on marble, such a change has unavoidably generated conflicting reactions, ranging from the rise of ‘sovereignism’ as an angry response to a co-operative international order, to the almost obsessive urgency to wash away faults and guilts. Both reactions are strongly opposed to the beneficial role of critical thought, although the economic, social, and cultural framework is naturally finding out that its ways and social frictions often manage to trigger institutional change.

In actual fact, the recurring dilemma for the prevailing economic logic pertains to the interpretation of society as either a mere sum of single individuals (an oleographic Thatcherian view) or a complex body that generates specific views and actions. If one accepts that heterogeneity is a founding feature of whatever subject (including individuals, whose evolving nature overcomes the expected compactness of the textbook rational and fully informed agent), then individual and social visions, choices, and actions thus appear to be dependent upon both the shape and dynamics of interactions, within a sort of neural network whose trails and outcomes may strongly vary across time and place. If this is evident for creative and cultural phenomena, then this logic can therefore be extended to the economy at large, thus requiring a less rigidly predictable framework for the discipline of economics, whose backbone should be crafted upon the changing dynamics of values.

Within such a framework, where everything is moving unpredictably, simply relying upon dimensional metrics in order to analyse values is demonstrably insufficient (see Vermeulen and Loots (2026) in this volume).

Values should be interpreted in terms of tensions and orientations within a complex ecosystem in which each 'species' develops and pursues their specific goals, which, in turn, generates a selective cross-fertilisation (see Petrova (2026) and Klamer (2026) in this volume). Individual and social practices are here intertwined and reciprocally balanced, revealing a hierarchy of values: the wolf closing the row is showing responsibility, protection, example, as every leader should do (see Dempster (2026) in this volume).

Values reflect evolutionary responses, adapting to emergent trends and, in some instances, even potentially anticipating them. Among the examples of unconventional experimental practices within the mainstream cultural system, one particularly instructive case is the *Opera Camion* initiative, which was conducted by the Opera di Roma and Teatro Massimo di Palermo in Italy as a prototype of the new commons, where value was generated and fed by shared experiences and enjoyment of culture (see Sabatini (2026) in this volume).

It is important to note here that the sharing of cultural values does not only reflect intangible practices. A hyper-specific experience of shared values is illustrated in Matilde Ferrero and Irene Pinto's discussion of 'social centres', within their chapter in this volume (Ferrero and Pinto 2026). This approach combines cultural contents and political orientations, which somehow generated a contradictory structure: on the one hand, they adopted openness as a funding rule in order to expand and further enrich their vision and activities; on the other hand, the shared political backbone acted as a (mobile but not evanescent) threshold to the openness itself. Resultantly, while complexity can prove to be fragile, it nevertheless appears to be crucial for overcoming holes and voids within municipal action, alongside helping to loosen the rigidity of bureaucratic constraints that prefer conventional projects.

Such contradictions pertain to the contrast between the stability and evolution of values. This is another weakness of the conventional approach (and textbook wisdom), which is clearly oriented towards the solidity of unchangeable values. A relatively simple and discouraging example comes from debates around the 'funding values' of Europe, institutionally predicated on our presumed 'Christian roots', an ambiguous label with unclear borders and contents, whose continued adoption completely ignores the political and cultural backbone that was built over the course of centuries of hybridisation, exchange, exploration, mistakes, and responsibilities, and above all neglects the common purpose and related shared strategy.

Within capitalistic rhetoric, leaders are the protectors of values, who ultimately decide when it is worthwhile to transmit them to future leaders. Research suggests that the real leaders are values in and of themselves. The transmission of these values serves to grant them an extended life within an evolutionary trail: the systematic role of driving choices and strategies is not geared towards fixity here, but rather ensuring ongoing consistency with the dynamics of the cultural, social, and economic ecosystem. This serves to demonstrate the much broader scope of human choice, which extends far beyond the mere economic logic (see Wincewicz-Price (2026) in this volume).

The VBA developed by Arjo Klamer and subsequently shared by the contributors in this volume is straightforward: values are complex and delicate; they capture both our cultural multiplicity and evolutionary nature. Individual purposes, shared identities, social practices, and common strategies define the ecosystem in which values reflect appraisal, experience, and desire and continuously evolve to the unpredictable dynamics. Utilising such an approach allows us to overcome the atrophy of textbook economics, whose utility should be handled with care and decision, just like Wittgenstein's ladder. This approach posits that our choices and actions are ultimately driven by a much richer range of purposes than the mere accumulation of commodities. Consequently, the analysis of our behaviour within the cultural realm can prove effective and suggestive of more eloquent interpretations of human dynamics.

Adopting a VBA is crucial at this historical juncture in which the conventional pillars of economics are being weakened by the increased importance of non-functional factors and the complexity of multicultural communities. In parallel with this, the once ostensibly seamless adaptation of the manufacturing economics toolbox to the arts and cultural sector has proven to be illusory, in light of the multiplicity of cultural experiences, where exploration and discovery clearly prevail over accumulation and satiation.

The changing cultural, social, and economic paradigm suggests that the field of economics could learn quite a lot from cultural processes, dismissing the consolidated wisdom whose mechanical structure no longer responds to the magmatic multiplicity of an ecosystem where both everything appears to be looking for new orientations and radical doubt soundly prevails over certainties.

Notes

1 It was Edward Taylor who first opposed 'culture' to 'nature' in his seminal text *Primitive Culture* (Taylor, 1871), emphasising its evolving and heterogeneous features.

2 The surviving Kings, at least in the European Continent, are still sworn in 'by the grace of God' (*Dei Gratia*). Indeed, the most recently crowned King was anointed by the Archbishop of Canterbury, who, among his many labels, is referred to as '*Fidei Defensor*'.

3 The earliest example is the Speenhamland System (Berkshire Bread Act, 1795), which encouraged changing the parish district, and actually helped to fuel the urbanisation of human capital (see, for example, Polanyi, 1944).

4 It is urban legend that when the merchant Legendre to the Minister J.B. Colbert was asked to give advice about how to facilitate trade in France, they allegedly responded 'Laissez nous faire'. The economist Jacques-Claude Marie-Vincent de Gournay subsequently sculpted this on bronze to serve as the official symbol of the competitive paradigm.

5 The seminal definition elaborated by the Brundtland Commission (1987) simply reflects the prevailing worry over material sustainability, and, hence, substantially neglects the financial solidity of cultural supply (the late 1980s were already affected by the dimensional limits of public budgets), and the crucial value of cognitive sustainability, whose power derives from technical and critical elaborations whose transmission to further generations can generate an emergent interest in and

commitment towards the centrality of art and culture within our value hierarchy (see, for example, Ferrero and Trimarchi, 2023).

6 See, for example, Trimarchi (2018).

7 On the insufficiency of information offered to the audience, see, for example, Bollati and Spanevello (2022) and Solima (2022).

8 See Stigler and Becker (1977).

9 In 1987, the American Economics Association began to publish the *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, which contained a special section named 'Anomalies'. Its founding article was written by the then Nobel Prize winning Richard H. Thaler (1987). Economists regularly exclude from normality actions that are not considered to be rational and egoistic, such as, for example, 'generosity', 'altruism', and such like. Nevertheless, experiments show that a systematic egoistic and non-cooperative approach is not at all warranted, and that, in light of the available information on and visibility of others' behaviours, various forms of cooperation are in fact discernible (Weimann, 1994).

10 During the 2009 'Ignite' summer season, the Royal Opera House in Covent Garden staged an opera whose libretto had been crowdsourced via tweets from hundreds of musicophiles (see Carbone and Trimarchi, 2012); after the COVID-19 pandemic ended, the Metropolitan Opera recorded a 40% growth in its audience numbers due to the rise in new spectators who were attracted by the clear semantic renewal (Hernández, 2023).

11 The evolution of monuments in accordance with changes in the spirit of the time is critically analysed by De Zardo (2023).

12 An eloquent focus upon heterotopia and its emerging values is offered by Dekker and Morea (2023), who point out apparently anomalous phenomena whose sharpness gives a clear picture of how culture and society will evolve in the coming years.

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3 The Logic of Preferences and the Formation of Values

Agnieszka Wincewicz-Price

Introduction

Within a market society values are routinely defined by utility, which is typically instantiated by profit, not least because these are the objects of pursuit that are deemed to be worthy by modern economics, ostensibly on "scientific," and thus wholly undisputed grounds. The key question within the value-based approach (VBA) developed by Arjo Klamer[1] extends beyond the limits demarcated by modern economics. This question concerns the purpose, that is, the ends of human endeavors which in economic theory are assumed to be given (even when they do not explicitly concern pecuniary profit) and, as such, ceasing to be the object of inquiry. Following the logic of textbook economics, one could even go as far as to say that the very core question of the VBA is entirely unrelated, even wholly irrelevant to the discipline of economics, for the latter deals with means as opposed to ends. Given this fact, why should an economist be concerned about ends?

The truth of the matter is not so much that ends are deemed to be irrelevant within mainstream economics as it is that they have been eliminated from the subject matter of economics in order to give the latter a stronger veneer of being a science (not without consequences in various forms as discussed in all of the chapters within this volume). The mathematization of economics, however, has not in and of itself changed the fact that human economic action is purposeful and involves choices with respect to *both* ends and means, or, alternatively, the "weighing of persons as well as objects" as summarized neatly by John D. Mueller (2014) in his seminal work.[2] That makes "the art of choosing" (Iyengar, 2010)—as opposed to the much more limited and analytically construed decision theory— difficult from the perspective of rigorous empirical analysis. The way choice is depicted at this historical juncture has been informed—more or less consciously—by an instrumentalist paradigm extensively developed within the field of economics (and analytic philosophy). Indeed, it is the simplified logic of modern economics which serves as the basis of our contemporary understanding of human endeavors. It is important to note here that this influence extends far beyond the aforementioned prominence of the profit motive that defines our culture. After all, the pursuit of wealth

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marked human endeavors centuries before economics became a formal scholarly discipline (Aristotle's analysis of *chrematos* comes to mind in this regard).

The goal of this chapter is to show some underappreciated consequences associated with the commonplace utilization of economic logic when attempting to account for choice. It appears that the lack of interest in the articulation of ends, which most proximately derives from the methodological needs of economic theory, has spilled over into the everyday practise of human choice, in turn, contributing towards the apparent loss of meaning underlying people's actions, their inability to articulate what the precise purpose of their endeavors are, what good they are able to pursue and why this is the case. As Klamer (2016) has noted, shopping, working, and entrepreneurial activities are activities to which we attribute meanings and values, both with respect to ourselves and others. In order to address the question of one's ends or purpose, one must first realize that how people choose and what precisely constitutes their welfare necessitates understanding and explicitly treating human agents as moral, rather than merely economic agents.

In contrast to the everyday usage of the term, moral within the context of the chapter is not to be understood merely as ethical, sincere, or being guiltless but rather as being capable of discerning the good, reasoning towards the good, and pursuing it. Together, these three aspects are captured by what I refer to below as qualities and actions (or indeed *praxis*, to use the nomenclature of the VBA) of an aspiring agent. The theoretical construct of the aspiring agent allows us to understand two important things: 1) that we only come to understand the good we are pursuing gradually as we learn more about it, which means that our ends are necessarily not fully given and comprehendible upfront; 2) the good we are pursuing has an inherent personal and social aspect. Neither of these points are accounted for within the preference-based economic theory of choice. And while it certainly cannot be denied that problems related to human choice are too complex to allow for an analysis unsupported by some simplifying assumptions,[3] it is nonetheless crucial that this simplification is not confused with the more complex picture behind it. Both perspectives are discussed in turn below: the simplified logic of preferences is confronted with the more nuanced logic of values.

The logic of preferences

The logical structure of neoclassical (textbook) economics has been founded on rational choice theory. Rational agency in the economic sense is essentially a technical concept and originates directly from a specific set of logical assumptions known as the axioms of rational choice theory, which are necessary for producing well-defined preference orderings (von Neumann and Morgenstern, 1944). These, in turn, are needed to illustrate choice within neat mathematical equations and model it as a pursuit of maximization, for, indeed, everything we do is perceived by economists as constituting an attempt to maximize utility (itself an under-defined concept[4]). Just how crucial the assumptions of rational choice theory are for economics has been concisely summarized by Gary Becker in his well-known statement that "the combined assumptions of [utility] maximizing behaviour, market equilibrium, and stable preferences, used relentlessly and unflinchingly, form the heart of the economic approach" (Becker, 1976, p. 5).

One must bear in mind here, however, that most economists are not concerned with explaining human choice qua individual behavior but rather are studying it as a building block in their analysis of social phenomena. That is to say, they rely on the abstract conception referred to as homo economicus which co-defines rationality and individuality, not in connection with human behavior, but rather via reference to the logical-mathematical properties of equilibrium analysis. Thus, the concept of agency employed within standard micro- and macro-economics, that is, the so-called rational agent, does not necessarily refer to the rationality of individual personal action (Ross, 2012).

Consequently, what is deemed to be rational within mainstream economic parlance should not be confused with other concepts of rationality employed within the fields of philosophy or ethics. The latter tend to deal with broader accounts of substantive judgments and reasons for one's beliefs and actions. Similarly, economic "choice" should not be confused with the way real people decide, choose, and act in their everyday lives. As Debreu put it: abstract individual conception refers to nothing in the world whatsoever (1986). Homo economicus should thus not be understood as a "person." Rather, it would be more accurate to conceive of this theoretical construct as a "representative agent" (e.g., repeated markets). That is to say, it does not provide an empirically relevant model of individual behavior.

Despite this, many disciplines have embraced the economic model without adequate consideration of its formal limitations. For instance, decision theory, game theory, and much of political theory approach rational agency in an analogous way to neoclassical economics. The concept has become sufficiently powerful to inform common (mis)understandings of instrumental rationality as a good in and of itself. The consequence of this is that more profit, more consumption, more economic growth become undisputed dogmas and *ends in and of themselves*, in part, because they are based upon the ostensibly scientific grounds of the economic, mathematically informed law of maximization.

However, closer examination of the key element of rational choice analysis, namely preferences, quickly shows that, albeit with a limited number of trivial exceptions, it is simply not possible for this theory to identify an economic agent with a human being. As Becker (1993) writes, while the economic approach to behavior builds on a theory of individual choice, it is not primarily concerned with individuals. Rather, it can be said to use theory at the micro level as a powerful tool through which to derive implications at the group or macro level.

Axioms are not fit to account for human choice

What exactly preferences mean is a problematic issue. Economists themselves have had longstanding, deeply complex discussions about this very issue.[5] The notion of preferences and the way they are analyzed varies across disciplines and, indeed, there is no universal definition that takes into account the needs of all usages. Many non-economists and even some economists, too, speak somewhat misleadingly of preferences as if they were psychological phenomena. However, what the term should be taken to mean is a formal ordering relation, constructed so as to allow an equilibrium analysis. Preferences consist of a subjective and comparative form of evaluation, and, as such, they do not represent an objective assessment of whether A is better than B, but rather express an agent's subjective position of the following form: Agent X prefers A to B.

In an attempt to offer some definitional clarity over preferences, including, among other things, how they should be understood within the context of economic modeling, Hausman (2012) shows that the assumptions of rational choice theory can only make sense and be useful in relation to a very specific notion of preferences. He proceeds to describe them as "total subjective comparative evaluations" and argues that this definition effectively captures most practises within contemporary economics. As either total or overall evaluations, preferences are "already informed by reflection upon what there is reason to do" (Hausman, 2012, p. 6). In other words, they are outcomes of comparative assessments rather than inputs within the deliberation process. Hausman illustrates this through the following example: "To say that Jill prefers x to y is to say that when Jill has thought about *everything she takes to bear on how much she values x and y*, Jill ranks x above y" (2012, p. 4, emphasis added). Hence, a preference is comparative (x is ranked above y); the comparison is in terms of value; the valuation is subjective ("how much she values …"); and it takes into account the totality of factors that the individual thinks are relevant to the comparison under consideration ("everything she takes to bear on …").

As aforementioned, rational choice theory requires that preferences meet a number of conditions in order to form meaningful input for the economic modeling of behavior, namely: completeness, transitivity, independence, and continuity. This assumption of completeness means that the agent *can always decide* in favor of A or B or be indifferent towards them. The inability to come to a decision is simply not allowed by this condition. Furthermore, rational choice by definition must be consistent, which is captured by the requirement of transitivity. If a bike is preferred over a bus and a bus is preferred to a car, then a bike should be preferred to a car. The independence axiom complicates matters even further, insofar as it means that the choice (or indifference) between A and B should be wholly independent of context. The continuity axiom ensures that preferences vary continuously across the array of alternatives.

Within the standard economic approach, a person experiencing different motivations, who may find it impossible to compare all of the options, while also being unable to make a clear-cut decision between them, would be considered as a case in which the agent's preferences are not fully formed (incomplete), and so, he or she is deemed to be incapable of engaging in rational action. An example of such a case is when one is forced to make a choice between integrity or charity on the one hand, and, on the other, some other incompatible goal one might have, say, the pursuit of a suitable retirement, or subsistence, or approval from others (Taylor, 1985). One can compare the strength of one's desire to have a cup of coffee right at this moment with one's desire to have a cup of tea right now, and the degree of respective enjoyment and satisfactions that this would bring. But how can either of those desires and their satiation be compared with one's desire to be a fine scholar, a good father, a true friend? Such alternatives are incommensurable. It is often impossible to coherently combine all of the demands that we deem to be important and valid. In light of this, it seems evident that the rational choice approach has no use in those situations—which are hardly uncommon—when one needs to combine two or more different goals, virtues or standards, which we feel we cannot ignore or downplay but which nevertheless appear to demand incompatible things of us.

While mainstream economics assume complete and transitive preferences, which implies that all aspects of a choice setting can be weighed up against each other and all alternatives can be ranked in terms of "betterness," people sometimes refuse to do this (and often for good reason). For example, the mother in the famous novel *Sophie's Choice* who has to choose whether her daughter or son lives is an example of a such a dilemma which makes the formation of a well-defined preference impossible. A less dramatic but nevertheless routine example from everyday life is that of norms, rules, principles, and values that people embrace. When we uphold them, we generally act non-instrumentally and, in some instances, somewhat automatically. What motivates people in most of these circumstances is not some conscious and deliberative calculation but rather a disposition towards acting in accordance with something that is perceived as being good.

Even this very brief account of the conditions imposed upon decision making by the logic of rational choice theory testifies to the fact that the rational ideal embodied in the concept of preferences as total comparative evaluations entirely eliminates human choice in the ordinary sense of the term (Shackle, 1979). This is because the conception of human rational agency in terms of maximizing over a complete and consistent set of preference orderings is simply not psychologically realistic. All that formal rationality can posit about an individual agent's actions is that it is explicable *as if* the agent is maximizing the satisfaction of their preferences. The focus here is on the formal or mathematical properties of agents' preferences, while the content of these preferences is deemed to be entirely irrelevant from the theory's perspective. The question of why agents hold certain preferences and not others and whether it is reasonable to choose X over Y is also irrelevant. Homo economicus is merely rational or irrational in a narrow way that does not account for any conflict of values or moral qualms. Homo economicus thus cannot form any ideas of the good or choose between good and evil, which is a distinctly human capacity. Homo economicus is merely rational or irrational in a narrow way that does not account for any moral concerns or values.

The logic of values

Even prior to the emergence of behavioral economics, several prominent economists had shown serious scepticism towards rational choice theory as a psychological theory.[6] Frank Knight, an early twentieth-century Chicago school representative, openly confronted the inadequacy of "rational economic man" to explain human choice. He recognized that rigorous and useful models of economic maximization required human beings to be described as purposely and consciously utilizing means through which to attain predefined ends. At the same time, he contended that "there is no such man," because human beings do not know what they want and what is good for them, and they "do not act very intelligently to get things which they have decided to acquire." Neither did he presume that human beings know even their most basic wants:

> We propose to suggest that these wants which are the common starting point of economic reasoning are from a more critical point of view the most obstinately unknown of all the unknowns in the whole system of variables with which economic science deals.
>
> (Knight, 1922, p. 20)

In another famous observation, Knight stated: "the chief thing which the common-sense individual wants, is not satisfactions for the wants he has, but more, and better wants" (1922, p. 42).[7] Consequently, Knight continually cautioned against any over-zealous application of economic theory to phenomena, whose explanation extended far beyond formal economic theory alone, arguing instead that economic theory is not the explanatory science of all reality.

In a similar vein (potentially influenced by Knight himself), Buchanan (1979) criticized the teleological foundations of modern economic theory, and its tendency to force all analyzable behavior into the straitjacket of "maximizing a utility or objective function under constraints" (p. 96). In contrast to this approach, he suggested that it is useful to think of man as an imaginative being, to allow for some recognition that people imagine themselves to be other than they are, and that they act to achieve imagined states of being. He talked about one's sense of becoming as a central, if not the most important, fact of human life.

In an uncompromising tone, McCloskey argued that the reduction of the person to an economic agent with social or moral taste trivializes human moral faculties, making them analogous to a taste for chocolate ice cream:

> Most academics and other intellectuals nowadays, without giving it much thought, adhere to the emotivist, chocolate-ice-cream theory. They view the ethical person as maximizing utility function with respect to the doing of good deeds, just as he or she does in the eating of ice cream. No duty, love, faith, or persuasion carried weight.
>
> (2009, p. 26)

In order to sufficiently address the question of purposeful action upon which the VBA is predicated, it is imperative to recognize this underappreciated aspect of moral nature which appears to also be implied in Frank Knight's apt observation about people wanting "more and better wants" (1922, p. 42) rather than the satisfaction of given preferences. The language of economics would describe this phenomenon as someone seeking to improve their existing preferences without having a specified understanding of the improved preferences themselves. However, working towards an improved, imagined image of oneself (self-betterment) through conscious formation and changing one's wants might be better rendered as *striving for the good* or *acting upon values* than simply as a refinement of one's preferences. For it is not merely the desires, wants, tastes, or, indeed, preferences that are subject to revision over time, but rather *the reasons* for also holding those same desires, wants, tastes, and even preferences. And it is those reasons that are ultimately grounded in more or less explicitly held values.

One particularly interesting and intuitive account of how values are formed and how they evolve or change over time was put forward by an American philosopher Agnes Callard in her 2018 book *Aspiration: The Agency of Becoming*. In the book, Callard defines aspiration as "the process of gradually working oneself all the way into [the] thought" of what it is going to be like to acquire the value one is pursuing (2018, p. 34). It is a process through which one strives to become in some way a better person. This process, as she notes, is nicely captured in Iris Murdoch's description of humanity in general: "man is the creature who makes pictures of himself and then comes to resemble the picture" (2018, p. 49). Callard argues that we can rationally make ourselves come to see things differently: "Coming to value something tends to represent a deep change in how one sees and feels and thinks. Acquiring a new value often alters the structure of one's priorities" (2018, p. 5).

Inspired by this framework, which itself is rooted within the tradition of virtue ethics, in what follows I will oppose the image of a rational goal-oriented agent, who is guided by known and stable preferences, with an alternative account of agency grounded in the recognition that choice is not always based on a well-defined goal. I refer to an agent engaged in this process of open-ended reasoning an "aspiring person."

The virtue ethics background

Within the Aristotelian-Thomistic virtue ethics tradition moral behavior is not solely about fulfilling one's duty or obligation to others and following rules. Rather, it is just as much a theory of the formation of the will, and the development of desires and aspirations (Koslowski, 2006). In this respect, personal excellence is thus directed towards a better social coexistence. It is thus built upon enlightened self-interest, that is, a "life worth living," rather than, say, self-less altruism. Within virtue ethics the overarching question of ethical theory "What I ought to do" is combined with reflection upon "What sort of person ought I to strive to be" and "What I should and could desire." Indeed, within Aristotle's work (and also for Aquinas) a person is conceived through their actions as being *en route* towards some sense of completion (Schenck, 1976).

However, in contradistinction to the standard economic approach developed within rational choice theory, in Aristotle's account of human choice and deliberation we find that deliberation over human's ends by definition does not benefit from the means-end paradigm (Wiggins, 1980). For Aristotle, it is the mark of the person of practical wisdom to be able to "deliberate well about what is good and expedient for himself, not in some particular respect (health, strength) but about what sorts of things conduce to the good life in general" (NE, Book VI). Deliberation in Aristotle, then, is not primarily a search for means, but rather a search for the best specification of the good that one wants.

A non-technical deliberation is one in which humans have a vague description of something they want—a good life, a satisfying career, a fulfilling hobby, and so on. The problem is not to see what would be causally efficacious in bringing this about, but rather to see what truly qualifies as an adequate and practically realizable specification of what would satisfy this want. As long as this specification is not available, then there is no room for the means. Similarly, wisdom in action (phronesis) can never be reduced to general rules that apply smoothly across all circumstances by virtue of the uncertain and idiosyncratic nature of human action. In order to discover what we prefer or what is really of value to us is one of the purposes of wise decision making.

The Aristotelian perspective on human nature was subsequently synthesized and complemented by Thomas Aquinas who thought that human beings are naturally ordered towards the true and the good via the operation of the intellect (reason) and the will, even though sin has corrupted this nature. As his famous line goes: "Whatever man desires, he desires it under the aspect of good" (ST I-II, q.1).

In order to become a good person, then, one must first acquire the virtue of prudence, which is covered within Aquinas's notion of "prudential" (ST II-II q.47 aa 1–7). Prudence enables us to reason well towards the choice of commitments, projects, and actions, and to apply general practical principles to concrete circumstances in order to choose correctly. Prudence involves both the choice of the end that is sought and the means through which to attain that end. It thus calls for reason rather than impulsivity, and takes counsel from others with respect to both selecting the end and the means to achieve the chosen end (Elmendorf, 1892, p. 4). In the *Summa*, prudentia is described as being superior to theoretical knowledge, for prudence perfects the cognitive faculty.

Centuries later, Adam Smith developed his theory of moral judgment by drawing, albeit implicitly, upon the ancient tradition of prudential judgment. Contrary to some modern interpretations, it is not prudential in the limited sense of, say, frugality but rather in the fullest sense of Aristotle's phronesis or Aquinas's prudentia. It is not so much about the calculation of potential gains, as it is about the desire to do proper things, to do things that would meet the approval of a disinterested by-stander, the impartial spectator, God even (Choi, 1990). Smith conceives of humans as divided creatures who have outwardly-directed passions that want simply to be satisfied, alongside higher-order passions pertaining to what sort of person we would like to be.

The view of the human agent that emerges from the anthropologies developed by Aristotle, Thomas Aquinas, and Adam Smith can be summarized as a picture of a human being who directs themselves in relation to their own good via practical reason, and guided by virtue. When a person acts on the basis of practical wisdom, then it means that their choices are embedded within an ongoing process of self-formation. Their decisions shape their judgment of their capabilities and interests, which, in turn, inform their future decisions. They do not possess complete and accurate knowledge of themselves and others, but rather are constantly in a process of (self-)development. Their wants and needs are not certain and given determinants of their actions, as assumed by mainstream economic theories. It is rather their actions which form their unique experience and influence their judgment.

The aspiring agent

Callard's theory of aspiration serves as an expedient conceptual tool through which to grasp how we come to form and exercise our values. Her theory is directly informed by Aristotle and treats aspiration as a distinctive form of practical rationality guided by what she calls "proleptic reason." Aspiration has a distinctive rational form that is not the rationality of deliberation, calculation, preference, or decision. Etymologically, proleptic describes something which exists before its proper or historical time. An aspiring agent is a proleptic reasoner in the sense that "he does not fully have in view the end for the sake of which he is acting" (Callard, 2018, p. 5). The end they pursue is one whose value they are also seeking to learn. Proleptic reason is a reason which is not fully comprehended by the agent but rather undergoes a process of formation as the person acquires greater experience and knowledge over their situation. It is thus analogous to Aristotle's dynamic process of value acquisition. What makes Aristotle's trainee-in-virtue a proleptic reasoner is that they do not act to match a preconceived goal that they fully understand. Rather, through their actions they learn more about the value they are pursuing. They do so in order to be able to appreciate it fully at the end of their pursuit.

In other words, an aspiring agent is someone who through their choices discovers and learns what is meaningful and worth pursuing, and over time adjusts their preferences in line with these values. Without sufficient experience or at least reflection about what the goal entails, we cannot provide an explicit description of how to arrive at it. Through open-ended involvement in the various practices of our life we learn to exercise practical judgment, a judgment that only becomes operative within practice and about which we cannot always give a fully specified or systematic account of, but yet we nonetheless act upon the basis of. It enables us to both express what is valuable for us and to form ourselves in accordance with that which we find valuable. Aspiring parents know that they do not really know what it is like to be a parent prior to engaging in the various activities involved in parenting. An aspiring doctor knows that they cannot fully know what it is like to be a doctor until they have spent some time performing their duties as a doctor. This is why it is perhaps artists, whose ventures are discussed throughout this volume, who the best embodiment of this concept.

What Callard does not address is an important question concerning what forms one's initial interest in some good that one cannot fully grasp before engaging oneself with it. An answer to this question can be found in what Hargreaves Heap calls "expressive rationality," namely, "the reflective capacity of human beings who self-consciously deliberate about their preferences, groping for what is worthwhile" (Hargreaves Heap, 1989, p. 5). It therefore can be said to account for one's concern for self-respect and self-worth.

As Hargreaves Heap understands it, action motivated by expressive concerns, unlike in the instrumental model, does not form a means to a given end. Rather, it is implicated in the choice of ends. That is to say, it forms part of the decision over who to be, and what ends to have. It is perhaps thus better described as an activity which is its own end and gives expression to the agent's self-identity in the action itself. Expressive reason is that form of reason that guides action when it is primarily taken for its symbolic properties: that is, the action says some, usually, evaluative thing about the person engaging in it. Thus, the person appears to be "honourable," "caring," "moral," "just," "fair," and so on, through such expressive acts (Hargreaves Heap, 1999). The expressively rational individual often acts from a position of uncertainty with respect to what values they want to entertain and the conditions that are marked by apparently unresolvable conflicts between different ways of being. One could have done x but did y instead, which serves to say something about that particular person. For example, a mother of two young children who, say, would like to be active in the labor market faces a choice between sending their children to preschool when they are very young, which would enable her to go back to work sooner, or deciding to spend more time with them at home, which would allow her to fulfil herself as a mother, but could limit her possibilities for professional development. Either choice says something about her with respect to her priorities. Similarly, expressive rationality accounts of examples of consumer behavior (particularly those where price is no longer the main driver of choice[8]) focus on the manner in which the purchase of a particular good or service can be seen as the agent's way of communicating the expressive meaning of their consumption to others. Their pattern of consumption, then, says something about the kind of person they are, the kinds of things they value and find worthy.

It appears reasonable to suggest that an aspiring person is thus also motivated by expressive reason. This accounts for the fact that people act in ways that encourage a sense of self-worth. While proleptic reason designates the form of agency discussed within Aristotle's theory of habituation, expressive reason corresponds with Smith's concept of praiseworthiness and reflection upon how one's actions would appear to an impartial spectator.

An important aspect of aspiration pertains to its transformative value: aspiration changes what one cares about. Everyday general examples of this would be quitting an addiction or taking up a challenge to become physically fit. Transformative pursuits aim towards values, the appreciation of which is connected to the performance of the activity (e.g., the value of entrepreneurship is connected to running a business) or involvement within the relationship (e.g., the value of parental love is connected to becoming a parent) in question. Indeed, this is because the pursuits themselves constitute a kind of value-education, which is to say it gradually changes the agent into the kind of person who can appreciate the value they chose to pursue in the first place. Callard (2018) illustrates this clearly when she says that:

> In the course of becoming a teacher or a friend or a reader of ancient Greek, one learns to appreciate the values that are distinctive of teaching or friendship or reading ancient Greek. But one does not fully appreciate them until one is at, or close to, the end of the process of transformation. For it is the end-state (teaching, parenting, translating) that offers up the actual engagement with the value on which any full appreciation of it must be conditioned.
>
> (p. 44)

Interpersonal nature of value acquisition

While the concepts of proleptic and expressive reason shed much light upon the insufficiency of the instrumental paradigm in accounting for human choice and action, the notion of an aspiring person might nonetheless appear akin to the rational choice preference-based reasoning in terms of its focus on the individual, deciding for themselves and their own individual benefit. This is not the case, however. The framework of aspiration and value acquisition would be utterly vacuous if it were not based upon the recognition that each of us is not an *individual*, but rather a *person* who is defined, in part, by *relationships to other persons* (familial, neighborly, professional, communal, friendship relations, etc.).[9] The inevitable presence of these relationships (even for a shipwrecked Robinson Crusoe), in turn, means that the good we strive towards and the values we form are necessarily informed or dictated by those others that we care about to varying degrees of intensity. That we share the most important goods with others is one of the basic tenets of the VBA, as Klamer (2026) explains in his chapter within this volume. However, our relations with others also necessarily means, firstly, that our plans and projects are dependent upon them, and secondly, that we are accountable to others for our choices and actions. We thus form our ideas of the good with those we care about in mind.

Utilitarian philosophy, upon which the rational choice approach is founded, largely ignores the fact of relationships between people. This omission helps economists to employ the methodological simplification which allows them to treat a household, an enterprise, an organization or a community as if it were merely a single organism, a unit of analysis. In so doing, this simplistic economic approach overlooks a crucial point about all human action, including economic activity, namely that it is performed by people and is for people. Human economic activity is not ultimately undertaken by "individuals" for "utility." As Mueller argues, "What is forgotten is the most important aspect of economic choice: the choice of persons who are always the ends or purposes of economic activity, which we express by our distribution of wealth or income among them" (2014, p. 162).

What is also important to realize within this context is that our relationships with others are not always transactional in nature and based exclusively upon our own terms and interests. Roger Scruton (2017) writes beautifully about how personhood is "bound by ties we never choose" (p. 116). We do not choose our parents, our place of birth, our classmates, and so on and so forth. As moral agents, we are also bound by unchosen moral requirements. We live by unchosen obligations which are shaped through our experiences of life with other people, and, ultimately, our consciousness of what matters derives from this. Many of our values are therefore not a subject of personal choice but rather of submission or adherence. Values are not artificial concepts waiting to be chosen or selected by an act of subjective will, but rather are embedded within our daily practises. They are ideals that become real in our everyday dealings with one another. We discover values in interactions with others and, inspired by them, we want to pursue them further (whether we succeed is a different matter as the case of Alcibiades' fascination with Socrates shows).

As people, we also make ourselves accountable for our actions and states of mind. Hence, even when we are unobserved, we are judged, as Adam Smith demonstrated via his theory of the impartial spectator. The practice of accountability between self-conscious agents is at the root of morality. Scruton (2017) captures it neatly in his rendering of the gist of Smith's famous concept: "When asking myself what I should do, I entertain the thought of what another would think of my action when observing it with a disinterested eye" (p. 90).

Conclusion

It should by now be clear that homo economicus is a particularly misidentified representation of a person. Elaborate accounts of preference orderings and utility brought about by the satiation of those preferences are insufficient for explaining precisely what is entailed in human choice. The assumptions underlying rational choice theory explain choice in a deeply restricted sense. Among other things, they overlook the uncertainty and instability of ideas of the good and values that provide reasons for our particular decisions and actions. They are only useful within a highly restricted scope and should thus not be extrapolated to wider contexts.

The concept of aspiration extends beyond the narrow strictures of instrumental rationality to the realms of creative imagination, expressive reasoning, self-reflection, and moral judgment. It accounts for the complexity and uncertainty of choice as well as the conflicts people face and the incomplete grasp of values they have, all of which provide learning opportunities for the agent. Whereas rational choice theory paints a picture of a well-informed, goal-oriented agent, guided by known and stable preferences, the account of an aspiring person recognizes that decision making is not always based on a well-defined goal, while the decision maker is an evolving self, capable of consciously changing their values. The aspiring agent seeks to construct a good life both for themselves and those who depend on them, guided by an underspecified vision of the good which they are open to revisiting based upon new experiences.

In view of the above, the most serious deficiency within economics practised as modern science appears to be its ambition to provide an objective account of the world, describe economic phenomena from no particular perspective, and provide a universal theory of choice. Since human decision making and its broadly understood rationality (not merely formal consistency) must be viewed in the context of the choice that is being made, attempts to arrive at a universal explanation will always be deficient with respect to important details. Moral considerations about ends and values, which form inseparable aspects of economic activity, are a case in point. They co-determine the choice behavior of economic agents and thereby direct the outcome of economic activity. Abstracting them away or forcing them into the strictures of rational choice theory serves to limit the extent to which many contexts of human choice can be meaningfully explained. Consequently, it also limits the scope of application of abstract economic theory into policy which encompasses a more complex reality. Simplistic assumptions about the choice and meaning of ends that humans pursue make them a particularly insufficient basis for economic policy designed to increase human welfare. For welfare is as much a question about ends as it is about means, while the ends ordinarily stand in need of specification—they are not given. The common economic goals of productivity, efficiency, and profit maximization are not ends in themselves—they are not valuable and worth pursuing for their own sake—but rather are merely tools for the achievement of actual goods: social, communal, familial, and personal. It is in this sense that attaining a broader understanding of human choice should be regarded as a useful pursuit for economists, if not necessarily of critical importance to them, who after all are also striving for their work to be meaningful.

Notes

1 Delineated earlier in this volume as well as in Klamer (2016).
2 See also Weber (1964) who argued that understanding of the economy and society requires that ultimate ends should be considered.
3 As Hausman aptly put it, partly in defence of the simplifications used by economists, "the real story concerning what people buy, how they invest, or what careers they choose is not one that a single discipline can tel" (2011, p. 118).
4 Cf. for example Broome (1991).
5 Angner (2018) offers a good overview of some disagreements there.
6 Cf. Samuelson (1938).
7 See Handke's (2026) chapter in this volume, particularly his section on "Learning individuals."
8 See Trimarchi (2026) in this volume.
9 See Petrova (2026) and Coate et al. (2026) in this volume.

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4 The Process of Values Realization in the Arts

Lyudmila Petrova

Introduction

This chapter aims to inform extant understandings of how radical changes within institutional settings shape the arts and cultural sector.[1] The argument put forward here is that this process is not only connected to structural changes, such as, for example, new laws, rules, procedures, and so on, but rather also connects to the formation of new cultural and/or social values, which, in turn, engender different individual and institutional practices.

For illustrative purposes, I refer to the case of the radical shift within the Bulgarian visual arts in the early 1990s, after the fall of the Berlin wall. Around this period, one large group of Bulgarian visual artists was engaged in disruptive innovative practices that were referred to as "unconventional art",[2] in response to the profound political and economic shifts in Bulgaria at that historical juncture. Reflecting upon this now, one could take for granted that these artistic changes were paradigmatic, in precisely the same way that the shifts associated with the move away from socialist governance logic to liberal democracy and the entry into the free-market logic were. However, upon closer inspection of this case of "unconventional" art, one cannot straightforwardly claim that it was a change in the governmental structure that directly led to artistic innovation. Rather, it appears that the new artistic practices that coincided with the political changes were incapable of aiding the paradigm of "unconventional" art to both mature and become a movement capable of turning into a paradigm shift within the sector, as it had initially promised to be. Instead, despite the radical scope of the changes, this in and of itself did not bring about the substantive transformation of the Bulgarian visual arts by sustaining the innovative practices in the long term. What does this story tell us about radical transformation within the cultural sector?

By building upon the foundations of the value-based approach (VBA) as conceptualized in this volume as well as Kuhn's (1962/1996) concept of a paradigm shift, this chapter provides an analytical framework that, first, underscores the differences between social and cultural values within the process of their realization within the arts and cultural sector, and second, demonstrates how the changing of one institutional context or logic[3]

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alongside another might engender a shift in those values at both the individual and institutional levels. Here, I first argue that even though cultural and social values are intertwined, they are nevertheless both based on separate qualities and expressed differently within individuals and institutions' practices. Second, radical change or paradigm shifts within the arts and cultural sector can only occur when cultural and social values and practices change in a fundamental way. By combining both perspectives, this chapter elaborates on the dynamic interplay between values and practices within the process of radical change.

The culture of paradigm shifts within the arts

I will start to elaborate on the framework by referring to a personal anecdote from the Bulgarian visual artist, Nedko Solakov, who was part of the Bulgarian visual art scene in the late 1980s.

Box 4.1 "One day I walked into the gallery hosting 'The City?' exhibition and saw a tag 'Purchased by Dimitrovgrad City Art Gallery' on the card index box. I thought it was a prank. It turned out they really wanted to buy the chest, but it had no price and without an official price no state gallery could buy it (and they were all owned by the state). So, I approached the chair of the Jury of 'The City?' 'You've got a nerve! We let you have your exhibition and now you want us to do a valuation!' the official snapped at me with a wink. 'Go to the Fine Art Commission* (at the UBA[4]) to have your work valued!' he advised me on my way out. I went to the commission carrying the box under my arms. They looked at it as if it was a warty toad. They quarrelled among themselves, firstly in my presence, then told me to wait in the corridor. It took these dozen bigwig artists about an hour (only two of them spoke in favour of the box – E.S. and R. G.), but they never got to do any 'valuation'. 'Listen, Nedko, this type of "art" does not generally lend itself to valuation. When I was in Paris, there were things like this …' and so on and so forth, the chairman told me. 'You'd better go back to the jury of your exhibition and get them to do the valuation!' he concluded. … But the Dimitrovgrad City Art Gallery wanted the box so much that I finally donated it to them through the '1300 years of Bulgarian Fund' on the condition that they purchase two small works of mine which already had (modest) prices. The deal was done …" (Sofia City Art Gallery, 2009).

One could argue that Solakov's story is ultimately about how to estimate the price of a radically new artwork. However, this is also a story about how his "unconventional" artwork challenged established valuation practices. Hence, the story sheds light upon the complex judgments that are involved in determining the value of a cultural good as well as pointing out how paramount the social aspects of this process are, that is, that a well-developed network of art professionals engage in economic, social, and cultural processes of valuation (Velthuis, 2005).

Values of cultural good

Cultural goods are characterized by their capacity to yield economic, social, and cultural values (Klamer, 1996, 2002, 2004; Throsby, 2001, 2008; Hutter and Shusterman, 2006). It is thus critically important not only to acknowledge these values, but also to be able to analyse the way they are created, affirmed, or changed (Petrova, 2020). While much research has focused on the economic values of cultural goods, because of its complexity the cultural value of cultural goods remains understudied.

Throsby (2001) describes cultural value as multi-dimensional, contested, and as lacking a standard measurement unit. It encompasses aesthetic, authenticity, symbolic, spiritual, historical, and social components. For instance, aesthetic value relates to an artwork's form and style, while authenticity is tied to originality (Ginsburgh, 2003). Symbolic value conveys meaning, spiritual value connects to cultural or religious significance, historical value reflects the context of creation, and social value serves to foster group identity.

Klamer (2004) offers another approach by strictly differentiating between cultural and social value, and thus putting "culture as expression" against "culture as identity". The latter pertains to the social dimensions of culture, such as, for example, a sense of belonging, identity, solidarity, and so on, while the former has artistic and aesthetic connotations. These characteristics are also understood as qualities[5] of the cultural good itself. The notion of the quality of an artwork is often used as a substitute for different dimensions of cultural value qua forms of "artistic merit" (Angelini and Castellani, 2019).

Consequently, realizing the economic, social, and cultural values of a cultural good are dynamically constructed through social relationships within a concrete context, rather than being fixed or solely monetized (Petrova, 2020; see also Coate, van Loon, and Weber, 2026; Klamer, 2026; Morea and Dekker, 2026; Wincewicz-Price, 2026 in this volume). This dynamic process, termed cultural valorization, evolves as new practices and values subsequently emerge (Klamer, 2003).

Paradigm shift

Considering the multiplicity of cultural values as well as their dynamic interrelations with different contexts, if we return to the case of Nedko Solakov, it raises the question of what it takes to introduce a radically new artwork within the existing art world.[6]

In his work *The structure of scientific revolution*, Kuhn (1962/1996) studied the discoveries and radical novelty within science as a unilinear, paradigm-driven, and (scientific) community-bounded process. He argues that paradigms define the particularity of any domain, by virtue of defining its framework and bounding its community. They also lay the foundation for professional practices that are based upon achievements that by definition must be both unique/incommensurable and appropriate. As such, they help to transform a group into a profession, and, moreover, help professional communities to bind their discipline. New paradigms invariably occur at historical junctures in which the existing framework of how to do things is called into question, whereby a new paradigm signals an awareness of an anomaly within the existing mode of practice within the pre-existing domain. According to Kuhn (1962/1996), a moment of discovery (or invention) is an indispensable condition for a new paradigm to take shape.

Close examination of paradigmatic changes within the field of science led Kuhn (1962/1996) to conclude that paradigm shifts rely upon purposeful and coordinated actions on behalf of various actors, who in one way or another negotiate meanings as part of their theories, while, simultaneously, considering shifts in values. The notion of incommensurability in Kuhn's interpretation suggests that while theories can use the same terms, they can have altogether different meanings and address wholly different things. This development thus requires replacing old concepts with new concepts. Therefore, Kuhn (1962/1996) argues that it is not simply a matter of better translation, but rather a question of developing new languages through which to explain the newly created concepts and methods, which only make sense in historical context and in relation to the concrete knowledge that is shaped by that paradigm at that moment. Hence, it is not a matter of knowing it, but rather a matter of learning it. If we apply these principles to the arts, then we can say that the difficulty of resolving anomalies within the art world is that, in contradiction with the scientific domain where paradigms can either be 'disproved' by an invention or discovery,[7] it can only be judged and legitimized by the relevant actors or experts coming to an agreement. In this way, the other important dimension of Kuhn's paradigm shift, that is, that a community defined by professionals' engagement, becomes paramount. The distinction that Kuhn (1962/1996) draws between a new paradigm and a paradigm shift is decisive in his theory, in as far as it points to the fundamental differences between, for example, solely newness and a newness that can lead to transformative practices within the domain. Consequently, a new paradigm does not in and of itself necessarily lead to a paradigm shift; rather, it also requires a fundamental shift within a community's life.

The argument put forward in this chapter goes one step further by proposing, through recourse to VBA, that these radical changes or innovations necessitate radical shifts within social (operational) and cultural (artistic) practices.

Culture of radical shifts within the arts

Setting out from the position discussed above, it is instructive to illustrate this by looking at the changes in practices within the visual art world in Bulgaria. In Kuhnian terms, the "unconventional" artwork that emerged in Bulgaria during the country's transition from socialism can be understood as a paradigm that has specific features which are shared by a group of artists. The artistic qualities of this paradigm, according to Klamer (2017), constitute the cultural dimensions (marked as C3 in Figure 4.1) of this paradigm. Furthermore, Kuhn (1962/1996) argues that for a paradigm to either make a difference or replace the previous paradigm, it must be broadly acknowledged and shared not only among peers, but also among those who are capable of judging its qualities. If in the beginning a paradigm is shared by only a few supporters in order to win out against the other established paradigms, it must seek to attract a set of knowledgeable followers who can help to move the paradigm forward,

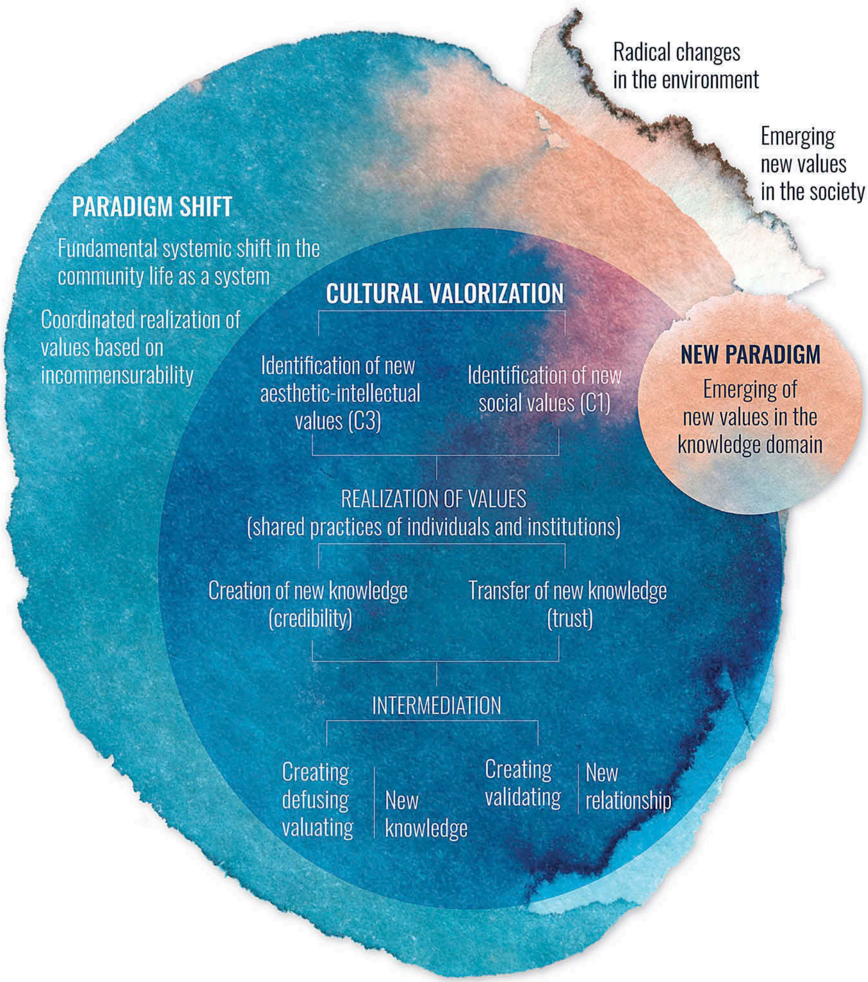

Figure 4.1 Cultural valorization of a paradigm shift: individuals' and institutions' perspectives

Source: Petrova (2020).

explore its possibilities, and show what it would be like to belong to the community that is guided by it (Kuhn, 1962/1996). However, this can only happen if they are knowledgeable, and capable of generating trust and credibility among both the domain and the field (Bonus and Ronte, 1997; Bianchi, 2015), which is suggestive of a certain social context with specific dynamics that undergo the process of change. This social context is characterized by concrete interpersonal relationships which serve to shape the social fabric of the specific domain of knowledge (in our case the Bulgarian visual art scene) and its operation (marked as C3 in Figure 4.1).

Analytical framework for exploring paradigm shifts within the arts and cultural sector: a value-based approach

Utilizing a framework that combines the idea of a paradigm shift and VBA allows for both: (1) analysis of the changes within artistic expression (ideas, meanings, artistic forms, etc.) which constitutes a change in cultural logic according to Klamer's five-sphere model;[8] and (2) examination of the cultural changes within social practices which are undertaken by individuals and organizations while interacting in different contexts.

In order to explore these various interrelations in a holistic manner, this section explores the theoretical rationale for the (cultural) valorization of new paradigms within the arts (Figure 4.1). First, it analyses the process of valorization for a new paradigm from the perspective of individual artists. Second, it examines the process of valorization for new art at the institutional level by analysing how artistic changes evolve within successful (institutional) practices.

Cultural valorization

Before proceeding to introduce the framework, for the purposes of clarity in the discussion it is first necessary to elaborate on the notion of (cultural) valorization. *Valorization* is a process of value generation through which a cultural artefact gains its worth, while its value is under construction (Vatin, 2013). This process is largely unpredictable and dynamic, and, moreover, requires a considerable degree of reasoning and contestation, or creating and negotiating meanings. As such, valorization can be said to be a socially and culturally mediated process that stands in direct contradistinction to standard economic doxa that understands our choices as being determined by given preferences (see Wincewicz-Price's (2026) and Bille's (2026) chapters in this volume). Cultural valorization not only takes place at the level of the individual, that is, individuals valorizing through different practices, but also takes place at the organizational or institutional level via the strategies adopted by those entities to realize their goals and purposes. Within the art world, for example, cultural valorization has been explored as a mechanism of canon formation, where changes in the institutional and organizational environment have also been considered (Corse and Griffin, 1997). In some sense, the cultural valorization undertaken by individuals and via organizations exhibit different logics, as Klamer (2017)[9] explained, while each sphere valorizes their values through different practices. The market points to the process of price formation (market logic, M) and the government launches regulation procedures (government logic, G), while for artists it is the process of socializing (social logic, S) and creating meanings or engaging in sense-making (cultural logic, C).

Within the context of the Bulgarian case study, for example, in the old system for valorizing art, artists needed to articulate their artistic pursuits (cultural logic) in an obvious fashion so that the Union of Bulgarian Artists (UBA) (government logic) could promote them, sell them, and disseminate them among its networks. In the post-1989 political milieu, the process of valorization differed dramatically in light of the fact that new actors became involved: artists now had to work with various stakeholders (e.g. curators, gallery owners, dealers, banks, foundations, etc.) with whom they may differ in terms of values and thus need to adopt different strategies to persuade them.

Cultural valorization of a new paradigm within the arts: artists' perspectives

From artists' perspective, the creation of a radical new artwork constitutes a moment of breakthrough, which is invariably complicated and uncomfortable. It is a moment that raises new questions and necessitates the search for new answers. It is a moment of discovery which, intentionally or otherwise, challenges the status quo of an artist. However, what if this is a radical new artwork that serves to create the conditions of emergence for a new art movement within the existing art domain and, hence, has the potential to reshape the entire sector? Art history offers numerous examples of such artwork, including, among others, work by van Gogh, Monet, Duchamp, and so forth, whose work subsequently created the potential for a new paradigm shift within the existing art world.

For argument's sake, let us agree that the radically new work of Solakov had the potential to establish a new paradigm, then let us speculate further by envisioning what it would have taken for the artist to introduce a new paradigm within his domain of practice. In order to capture the dynamics of this process, in accordance with Klamer's (2017) notion of cultural valorization, the analysis here builds upon the two stages of the VBA: (1) awareness and articulation of the goods/values the artist is striving towards; (2) engaging others/persuading others that the goods/values the artists are striving towards are also good for them.

Artists' awareness and articulation of values when a new paradigm is at stake

On the one hand, Solakov's own artistic breakthrough created a situation of value crisis (in the Kuhnian sense of the term) between his peers and the judges. This could prove to be highly discomforting for an artist, inasmuch as it signals that they are moving beyond the existing boundaries of what constitutes good or bad art. It might also signal that they are losing the reference point for their own domain of knowledge and practice. According to Kuhn (1962/1996), however, this could be a positive sign which invites the artist to reconsider what is important for them to pursue within their own work.

For Nedko Solakov, this might have meant that in order to be capable of persuading the Jury and the members of the Fine Art Commission (see Box 4.1), he would have needed to first understand what was so important for him about this new work of art. Was it solely a question of the newness of the form, or were there other values involved for him? Moreover, how did this connect or not with the values of his peers, critics, and other followers, or both the field and domain of the visual arts as a whole? More often than not, when we talk about our beliefs, we "deliberate, weigh up our values, take into account feelings including our own, and grope for the right thing to do" (Klamer, 2017, p. 15). In other words, by pursuing the good that they are striving towards, artists can come to discover the values underlying their interest, and, as such, become cognizant of the values of which they were previously unaware.

Engaging others

The process through which an artist reflects upon their own values and learns how to articulate them is central to the valorization process of a radical new piece of art. This process suggests an engagement with other stakeholders, or those who may also care about the same good that the artist is striving towards via their work.

Art historians remind us that in many cases although a radical new artwork emerges as a consequence of an individual discovery by artists, it only takes on importance when it is subsequently shared and embraced by fellow artists, curators, and others. However, how exactly does an artist make others care about their radical new artwork? Extant literature underscores the importance of both effort on behalf of artists to receive attention for their new artform and openness from those who they would like to engage with it (Gardner, 1993; Csikszentmihalyi, 1996; Collins, 1998; Frey, 1999; Caves, 2000; Throsby, 2001; Murray, 2003; Velthuis, 2005; Klamer and Petrova, 2007; Accominotti, 2009). Cultural economists, such as Hutter (2015), invite researchers to look at different dimensions of the process of appraisal that artists can generate themselves. On the one hand, this process relies upon the merits of the work (novelty, originality, uniqueness, etc.) which the artists must first share with others to receive validation for their work, while, on the other hand, it requires the artist to engage with others, such as new peers, jury members, critics, and other actors. In other words, the artist must articulate the community for whom the new artwork will eventually be of worth to.

The realization of a paradigm shift: institutions' perspectives

It is important to stress here that Kuhn (1962/1996) argues that paradigm shifts can only be said to truly occur if the broader community agrees upon the respective merits of the new paradigm and agrees to reconstruct the existing rules of the domain in such a way that makes space for the new rules. Furthermore, Kuhn notes that this reconstruction only makes sense as a response to the principals of incommensurability, which suggests that what worked in the old setting no longer works in the new setting. A paradigm shift can thus be said to be marked by radical transformations within all the other different dimensions of the system.

If we assume that Solvakov was cognizant of why he was pursuing his radical new art, and that he had managed to engage others with his new art, then is it fair to assume that a paradigm shift took place?

A paradigm shift begins when a crisis occurs that serves to blur the prevailing rules and order of things (Kuhn 1962/1996). As this process gathers steam, the anomaly comes to be more generally recognized, and it is only then that the authorities within the domain and the field begin to pay more attention to it. Consequently, the domain of knowledge begins to look quite different: competing articulations of the paradigm rapidly increase, fragmentation among different groups occurs, and participants within the domain feel compelled to redefine/reaffirm the subject matter of their discipline. In this sense, Solakov's case indeed can be said to illustrate the beginning of an anomaly within the sector and a subsequent crisis. The crisis was followed by the emergence of new groups, the entry of new actors and new ideas into the field, all of which challenged the existing institutional practices within the visual arts. This tension underscores the fact that the dominant governmental logic which had prevailed for five decades was incapable of coping with the new art through its pre-existing valorization process, logic, and values (Figure 4.2). At the same time, the logic of the market

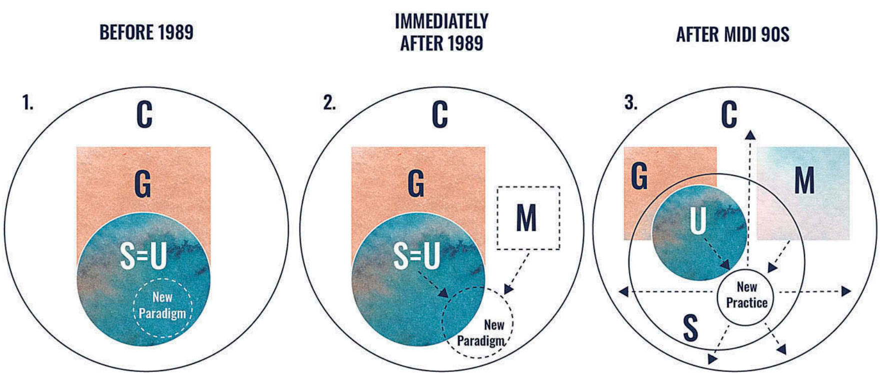

Figure 4.2 Formation of the new social and cultural logics during the transition period
Legend: Governmental sphere (G), Market sphere (M), Social sphere (S), Oikos sphere (O), Cultural sphere (C), the Union of Bulgarian artists (U)
Source: Petrova (2020).

also began to impact upon the new art through the engagement of different stakeholders (e.g. dealers, gallery owners, etc.) in the process of promoting it.

The formation of new institutional practices: process and agents

Those Bulgarian visual artists who discovered for themselves the importance of innovation slowly began to form an artistic community. The consequence of this was that the artistic communities came to realize that the existing institutions (selection procedures, exhibitions, etc.) had ceased to adequately meet their professional needs. Kuhn's model of a paradigm shift (1962/1996) posits that such cases create conflicts within existing institutions and parts of the artistic community. And when this crisis deepens, individuals engage in concrete strategies aimed towards reconstructing the sector through the establishment of a new institutional framework.

Indeed, in the Bulgarian context, different groups of artists began to coexist during this moment of historical change, namely in terms of the structural shift from one central governmental structure towards a free market and new social sphere. From a Kuhnian perspective, it appears that the different groups thus believed in and practiced different values, and in so doing began to fragment. Each group was motivated by values that lay outside of the content (aesthetic-intellectual) of the new paradigm. For Kuhn (1962/1996), this necessitates that each group attempts to draw in the masses, which, in turn, increases the strength and worth of the group's new paradigm.

In relation to the core values which motivate the new practices generated by a paradigm shift, the critical moment of this transformation process[10] concerns the controversy between the growing importance of a paradigm, which, in turn, might lead to a paradigm shift within the domain, and the need for the new movement's domain of knowledge to sustain its boundaries and remain distinct from other domains of knowledge (Kuhn 1962/1996). This raises the question of how to strike the requisite balance between the diverging forces within the process of a paradigm change and the converging forces which provide the necessary stability within the domain?

Intermediaries as agents of cultural valorization

The dynamic nature of institutional change derives from the lock-in between institutions and agents and the feedback that people provide in relation to the changes within the constraints (North, 1990). This translates into changes in structures (formal constraints) and values (informal constraints). When considering values as an indispensable part of institutional change, Dolfsma and Verburg (2008) suggest that the process of change implies "legitimacy or sense-making and interpretation" of these values (p. 1039). This is especially important in instances in which institutional changes take place within a domain of knowledge characterized by weak boundaries,[11] such as the arts. This means that the process of validation takes on a specific inflection when realized within the arts, especially when a radically new form occurs. In this sense, the subjective judgments of each actor involved can vary up until the very point at which judges agree upon the respective merits of the new paradigm with regard to its importance for the entire community. This process of achieving a public appreciation/appraisal of newly emerged art forms is ordinarily managed by intermediaries, whose role is highly complex in as far as they must become masters in constructing, disseminating, and evaluating (thus mastering uncertainty) while the sector is radically changing (Caves, 2000).

Another important point to make here is that artworks are complex goods, whose production, dissemination, and consumption are loaded with different emotions which can be differentially experienced in different contexts. In economic terms, when values such as infinity, novelty, affection, which are indicative of strong emotional involvement, operate as motivating factors within production and consumption, then transaction costs are invariably high (Bianchi, 2015). The economic argument here is that knowledge is important within market coordination processes, especially with respect to cultural goods (Dekker, 2014), and thus intermediaries have a decisive role to play in terms of compensating for the informational asymmetry by sharing their knowledge.

At the same time, knowledge is integral to the process of paradigm shifts in that it produces what Kuhn (1962/1996) refers to as an "adapted set of instruments" (p. 168), whose successful outcomes increase articulation and specialization. Producing these sets of instruments for a new paradigm contains a complex process of valorizing (in terms of generating, affirmation, and enhancement of values) by intermediaries. This process is highly influenced by their knowledge, that is, cultural capital, as well as how they transfer this knowledge, such as their social capital. Klamer (2017) explicates that this process is not an automatic one, but rather requires deliberate valorization on the part of these intermediaries.

In light of the complexity of the cultural valorization process, the role of the intermediaries is thus to lend credibility to the new paradigm by sharing and conveying their knowledge on subject matters (Bonus and Ronte, 1997). Trust and credibility are acquired via the mutual sharing of common knowledge among various actors in the art world (artists, critics, galleries, curators) and are the consequence of this cooperation (Bonus and Ronte, 1997). The capacity of intermediaries to build trust and credibility marks them out as fundamental actors in the process of change, who assist in the process of adjustment between existing and new paradigms, and existing and new knowledge, while, simultaneously, ensuring the stability of the sector during the process of transformation. In summary, social factors like the mastering of personal interactions (ties) with other actors is regarded as playing a vital role in terms of securing the appraisal of a new artwork. In this respect, in the arts, intermediaries assist in the process of building relationships, alongside mastering cultural and social capitals.[12]

Value-based approach as a method to analyse paradigm shifts within the arts

Applying Klamer's (2017) VBA opens up the possibility of understanding disruptive artistic innovations or paradigm shifts in terms of cultural and social shifts, that is, shifts in values, norms, and practices. It provides a framework through which to examine these shifts via analysing the valorization practices within market, government, social, and cultural spheres that are undertaken by individuals and institutions (Figure 4.3). Changing one logic alongside another induces a shift of values on both the individual and institutional levels. Detecting these shifts begins with a clear articulation of the (new) core values (Figure 4.3, stage one) that are shared by the core stakeholders (Figure 4.3, stage 2) and expressed within different practices within different logics (market, government, third sphere and cultural sphere) as described by Klamer's five-sphere model (2017; see Klamer's (2026) chapter in this volume).

At stage one, in the case of Nedko Solakov (Box 4.1), it may have been important for him to articulate and reflect upon the multiplicity of values by distinguishing between the clusters of personal (relating to ourselves); social (relating to known others); societal (relating to communities at large); and transcendental (relating to that which transcends the personal, social or societal level) (Petrova, Graça, and Klamer, 2022). An important point here is that while distinguishing these categories of values from one another, even if it looks like our actions are motivated by personal values (for example, our interest in creativity), there may nevertheless be social, societal, or even transcendental issues at stake, of which we are not aware. For example, at first Nedko Solakov could have experienced his radical work as a personal pursuit of newness, but it may also have served the interests of the artistic community which needed to find a

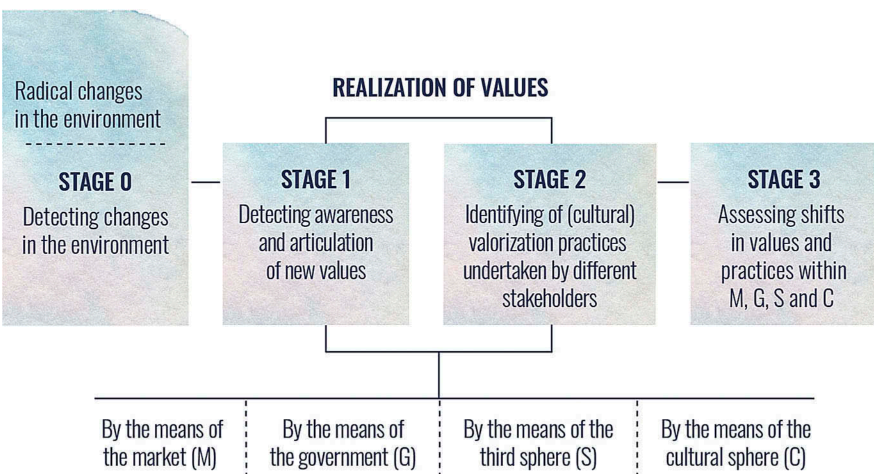

Figure 4.3 VBA framework for realization of values and change
Source: Petrova (2020).

reaffirmation of another point of view during this turbulent time of political transition. With respect to the latter, this could have served as an important catalyst for the artist to begin to deliberately interact, converse, engage with others and, in so doing, build a community of followers.

At stage two, as demonstrated in Solakov's account, by making concrete choices the artist sets out to, and indeed needs to, deliberately valorize their work, while, simultaneously, articulating its worth for each different group of potential followers/collaborators or any other type of actors. Artists can undertake different strategies to secure this attention, including, among other things, diffusing information, engaging in different conversations, or building upon their existing network of actors (Becker, 1982; Bourdieu, 1993). Invariably, as part of this process artists experience, negotiate, and balance conflicting values, while, simultaneously, pursuing their artistic career and seeking the attention and validation of others.

Only when these stages are completed can the analysis proceed to assessing both the scope of the change (artistic, aesthetic, social, etc.) and how significant they are (see the chapter by Petrova and Klamer (2026) in this volume).

Conclusions

This chapter has proposed a framework through which to analyse radical change/innovation within the arts that occur during profound change in the wider environment by making sense of different valorization practices. Drawing upon interdisciplinary discourses, the chapter stressed the importance of the socio-cultural along with the socio-economic dimensions of these changes. The distinct nature of the cultural and social values expressed within different practices undertaken by individuals and institutions. In order to both explore these various interrelations in a holistic manner and make sense of radical changes within the arts, which are expressed through shifts in values and practices, the framework utilized in this chapter made use of: (1) the theory of paradigm shifts, which was used to explain the development of new cultural and social practices; and (2) the VBA, which emphasizes the importance of values and practices within the different spheres.

At the individual level, although, on the one hand, the engagement of artists' peers and other stakeholders can be understood as a prerequisite for a paradigm shift, it is nevertheless not sufficient in and of itself for a paradigm shift to occur. Rather, it is also critically important to establish new relationships at the institutional level. With this in mind, this chapter has argued that intermediaries play a critical/indispensable role as facilitators of paradigm shifts within the visual arts. Compensating for the fact that cultural sectors are idiosyncratic, the field's experts and intermediaries thus take up the responsibility to mitigate the uncertainty by building credibility through the successful transference of their knowledge. They do this by either developing different networks or continually creating/re-shaping the relationships between existing and new actors. They are equipped with the tools and capacities for building appropriability conditions via a highly specific process of cultural valorization. The latter encompasses all stakeholders involved within the sector (artists, peers, dealers, curators, critics, other supporters) and involves a concerted effort to build new institutional relationships and reshape old ones based upon concrete values which are realized through a set of strategies and underpinned by a certain logic and rhetoric. Consequently, establishing a new paradigm requires both social and cultural forms of capital.

Overall, then, the framework developed in this chapter makes a substantial contribution to the field by bringing all these elements together, and while it does not necessarily resolve the complexity of the analysis of paradigm shifts within the arts it does elaborate on different possibilities. This chapter also provides a clear indication of what to look for in future empirical analyses within this field, and provides a blueprint for how to deal with radical innovation within the arts and cultural sector through recourse to the unique combinatory framework of paradigm shifts and the VBA.

Along with the fact that systemic change within the context of disruptive innovation pervades all aspects of a system, it also takes into account the interrelationships and interdependencies between these constitutive parts. As such, the change realizes itself as a result of the interplay between persons, products, processes, and the environment. Kuhn (1962/1996) expounds that the success of a paradigm is due, at least in part, to growing its credibility through its supporters. Mastering both (specific) knowledge and rhetoric, lends to these relationships the trust that is required for the paradigm to grow into becoming a true paradigm shift. It is through these different social practices that a new paradigm is ultimately established and, in this sense, the contention here is that relationships within the social sphere (S) can support the shifts in ideas and artistic expression, and so on (C3). At the same time, these relationships are grounded in particular cultural characteristics in the anthropological sense (C1), which, in turn, can either foster or hamper the paradigm shift.

Thus, the framework delineated in this chapter for analysing paradigm shifts or radical innovation allows for the analysis of not only the emergence and development of new structures and instruments but also the emergence and development of various relationships among individuals and institutional actors, and between individuals and institutional actors. It is only when all these practices have transformed in a reasonably consistent manner that a paradigm shift can be said to have occurred.

Notes

1 A previous version of this chapter is part of Petrova's (2020) PhD dissertation, "Cultural innovation in transition: a value-based approach", published by the Erasmus University.

2 New art forms that were part of the Bulgarian contemporary art were called "unconventional" to mark their radical innovativeness in comparing to the other contemporary art forms.

3 Here, the notion of institutional logic refers to Klamer's (2026) seven different spheres explained in Chapter 1 of this volume.
4 The Union of Bulgarian Visual Artists (UBA) is the central institution that organized the visual arts sector since 1945.
5 This is a category that originates in the work of Hume (1757/1965), where it was used to assess the different characteristics of artwork over time (Ginsburgh, 2003). Economists measure it based on consumers' choices, while philosophers base it on the long-term reputations of art experts (Ginsburgh, 2003).
6 See Becker (1982).
7 According to Kuhn (1962/1996), discovery is marked by novelties of fact. By invention, Kuhn is referring to the fact that the novelty occurs as a result of a change in an existing theory.
8 See Klamer (2017) as well as Klamer (2026) in this volume.
9 Here, I am referring to the five logics presented by Klamer (2017)—market (M), government (G), social (S), oikos (O) and cultural (C).
10 The transformation is marked by shifts in values as opposed to the transition process which is marked by shifts within structures or instruments.
11 The weak boundaries of a particular domain refer to the tremendous diversity of paradigms and lack of well-defined theoretical and/or methodological paradigms within a domain (Csikszentmihalyi, 1996). In other words, the domain is less paradigmatic.
12 See Bourdieu's (1986/2010) concepts.

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5 Cutting through the Value Thicket

The Value-Based Approach in Cultural Economics and its Friends and Foes

Christian Handke

Introduction

Studying and working among the Rotterdam-based cultural economists has one engage with some peculiar perspectives on economics, the cultural sector, and on the central but challenging concept of value. There is something about the place. A reasonably well-established label for this Rotterdam perspective is the *value-based approach* (VBA) to cultural economics,[1] which pushes the boundaries of economics and revolves around emergence of value in complex social processes (valorization). VBA gradually took shape under the auspices of Arjo Klamer, involving several dozen PhD projects and prolific writing and consultancy by the graduates, staff and other associates of Erasmus University.[2] That joint endeavour has already left a mark on the global community of cultural economists and inspired stakeholders in the cultural sector.

This chapter takes stock of the VBA core as I have come to understand it over the years, and positions VBA within related research fields. Within the VBA community, this chapter aims to introduce new ideas, generate even greater awareness of compatible ideas and insights found elsewhere, as well as of rival positions. On the other hand, I hope this chapter will expand the impact of VBA by succinctly presenting its unique profile. In any case, this chapter also administers some tough love. For all its considerable merits, I reckon that VBA has encountered some traps and dead-end streets, which exemplify broader challenges in coming to terms with the value of culture.

Another short note for caution: this chapter largely focuses on a handful of prominent authors, prioritizes members of the VBA community operating in and around Rotterdam, and publications in prestigious journals or widely cited other work. It leaves considerable scope for future work to also cover other like-minded academics, who have trodden similar paths. Within my limited corpus, I did my best to identify reasonably consistent commonalities, but I probably do not do justice to every single author and work in the VBA oeuvre. At the very least, my chapter may serve as a testing ground, which of the common themes, values, methods, partnerships, and rivalries the VBA community accepts and wishes to cultivate.

Surprise, surprise, let's start with a discussion of *value* …

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Value

Considering the concept of value, a couple of initial distinctions should be helpful. At least as far as my writing skills are concerned, it is necessary to distinguish theorizing regarding (1) *what value is*, from (2) *what people value*, and (3) *how value comes about*. Furthermore, it is helpful to separate these theoretical issues from the question (4) *to what extent* people value something, which requires (5) suitable *empirical* strategies. That goes a long way to disentangle the profile and contribution of VBA. I tackle all this in the following, if not quite in that order.

What is value?

I understand the verb *to value* simply as a synonym of *to appreciate*, which means either to be aware of something, or to assess its worth, or to like or even to desire, or any combinations thereof. Awareness as the result of learning, challenges in gauging worth, and satisfying various desires are all at the heart of VBA.

The noun *value* has two distinguishable meanings. First, value refers to a peculiar, somewhat scalable phenomenon of *how much* something is appreciated/considered of worth. Operationalizing this concept in empirical work is not entirely straightforward, and VBA has taken little interest in precise metrics.

Second, a central concern in VBA is *values* in the sense of principles of making moral judgements – determining right from wrong (cf. Klamer, 2017). Like many sociologists, VBA proponents emphasize that values are acquired in social processes involving interdependent and diverse agents. Furthermore, VBA is quite optimistic about the potential for stakeholders to continuously learn, improve their understanding about what they themselves and others appreciate, and how to cultivate joint interests.[3]

Let's compare to common practice in conventional (welfare) economics, which focuses on value and trade-offs – that is on the relative worth of specific goods and services, or on the costs and benefits associated with specifics courses of actions – under two simplifying assumptions. On the one hand, economists regularly seek to capture the net effect of all values that concern stakeholders on a quantitative-pecuniary scale of aggregate value (cf. Dekker, 2015). For deducing policy implications, this has considerable advantages. It can be misleading, however, if stakeholders put too much weight on those values and aspects of value amenable to measurement (Blaug, 2001; Klamer, 2003a, pp. 207–208) at the expense of values that persist beyond markets and/or take shape over protracted and complex processes. On the other hand, shared norms and values in communities are regularly taken for granted as a reasonably stable, tried-and-tested framework, which can largely be ignored. This conflicts with much of sociology, where values and their formation are of central concern and virtually always considered as problematic because predominant values allegedly reflect and sustain the relative power of privileged groups at the expense of others.

VBA does not adhere to these two simplifying conventions in much of economics, either, nor does it focus on power and discrimination. VBA proponents argue that values beyond markets are at stake in the cultural sector, but that stakeholders often lack awareness. Lack of awareness regarding values, not inequality, is the main social problem that VBA grapples with. VBA seeks to promote learning on hidden and mutable values by stakeholders, regardless of their ilk, and provides a framework for such reflections. Nonetheless, an understanding of value (the singular) is still of central import to capture some strengths and weaknesses of VBA.

How to assess value?

Direct gauging of the absolute value of most things is not feasible. In state-of-the-art economics, value is understood in relative terms, as an expression of preference for some option over all alternative courses of action, and thus in a more or less sophisticated ordinal scale (Mas-Colell, Whinston, and Green, 1995).

In my reading, a source of confusion is that many authors equate "economic value" with observable "market value" – price or prices times units sold.[4] This is often associated with the allegation that economists would exclusively consider market value and develop moral judgements based on this limited indicator of value. Interestingly, this does not only come from proponents of other academic disciplines, which could be explained by animosity and ignorance. For instance, the renowned cultural economist Throsby (1999, p. 8) alleges: "The stock of existing music and literature, for example, … has immense cultural value, but no economic value since they cannot be traded as assets." And the fellow (cultural) economists Hutter and Frey (2010, p. 36) even claim there would be a "strong consensus among economists that exchange [i.e. market] value exhausts the meaning of the notion of value". Instead, these authors and the VBA literature argue that other values (sources of value), which are not adequately reflected in markets, ought to be assessed. For example, as Klamer (2003a, p. 209, 2003b, p. 17) has it: "The cultural economic perspective compels us to distinguish social and cultural values from economic values."[5] However, that is easily misleading, as it conflates the separate issues *to what extent* something is valued and *why* something is valued.

Regarding the *extent* of value, in textbook (welfare) economics, market value is clearly not the same as full economic value.[6] Some aspects of value are hidden in markets, for instance user surplus, external effects, potential use value of those excluded due to the exploitation of market power, or protracted and indirect consequences that escape full human understanding.[7] In many markets, just the value of user surplus is a large multiple of market value, for instance regarding essentials such as water. The concept of *full economic value* is virtually the same as *full social value*, encompassing anything that is appreciated by humans, even if it is not reflected in market transactions and does not easily translate into monetary scales. The alleged problem in the discipline of economics is not one of theory but one of operationalization and ambition in empirical research.

That market value is not capturing full social/economic value has not been lost on cultural economics. The literature is rife with allusions to value indicators beyond present market value, for instance regarding shadow prices, non-use value, or rational addiction and taste formation. In empirical work, regarding methods to assess value, the common response has been applications of contingent valuation methods (CVM), sophisticated survey techniques designed to capture full economic/social value on monetary scales in terms of willingness to pay or willingness to accept (Noonan, 2003; Handke, Balazs, and Vallbé, 2016; cf. Dekker, 2015, p. 316).[8]

Overall, I reckon it is a dead-end street to place VBA in opposition to an alleged exclusive focus of economics on market value. VBA and similarly-minded cultural economists should not devote much energy on building strawmen, based on bad practice or superficial exposition by some economists. What is the point of messing with deadbeat, of caricaturing standard economics, and of catering for prejudices of non-economists?[9] Criticism that can be perceived as superficial is all too easily ignored.[10] VBA should rather critically engage with best practice in economics. More relevant criticisms of (cultural) economics may come from constructive criticisms of CVM, which is a considerable challenge due to the technicalities involved (cf. Noonan, 2003; Throsby, 2003). In empirical work, there is also much scope to develop and implement other observable indicators of value, such as participation time and intensity, voluntary investments in training related to arts and culture, volunteering, and intrinsic motivation to create. We will return to VBA and empirical methods below.

What do people value?

Another source of confusion regards the separate questions *what* humans value and *how* perceptions of value come about. All too often, these issues are conflated. Regarding the *what*, cultural goods and services do not only have direct use value, concerning the individual users' enjoyment derived from use. Cultural goods and services also have indirect use value (Andersson, Armbrecht, and Lundberg, 2012) or non-use value (Martin, 1994; Hansen, 1997; Frey, 2003). The literature features various, often incompatible categorizations, and the exact boundaries are contestable. Let's take stock of major items.

There is near universal agreement that engagement with cultural goods and services has different types of *use value*. On the one hand, it can be an end in itself, by bringing sheer enjoyment, whereas "[e]conomic [i.e. pecuniary] value, however, can only be a means towards an end" (Klamer, 2003a, p. 208). On the other, arts and culture can be a means to an end, for instance by serving some broader educational purpose for users or by generating revenues to suppliers of cultural goods. A major theme in cultural economics is also so-called intrinsic motivation, where much work – any activity that can generate value for others – in the cultural sector is relatively enjoyable or associated with non-pecuniary rewards to the worker. In a sense, creative work seems to have use value, too. Dekker (2015, p. 321) extends on this by observing that "cultural goods more than other goods (but not exclusively) shape who we are and what we aspire to be", which probably mixes pure enjoyment with other, instrumental benefits. In any case, conspicuous engagement with widely revered culture may have *prestige value*. Users can signal sophistication and promote their social status when they adopt a visible, cultured habitus, as users or as creators of cultural goods and services.

Furthermore, due to their quasi-public good attributes, cultural goods and services also have non-use value. For instance, consider suppliers of complementary goods, such as hotels and restaurants, who experience greater demand for their services when attractive cultural sites operate in their vicinity. Suppliers of complementary goods appropriate some of the surplus value of cultural goods and services that spills over to them. A vibrant and engaging cultural scene can also have broader benefits in terms of social cohesion and co-operation, education, and innovation. This is non-use value, when the benefits of any positive transformative effect of engagement with arts and culture accrue to other members of society than the user being transformed. Support of arts and culture may thus be used for value signalling, where sponsors and donors are visibly attributed and recognizable in their contribution to public goods (cf. Srakar and Čopič, 2012). There may also be proper altruism, where individuals experience "psychic benefits" (Frey and Eichenberger, 1995; Csikszentmihalyi, 2000) or "warm glow" (Andreoni, 1990; Cecere Le Guel, and Rochelandet, 2017). It remains challenging, however, to disentangle the various self-interested motives from proper altruism.

Another source of value transpires when people cherish the mere potential to have cultural goods and services available to themselves (potential use value), even if they do not have any specific plans of usage, or to others (potential non-use value). In fundamental economic terms, many cultural goods and services require specialized labour and capital that take shape over long initial periods of investment before they bring about sustained benefits. Once there has been an interruption in production, it is difficult to quickly make many high-quality cultural goods and services available. This relates to "option value" or "existence value" regarding the potential of cheap and easy access to culture for individuals themselves or for other current members of society, or even to "bequest value" regarding the preservation of cultural heritage for future generations.

Last but not least, an illuminating contribution of VBA is the assertion that cultural production and products are valued due to their ability to generate communal, shared experiences. As Klamer (2016, p. 6) has it: "a work of art … has to be shared, or be part of a common practice in order to qualify as art". Shared experiences are often appreciated as an end in themselves. In this respect, VBA relates to more recent work by the sociologist Rosa (2019) on *resonance*. Shared experiences and practices regarding arts and culture also contribute to the formation of groups of like-minded people in society.[11] Klamer (1997, 2003b) focuses on broader societal benefits of arts and culture, which accrue beyond the cultural sector, in terms of social cohesion or the development and sustenance of shared norms and values. If this works well, it promotes trust, and facilitates trading as well as other forms of social co-ordination. In this respect, VBA shares an interest with institutional economics (e.g. Williamson, 1993; Rousseau et al., 1998; Korczynski, 2000; Berggrem and Jordahl, 2006; Bromiley and Harris, 2006; Fehr, 2009), but in my reading, the potential for cross-fertilization remains largely untapped.

In short, many different benefits and values are at stake in cultural practices. It is hard to imagine that stakeholders consciously and fully assess all of this whenever they act/make choices. Nor should we easily assume that people cannot "get it" and are doomed to reliably ignore important issues, or that experts have better information on what people would actually appreciate and how much. This begets another important question in the VBA repertoire.

How do perceptions of value come about?

Regarding the issue of *how* people develop perceptions of value, VBA takes social interdependence into focus. To be sure, this is a common theme throughout cultural economics. On the one hand, cultural goods and services are shared goods (Klamer, 2016), which derive some of their value for individual users from the engagement of others. In terms of contemporary microeconomics, there are positive network effects. On the other hand, users make choices to engage with specific cultural works with incomplete information about the product's attributes – which, as a rule, are only gradually revealed and understood after accessing/buying and spending time with the cultural work – and about the relative value of a plenitude of other cultural works, which are often close substitutes. Observations of other people's behaviour and attitudes can provide quality signals, which affect individuals' attention and choices. Processes of social contagion may thus explain common observations of fads and fashions as well as superstar effects in the cultural sector (cf. Bikhchandani, Hirshleifer, and Welch, 1992; Kretschmer, Klimis, and Choi, 1999; Blaug, 2001; Throsby, 2003).

VBA has produced unique and advanced discussions of valorization – the complex social process that gradually brings about perceptions regarding the relative value of specific works of art (cf. Dekker, 2015). Such processes are particularly sophisticated regarding contemporary art, where no universal quality indicators based on intrinsic attributes of works are acceptable, and the discrepancies between any objective costs of production and market value can be especially vast (cf. Velthuis, 2013).

Klamer (2016, p. 4) has developed an ambitious theoretical framework in which to think about valorization processes in various aspects of society that each operates in its own valorization "logic" (cf. Bourdieu, 2005; Boltanski and Thévenot, 2006). For starters, there is the usual distinction between "market logics" regarding pecuniary values, selfish-behaviour, and trading of goods and services,[12] and a "government logic" ostensibly regarding welfare throughout a political entity such as a nation state.[13] Similarly to Ostrom (2010), Klamer argues that other aspects of society contribute to cultural and artistic practices. However, in contrast to Ostrom's mere addition of a single mode of governance, the commons, which rely on informal norms and values backed up by peer pressure, Klamer (2016) introduces a more detailed categorization of additional spheres and corresponding logics. First, there is "cultural valorisation by which a work acquires its artistic status", operated by cultural industries peers and experts (Klamer, 2016, p. 6). Second, a wider "social space" where a "singular work derives its values from being a contribution to a common practice, that is, a practice that a group of people, artists, connoisseurs, museum directors have in common" (Klamer, 2016, p. 6). Third, there is the oikos (household or home), where kins and/or perhaps dear friends experience virtually permanent ties and frequent, intense interactions, without apparent consideration for equivalent reciprocity. In all these three additional spheres, individuals jointly contribute to, create, and enjoy values, which are often largely private (rival and exclusive) but without any clear-cut buying and selling.

Klamer (2016, pp. 5–6) alleges that those "part[s] of the valorisation [… are] not acknowledged in standard economic approaches" and "[t]he value-based approach points to an impact that is inconceivable in the standard approach" of economics, which focuses on calculated choices in the market or governmental sphere. In other words, in an earlier work, Klamer (2003a, p. 199) asserts: "Whereas the 'choice' group focuses on the moments of exchange, the language of the 'values' group acknowledges values generated, produced and sustained in nonmarket type of transactions." Much work remains on the interaction between different valorization logics (cf. Angelini and Castellani, 2019), and I wager the hypothesis that particularly strong positive effects persist from visible tokens of cultural and social value onto market value.

Methods and methodology

The aim to grasp value and values beyond markets and government policy coincides with preferences for empirical methods and perhaps even academic methodology. VBA proponents mostly favour qualitative empirical methods or mixed methods research employed in case studies (cf. Klamer, 2003a). There seem to be three fundamental assumptions.

First, revealed preferences data based on a multitude of observed choices are a relatively limited means to capture the value of arts and culture. Second, it is useful – desirable and reasonably efficient – for researchers to try and address rich, qualitative data that capture more nuance regarding the individual stakeholders' awareness and attitudes, as well as the specific social context in which they operate. This often means that VBA researchers ought to personally engage with stakeholders, conduct conversations or make participant observations. As Klamer (2016, p. 5; cf. Klamer, 2003a, p. 192) has it: "The value-based approach begins with what theatre makers and others involved in the arts world find important, that is with their values, or with the qualities that they want to realize."

Third, stakeholders are usually not fully aware of their own motives and values, nor of the constraints associated with preconceived ideas and the local culture of shared norms and values, under which they operate. Thus, VBA researchers glean useful information from conducting extensive conversations with stakeholders. One effective way to motivate conversation partners is by providing them with useful services in the process. Teaching or consultancy is data collection, and vice versa. However, in order to provide recognizable services to conversation partners, VBA researchers can hardly adhere to strictly inductive empirical work, aiming to minimize the impact of the researcher's preconceived ideas on the data. They act as moderators and provide a substantial framework for reflection, for instance in terms of the categorizations of spheres and logics summarized above, or in terms of a "quality impact monitor" (Klamer, 2016; cf. Petrova, Graça, and Klamer, 2022). I am not sure whether this combination of purposes is pragmatic, that is as a costly solution to a practical problem, or whether it even constitutes the ideal in VBA research. In any case, it is common VBA practice.

Be that as it may, there are some obvious advantages and drawbacks of this repertoire of methods. For instance, qualitative methods work rather well for developing new ideas and theory in the sense of concepts and categorizations. They are quite limited when it comes to establishing the relative import of concepts across multiple cases, to developing generalizable insights (rather than going through the labour-intensive process of ad hoc conversations for each instance of application), to identifying causal associations, or to making useful predictions.

Nonetheless, directly engaging with stakeholders by talking with them in their own terms has another considerable advantage: it may help overcome the problem that economic jargon and economic reasoning often remain ineffective due to negative "visceral emotional reactions" of stakeholders in the cultural sector (Klamer, 2016, p. 4). However, VBA does not just seek to lure people with different skills and different preconceived ideas into expanding their repertoire with some well-curated economic ideas presented in agreeable language. There is also a deliberate struggle with economics, a quest to provide "an alternative vocabulary and with that, other values" (Klamer, 2016, p. 9).

Critical engagements with economics and capitalism

To my understanding, the strongest argument for the latter ambition is the problem of performativity, where engagement with economics makes people more prone to act according to economic principles (MacKenzie et al., 2007;

cf. Bourdieu, 2005). Economics provides a structure to think about arts and culture that guides, enables, and restricts. As economic reasoning permeates much of society, economics may often create the outcomes it predicts, which would render some of its predictive power hollow and unhelpful. VBA is about overcoming some of these restrictions, broadening the scope and relevance of applied research.

At the outset, let's be clear that criticisms of any overreliance on economic reasoning in the cultural sector can go too far. It holds more sway, for instance, regarding market-oriented and evidence-based cultural policy, which is relatively common in the USA, in the UK, and perhaps the Netherlands. However, in other countries, such as Germany and France, Kantian notions of the freedom of the arts are associated with the perception that some arts and culture is meritorious, and should be lavishly supported by public means, beyond any debasing concern for specific, well-documented benefits. That traditional attitude contrasts starkly with deliberate efforts by VBA to map the various sources of the value of culture.

Nonetheless, regarding criticisms of an apparent hegemony of economic reasoning, one might easily conflate VBA with other academic fields, who struggle against the tenets of economics and capitalism. For instance, there is contemporary Marxist critical theory, proponents of which have even coined the very expression of culture/cultural industry (Horkheimer and Adorno 2015 (1944); today mostly used in the plural). Another case in point are sociologists of arts and culture following Bourdieu, who as a rule share with critical theory a sceptical perspective on capitalism and economics.[14] Bourdieu's flexible use of empirical methods (including qualitative methods), his emphasis on empirical investigations as "communication" (Bourdieu 1996a), as well as his jargon of evaluation "logics" (Bourdieu, 2005) are also featured in prominent VBA works (e.g. Klamer, 2016). There are further common interests and shared values between VBA, critical theory/Marxism, as well as sociology à la Bourdieu. For instance, VBA seeks to unlock the true values of individuals, a bit like a critical theorist would seek to challenge and overcome false consciousness. And VBA seeks greater awareness and appreciation for forms of social co-ordination that do not 'fetishize' pecuniary value(s), that do not rely on markets, do not require clearly defined property rights nor formal contracts. However, I will now show that there are about as many substantial differences between VBA and these related fields, as there are commonalities. A shared opponent does not necessarily make friends.

Super-subjectivity

A conventional division in theories of value lays in the relative emphasis of either 'objective' factors regarding production costs (such as labour and capital) or of 'subjective' perceptions of usefulness as determinants of value. Classical Marxists and (other) classical economists, for instance, focus on the labour required as main determinant of value. By contrast, the standard marginalist theory of value in contemporary economics prominently features subjective perceptions of value. Standard economics revolves around the interplay between perceived values on the demand side and costs of production on the supply side. Economists tend to pay relatively little attention to *why* exactly humans develop perceptions of value.[15] Economists usually put much faith in sovereign consumers getting it right, at least as a central tendency across multiple instances of choice. As seen above, much of cultural economics and VBA do not adhere to this soft-type rational choice tradition.

However, VBA is found even further down the subjective end than standard economics. VBA proponents are consistently focused on subjective perceptions as the source of value. They seek to document what exactly is valued by whom, they often seek to create greater awareness of what is at stake, and aim to improve valorization, rather than accept extant attitudes and preferences of stakeholders as the best indication of value. Discussions of production functions and market equilibria are virtually absent.

At first sight, this may appear as a regress in the VBA literature compared to meticulous discussions of the interplay of supply and demand in economics. However, considering some idiosyncrasies of the cultural sector, this may not be all that important. For instance, cultural goods and services are extremely heterogenous products, so that any setting of market boundaries is somewhat arbitrary and trivializing. Furthermore, objective information on production costs for cultural works is hardly available, and intrinsic motivation to create might even mean that the labour component of the production function has the opposite sign than one might expect, that is looks like a benefit rather than a cost. What is more, creators often employ complex multi-product and intertemporal pricing strategies, so that asking prices will only rarely have much to do with costs. Be that as it may, in this fundamental respect, VBA is incompatible with Marxist criticisms of standard economics and capitalism – even more so than standard economics itself.

Learning individuals and whose valuations do we trust?

VBA's emphasis on subjective perceptions is encapsulated in the ambivalent meaning of the slogan's verb "to realize the values of culture",[16] where "realize" signifies both "to become aware of" as well as "to achieve something you were hoping for". At closer inspection, VBA as it presents itself today has taken a peculiar position regarding several fundamental questions: (1) how rational and trustworthy are stakeholders' evaluations? (2) As people clearly aren't perfect, what is the adequate role of experts in learning processes throughout society? (3) What is the appropriate level to try and instigate desirable social change?

VBA addresses value and values as social constructs, much like critical theory and related social theory. This obviously assumes incomplete information as a universal or common condition. People may be wrong in their choices, routines, and values, at least in the sense that there is room for improvement. People may learn and often spend great resources on acquiring and processing new information that they suspect will entertain or help them make better choices.

That is not terribly original yet. In terms of economics, VBA is thus in the camp of industrial organization economics, evolutionary economics, behavioural economics, information economics, and those sizable aspects of contemporary (micro-)economics, which address agents with imperfect knowledge and some potential to learn.[17] This is almost always associated with a notion that people *ought* to learn, as one might expect from academic professionals anyway.

Things get a bit more divisive regarding the issue to what extent, by whom, and how imperfect agents should be taught, nudged, or constrained. In other words, what is the role of experts? Or who gets to instruct others and how should instructions be administered?

Economics is largely based on two default assumptions in this respect. First, as a rule, individuals are the best judges of their own well-being and how they can promote it, even if they are not perfect. Individuals still have private information about their own position and the appropriate incentives to try and get their choices right, in as far as they carry the consequences of their actions (cf. Hayek, 1945). This cautions against extensive interference of public authorities or experts with other individuals' choices, or even coercive, centralized control (which of course is inevitably administered by other flawed individuals and imperfect organizations). Second, current social orders and the formal institutions that comprise it have developed under some internal public scrutiny and external competitive pressure, and have thus demonstrated that overall, they perform reasonably well, even though we might not perfectly understand how. This cautions against swift and radical change on the governmental and wider societal level.

Those notions in economics conflict with critical theory and related social science perspectives. Critical theory is often dismissive of the scope for individual agency as a means for positive change. As Adorno (1997) has famously put it: "*Es gibt kein richtiges Leben im falschen*". A common understanding of this is that there is no proper life in a society marred by structural problems. In other words, those who seek to improve their lot ought to focus on the grand societal and political level. Regarding current social orders, in particular in the proverbial West, critical theory proponents usually dismiss traded social conventions and majority values as misguided and oppressive. This is often associated with calls for more extensive restrictions on discriminatory behaviour, and for measures to correct historical injustices and current inequalities to be conducted with state authority. And, since most laypeople are unable to break out of the false consciousness acquired through a flawed social order, they are in need of educators, that is, critical theorists.[18]

VBA falls into an interesting position in these respects. First, it focuses on situations, where people lack awareness in ways that restrict them from realizing the full values of culture. Second, VBA is unapologetic about offering some ready-made suggestions for what might matter and how to improve, delivered by (VBA) experts (see Petrova, Graça, and Klamer, 2022, pp. 5ff.).

Third, VBA encourages engagement with apparently underappreciated values, which closely correspond to traditional, leftist themes: realize your personal values rather than alienated work, resist the fetish of money, cultivate altruism and solidarity. However, in consultancy, VBA encourages stakeholders to listen *and* talk, and to set their own priorities, picking values as they see fit. And in research, VBA seeks to document these values as they have been presented by stakeholders. VBA offers a process of reflection within a reasonably flexible framework.

What is more, VBA has hardly been associated with calls for wholesale structural change to society, or even just specific national policy changes.[19] This assessment explains why this chapter features no discussion of policy implications, other than this: VBA largely encourages people to get their own house in order, to use a phrase currently popular with right-wing thinkers that still suits here. Starting small is fine. Under the current social order, there is scope for individual, social, and societal improvement through gradual, bottom-up processes, entrepreneurship and innovation (Klamer, 2011), as well as through cultivation of informal communities.

Last but not least, VBA hardly engages with apparent divisions within society, which are central in traditional Marxism (class) and in contemporary critical theory and sociology (gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, or perceived "race"). In my reading, VBA is largely class- and colour-blind in its support of holdouts against economic imperialism. For all the affinity we might otherwise expect due to VBA's attacks on much of economics, this constitutes a division line to sociology and critical theory.

Conclusions

VBA revolves around two core issues. First, it responds to a perceived need for individual stakeholders to consciously develop values in processes of introspection regarding what stakeholders can and want to achieve subject to their capabilities and position in society. Second, it focuses on complex social processes of valorization in which cultural activities and cultural goods and services develop value/social impact that are only partially a consequence of the intrinsic attributes of cultural goods and services themselves. VBA thus often operates at the forefront of economics, cultural policy, and cultural management.

However, this chapter argues that VBA (and much of the related cultural economics literature) ought to better disentangle the questions of *what* people tend to value, from the questions of *how* values are discovered and give rise to value in valorization processes, *to what extent* people effectively value at any given point, and perhaps even to develop predictions to what extent additional, potential value can be unlocked subject to various degrees of awareness and information. This chapter has also argued that VBA ought to avoid struggling with strawmen – in particular, caricatures of contemporary economics. Good, standard economic practice is not restricted to discussions of market value, does not confuse market value with full social value, and does not necessarily assume perfectly informed, rational agents. Where specific economic studies exhibit such assumptions, these are either deliberate simplifications, which may indeed be justified to conduct efficient research, or they are mere mistakes. Errors at the weaker end of economics should not exhaust any critical reflection on economics at large. That is not only a waste of energy on flogging deadbeat. It is also a strategic mistake, as it can cripple exchanges with good practice in (the rest of) economics and its proponents, as well as bolster superficial, wholesale criticism of economics in other academic disciplines, which could easily undermine VBA economics, too.

VBA is in a fascinating position within the social sciences. On the one hand, it invokes several criticisms of economics as a rather dominant conceptual framework (if perhaps less dominant in the cultural sector) and by extension capitalism. That resonates with longstanding attitudes in critical theory and sociology. VBA struggles against the apparent fetish of money and markets in much of society, it seeks to promote authentic expressions of wider values rather than alienated work and consumption, as well as awareness of alternative modes of social co-ordination based on informal institutions, the formation of communities, solidarity, and even altruism. On the other hand, VBA's super-subjective conceptualization of value is fundamentally incompatible with Marxist perspectives. What is more, VBA is focused on gradual social change through bottom-up processes, from personal introspection to the formation of informal communities, and to entrepreneurship and innovation. VBA largely disregards apparent social struggles between distinct social groups according to class, gender, ethnicity, and the like. This contrasts starkly with critical theory, which tends to dismiss piecemeal improvements within the current social order as illusory, or, somewhat paradoxically, argues for statutory action to ensure representation of marginalized groups and to mitigate discrimination and social inequality. By contrast, VBA emphasizes the potential of individual agency to benefit communities within the current social order and the scope for incremental social and societal change.

Furthermore, VBA is an arena for applying qualitative methods and even ethnographic work on central issues of economics. As far as I am concerned, this is already a welcome contribution, and VBA performs well in terms of generating new ideas and in documenting specific agents' attitudes in particular social circumstances. However, this orientation also entails some restrictions.

In my reading, there are five challenges for VBA to break new ground, by expanding its methods and consolidate its contributions. First, as Dekker (2015, p. 323) has had it, qualitative work and case studies could be complemented with (quantitative) testing of falsifiable hypotheses to identify more general patterns in processes of valorization and "valuation regimes" (cf. Boltanski and Thévenot, 2006). Second, VBA could foster more intensive exchanges with various academic communities, who engage with essentially the same issues in processes akin to parallel or convergent evolution. This chapter has identified a couple of options in this respect. So far, VBA has largely presented itself as a critical expansion to economics. There are parallel developments with – and probably some heavy drawings on – selected sociological works, in particular. More explicit, critical reflections on sociology may also be in order.[20] Third, there are new opportunities for qualitative research with the plethora of qualitative data that has become available online (cf. Handke and Dalla Chiesa, 2022) and with computer-aided analysis of such data. Fourth, VBA eventually ought to document how it makes unique contributions to wider debates regarding specific aspects of economic and social policy, such as copyright policy, public financing of arts and culture, technological change and digitalization, or sustainability. Fifth, there is untapped potential for VBA to yield useful insights beyond the cultural sector. The cultural sector has no clear-cut boundaries. VBA has already started expanding its efforts beyond the fine and performing arts to address some creative industries and arts and crafts. There is scope for broader application throughout the economy and society, as awareness of values and valorization processes are likely to matter well beyond the arts (cf. Friedman et al., 2013).

Last but not least, there are some interesting trade-offs (or dialectics) regarding the role of experts, their conceptual frameworks and methods, in any project that seeks to promote the authentic realization of values by stakeholders. VBA is a case in point. According to Klamer (2016, p. 368), in VBA "the standard rational choice approach … is relaxed". It seems reasonable to assume that people do not reliably manage to effectively pursue their own interests. That does not mean that authorities (governmental agents or experts) – who are essentially people, too – can reliably improve the situation. I hope that VBA proponents will continue to strike a reasonable balance regarding the worthwhile but paradoxical task of holding effective conversations regarding value and diverse values, to simultaneously learn and teach, in a manner that helps empower stakeholders.

Notes

1 The first published use of the expression VBA in the 'Rotterdam community' of cultural economists I found is in Klamer (2016). This chapter also covers works preceding the emergence of the term among this group. An earlier use of the exact expression VBA in cultural economics is found in Srakar and Čopič (2012), who document the import of non-use value and public good attributes in private funding of the arts.

2 For reasons of space, I do not list the many laudable participants and contributors here. This volume – the authors contributing and the works they cite – provides a decent overview.

3 Furthermore, within groups of people, who co-habit and interact, a core of shared norms and values tends to take shape. That constitutes a specific 'culture' of a limited range of expected behavior within communities, which tends to change only gradually. Some shared norms and values are sustained by formal institutions, such as a legal framework accompanied by a judiciary and executive. Other values remain informal and are propped by peer pressure.

4 For instance, in their widely cited work on information systems design, Friedman et al. (2013, p. 57; cf. Friedman 1996) describe value as follows:

"In a narrow sense, the word 'value' refers simply to the economic worth of an object. For example, the value of a computer could be said to be 2,000 dollars. However, in the work described here, we use a broader meaning of the term wherein a value refers to what a person or group of people consider important in life."

This text continues with a passage that could just as well come from VBA authors:

"In this sense, people find many things of value, both lofty and mundane: their children, friendship, morning tea, education, art, a walk in the woods, nice manners, good science, a wise leader, clean air."

The authors list "enduring social values" at stake in the design of information systems as privacy, property, physical welfare, freedom from bias, universal usability, autonomy, informed consent, and trust. There is clear scope for greater exchange between VBA and the literature in "value-based design", even though some of these values are clearly distinct from those discussed for arts and culture.

5 This idea resonates through much of cultural economics – for a literature reviews, see Angelini and Castellani (2019). Some formidable authors address cultural value and economic value as distinct but related concepts (Throsby 2001; Hutter and Frey 2010). Angelini and Castellani (2019) themselves distinguish social, spiritual, historical, symbolic, aesthetic, and "other values", all of which are components of "cultural value". They suggest a structural equation model to test for complex causal associations between artists' talent, fame, cultural value, economic value, and price.

6 The notion that market value would be all that matters may be more common in business and management, see for instance De Ruyter et al. (1997) or Kothari and Lackner (2006).

7 In sophisticated business economics, protracted effects regarding trust, repeated interactions, untraded interdependencies, and sustainability may be excluded for simplicity, but this is not universally the case. At least, ambitious authors will acknowledge such 'real-world complications' or long-term considerations, when interpreting their results with a view to practical implications.

8 For a general manual, see Bateman et al. (2002).

9 The authors scrutinized here are clearly aware of some nuance in economic assessments of value. For instance, Hutter and Shuster (2006) do discuss external effects, taste formation (drawing on Scitovsky 1976), and psychic returns (use value) of arts, which Baumol (1986) invoked to explain below-average investment returns of art works. Furthermore, Dekker (2015, p. 316) also refers to consumer surplus. My best guess is that allegations of pervasive 'money fetishizing' by economists are deliberate rhetorical devices. If so, they do not work for me.

10 I hope my superficial discussions of critical theory and sociology in this chapter are not too much of an unintended caricature, either. At least, they are mostly not presented as criticisms of those academic fields but as counterpoints to better grasp the unique profile of VBA.

11 Group formation also comes with boundaries set against compatriots perceived as outsiders of that group, say participants in a different youth culture or members of a different political party (cf. Leibenstein 1950; Klamer 2003a, p. 192; Ostrom 2010).

12 Bourdieu (2005, p. 9) rather elegantly calls it the "economic logic of interest and calculation".

13 Klamer (2016, p. 4) assumes that markets and governments both revolve around "financial valorization". In my understanding, we can add some more nuance regarding governments. On the one hand, governments do not only conduct policy by allocating public financial means, but they also set legal and regulatory frameworks, the consequences of which are not easily expressed in pecuniary terms (cf. Klamer, Mignosa, and Petrova, 2013; Handke and Karatas 2023). What is more, governments care about their legitimacy and public support, which in democracies is denominated not in money but in votes (among other things). Furthermore, subject to need of

securing sufficient public support or acquiescence, individuals in governmental positions may pursue their own selfish interests.

14 For Adorno and his co-authors, virtually all contemporary culture is mass deceit, whereas Bourdieu is more concerned with what he considers the arbitrary aggrandization of cultural tastes and practices of the powerful (cf. Gartman 2013).

15 Accordingly, Dekker (2015, p. 316) describes a common perspective among economists as follows: "Historical, esthetic, social, societal and economic values are all captured in that one figure, the market price, but notoriously difficult to separate." In pragmatic research on the relative value of various options, that "notorious difficulty" will often be circumvented. This ought to be acceptable, if research limitations are adequately acknowledged by the researchers and considered by stakeholders, when they make use of the information.

16 Paraphrased from Klamer (2003b, 2011, 2017).

17 See for instance Morgenstern (1979) for a fundamental report on expected utility theory that has taken shape in the 1940s.

18 Economics also conflicts with social conservatism, in as far as the latter invokes some "natural order of things", which should be beyond scrutiny, besides the tenets of economics. I do not honor that with our attention here.

19 For some work by VBA authors on specifics of cultural policy, see Klamer and Petrova (2007), as well as Klamer, Mignosa, and Petrova (2013).

20 Economics may be more influential than sociology in large parts of society, but regarding academic engagements with arts and culture, cultural sociology is rather more imposing than cultural economics, at least according to citation counts of some "classic" works (e.g. Bourdieu 1996b; Boltanski and Thévenot 2006). This alleviated status alone is a reason to critically engage. Furthermore, I reckon some relative strengths of economics are that it seeks to uphold a reasonably uniform jargon and theoretical core, and that most economists seek to generate falsifiable predictions. In my reading, sociology appears to be more fragmented, not always keen on enabling falsification, and sometimes as set on confirming preconceived ideas regarding specific social problems as hard-nosed, liberal market economists.

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Part II

Values and Valorization: Applications of the Values-Based Approach

6 Towards an Appreciation of Creative Craft

Exploring the Relation between Culture and the Valorization of Creative Craft

Marleen Hofland-Mol

Introduction

A central issue in debates over the appreciation of cultural goods is the value a consumer assigns to a particular cultural good. It has been argued that the valuation of cultural goods, such as, for example, creatively crafted goods, is socially constructed and that a *culture of appreciation* is an essential component in their valorization. Understanding the value of cultural goods as socially constructed raises questions over what actors influence the valuation of cultural goods. Using the goldsmith sector as a starting point for this analysis, I aim to obtain insight into precisely what might cultivate a *culture of appreciation* within the creative crafts. To achieve this, I address two specific themes. First, I consider culture's role in valorizing cultural goods, putting forward the argument that culture should be viewed as an explicit social construction and, therefore, as a symbolic good. Consequently, cultural works, such as art or handmade jewellery, are the product of social interactions that are a response to a broader social context. This effect brings me to the second theme: an exploration of the influence that interactions and relations within a cultural field have upon the valuation of creative craft. These themes are elucidated through an interview with the goldsmith who made my own wedding ring and viewed through a cultural economic perspective through recourse to Arjo Klamer's five-spheres model (2017).

Appreciating creative craft

Craft is not a widely investigated topic within the field of cultural economics. Indeed, there are only a handful of examples of such investigations within extant literature. For instance, Cominelli and Greffe (2013) studied the connection between crafts and intangible heritage, while Goto (2013) explored the relationship between craft and the cultural and creative industries. In their book *A Cultural Economic Analysis of Craft*, Mignosa and Kotipalli (2019) posited that adopting an interdisciplinary approach would enhance contemporary debates on craft. There is a consensus amongst these aforementioned studies that, like any other cultural good, crafted works have intrinsic

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meaning. In this respect, the craft sector can thus be said to be part of the cultural and creative industries. In the Netherlands, Klamer et al. (2013) outlined what Dutch creative crafts could learn from creative crafts[1] in other countries. One of the key findings was that in countries like Germany, craftsmanship, or artisanship[2] is rooted in society and is widely revered, which is in marked contrast to the general lack of appreciation for the quality of creative craftwork in the Netherlands (Klamer et al., 2013). In fact, Luckman and Thomas (2018), in their book *Craft Economies*, argued that Germany champions "craft, making, and the artisanal in their own policy rubrics" (p. 2).

Being an artisan myself, I recognize this appreciation of creative craftwork from my time as an apprentice goldsmith in Berlin, where I noticed that Germans were far more prepared to pay more for a distinct piece of jewellery than Dutch consumers. Years later, when I was in the goldsmith workshop of Leen Heyne to discuss my wedding ring, he explained that there was little interest in the gold versions of his designs in his home country, the Netherlands, in contrast to Germany, he said, where he sold successfully and felt his work was appreciated. Moreover, it appeared that German consumers' appreciation for quality and artisanship encouraged German goldsmiths to make better-quality pieces. This is in line with Klamer et al. (2013), who identified unappreciation as one of the principal reasons why the Netherlands lacks a creative crafts culture. However, none of the aforementioned studies give any explanation of how this observed discrepancy in the valuation of crafts originated. Before exploring this discrepancy in the appreciation of crafts, I first discuss the valuation of cultural goods.

The value a consumer designates to a sculpture, a glass artefact, or a handmade jewellery piece is a central issue in debates over the value of cultural goods (Throsby, 2008). For example, the worth that I ascribe to my wedding ring is influenced by many factors, ranging from my experience as a goldsmith, societal and historical perspectives on the significance of wedding bands and the institution of marriage, to the tarnished brilliance of the gold material as a result of the often-dubious circumstances and severe consequences of its mining (Farrell et al., 2004). In other words, many factors influence the valuation of a cultural good. Similarly, Throsby (2008) defined valuation as "the social, political, and cultural context within which the work is received; the historical tradition from which it derives and the known or imagined assessments of others" (p. 75). Alongside this, Rohan (2000) asserted that along with a *personal value system,* people also have a *social value system* through which they validate the values of the groups to which they belong, which is to say that personal criteria, the basis for the valuation of any good, are both influenced by and shared with the environment. Klamer (2017) also raised this notion of *sharing*, suggesting that in the act of purchasing goods, people realize these goods' values. Moreover, both Klamer (2017) and Dekker and Morea (2023) maintained that the realization of values is embedded within culture and, as such, that valuation occurs within a cultural context. How, then, would we describe the cultural context of the creative crafts field? How is the work of artisans valued? What other aspects must be considered when exploring the culture of this specific cultural field? To gain insight into these questions, it is instructive to first outline a more generic perspective of culture.

Culture as values or culture as structures?

Contemporary sociologists have determined four key elements with regard to the notion of *culture: norms, values, beliefs*, and *expressive symbols* (Peterson, 1979). Griswold (2013) put forward an alternative viewpoint that culture is ultimately based upon actions and ideas. Steel and Taras (2010), for their turn, asserted that the culture of a community influences its social structures and vice versa. While cultural goods can thus be said to express culture, this raises the question of how the appreciation of cultural goods and the notion of culture are connected? After all, valuation occurs through both individual and group processes (Rohan, 2000). Rohan's (2000) perspective is in accordance with Wuthnow and Witten's (1988) understanding of culture as an *implicit* representation of social life that relates to the terms of values and norms that are represented within social interactions. One might argue that valorization through cultural interaction is a proper representation, insofar as the number of values can be limited (Rokeach, 1979), the values are shared (Dekker, 2015; Klamer, 2017), and the criteria are incorporated for the purposes of selecting and evaluating people, actions, and goods (Schwartz and Bilsky, 1990). Nevertheless, determining cultural value systems is problematic due to the inherent difficulty of understanding shared group values (Rohan, 2000). For example, are they what a specific group themselves deems to be valuable, and do these thus constitute the average values of group members? In response to these questions, it is important to note that people use various valuation tools in a variety of different situations, and do so inconsistently (Griswold, 2013).

Despite such challenges, Dekker and Morea (2023) claimed that the valuation of cultural goods can be achieved when the relevant values are sufficiently described and discussed. Cultural works, such as art and handmade jewellery, result from social interactions that themselves are a response to a broader social context and, as such, can be said to represent culture (Wuthnow and Witten, 1988). According to DiMaggio (1997), the understanding of culture within sociology has shifted from *culture as values* that represent attributes, such as, for example, purpose and communal life, to *culture as structures*, which, in turn, necessitates identifying the units of cultural analysis and focusing on the relations between them. If one understands culture as an *explicit* social construction, then it can be perceived as a symbolic good insofar as it resamples the relationships between people (Wuthnow and Witten, 1988). The next section proposes an approach through which to study the relationship between values and actors within creative crafts in order to obtain insights into what potentially influences the culture of a creative field.

Value, valuing, and valorizing creative craft

Cultural economics posits that the value of cultural goods, such as creative craft work, is determined (*evaluation*) and created (*valorization*) within a social environment (Dekker and Morea, 2023; Klamer, 2017; Throsby, 2008). Within the social domain, creators participate in social networks, and their craft work is realized within a specific context that differs from the market and government spheres. The social domain for a creative craftsperson is different than that of an artist or designer. Each domain has specific actors, relations, and organizations. For instance, in my goldsmith workshop, my partner and I made unique designs for our customers, working closely with highly specialized craft persons, including a skilled hand engraver who engraved all of our wedding rings and a goldsmith restorer in the south of the Netherlands who specialized in the Dutch technique of filigree[3] and restored an antique Dutch necklace for one customer (Hofland-Mol, 2023). Such specialization, which is representative of an individual discipline within the creative crafts, the *restoration* craft, should not be confused with the altogether more common craft discipline of *repair* craft. This is because the latter involves a broken contemporary jewellery piece being mended, while in the former case a restoration goldsmith restores an antique jewellery piece to its original style. This example from my own goldsmith practice underscores the sheer diversity of both the creative craft forms and specialisms within the goldsmith craft field. It also serves to illustrate the context in which cultural goods are valued and valorized within the goldsmith field.

Within the field of cultural economics, Klamer (2017) introduced a five-sphere model[4] comprising the various spheres within which people and organizations valorize cultural goods (Figure 6.1.). Along with the *market* and *government* spheres, Klamer proposed *social* and *oikos* spheres, situating these four spheres within the overarching fifth sphere: *culture*.[5]

Klamer's model helps us understand how values arise, develop, change, and evolve, which, in turn, allows us to transcend market and government logic to valorize cultural works. To carry out this exercise, it is essential to consider *culture as a value* argument and explore what values are embodied within cultural practices, beginning with establishing the relationship between values and culture and then moving into briefly discussing the values of creative crafts.

Exploring values within the creative crafts

As aforementioned, Throsby opined that "To think about culture … is to think about value" (2001, p. 26). Values are debated across a wide range of academic disciplines, including, among others, sociology, philosophy, and cultural economics. Connor (1992) explained that within the cultural and creative industries (CCI), one simply cannot avoid questioning the notion of value.[6] Here, he was referring not only to the notion of value but also to the "process of estimating, ascribing, modifying, affirming and even denying

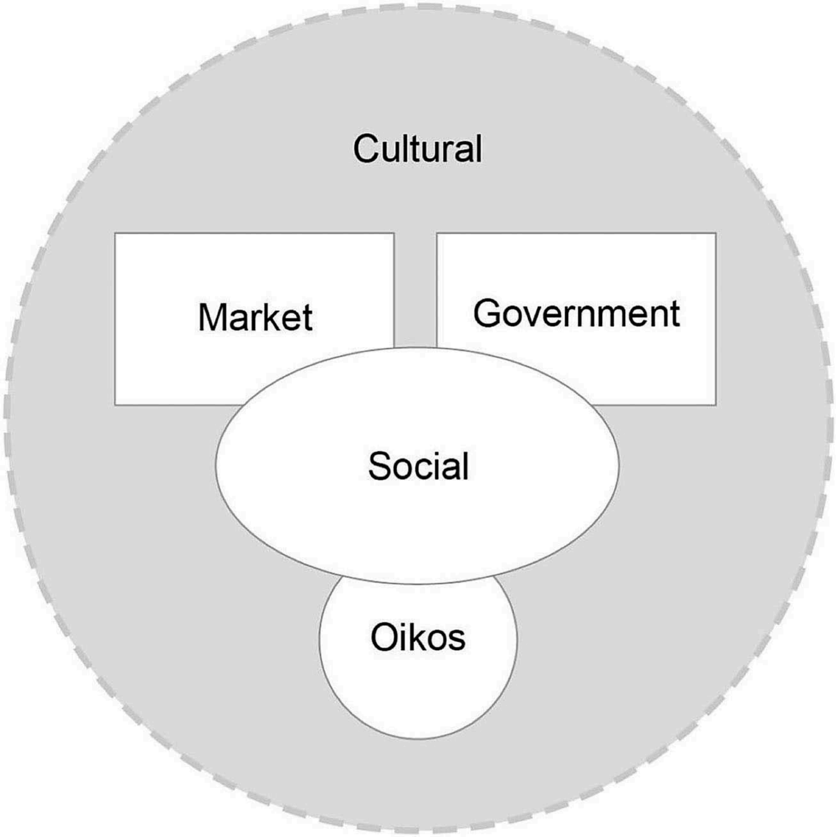

Figure 6.1 Five-sphere model
Source: Klamer (2026).

value in short, the process of *evaluation.* … We are claimed always and everywhere by the necessity of value in this active, transactional sense" (Connor, 1992, p. 8). With regard to value and evaluation within the CCI, the prevailing line of thought is comparable to that of a conventional economist (Throsby, 2001). Nevertheless, precisely how value originates within the CCI may differ from how it originates within the economic sector. Hence, what reflects the value that a community places upon a certain ceramic work representing ancient symbols and traditions? What does it mean exactly when we say that Rembrandt's work is valuable? Throsby and Zednik (2014) raised these very sorts of questions when they applied a set of value dimensions, including aesthetic, social, symbolic, spiritual, and educational values, to explore the value that visitors to an exhibition accord towards certain paintings.

In discussions around the value of crafts, conversations invariably touch upon the notion of *quality* or excellence, or in other words, artisanship.

Cavalli (2017) wrote a book on the topic of excellence, *The master's touch*, which focused on the question of what excellence in artisanship means and aspired to provide a shared language that would serve as a foundation for understanding excellence, thus celebrating the value of artisanship. When discussing values, Cavalli (2017) referred to the set of proposed values within the International Charter of Artistic Craftsmanship (ICAC).[7] The ICAC stresses the value of creative crafts in general and provides guidance in the education, protection, and promotion of creative crafts in Europe. The charter identifies three values related to creative, or artistic, artisanship: *economic, social*, and *cultural*.[8] The overarching values proposed by the ICAC are nearly universal. As such, the various actors within the creative craft world – creators, consumers, and distributors – can all endorse them. In contrast to Cavalli (2017),[9] the ICAC defines artisanship as a representation of "material culture linked to the environment where the artistic phenomena and the art objects are manifested and produced" (Confartigianato Liguria, n.d., para. 2). This definition is in line with Sennett's (2008) assertion that excellence is not acquired in solitude but rather is the product of shared effort, or what William Edwards Deming[10] called "collective craftsmanship" (as cited in Sennett, 2008, p. 31). In other words, artisanship thrives through shared commitment and mutual exchange. Therefore, culture is expressed, shaped, and built within that specific context or environment. What does this environment look like? What events shape it? How is it structured? Who are the participants, and how are they related to one another?

I propose to utilize Klamer's five-sphere model as a guide framework for exploring *culture as* values, on the grounds that it offers insights into how values arise, develop, and change and how people valorize cultural goods beyond the market and the governmental sphere. By assessing the structure, ecosystem, relationships, and norms and beliefs within the creative crafts field, this model may help shed light upon the notion of *culture as structure*. In other words, here I am proposing a more associative approach since cultural goods are valued within certain environments. Through recourse to the five-sphere model, the values and structure of the goldsmith field are associated with my wedding ring as the principal object of study. For these purposes, the ring maker, Leen Heyne, was interviewed. In doing so, this study sought to not find some complete truth but rather to make a valuable contribution to knowledge based on the stated research aims and objectives (Alexander, 2021).

Towards a culture of appreciation

I invited Leen Heyne for an interview seven years after I bought my wedding ring from his goldsmith workshop. In preparation for our conversation, I viewed his website and, with admiration, gazed at his graceful creations. Resembling folding paper, the jewellery pieces were bent with an ease and flow that almost obscured the sheer mastery of his work because of how easy they look to make.

We began the interview by discussing the Netherlands since I was attempting to gain insight into how the Dutch appreciate the craft of goldsmithing. I also wanted to know which organizations and relations he felt influenced the valuation of craft within the Dutch context. When I asked him how much the Dutch appreciate the goldsmith craft within their own country on a scale from 1 (lowest) to 10 (highest), he initially said 7 before subsequently changing his grade to an 8, explaining,

> *I think they [the Dutch] really appreciate the idea of the craft, but they don't have extensive knowledge to appreciate it to the fullest*." Later, he proceeded to expand upon this point, noting that: *"I think that the majority (of Dutch people) do not see the difference between semi-handwork [e.g., industrially made work] and real handwork*." However, when asked to evaluate how the Dutch view the goldsmith craft within the context of their actual purchasing behaviour, Leen argued that *"a Dutch person pays more for* something *with a name [a brand] … as status [object]. Therefore, a brand is an easy choice because a lot of people know it. … Most handmade work is often chosen because of emotional reasons … because of the appreciation for the artisanship and [what] the piece eventually looks like, or because somebody goes to a goldsmith with a very personal wish [and] that [the personal wish] is granted. There is far more emotion in that [the latter case].*

Emotional value was not on the list of cultural values that I presented to Leen later in the interview. Based on my review of extant literature in the field, I presented him with eight values,[11] asking him to grade them on a scale ranging from 1 (least relevant value) to 8 (most relevant important value) in relation to the goldsmith field based on his own experience and perspective. Each number could only be used once. In light of this, grading these values proved not to be a straightforward process, but it did serve as an excellent springboard for discussing these values in sufficient depth. Leen chose *symbolic value* (as a conveyor and repository of meaning) for jewellery in general[12] as being the most relevant, assigning it an 8. However, when he considered a goldsmith's creations, he maintained that *technical* (7) and *authenticity* (6) were the most suitable. He explained his choices via the following example:

> *Wedding rings can simply be bought at Siebel [a Dutch jeweller's chain], but then the people [consumers] would be less connected. So, that is why they would go to a goldsmith … [it] has to do with technique and authenticity. Function [as a value] would be at the very bottom in this case. … This [functionality] would not be a reason for somebody to go to a goldsmith. … Still, I think one of the main reasons is because someone wants something personal, something with emotion, or a certain sense of artisanship - somebody who can appreciate the craft, so to speak.*

During the conversation about values, he clarified this response, noting:

> *"I was thinking about technical … most of the people that visit me (in the goldsmith workshop) do not have any idea what I am talking about."* When I mentioned that technical value could still be important, he replied, *"Subconsciously … I think that also my work screams this, meaning it screams artisanship. So, even if somebody does not know anything about it [artisanship], he or she sees it and feels it. … They feel it is handwork, so to speak."*

Next, when discussing the value of *authenticity*, he noted:

> *I think that a lot of people are searching for something unique, that is that authenticity, so to say … something unique and beautiful, well that [beauty] has nothing to do with it, but it is something specially made for you. That is what they like; they think that is a beautiful idea, and that is what it is: a beautiful idea.*

What is striking about Leen's responses here is that *technique*, in relation to quality and artisanship, holds ambiguous value for the Dutch. Although artisanship is relevant to them, they do not recognize it. This begs the question of how someone can value something without recognizing it? In that sense, *authenticity* and *symbolic* values might be easier for the Dutch to comprehend, or perhaps for any person who purchases a piece of jewellery, since they are personal values. That is to say, they are questions of taste, whereas recognizing artisanship requires specialized knowledge of goldsmiths' techniques.

In the next series of questions, I asked Leen which organizations or relations influence the realization of the cultural values he selected as being most relevant (symbolic, technical, and authenticity). First, he mentioned museums, observing that:

> *There are a few museums, but they focus on the conceptual [rather] than on artisanship. … I think that the ones who really represent artisanship in the Netherlands are a few selective shops or goldsmiths. … Almost every city has around one goldsmith who really tries to show that [artisanship]. The difference between mass [produced] and handmade [made with artisanship] is that not all those shops [goldsmiths] are doing that, but some do that really well.*

Later, he discussed the role of schools, particularly the Vakschool Schoonhoven:[13]

> *Maybe it starts at the base, at the schools [the Vakschool]. Maybe they should be stricter. … But I do think it also relates to the goldsmiths themselves. The better, stricter goldsmiths there are, the more people see that, and the more people will recognise that. I do not think anybody else can do that: educate the people.*

The concluding series of questions were related to goldsmith culture in the Netherlands, which Leen described as follows:

> *I would say there is a lot of shoddy work. … Yes, you know … something is [cast] swiftly, then it is roughly polished, and then some stone is being crammed into it, and then its handwork, so to say. Yes, I think* that that *has been done quite often in the Netherlands. … Germany – there it is really completely different. People look more for quality there. … I have the idea that, in general, people in Germany are willing to save for something they really want, instead of settling for something less.*

When I asked Leen what exactly he meant by *quality*, he made the following clarification:

> *The quality in artisanship and finishing, yes, and weight – obviously, that is not quality, but it is valued there [Germany]. Something must have some substance, some volume. … I think that there, people are somewhat better raised regarding knowledge of quality. … That is just culture, so [it is learned] through their parents, I think, through their family, yes, from generation to generation, so to say. … I think that in Germany, it is not something flashy. It is more a sort of status that you are well-bred - that you show* that you *recognise quality and that you appreciate that. … I think that a Dutch person often thinks that money is status.*

He proceeded to explain further his experiences with the Dutch valuation of goldsmith work:

> *In the Netherlands, a large part [of the population] is only interested in the idea of handwork, … which always surprised me because the Netherlands is a very good design country. From the 1970s onwards, there were very good designers in the furniture field, [as well as] in jewellery - a lot of good designers and artists. … I do not see myself as an artist.*

When attempting to pinpoint both how and where values within the Dutch goldsmith sector arose, Leen argued that *goldsmiths* could play a significant role in the appreciation of their craft and the jewellery they create within their market. Nonetheless, other organizations, such as *museums* and *schools*, also have an influential role to play in terms of educating people about the goldsmith craft. In other words, attempts to cultivate an appreciation of the goldsmith craft among the populace begins in a different sphere than the market: the cultural sphere. Moreover, when comparing the Netherlands with Germany, Leen suggested that learning how to value handwork arises in a social context while interacting with one's friends and family, that is, in what Klamer (2017) calls the "oikos sphere". In addition, the symbolism of a good such as a wedding ring transcends the notion of market value, representing instead the values of commitment, love, and events or memories, including the wedding day itself.

Conclusion

This preliminary exploration sought to contribute towards ongoing debates over the appreciation of cultural goods. Specifically, creative craft goods, such as my own wedding ring, are socially constructed and thus require a *culture of appreciation*. A culture of appreciation raises questions pertaining to what specific actors might influence the valuation of cultural goods. The analysis of the interview with the goldsmith who created my wedding ring, Leen Heyne, makes several noteworthy contributions to extant literature. First, while people assign a specific value to goldsmiths' goods, for example, artisanship, they may find it difficult to recognize that value. This is interesting, because what does it mean for the creative crafts when values such as artisanship, which is typically assigned to both creative craft goods and their makers, are not straightforwardly recognized by consumers? Second, the interview demonstrates that culture plays a significant role in the appreciation of creative craft goods. As Heyne points out, both the valuing and valorizing of creative craft goods is something that is passed from generation to generation and, hence, is necessarily shaped by many actors. Finally, the personal sphere is essential for both creating an appreciative culture and nurturing an awareness of the valuation of artisanship and quality. These findings are important insofar as they cast a different light upon the valuation and valorization of cultural goods, pointing instead to spheres that extend beyond the market. Moreover, in order to address these concluding findings in a broader context, further research is required to investigate the specific actors that contribute towards an appreciative culture.

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Notes

1 Klamer et al. (2013) define *creative craft* as skilled work that exhibits both the apparent quality and creative expression of the maker.
2 Since this chapter explores creative crafts, it considers the notions of *artisan* and *artisanship*, as these terms relate to this specific field of craft as opposed to craft in general. Moreover, these terms are more neutral.
3 The filigree technique uses thin wires to decorate jewellery items, often in patterns.
4 See also the elaborated version of seven-spheres model in Klamer's (2026) chapter in this volume.
5 For an elaborate illustration of the five spheres and the five-sphere model, see Klamer (2026) in this volume.
6 As put forward by Throsby (2001).

7 The ICAC was issued in 2010 and signed by three French and 15 Italian regions. Along with a description of values, it proposed political, strategic, and action lines through which to support the creative crafts sector in relation to communication and promotion, internationalism and commercialization, research and innovation, training, education, tourism, and museums.
8 For an explanation of the values that the ICAC established, please see Confartigianato Liguria (n.d., para. 1–3).
9 To create a shared meaning of artisanship, Cavalli (2017) designed a methodology based on a set of criteria that might determine “which artisans are true masters” (2017, p. 12). In so doing, it appears that Cavalli (2017) views excellence as an individual achievement.
10 After the Second World War, the ideas of industrial expert William Edwards Deming were adopted by large Japanese corporations, which became leading producers in their respective fields (Sennett, 2008).
11 The eight values are: aesthetic, authentic, technical, functional, social, historical, spiritual, and symbolic.
12 In this case, jewellery in general means jewellery pieces that are made from a precious metal sold at a goldsmith or jewellery store.
13 The Vakschool Schoonhoven is the sole education institution in the Netherlands with accredited programs for becoming a goldsmith, silversmith, jeweller, or watchmaker.

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7 The Values of Public Art

The Case of Zadkine's 'Destroyed City'

Valeria Morea and Erwin Dekker

Introduction

In this chapter, we analyse the values that are realised though the social practices associated with the statue 'The Destroyed City' (De Verwoeste Stad) by Ossip Zadkine in Rotterdam. The Franco-Russian sculptor first completed the statue in 1947, and it then travelled to various exhibitions in Germany and the Netherlands. A larger version was subsequently commissioned and revealed in 1953 at the head of the Leuve-harbour in downtown Rotterdam. The statue eventually became an iconic landmark and a site of remembrance, protests, and social imagination within the city of Rotterdam. Through our case of 'The Destroyed City', we demonstrate how values are realised within the social practices around art, that is, what individuals and social groups actually say about, and do in relation to, the statue.

We trace the social practices around this public sculpture, before proceeding to analyse the various values that disparate groups and communities have attempted to realise in relation to this public work of art. Our analysis is underpinned by Klamer's (2016) classification of values that he developed as part of his value-based approach (see also Klamer's and Petrova's chapters in this volume). Our work stems from the assumption that values are realised within social practices, and that within heterogenous contexts like cities, these values are often in contestation with each other. Previous research has also drawn upon the notion of contestation in order to study the impact of major events upon cities (Romero Renau and Trudelle, 2011). We utilise a similar methodology of tracing moments of contestation for the express purpose of analysing the ongoing realisation of values around this public artwork. Studying forms of contestation provides an expedient lens through which to examine the various ways in which values are realised, which are not necessarily in accordance with the original intentions of the artist or those who commissioned the work, but rather based upon the shifting values of the various stakeholders across time.

Socio-economic studies of public art can generally be categorised into two approaches. The first approach consists of eliciting individual valuations of the public artwork, such as, for example, through contingent valuation

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methods or discrete-choice experiments, in order to establish the full economic or social value of the public artwork (Tanguy and Kumar, 2019), which tends to frame contestation as a social cost, that is, a public bad (Balfe and Wyszomirski, 1986). The other prevailing approach looks at public art as a catalyst for social change and pays especial attention to the social and political engagement of these projects (Cartiere and Zebracki, 2016; Zebracki and Xiao, 2021). Our approach diverges from both of these perspectives in two critical respects. First, we argue that it is essential to refrain from reducing value to a singular dimension, be that monetary or social, and that in order to truly understand the value of public art we must instead analyse the heterogenous values that are realised around it. Second, given that we believe that both value and values are realised in the process of individuals relating to a work of art, it is important that the methodology we employ also be capable of capturing this active engagement. While other scholars have also drawn attention to the idea that objects are imbued with different values within different moments of their life based upon what individuals experience with and around them, such as, for example, commoditisation and dissonance (Kopytoff, 1986; Antal, Hutter, and Stark, 2015), they have tended to speak of the changing value of art or the biography of objects, rather than focusing on the social practices around art.

From monuments to public art

Public art refers to artworks that are displayed in and engage with public spaces, which means that people can engage with them deliberately or they can casually encounter them. Public art comes in a variety of forms, ranging from traditional sculptures and murals to more contemporary installations that incorporate technology and multimedia components. Two key elements which differentiate public art from other kinds of art are location and audience (Knight and Senie, 2011). This is why public art research is interdisciplinary in nature and draws from, among other disciplines, art history, cultural studies, urban planning, and sociology.

Art that is located within public spaces has potential social, political, and cultural dimensions. Appleton (2006) traces the history of public art, at least within the context of Western society, and identifies different phases that public art has undergone across history (propaganda, beautification, regeneration). Recently, public art has been used to foster a sense of identity and pride within local communities, as well as to spark discussion and debate around important social, political, and environmental issues. Scholars who focus upon artists' perspectives have suggested that art also derives its public character from the intentions of the artist: 'for the questions it chooses to ask or address, and not because of its accessibility or the volume of its viewers' (Phillips 1989, p. 332). In fact, Senie (1992) maintains that the defining feature of public art is that it engages an involuntary audience, who are highly heterogeneous in their tastes, preferences, and values.

While this may well be true, the realisation of values around an artwork is not reducible to the intentions of artists themselves, nor can it be restricted to the fact that the public has no choice in the matter. In fact, one of the most common responses to public artwork is utter indifference. Hence, in order to understand the values that are realised through a public artwork, we must study how it is used, given meaning, and contested by those who feel that the artwork belongs to them, or forms part of their community. A textbook example of this is Richard Serra's 'Tilted Arc' in New York. In this particular case, contestation was regarded as a 'public bad' (see, for example, Cordes and Goldfarb, 2007) and, ultimately, the artwork was removed. Similarly, in Washington DC, Maya Lin's 'Vietnam Veterans Memorial' was also an object of contestation during its installation phase. The artist designed a site for remembrance as opposed to visually depicting the veterans who fought in the war, a choice that led many critics to rail against the missing figurative element, which, in turn, resulted in the counter-memorial 'The Three Servicemen' by Frederick Hart (Hein, 1996).

Bourriaud's (2002) notion of relational aesthetics is especially relevant in the case of public art, in as far as it increasingly provides spaces for social relations and negotiations that produce the space. Social relations appear to be constitutive of the value of public art. Indeed, public art can only be said to exist insofar as it gives rise to social practices, invites engagement and sparks discussions. The realisation of a work of art represents both an attempt to understand its meaning (what is its value?) and a contestation of its respective merits and meaning (what does it contribute towards or make us aware of?). In the last decade, a group of scholars working at the intersection between sociology and economics sought to do justice to the diversity of values realised through the arts and other goods (Beckert and Aspers, 2011; Kjellberg and Mallard, 2013). Their work sheds light upon the social construction of value, the practices that shape value, as well as the fact that the value of something extends beyond mere price. While this work serves as an important inspiration for us, these researchers tend to study 'valuation' as a social phenomenon that requires description, whereas our approach considers valuation as a process that is directed by the values that individuals are seeking to realise through their agency.

Conversely, Klamer (2016) places the values of actors front and centre within his VBA, and analyses the realisation of values as a process. In other words, Klamer (2016) argues that values are realised within practices and focuses on the process of value realisation rather than a specific point in time. However, somewhat surprisingly, Klamer considers values primarily in terms of what brings individuals together, rather than as a reflection of the moral heterogeneity that characterises modern societies. This is curious in light of the fact that public art has been the source of such contestation over the past decade, such as, for example, conflicts over statues which honoured statesmen and military leaders from the colonial or racist past (Dekker and Morea, 2023). There has also been considerable debate around the extent to which relatively older public artwork continues to represent the values of the present, or mostly reinforces, for instance, the hierarchical and patriarchal values of the past.

Contestation is, however, more than merely a reflection of different values. Rather, values are mediated through public art, which is to say that neither the meaning nor the values associated with art within public spaces are fixed or predetermined (Capdepón and Dornhof, 2022). Consequently, when memorial sites only convey a one-sided version of an identity or history, then this will shape the social practices around it. These memorial sites may become neglected, or function as a place of contestation and reinvention. The protests witnessed in recent years at colonial statues can themselves be understood as a new social practice taking place around these memorials, namely an appropriation by new publics. The American pragmatist philosopher John Dewey called attention to what he referred to as problematic or troublesome situations (Dewey 1986, p. 111). These occupy a special place within his pragmatic approach to values and society because trouble has the potential to be productive.

Inspired by this work, David Stark (2009) suggests that much of the active process of value realisation and discovery occurs precisely where values come into conflict with one another, or when widely accepted meanings are suddenly contested. These moments of reconsideration and reorientation may end up either reaffirming existing practices or sharpening our sense that something has to change. Such forms of contestation have profound value for democratic societies insofar as they provide opportunities for dissident voices to be heard. While from a simple economic perspective, one may worry that such forms of contestation may result in the loss of social utility because there is less coordination, from our perspective, we see contestation as an indicator that values are being realised.

Although his approach is oriented towards harmony, Klamer also recognises that values are associated with only partially compatible social spheres. He distinguishes between the market, organisational, social, and domestic spheres, and is explicit about the values that he associates with these different orders (see the glossary in this volume). Therefore, we can effectively utilise Klamer's (2016) framework in order to analyse how different social practices seek to realise partially incompatible values around Zadkine's 'The Destroyed City'.

The destroyed city

Zadkine's 'The Destroyed City' was anonymously donated to the city of Rotterdam by the owner of the local Bijenkorf, the biggest department store in the Netherlands which lost many Jewish employees during the Second World War. The donor's identity was revealed 25 years after the donation, although by that point everyone knew this 'public secret'. Because of this and the fact that it was not the official Second World War memorial of Rotterdam, some suggested that the statue retained a strictly private character (Bleij and Halbertsma, 1994). This reflects the common idea that public art mainly refers to whoever commissioned or paid for the artwork (Cordes and Goldfarb, 1996). However, the city council both had to approve of the statue's installation and accorded it a highly public role, by virtue of situating it in the middle of a central square within the harbour of Rotterdam. A key insight from extant literature on public art is that it is ultimately the audience that determines whether or not art is public, and, although it was a private donation, Rotterdammers subsequently came to embrace the statue within a wide range of social practices which, in turn, transformed it into a form of public art.

Before the official acquisition, 'The Destroyed City' had come to the Netherlands in 1948 when the Stedelijk Museum hosted an exhibition on the work of the Franco-Russian artist Ossip Zadkine. In reviews of that exhibition, the attention was focused upon his recent work about the war, such as 'Terror' and the 'Monument for a Destroyed City', the latter of which was displayed in a two-metre-high version of plaster. An earlier version that was made in terracotta was supposed to be displayed at art shows in Munich and Berlin in Germany, but broke before it was ever exhibited. In another review of the same exhibition in Amsterdam, one of the journalists wondered whether it is not true that: 'most people in this age are torn, destroyed cities without a heart'. Indeed, one of the most persistent nicknames of 'The Destroyed City' would become 'The City without a Heart'.

The statue was once again displayed at an outdoor exhibition in Sonsbeek Park, Arnhem, in the summer of 1949, where it again stood out, and it must have been around this time that G. van der Wal, the president of the firm Bijenkorf, became interested in donating a larger version to the city of Rotterdam, where one of its department stores had been damaged by the bombing. The initial response from both city officials and citizens to this proposal was mixed, in part, because many of them simply were not ready for the modern and deformed figure which Zadkine had sculpted; indeed, several commentators referred to the statue as 'demonic'.

Despite this initial reluctance, in the late summer of 1951 Rotterdam decided to accept the donation and paid for the pedestal and installation of the statue. In May 1953, it was revealed one day after the thirteenth anniversary of the bombing of the city of Rotterdam, on 14 May 1940. As early as 1954, a newspaper reported that the statue had become accepted in the city and was drawing tourists. The statue was placed at the head of the Leuvehaven in a great empty space, and in 1958 the square around it was renamed Square 1940, which served to solidify the connection between the statue and the bombing of 1940. This renaming was mostly symbolic, because it was not until the construction of the new Maritime Museum in the 1980s that Plein 1940 was separated from the adjacent Churchill-square at the intersection of Blaak and Coolsingel. In fact, some newspaper reports continued to frequently refer to it as Churchill-square, rather than Square 1940.

When the metro was constructed in the 1970s the statue had to be moved by around 60 metres. Upon completion of the metro, the statue was subsequently moved back to yet another different spot, although that place was compromised by the construction of both a large residential tower on one side and the Maritime Museum on the other side. It was during this particular move that the statue was accidentally rotated by 90 degrees. The heart, through which one was supposed to see the blue sky as well as the water in the background (although this was always difficult given the elevation of the tall statue) now provided a hole through which one of the adjacent buildings could be seen. Zadkine had originally insisted on the statue being positioned so that the face looked towards the city centre in the north and the gap provided a view towards the river in the south.

Data and methodology

In order to study the social practices around the 'The Destroyed City' (De Verwoeste Stad) by Ossip Zadkine we analysed newspaper coverage of the statue between 1948 and 2020 in two databases (Delpher and Lexis Uni for the periods 1948–2000 and 2000–2020, respectively). This resulted in around 800 articles which contained both the name of the artist 'Zadkine' and 'Verwoeste Stad' the official name of the statue. We carried out additional searches for 'Zadkine' and some of the statue's most common nicknames, such as 'The City without heart' (Stad zonder Hart) or 'John Hole' (Jan Gat). This led to the identification of a few additional articles which were added to our dataset, albeit these additional articles did not pertain to moments or practices that were not already part of our database.

We narrowed down our initial dataset to 179 articles which contained relevant discussions of social practices or discussion around the statue. We attempted to remove both unnecessary duplications as part of this selection process, as articles were sometimes reprinted in different outlets, and articles that only made passing mention of the statue as they were focused on other subjects. Based upon Klamer's (2016) theoretical framework of personal, social, societal, and transcendental values, we subsequently coded the articles into three major groups which represented the latter three types of values. Since we were interested in public art and how social practices develop around it, we opted to ignore the personal motivations and aspirations of the French-Russian artist Ossip Zadkine, with the exception of those instances in which his motivations and intentions were specifically invoked by others. Since the statue is not site-specific, the artist's intentions here are not of direct relevance to either the social practices or meanings of 'The Destroyed City'. We should note here that our approach partially overlaps with an article which examined how the practices around the statue came to shape the remembrance of the war and the bombing in Rotterdam (Strupp, 2009), albeit its focus was solely on the statue in relation to the air raids during the war. In what follows, we will examine various forms of contestation over both the meaning and purpose of the statue. Figure 7.1 provides an overview of the newspaper coverage of Zadkine's statue during the period of our analysis. Here, the key episodes are illustrated along with their respective value category.

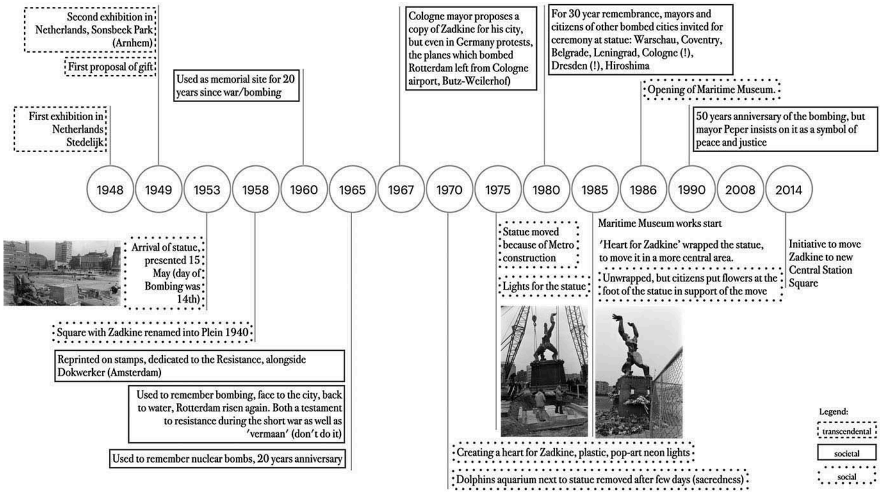

Figure 7.1 Timeline of 'The Destroyed City'
Different frames (line, dash, dot) represent different value categories (see legend).

Social values

We consider the social values of Zadkine's 'The Destroyed City' as those that relate to the identity of the city of Rotterdam, which are different from the more politically-oriented societal values. Within this section, we focus upon the practices and forms of contestation that involve a sense of belonging (i.e., what does the statue mean for the people in the city?) and identity (i.e., how does the statue relate to the identity of the city?).

Any discussion around this sense of belonging must start with the rather widespread sentiment around 1950, prior to the decision being made to install the statue, that Zadkine's creation did not belong in Rotterdam. While there was an aesthetic dimension to this discussion, there was also the question of whether or not it made sense to emphasise the suffering of the past, rather than the opportunities offered by the present. As one reader wrote to a newspaper: 'The heart of the city is the harbour. That is still there, and moreover we are not at all desperate. To the contrary, we work hard, and we will overcome.' This forward-looking attitude was not necessarily hostile to the modernist design, but rather interpreted the sculpture with the raised arms as a memorial of the bombing of May 1940. In this specific respect, they felt that this was not fitting for a city that was both reconstructing and reinventing itself.

A poem read during the official presentation of the sculpture highlighted both of these potential meanings, although it primarily emphasised the suffering during the bombing: 'The city was violated/ From hundreds of mouths/ prayers resounded/Of those who endured/bound by faith/they have regained freedom.' This resistance to the modernist sculpture faded quickly, and the statue was soon accepted in Rotterdam. In 1954, newspapers no longer wrote about resistance to the piece, but rather about both the tourists the statue attracted and the miniature reproductions that were now sold, which went against the express wishes of Zadkine.

In 1955, some spots appeared on the sculpture, which formed part of the natural process of the materials that were used, especially in the places where distinct parts of the work were assembled. The concerned city contacted an expert who reassured the people of Rotterdam that there was nothing to worry about as long as the statue was bee-waxed twice a year. Zadkine was interviewed about these concerns, and evidently proud he suggested that the city had truly adopted the statue: 'Like it is their baby, when there is a red spot on its behind, they will call the doctor.' Perhaps the clearest indication that the statue was an enormous success was the fact that citizens of Rotterdam who lived on the other side of the Maas river, in the Charlois neighbourhood, began campaigning for a memorial to match Zadkine's sculpture on the North bank.

By 1970, the statue had become a proud landmark of the city of Rotterdam and, in fact, had been accorded a number of nicknames that were typical of Rotterdam, whose residents pride themselves on giving endearing nicknames to buildings and places in the city. For example, another modern art work, which is situated in front of Unilever's headquarters, is endearingly referred to as the 'pile of rubble'. 'The Destroyed City' is frequently referred to by the name of its maker Zadkine, which is sometimes Dutchified into Zadkien (or the diminutive Zadkini), as well as 'The City without a Heart' (Stad Zonder Hart), 'Johnny with his hands up', 'John Hole' (Jan Gat), or 'Lord Despair' (Lord Wanhoop). Evidently, the citizens of Rotterdam had embraced the statue, and when the first proposals for new constructions close to the statue were announced in 1967, there was instant resistance. The sculpture that had generated opposition when it was originally announced was now being protected by citizens from the encroaching growing city.

Defending the statue and maintaining its relevance was one of the key issues in the proceeding decades. In a wide variety of forms, citizens and artists proposed that the statue needed to be situated within a better location, and given a heart, in order to reflect the now vibrant city, which was rebuilt, and forward-looking (again). Initiatives to include a heart, either inside the sculpture itself or within the new centre of the city, were undertaken in 1970, 1977, and 1980 (Beranová and Postma 1985, pp. 44–57). In 1985, the largest campaign to provide a heart for Zadkine as well as situate it in a more dignified place within the city was began by a committee of prominent citizens who felt that the city was neglecting the sculpture. The reason that the contestation was fiercest at this particular juncture was that during the construction of the Maritime Museum the statue had been completely hidden between fences, cranes, and construction materials. The protesters first wrapped the statue, Christo-style, in order to symbolise that it was hidden from view anyhow, and when the wrapping was subsequently removed by city officials, the citizens spontaneously laid bouquets of flowers at the foot of the monument. These protests occurred in early May when the statue frequently featured as the site of the celebrations for Memorial Day on 4 May and the memorial of the bombing on 14 May, both of which were frequently accompanied by flower ceremonies to commemorate the war victims. Now the citizens commemorated the statue of Zadkine as the victim, who was robbed of its spacious surroundings.

This was an interesting moment because the citizens were claiming ownership or stewardship over the statue, a duty which they felt the city itself was neglecting. This included the circulation of the urban myth that the bronze for the statue had come from a donation of coins by Rotterdam citizens. In the aftermath of this contestation, there were multiple surveys on the best location for the statue, while two enthusiasts published a bottom-up history of the sculpture, focused on the way that citizens remembered it and developed practices around it (Beranová and Postma, 1985). In the process, many new facts about the statue came to light, including the fact that the base or pedestal was made from stones originally intended for a Hitler memorial in Berlin to be constructed in 1944. The stone never reached Germany and instead laid unclaimed for some time at a construction firm in Rotterdam, which, ultimately, acquired it for a low price and decided to donate some of it for the sculpture. Another interesting aspect of this bottom-up history is that it contains many drawings and poems by citizens of Rotterdam, which place the statue within many different and frequently dry-humour contexts, which is typical of the city.

Socially speaking, this has remained the dominant context of the statue. Although it remains a memorial to the bombing of the city, the citizens have appropriated it and given it a distinctly local meaning as a point of pride for Rotterdammers. In this respect, it is more characteristic of the spirit of the city, than representing a particular moment in time. This process began with earlier commercial reproductions, and is now completed by reimaginations and proposals to locate it in a new place, or give it a heart, which have taken on new verve over the past two decades. Meanwhile, the duty of protection had a dual nature. On the one hand, citizens frequently invoked the intentions of the artist, Zadkine, whose name became synonymous with the statue and who specified that the hole in the chest should provide a panorama of the harbour and the skies (a view which was lost due to subsequent constructions). On the other hand, the citizens sought to ensure that the statue retained its relevance beyond the original intentions.

An interest group of prominent citizens proposed to move the statue to the most focal spot of the city, The Hofplein, a major traffic hub which would then be transformed into a pedestrian zone. The statue, which had by now become as much a symbol of civic pride as the bombing of the inner city, would replace a major classical fountain. While this particular initiative gathered broad support, indeed, there was a general survey organised by local newspapers, ultimately, the city governors managed to stall until the initiative eventually lost steam. However, the idea that Zadkine deserves a heart lives on, both for many artists and citizens of Rotterdam (see Figure 7.2). All throughout this period, however, the survivors of the bombing continued to argue for a more limited meaning of the work of art and argued that it should therefore remain in its original place.

Societal values

Our analysis of newspaper coverage suggests that there was scarce discussion of the societal values associated with the statue in the first decade following its introduction. As aforementioned, the statue was soon embraced by those in Rotterdam and came to be directly associated with the bombing of 14 May 1940 and the loss of the centre (heart) of the city. In 1960, it served as the site of the commiseration of the twentieth anniversary of the Nazi bombing. This is the first time in our dataset that the now common phrase ‘never again’ (nooit meer) appears, with the sculpture serving as both a symbol and memory of the fact that war and its atrocities should be avoided at all costs. Zadkine proclaimed in some interviews that his statue would be complete if doves were to build a nest inside it, and although this never happened, the monument did become a place where residents would come to feed doves. In this way, the statue also became a symbol of peace.

Figure 7.2 Zadkine’s ‘The destroyed city’ in Rotterdam between fences and construction work
Photographed by Rob Croes for Anefo, 5 May 1985, CC0, via Wikimedia Commons.

Consequently, protesters came to use the statue in anti-war demonstrations against the wars in Vietnam, and later again against both of the Iraq wars as well as the war in Afghanistan. However, in 1982, when the new mayor of the city, Bram Peper believed that he could turn the monument into a symbol purely of the movement for international peace and disarmament, he was met with significant resistance. Peper wanted to take a stand in the Cold War and support peaceful resolutions and rid the world of nuclear weapons. The Rotterdam harbour, many pointed out, was a key hub for the nuclear industry, although for security reasons the Ministry of Defense refused to confirm this. In response, the Rotterdam mayor proposed instead to engage in symbolic action by moving the statue and altering its symbolic value. However, Peper, like the younger generation who had sought to transform the social meaning of the statue, ultimately met with fierce opposition from residents who had experienced the war and claimed the famous sculpture should remain a symbol of the 1940 bombing and destruction of the city.

Despite such sentiments, it was impossible to restrict the social practices around the statue to only those that were directly tied to the German bombing in 1940. In 1962, for example, there was a ceremony commemorating the nuclear bombs that were dropped on Nagasaki and Hiroshima. Similarly, civil society organisations, notably the organisation ‘Ban the Bomb’, regularly used the Zadkine statue as the site for its demonstrations. And in 1980, mayors and residents from other bombed cities were invited to the fortieth anniversary ceremony of the bombing in Rotterdam: Warsaw, Coventry, Belgrade, Leningrad, Cologne, Dresden, and Hiroshima. With some small changes, this group of cities proposed a more active role for the UN in international conflicts in 1989, headed by Nobel Prize winning economist and peace activist Jan Tinbergen who had long been a professor in Rotterdam (Dekker, 2021).

The statue’s site thus became a symbol for destroyed cities all around the world, albeit with one significant contestation. A casting of the statue, given by Zadkine to an art dealer friend of his, ended up at the prominent art fair Documenta II in the German city of Kassel in 1959. The residents of this bombed German city were drawn to the statue and felt that it forcefully captured their experience. An image of it was used in a booklet on the past and present of Kassel. Zadkine declared that he was outraged by this exhibition in Germany, claiming that it demonstrated that some ‘people in Germany had learned nothing from the War’. Here, he conveniently forgot to mention that he had first exhibited a version of the statue at exhibitions in Munich and Berlin in 1947.

One further reason to doubt the sincerity of Zadkine’s outrage was that he only expressed it when this booklet was discovered some eight years after Documenta because of another scandal. At that time, the mayor of Cologne, who had visited the workers of Rotterdam, wanted to strengthen the bond between the cities and proposed to erect a copy of the statue in his hometown. In both German and Dutch newspapers, this proposal was met with broad outrage. Had he forgotten that the planes which had bombed Rotterdam had taken off from the airport Butz-Weilerhof in that very same city? In the mid-1960s, it was thus acceptable to invite victims from other bombed cities to rituals at the Zadkine sculpture, but the meaning of the statue could not yet be extended to include German victims. By the 1980s, such sentiments had faded into the background when the mayor and some residents from Cologne joined the memorial. In 1995, 50 years after the end of the war, and 55 years after the bombing, German chancellor Helmut Kohl placed a wreath at the statue and the statue thus became a site of reconciliation. One op-ed piece even argued that the Dutch prime minister Kok should use the opportunity to suggest to Kohl that the statue also 'symbolizes that the Netherlands had no heart for the Germans after the war, despite the fact that many Germans were as much victims of the Nazi-regime as the Dutch'. After the destruction of the Twin Towers in 2001, some citizens of Rotterdam suggested that the city should donate a copy to New York as a gesture of solidarity.

A final interesting societal appropriation of the 'Destroyed City' concerns protesters who felt that their city was being destroyed by other social ills than bombs. The first instance of this we identified occurred in 1974 when the residents of the Katendrecht neighbourhood (commonly known as 'De Kaap') painted the phrase 'The Destroyed Kaap' on the statue. They were lamenting the excessive level of prostitution within their neighbourhood, and were demanding that the city council do something about it. Similar symbolism was used by a group of French protesters, who journeyed to Rotterdam in 32 buses to march to Zadkine's statue to object to the liberal Dutch soft-drug policies, which they argued were destroying French inner-cities. At various points, the cultural sector also used the site as a symbol of the lack of public funding for the arts, which were thereby destroyed or at least impoverished. These practices emphasised the 'destructive' part of the statue, and thereby drew, arguably, upon some of the values that were originally associated with the statue.

Transcendental values

The transcendental values realised around 'The Destroyed City' are primarily those that are related to aesthetics and beauty. Because an earlier, smaller version of the statue was exhibited several times in the Netherlands prior to 1953, we were also able to find some earlier receptions of the work within Dutch newspapers. These reviews drew parallels to the work of Cubists such as Picasso as well as to expressionism. When, in 1949, it was suggested that the work should be commissioned for Rotterdam, one of the newspapers quoted an opening speech given during one of the exhibitions, which captured the initial sentiments well: 'It is a tragedy of forms characteristic of our times … Do not talk of the difficulties that these often daring experiments will bring, of the longing for the past which many will feel, because they cannot handle this. It does not matter. It has been made. It is who we are, even if we do not want to admit it yet.' The years following the decision to commission

Figure 7.3 Tower under construction and the statue 'The City without a heart'
Source: Photographed by Herbert Behrens for Anefo, 8 May 1957, CC0, via Wikimedia Commons.

the sculpture for Rotterdam were marked by contestation between those who felt that this sculpture and its 'monstruous' form were a necessary reminder of the tragedy and the ugliness of war, and those who desired a more traditional sculpture (one was planned but not realised due to the excessive costs).

Proponents of modern art praised the sculpture because it gave a clear function to the new artistic style, which had often been criticised for its abstractness. The narrative around modern art would prove to be very important in subsequent decades. When an abstract work of public art by Naum Gabo was revealed in 1954, many connections to Zadkine were made. However, such connections were both positive and negative in a broad discussion in 1957 in the national newspaper *Vrije Volk* (Free People), in as far as about as many voices spoke out against this new aesthetic in the city of

Rotterdam as there were in favour of it, with the latter group praising Rotterdam as the city of the new. The contrast between this and a profile of the artist in 1972 in a national newspaper is stark, with Zadkine now being praised as a great humane and figurative artist. In a related article from a few years later, although it was by then common to believe that the Zadkine statue had brought the common man closer to modern art, the author argued that Rotterdam did not embrace the sculpture for its aesthetic qualities or its modern nature. Rather, the citizens of Rotterdam made the statue their own by reinterpreting it to fit their own identity and turning it into 'The City without a Heart' (Figure 7.3). This was only possible because of the ultimately figurative nature of the work of art, which was in contrast with the abstract forms of 'modern art'. The author failed to recognise that the fully abstract sculpture by Gabo became popularly known as 'The Thing' in Rotterdam, and at least in this sense Gabo's sculpture was hardly immune to appropriation by citizens.

Over time, the statue came to be understood within various other artistic traditions. High-school pupils developed an art project which placed the work of Zadkine next to Ancient Greek sculptures. Moreover, rather than emphasising the links to Picasso's Cubist work, it became more common to draw parallels between Picasso's Guernica and Zadkine's 'The Destroyed City' as two classic works memorialising air raids. This multiplicity of aesthetic meanings was not directly contested, but rather existed alongside each other. A recurring theme in many of the narratives about art which invoked Zadkine's 'The Destroyed City' was that it came to play a role in a larger story about either the city of Rotterdam and how it became a city of public art and architecture and how Zadkine's artwork fitted into the history of modern sculpture, or how the city memorialised the war. These narratives now include Zadkine's work but contain elements that both precede it and come after it. For instance, in 2009, a new memorial was unveiled to remember the fire that ensued after the bombing (and which did much more damage than the bombs themselves). It consisted of small 'fiery' tiles on sidewalks which marked the borders of the fire. Furthermore, when, in June 2023, a prominent statue of an anonymous black woman in sneakers was revealed on the square in front of the Central Station, the stories around it referred to the controversy around Zadkine's work. However, the realisation of aesthetic values around that older public artwork appeared complete, in contrast to the realisation of social and societal values, for which the statue remained a significant site of social practices and contestation well beyond the 1980s.

Conclusion and discussion

In this chapter, we have analysed the values that have been realised around the public artwork 'The Destroyed City' in Rotterdam, a sculpture from the French-Russian artist Ossip Zadkine. We achieved this by utilising a novel methodology that analyses the social practices and contestations around this artwork. Our findings indicate that, over time, the citizens of Rotterdam have attempted to realise both different and sometimes mutually incompatible values around this sculpture. With respect to the three categories of values we identified, social, societal (political), and transcendental (aesthetic), we observed an evolution in terms of the values that were associated with the sculpture and realised within social practices around it. This evolution had a lot to do with how different generations dealt with the bombing, the memory of the Second World War, and the role of public art. However, our analysis also demonstrates that, from the outset, the citizens of Rotterdam appropriated the artwork through giving it nicknames, making it part of their everyday activities like dove-feeding, and by reinterpreting the relationship between the statue and the city.

Interestingly, this interpretation of the relationship between the statue and the city has proven to be the most long-lasting point of contestation and reimagination. This is most evident in the various initiatives to both move the statue to a more prominent site and give it a heart. In this sense, the statue has become as much of a symbol of local identity as it is a memorial of the war or, phrased otherwise, the post-war generations have developed an identity in which the missing heart, the reconstruction, and subsequent new heart have come to play a central role. However, as we have shown in this chapter, each decade has also ushered in new political imaginations concerning the relevance of the statue, ranging from relationships to other bombed cities, a site of both protest against the potential devastation of (nuclear) bombs and reconciliation and peace, to symbolising other societal ills which endanger the city.

Overall, our chapter provides an innovative means through which to map and, to some extent, measure the realisation of values of public art in a qualitative manner, which, in so doing, stands in marked contrast to the predominant economic approaches. While our methodology lends itself well to the identification of moments of contestation as well as the study of the evolution of values realised around the sculpture, it was not capable of providing a clear sense of which specific individuals or groups were attempting to realise the different values. Consequently, future research utilising other types of evidence could seek to deepen the analysis with respect to this particular dimension.

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8 Cultural Commons within a Value-Based Approach

A Case for the Theatrical Commons

Francesca Sabatini

Institutions, relations, and ontologies within the commons: framing relevant challenges to commons theory and the value-based approach

In its challenge to the conventional economic system, the value-based approach (VBA) breaks with at least two generally accepted norms which regulate textbook economics: one is the conventional dichotomy of the market-state paradigm that regulates humans' economic lives, adding concentric layers to both the interaction and interplay between these two governance mechanisms; the second is the public-private categorization of goods. This oversimplification of the standard economic categorization of club, common, public, and private goods based on the subtractability of the resource and the excludability of users (Ostrom, 2010) has been challenged by various authors such as Ostrom's research on the commons (1990), Klamer's work on social and cultural values (2002), and Bertacchini's on the cultural commons (2012).

With regard to the first challenge, which concerns norms and institutions, this identifies the social dynamics that are subtended to the management and maintenance of goods. In particular, market and government are logically regarded as being embedded within a wider social superstructure which determines the shape and role of both the other spheres; the social dimension is, in turn, embedded within a wider cultural sphere which shapes social norms, thus determining the way people manage and maintain goods (Klamer, 2016); the aspect of maintenance is referred to here because of its special importance in overcoming the standard economics approach: in fact, it entails a dimension of collective care, often overlooked within the productivist paradigm, thus implying that goods and resources cannot only be produced, but rather must be reproduced if the management system is to be sustainable—Euler would, in this respect, use the terms "reprodusage" and co-(re)production to express the production, reproduction, and use of resources, specifically common-pool resources (Euler, 2018). Similarly, Acksel et al. identify commoning as a social process, a "togetherness", observing that "This togetherness … is exercised in different ways by communities all around the world. In doing so, commoning must be scanned, refreshed and (newly)

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practiced" (2016, p. 134). Curiously enough, this definition echoes Arendt's definition of public action, that is, not being for or against one another, but being in "sheer togetherness" (Arendt, 1998), with the only difference in this regard being that Arendt was referring to action (subtending "public" to the term) as a domain which was somewhat unproductive, or better yet still, had no material output (in contrast to labor and work), while the "togetherness" of the commons is a productive one, and is concerned with the very livelihood of humans and their ability to satisfy their needs. Within its political and policy applications, this care component has been translated, for instance, into the "Regulation for the *care* and *regeneration* [emphasis added] of the urban commons" that was ratified by the city of Bologna (Bianchi, 2018).

The above discussion bears reference to the commons because it can be understood as the *trait d'union* between the first and second challenges; here, a VBA can be said to go beyond the public-private paradigm precisely insofar as it considers the way goods are produced and reproduced, being shared or excludable, and, in so doing, identifies different sets of goods, among which are common ones, and social ones, newly coined within a value-based framework. Within this particular context, social goods are defined as "a good that is important to a group of people, that requires contributions from all people in that group to be valuable and that excludes other people" (Petrova, Graça, and Klamer, 2022, p. 2); the "importance" refers here to the value attributed by people to these goods, which, in turn, contribute towards the building of a meaningful life for individuals, communities, and society, all of which have immense relevance that was simply unaccounted for in standard economic debates.

What can be referred to as a derivatively definitional challenge derives from new theorizations of economic relationships: once a conceptual framework is created, the need to understand where different objects fit is a natural one, either via empirical investigation or other theoretical inferences. In the case of economics, understanding what goods and resources fit within which category (and under which conditions) is a common research stream. In the case of the commons, De Angelis (2017) has warned against the taxonomical frenzy of framing new goods as commons, ironizing over the fact that "even the fascists had their black-shirt commons" (De Angelis, 2017, p. 55). Despite problematizing the need to classify goods, he also proceeded to acknowledge that, this approach, "although theoretically weak, offers when read politically an endless array of situated opportunities" (De Angelis, 2017, p. 63), thus indicating that a reflection upon ontologies contributes towards connoting objects politically and, in so doing, opens up debate over both their nature and the way they are managed and maintained. The theoretical implications of the interplay between the definitional and the institutional facets of economic theory are that the former can only be generated by the latter, and that every good is not common, public or private *per se*, but rather depends upon the public, common, private, or social mechanisms via which its use, production and reproduction is regulated.

On the one hand, therefore, there is a challenge pertaining to the properties (i.e., the characteristics) of the economic system, specifically to the *relational* property of economic unfolding on at least two levels: one concerns the relationship between economics and the other spheres (such as the social one) which both define and shape it; the other refers to the relational power intrinsically subtended to economics, which is not only a social science (a fact that is too often forgotten by scholars within the field of economics), but the science of relationships between humans themselves as well as between humans and their environment. On the other hand, the challenge is related to categories and ontologies, and attempting to navigate the slippery terrain of proliferating nomenclatures *vis à vis* the relevance of situated opportunities in order to strike a good balance between the urge to identify new research streams for new types of commons and the need to maintain theoretical rigour and reconduct new typologies to commonly accepted categories.

Within this framework, the VBA enriches commons theory by foregrounding how values are articulated, realized, and assessed across different social spheres—household, community, market, and government—rather than treating value as a synonym for price. In cultural settings, Klamer argues that stakeholders pursue *qualitative* achievements (e.g., meaning, connection, integrity, excellence) and organize around them, so governance choices cannot be reduced to allocative efficiency alone. This redirects analysis from *what rules work* to *what shared values mobilize and sustain cooperation*, clarifying why communities common even when private incentives appear weak. In short, the value-based approach provides a vocabulary and methodology for seeing commoning as value realization—from the articulation of what communities care about, to practices that enact those commitments, to assessments that legitimize them in policy and organizational life.

It is precisely within this framework that the present chapter is situated: it aims to investigate the nature of theatre, namely opera theatre, from both perspectives, that is, observing what type of good opera theatre can be regarded as, and what system it can be embedded within (or, alternatively, it can actively elicit) when it exits the conventional spaces and formats in which it is produced and experienced. The chapter is structured as follows: first, the theoretical framework, which draws from both extant literature on the commons and a VBA, is presented; In the second section, the case for a theatrical commons is introduced; the case study of an itinerant opera project, *OperaCamion*, is presented and discussed within this framework and context. Conclusions and avenues for further research are then elaborated in the final section.

Culture between shared, public, and common: the case of theatre and performance

It would appear wholly natural to identify cultural resources as being shared. In fact, an extensive body of literature exists on both the collective dimension of the arts and their linkages to the social dimension specifically, which, in turn, has led to the identification of social impact and benefits that culture yields for society at large (Belfiore and Bennett, 2008). When discussing commons theory, as aforementioned, De Angelis (2017) had problematized the taxonomical frenzy of framing new goods as commons, specifying that the effort should not be devoted (solely) to what I have framed as the definitional challenge but rather to the institutional one, that is, identifying the political salience of the commons as structures and institutions, and consequently as governance systems, rather than as goods per se.

Within contemporary research the commons have been conceptualized as composite resources, a fact which is true for both the commons as a whole and the cultural commons[1] specifically. According to Helfrich and Haas (2008), the commons can be broken down into three components: the "thing"—the commons itself, that is, the shared resource; the "community" which owns and manages it; and the system through which the resource is owned and managed ("systems and practices"). A similar conceptualization was applied by Bertacchini (2012) to the cultural commons, albeit with one substantial difference: after "culture" (i.e., the "thing") and "community", the third component is "space", which refers to either the virtual or physical arena in which the resource is shared.

In previous research, I theorized the existence of a theatrical commons (Sabatini, 2020). To begin with, theatre is a composite resource, consisting of both tangible and intangible elements. The tangible ones are the space in which performers perform, and the space from where the audience takes part in the performance; these spaces can be physically articulated in a building or transpire in any form of built/partially built environment, giving rise to different articulations of the audience-performer interaction, and shaping different actions, reactions and behavioural norms (Fischer-Lichte and Wihstutz, 2013). The intangible component is the performance itself, both in terms of the moment itself in which it *happens* (i.e., when it is delivered to an audience by the performers) and in the form of a *dramaturgy*, a text which, in whatever form it takes, provides a blueprint for the performers to follow. The written text, in turn, can be looked at as a shared cultural resource in the sense that, at least in most cases, the resource is reproduced and enjoyed collectively by groups of individuals. The way the performance is written and delivered necessarily entails different levels of participation from the audience to the performance itself as well as different interactions between audience and performers—ranging from explicitly interactive performances where the fourth wall is broken to the emotional participation for which Walmsley (2018) recently coined the term "audiency", that is, a collective presence and emotional responses (p. 199). To summarize, theatre as a cultural good comprises a purely cultural resource (both the performance and its dramaturgy), the space of the performance (meaning both its physical architecture and the way the performance space is defined within it) and the relations that are subtended to its creation within the immanence of the performance itself (Sabatini 2020).

Both the commons and the theatrical good, then, are composite resources. And theatre can, by all means, be understood and classified as a commons in the way illustrated above: as a "good", it exists as a cultural good which is defined by a common language, a set of archetypes, a theatrical "syntax" if you will; it has a space where this resource is shared, and a community which produces it and reproduces it over time with specific norms and rules, thus determining how it should be preserved and who has access to it—social norms of inclusion and exclusion have specifically connoted the different theatrical forms of expression, from opera theatre to post-colonial performances (Carlson, 2012). An additional layer can be added to this which sees the community as being responsible not only for the definition of exclusion and inclusion, but also for the commoning relations, namely the very act of being together and sharing emotional responses to the performance, co-creating a fundamental component of theatre itself, and becoming a relational commons (Brandtner, Douglas, and Kornberger, 2023). However, the theatrical commons, if one does indeed exist, differs from the other two typologies of common resources (especially cultural ones) in two crucial respects: while the COVID-19 pandemic and contemporary experimentation within the arts have attempted to also add a virtual connotation to the spatial dimension of performance, what is true is that in the theatrical commons the relationality and togetherness is deeply situated within physical space, and the element of physical proximity underlies collective, active audiency (Walmsley, 2018), as much as it guides the performance onstage and the performers' ability to respond to and interact with the audience and the physical space.

The second point refers to the production mechanisms and the nature of property within theatre: the spaces and equipment of theatres are privately owned (even when they belong to a public body); the dramaturgic resource, especially if created by contemporary authors, may be protected by copyright laws and also owned by their authors. Therefore, the means of producing a theatrical resource are not, often, common; however, not only is the theatrical performance shared by performers and audiences in the moment in which it is being created onstage, but also the means of producing the performance in itself can be shared under specific circumstances, explored in this research.

A VBA can help to unfold the peculiar dynamics of such a unique resource: here, the different spheres identified by the approach emerge as distinct properties of both the theatrical commons and its tripartite articulation. First of all, the identification of values that are subtended to the act of making a work of art, articulated into social and artistic values, is reflected in all three components of theatre: dramaturgy, and specifically its production and reproduction as a shared resource which is also a historically transmitted language, a theatrical syntax; space, whose physical connotations and organization also subtend specific social and cultural values; ultimately, relations, and specifically the social values which are subtended to the sharing of the theatrical experience between performers and audiences, and are dependent upon dramaturgy and space.

The valorization, that is, the enactment of such values for the people who partake in the creation and fruition of the work of art, is yet another matter, as it entails both moving beyond the logic of financial valorization and letting go of the ubiquitous Baumol's dilemma which, by positing the market failure of the creative industries by looking at the theatrical stance specifically, ultimately relegated cultural and social values to the lowest ladder of the value scale: artistic labor, considered *unproductive* in comparison to sectors that achieve technological efficiency gains, configurated the sector as a market failure, valuable only insofar as it could be externally subsidized. In this formulation, the *non-market values*—such as meaning, social cohesion, and artistic excellence—were conceptually subordinated to economic viability, rather than treated as autonomous sources of worth. A value-based approach, by contrast, reclaims these dimensions as central: it interprets artistic and cultural activities not as inefficient markets but as value-creating practices sustained through shared meanings, relationships, and forms of commoning (see Figure 8.1). Therefore, looking at the theatrical commons can help unfold the manifold ways in which this resource can be properly valorized by unpacking not only its composite nature (therefore identifying it as an object in the commons ontology) but also the means of governing it in a shared way (thus also addressing the institutional problem posited to standard economics by the VBA and commons theory).

The experience presented in the following section describes a situation in which the theatrical commons unfolded in its various potential degrees of commoning—that is, from the commoning of the performance to the actual co-creation and reproduction of a shared resource. After first providing an empirical description of the case study, I will then conclude by situating these experiences within the theoretical frameworks discussed up until this point, using the VBA to track how articulated values (artistic and social), practices of valorization, and institutional arrangements intersect across dramaturgy, space, and relations in *OperaCamion*.

Methodology

The methodological framework combined qualitative fieldwork, documentary analysis, and a value-based analytical lens to investigate how cultural commons emerge and are sustained in the performing arts. The research design

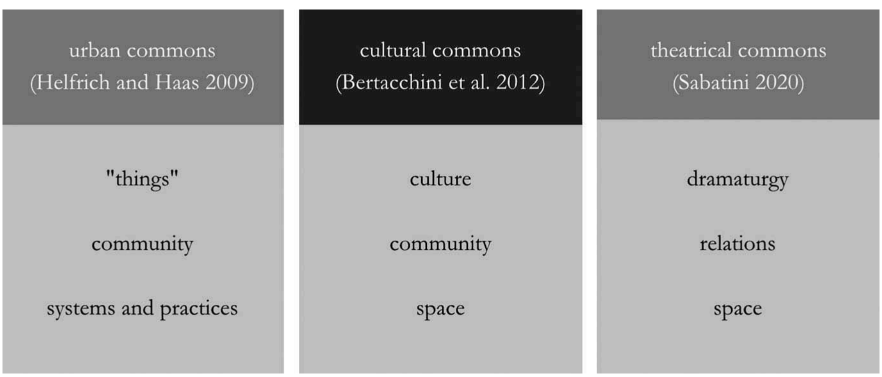

Figure 8.1 Three categorizations of the commons
Source: © Francesca Sabatini.

followed an interpretive and exploratory approach, aiming to uncover the meanings, values, and governance logics underpinning collaborative cultural production rather than to test predefined hypotheses.

Empirically, the study focused on *OperaCamion*, a participatory opera project in Italy, observed across its iterations in Rome and Palermo (Danisinni). Data collection combined semi-structured interviews, participant observation, and documentary sources (project reports, policy documents, press materials, and archival media). Interviews were conducted with artistic directors, institutional representatives, mediators, and community participants, addressing their motivations, perceptions of value, and experiences of collaboration. Participant observation during rehearsals and performances complemented these accounts, allowing the researcher to capture interactions, spatial dynamics, and the lived processes of commoning in situ.

Analytically, the research employed the VBA (Klamer, 2017; Petrova, Graça, and Klamer, 2022) to trace how shared values are articulated, enacted, and evaluated within the project's ecosystem. This entailed mapping actors and their interrelations, identifying the value domains (economic, social, cultural, and public) at play, and examining how these informed governance arrangements and artistic choices. The analysis proceeded iteratively, moving between empirical data and theoretical interpretation to reveal how the *OperaCamion* models in Rome and Danisinni instantiate different modes of cultural commoning—one more institutionally driven, the other community-initiated.

Ethical considerations included obtaining informed consent from all interviewees, ensuring anonymity where requested, and maintaining transparency with partner institutions. The resulting corpus enabled a nuanced understanding of how theatrical practices can operate as cultural commons, and how values-based analysis can make these processes visible and actionable in cultural policy and management.

OperaCamion: three degrees of commoning in theatre

OperaCamion (which means "Opera truck") is a project that was first staged in the summer of 2016 as a co-production of Teatro dell'Opera di Roma and Teatro Massimo in Palermo. The format is simple: a well-known work from the operatic repertoire is adapted – that is, shortened and simplified; a truck tours urban periphery during the summer, stops in public squares where upon the truck is transformed into a stage in the afternoon; in the meantime, people bring their own seat from home, and form the parterre; in the evening, the opera is performed for free.

The first *OperaCamion* performance took place in Rome in July 2016; it began touring in the Lazio region that same summer and was followed by performances in Palermo in September of the same year. In total, *OperaCamion* was staged on 40 occasions. Since its genesis, there have been five *OperaCamion* productions, three of which have stuck to the original 2016 format while touring within Rome and to other cities: *Figaro! OperaCamion* (2016), *Don Giovanni OperaCamion* (2017), *Rigoletto OperaCamion* (2018). A shorten version of Tosca was adapted in 2019 with the aim of staging it in 2020, but unfortunately the COVID-19 pandemic shut down the 2020 *OperaCamion* tour; the sole exception was *Figaro! OperaCamion*, which was performed in September 2020 in Reggio Emilia. The event was somewhat exceptional, as it was one of the few theatrical performances held that year, and it was staged in accordance with COVID safety measures. Two others, which will be discussed later, pertain to the "Danisinni model", and present a high level of site-specificity which made it structurally impossible (and undesirable) to take the production elsewhere. These performances were *Elisir di Danisinni*[2] (2018) and *La Cenerentola di Danisinni* (2019).

While there are no official figures about attendance, one rough estimation suggests that in Rome in 2017 alone, 10,000 citizens attended an *OperaCamion* performance for free (World Cities Culture Forum 2017).

The project, then, is unitary from an artistic point of view, insofar as all of its manifestations have been staged by the artistic duo Fabio Cherstich and Gianluigi Toccafondo. However, it evolved into three independent modalities from as early as 2017, which were autonomously produced by three different theatres, Rome, Palermo, and Reggio Emilia, which can be considered as three distinct cases.

Urban geography

From its early development onward, the project was conceived as an inextricable mixture of artistic and societal vocation. *OperaCamion* was, therefore, performed in and for peripheries; more specifically, it was performed in neglected public squares within these peripheries—in other words, within urban voids, spaces of the city "that remain empty of function and of meaning, but that if properly outfitted by identity and functional traits can return fully to be considered spaces that are inside, belonging to, and useful for the city" (Punziano and Terracciano 2017, p. 301).

During the four years of its existence, *OperaCamion* was able to reach many public squares at the outskirts of the urban perimeters all around Italy. It eventually reached the 15 *Municipi* of Rome, and three of the most critical suburbia in Palermo—Danisinni, Albergheria, and Zen. The Danisinni case is, on the contrary, a peculiar case in which the peripheral dimension is not determined by its distance from the city centre, but rather from what the interviewed Palermitans referred to as "urban depression"—a geographical pit which, despite its proximity to the theatre itself, is cut-off from both traffic and the economic, social and cultural life of the city.

Even when *OperaCamion* was rented by other municipalities and began touring in other cities, from Bologna to Milan, it was performed out of the historical centers, with the express aim of reaching a different audience, who Fabio Cherstich, the director, defines as a non-elite audience, in direct contrast with the typical operatic audience. In 2018, the Roman staging of *Rigoletto OperaCamion* additionally toured the towns which had been struck by the earthquake (2016–2017) in the Lazio region.

The following figures provide a mapping of the geographical diffusion of the *OperaCamion* project from 2016 to 2019, with a particular focus on the two specific case studies of Rome and Palermo: the position of the selected public squares, with respect to the historical city centers, can be seen on the maps (Figures 8.2 to 8.6).

Figure 8.2 *OperaCamion* performances in Italy. The tour in central Italy sought to reach those towns that had been struck by the earthquake in 2016: Borbona, Poggio Bustone, Accumoli, Amatrice, and Cittareale

Source: © Francesca Sabatini.

Figure 8.3 The names of the squares where *OperaCamion* performed in Rome, broken down by year
Source: © Francesca Sabatini.

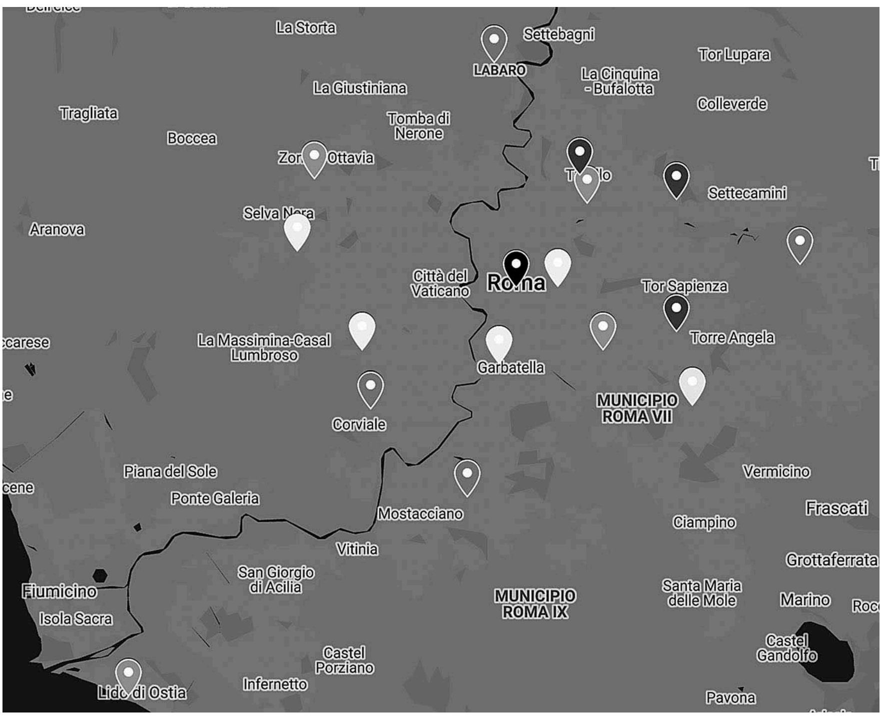

Figure 8.4 The map of the squares enumerated in Figure 8.4. The Opera Theatre is marked in black
Source: © Francesca Sabatini.

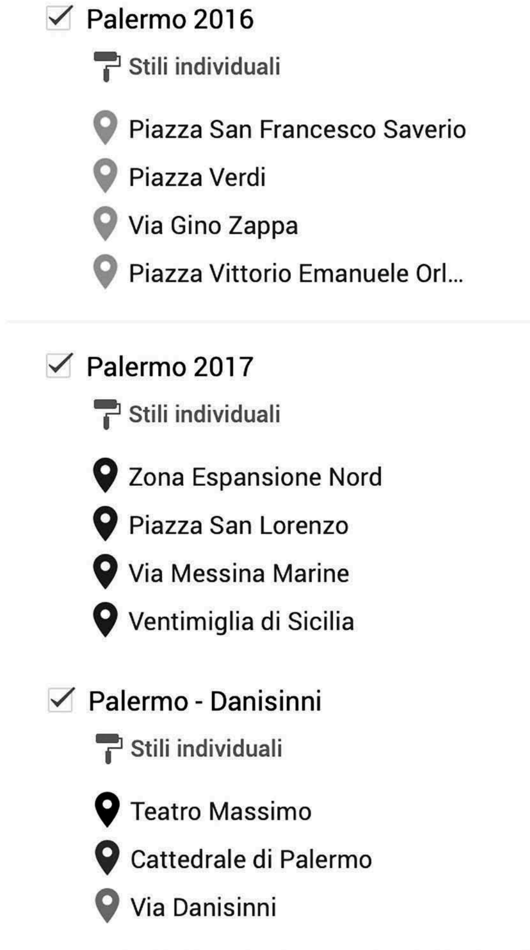

Figure 8.5 Names of the squares *OperaCamion* performed at in Palermo
Source: © Francesca Sabatini.

"Human geography"

The main actors in the project, whose interactions will be disentangled in the following section, can be clustered into six broad categories. The first of these is institutional actors: the representatives of the theatres who placed human, financial, and tangible resources at the service of the project; they oversaw the decision-making process and the material organization of the project.

The creative team conceived the project in its artistic dimension, and ideated the dramaturgic adaptation, the musical cuts, costumes, and

Figure 8.6 The map of the squares enumerated in Figure 8.6. Acqua dei Corsari is located South with respect to the rest of the city and has been added to the map
Source: © Francesca Sabatini.

scenography. The project was born from input from the stage director: it responded to an artistic and societal need rather than a purely strategic one on the part of the involved theatres. The creative team is, in fact, a creative duo, consisting of Fabio Cherstich, director, and Gianluigi Toccafondo, painter.

The third set of actors is the cast: in the case of Opera di Roma, most of the singers who were cast belonged to the theatre's Young Artist Program (YAP), a two-year course aimed at facilitating the entrance of emerging artists into the professional world of opera. Besides singers, the

YAP's aspiring directors, scenographers, costume designers, and light designers were also involved in the realization of the project. Some of the YAP's singers were also cast members of other *OperaCamion* performance at the time of the co-production between Teatro dell'Opera di Roma and Teatro Massimo di Palermo, for tournées, and for the staging in Reggio Emilia.

The fourth category comprises external agents and mediators: in their capacity as brokers between the municipality and the theatre, or the protagonists of local processes of reactivation, although these personalities do not fit the conventional theatrical professional profiles, they nevertheless acted as coordinators and mediators between the local and institutional levels. Among this group, one of the interviewees, Anna Cremonini, was the production manager in Rome, who was in charge of both organizing the production in its operational details and supervising its development in the selected public squares; the other interviewee, Fra' Mauro, is a Franciscan friar based in Danisinni, who is driving the process of human reactivation within the neighborhood. During the period of fieldwork research, other agents were also encountered, especially from the NPO "Insieme per Danisinni" (Together for Danisinni) who were interlocutors of the theatre during the project.

The fifth group is the audience, who can be fully acknowledged as being active participants within the *OperaCamion* project, due to both their co-presence within the theatrical space and their participation in the performance, either directly or indirectly. The final category of actors is commoners: as we shall see, the Danisinni case can be considered as a commons in which the community has taken active part in the regeneration of their neighbourhood, both in terms of the maintenance and upkeep of the structures they have created and in the development of participative activities, including the theatrical performances that were staged in 2018 and 2019.

OperaCamion *models: the two cities*

Ever since the first Roman performance, two distinct *OperaCamion* models have developed. These modalities developed almost spontaneously from the context in which they were being produced, so that a mixture of artistic inputs from the creative team and local specificities and needs generated different modes of bringing *OperaCamion* onstage within public spaces. The combination of these two factors, that is, of a strong core idea of theatre-making and of flexible degrees of adaptation to the local context, might serve as an indicator of the potential scalability of the *OperaCamion* project as well as its paradigmatic nature in inspiring both urban governance and cultural policy. Below are summaries of the features of each of these models:

1 *OperaCamion*/Rome: *OperaCamion* is produced mostly using the internal resources of the theatre itself, featuring the Youth Orchestra of Opera di Roma, singers from the theatre's YAP and the theatre's technicians. The truck stops in peripheries and the theatre does not bring chairs to the square; rather, people themselves bring their own chairs from home, or just sit on the ground (as most children do during the performance); people display their seats as they see fit and in so doing build the theatrical space themselves.
2 *OperaCamion*/Danisinni: Distinguished by its high centrality and isolation with respect to the rest of the urban fabric, it hosted two *OperaCamion* productions, one in 2018 and the other in 2019. The two productions were co-produced with the people of Danisinni, who set up an amateur choir with the help of the theatre and rehearsed in the neighbourhood for a six-month period prior to the performance.

The analysis considers both the Roman and the Danisinni implementations as expressions of the theatrical commons, but at different degrees and with distinct governance logics. Rome exemplifies an institutionally initiated mode, where an opera house catalyzes access and participation in public space; Danisinni exemplifies a community-driven mode, where neighborhood actors co-produce the work and its staging. Treating them together clarifies how shared values, norms, and spatial practices can yield multiple pathways to theatrical commoning within a single artistic project.

The Danisinni commons

Danisinni, a deprived neighbourhood in the heart of Palermo, is a singular case not only of the theatrical commons, but of the urban commons. What is more, its permeability to the external authority is so limited that it can be viewed through the lens of Ostrom's commons, the original natural common-pool resources that established the notion, rather than as the urban commons (whose boundaries are ordinarily both theoretically and factually looser). Originally initiated around the local Parish, the Danisinni commoners subsequently constituted themselves within an NPO which allowed them to develop several projects geared towards social welfare in the neighbourhood.

Below, Figure 8.7 illustrates the characteristics of Danisinni in relation to Ostrom's principles:

1. Clearly defined boundaries	• Boundaries of CPR: The neighbourhood perimeter clearly determines the boundaries of the Danisinni commons, materially consisting of its buildings and its natural resources (the river, the cattle). • Individuals who can use the resource: the Danisinni dwellers
2. Congruence between appropriation and provision rules and local conditions	Regarding the use of physical resources, schedules are established for cultivating the land and taking care of the animals, while an informal "office" run by Danisinni people distributes the cultivated products.
3. Collective-choice arrangements	The Parish first constituted a meeting platform for collective decision-making; since 2017, the "Local Conversations" became an established meeting point for making arrangements, discussing project proposals and tailoring the commons rules
4. Monitoring	The Danisinni community monitors itself upon the use of collective physical resources (with the help of appointed mediators and the Friars) also monitoring external institutions which enter the Danisinni to develop projects
5. Graduated sanctions	Sanctions are not technically imposed over non-compliant appropriators - strong mutual monitoring prevents rule-breaking; most interestingly, common sanctions such as detention are substituted (whenever possible) by community service.
6. Easy conflict-resolution mechanisms	the "low-cost local arenas to resolve conflict" in Danisinni is the Parish, around which the community still gathers to reduce tensions, coupled with the weekly "Local conversations" meetings
7. Minimal recognition of the rights to organize	The recognition of the Danisinni community goes beyond "minimal", and is recognized as an interlocutor and a stakeholder by the municipality and local institutions: the latter need to adapt when faced with the Danisinni environment

Figure 8.7 The table illustrates the design principles identified by Elinor Ostrom as they appeared within the Danisinni context
Source: © Francesca Sabatini.

This complex commoning configuration has, predictably, deeply altered the *OperaCamion* project from the very moment it entered the Danisinni neighbourhood. The commoners, in fact, forced the institutions and artistic team to alter the modalities through which the performance was produced in order to transform it into a co-production with the local dwellers, who were either trained to be choir members or applied their craftsmanship to help build the stage. The result was a production which was entirely commoned, from its space to its dramaturgic resource to, ultimately, the social norms that were subtended to the way the performance was to be experienced within the informal setting of the Danisinni farm.

Discussion: realizing values for communities, audiences, and performances within *OperaCamion*

Read through a VBA lens, the two OperaCamion models show how shared values were realized via specific governance choices and spatial practices, yielding distinct yet related pathways to theatrical commoning.

OperaCamion afforded the possibility for audiences, performers, and even institutional actors to change the way they perceived the theatrical experience, and, moreover, to produce it, reproduce it, and experience it accordingly. With regard to space, this was made possible by moving beyond the conventional spaces of theatre and opening up the possibility to co-create the theatrical space through seating and staging within partially built environments; dramaturgy itself was transformed and adapted for communities which were not conventionally part of the theatrical community; this entailed the writing of a new dramaturgic code onstage for opera which was accepted and eventually shared by the communities who took part in the project either as audiences or commoners.

Although the Roman model did not entail the stable community governance seen in Danisinni, it can nonetheless be understood as a form of commoning. Through the collective act of occupying urban squares, bringing chairs from home, and co-creating the theatrical space, audiences enacted a temporary yet genuine experience of shared cultural value. In this sense, *OperaCamion* transformed peripheral voids into ephemeral commons, where accessibility, conviviality, and participation replaced institutional boundaries. From a value-based approach perspective (Klamer, 2016; Petrova, Graça, and Klamer, 2022), these practices demonstrate that commoning can also occur through the realization of shared values in action—when citizens collectively embody inclusion and cultural democracy, even within institutionally led frameworks.

The transformations which occurred through and during the *OperaCamion* project exemplify how values are "realized in practice" (Klamer, 2016), as artistic and social values become tangible through acts of co-creation and shared experience rather than through monetary valuation. This, in turn, produced the third component, a relational resource, which was shared by audiences and performers who interacted with one another in new ways—the former by enacting emotional reactions through audiency and the latter, who reacted to the setting by improvising and interacting with the audience's responses to the play itself. Hence, *OperaCamion*'s relational dynamics reveal the coexistence of artistic, social, and public values (Petrova, Graça, and Klamer, 2022) that together constitute the commoning of culture. These values were documented by a series of interviews conducted with the performers, which are briefly summarized in the points that follow.

The project, as per the intentions of those who took part in it, has a strong societal dimension,[3] the connotations of which are two-fold: on the one hand, it is, in the words of the Superintendent of Palermo, "an intervention on the broader issue of inequalities", thus addressing cultural democracy by redesigning accessibility through both economic and spatial elements: the gratuity of the performance and its position within the urban grid are the tools through which this objective is achieved: these elements correspond to the identification of shared public values—such as equality, access, and participation—that motivate collective engagement (Klamer, 2017; Petrova, Graça, and Klamer, 2022). On the other, it addresses the artistic need to elaborate a new theatre for new audiences, which, in the view of the creative team, provides a way of ensuring the preservation of the operatic heritage and creating new opportunities for opera theatre to serve a more diverse audience.

Their enthusiasm for the project drove the artists to go beyond their intended tasks in the project. There were two components to this willingness to contribute: one consisted of going materially beyond one's assigned tasks, in order to partake actively, willingly (and joyfully, according to most of the participants) in the project. This resulted, for instance, in singers rehearsing in front of people and, specifically, in front of children ("When I was warming up, kids would come and ask me 'how do you do that? Can you sing us an aria?'; and I remember sitting under a tree and singing for them", one artist recalled), or in the scenographer supporting technicians to clean up the space prior to setting up the performance. Here, cultural value is not treated as an abstract quality but as the outcome of relational processes that connect creators, institutions, and publics (Petrova, Graça, and Klamer, 2022).

The other pertained to the greater possibility to contribute towards the theatrical resource, which was treated as a matter that was constantly evolving (something uncommon in the conservative operatic domain—see Cancellieri, Cattani, and Ferriani, 2022), and, more specifically, the possibility to improvise in response to audiences' reactions and to change the performance depending on the different setting each night. This aspect was touched upon by Cherstich, the director, who stated:

> they say 'opera is untouchable'—we cut Shakespeare, Chekhov, but opera has been cut or adapted so rarely—yet we also did that, we allowed ourselves to force it to meet the audience, to cut Mozart's *Don Giovanni*, to adapt *Il Barbiere di Siviglia* … This used to be done for children's *matinées*, but we applied it to every audience—without spoiling the musical dimension, but also without establishing it as the main aspect.

The participants also referred to the "spirit" of the unconventional performance, which was more informal and characterized by a greater interpersonal engagement on the behalf of the participants. Cherstich, the director, recalled that "the orchestra was young, they were willing to contribute, we had fun". This produced a choral work: "It was not just the work of two [of Cherstich and Toccafondo], everyone gave something, everyone did something *more* [emphasis added]." One artist described it as "addictive", while another referred to a sense of fulfilment which went beyond the artistic and monetary dimensions—"There was an adaptability which also transferred in the spirit with which *OperaCamion* addressed its audience." One of the singers recalled: "to me, it was much more important to sing this way than in Opera di Roma—I'd rather have *OperaCamion* every night".

Conclusion: *OperaCamion*, the theatrical commons and the value-based approach

In the first section, the commons and a VBA were presented as two mutually relevant and akin theoretical apparatuses, which are useful for challenging the market-driven perspective of standard economic reasoning. At least two main challenges to contemporary theorizations of the economy were identified: one is institutional, looking at the interconnection of different systems with the economic one, thus moving beyond the market-state dichotomy to instead embrace the influences of social and cultural values within this paradigm. The other challenge is definitional in nature, and consists of untangling the nature of objects, in proprietary terms, in order to both illustrate their potentially shared and common nature and to consequently understand how the institutional challenge can also be addressed.

The way the present chapter has attempted to advance these apparatuses started out from the definitional challenge: setting out from existing theory, this chapter has conceptualized a theatrical commons as a composite resource, consisting of dramaturgy, space, and the relations that are created within the space and the actual performance as well. Such a commons distinguishes itself from other common goods in two key respects: in contrast to other cultural common resources, "space" cannot be considered virtual, insofar as the relationship created between an audience and performers as well as between audience members, which in turn subtends the notion of "enactive audiency" (Walmsley, 2018), is made possible by the "togetherness" of physical proximity. The second pertains to the conditions under which making theatre can be considered an act of commoning, as the physical and material resources necessary to stage a performance are not, in most cases, shared. Ultimately, what is shared by audiences and performers is the co-creation, to varying degrees of course, of a shared artistic experience, and, ultimately, the moment of the performance itself.

At the same time, the theatrical commons exhibits a strong presence of culture as a shared resource, which is to say that a cultural code is shared between audience and performers in two respects: one is language, that is, the dramaturgy of the performance, whose conventions and codified features are understood by the audience and performers together; the other is the syntax, the way the language is arranged in space and experienced via norms and conventions. *OperaCamion* not only transforms the space of the performance, but also the syntax and language of the operatic work itself. While the work is still recognizable in form, it is adapted to a new setting and for new audiences, thus affording the possibility to share that cultural resource in a different context. In this respect, *OperaCamion* proves that when the rules of producing and reproducing a shared cultural resource are rewritten in response to context-specific features, then that resource can be said to be valorized.

The identification of the theatrical commons as well as its qualities, hence, fulfils the definitional objective, serving both the institutional purpose, which is that of shedding light upon what types of relational properties the theatrical commons entails, and what types of governance mechanisms can be put in place to better unfold its qualities. This, in turn, reflects the steps of the VBA, identifying what is important to the people involved in the creation of art, and valorizing it (Klamer, 2016): the research design, which is based upon empirical findings from interviews with artists, has contributed towards unfolding the values which the participants in *OperaCamion* attach to their theatrical endeavor.

The second step, which concerns the modes for valorizing the resource and of putting those values into place, is also aptly illustrated by *OperaCamion*, which shows that even a commonly inaccessible art form such as Opera theatre can become a shared resource if these resources are managed and designed in new ways. In particular, the setting and mode of *OperaCamion* is able to unfold the different artistic and societal levels of a resource which is simultaneously cultural, relational, and social.

This has significant policy implications: first, because a more seamless connection between research and the arts supports the identification of values for the different stakeholder groups involved in the funding, production, reproduction, and fruition of culture, across the whole value chain of culture. Second, because it demonstrates that redesigning the spaces and infrastructures of culture, alongside their position within the urban grid, opens up the possibility for culture and its various manifestations to connect to specific communities, and to catalyse relationships around shared languages and common cultural values. Third, it sheds light upon how preserving cultural and artistic canons while, simultaneously, favoring their innovation in response to the artistic urge to change and transform codes and languages in society, is able to ensure not only the preservation, but also the sustainable transmission of heritage forms of art. These implications can only be operationalized if cultural economists, researchers in cultural management, cultural professionals, and cultural policymakers reflect together upon the identification of shared and common resources, on the entangled systems which subtend to their management, and the policy stimuli which can ensure their sustainable governance.

Notes

1 The literature on the commons is vast and varied, as the concept has been approached from a variety of viewpoints primarily the economic one, which sees the commons as "common pool resources" (Ostrom, 1990) which, differently from public ones, are rivals; the sociological one, which places an emphasis on the fact that every resource, regardless of their nature, can be common, as long as it is appropriated in common—therefore looking at commoning as a social practice (Euler, 2018); which understands the commons as a form of collective self-governance and a political principle that contests both state and market control over resources, emphasizing autonomy, participation, and the reconfiguration of power relations (Hardt and Negri, 2009). The cultural commons were observed as a distinct commons in that cultural goods are "special" resources because they embed not only use and exchange values, but also symbolic ones (Throsby, 2001); in addition, they are not necessarily tangible goods, and as such, needed a reconceptualization of the institutional design principles which determine the production and governance of physical natural resources (Bertacchini, 2012).

2 Danisinni is a neighbourhood in Palermo; although it cannot be considered a periphery from a geographical perspective, the interviewees unanimously defined it as a placed characterized by "urban depression" (*depressione urbana*).

3 As one would expect, not everyone was aligned in their objectives and motivations: especially within complex artistic projects where artistic and social values are entangled, there is no unified consensus, and conflict did indeed arise in certain situations. I discussed these different motivations and the ensuing conflicts in a previous paper (Sabatini, 2023), and it lies beyond the scope of this chapter to describe these aspects here.

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9 Applying a Value-Based Approach to Analyze *Centri Sociali*

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Introduction

Within this chapter, we aim to explore the values that underpin the practises of three Italian *centri sociali* (social centers), which can be considered as paradigmatic examples of local communities reappropriating urban space. More specifically, our cases range from the controversial experience of Asilo Occupato in Turin to the successful Ex Asilo Filangieri in Naples, in addition to the resilient Làbas in Bologna. These three cases are examined through the lens of the knowledge commons, which is where shared resources are managed collectively to foster social and cultural values. Within this context, a value-based approach (VBA) offers an expedient lens through which to explore the values that drive both the initial establishment and ongoing sustainability of the social centers, prioritizing qualitative outcomes over traditional economic metrics. Specifically, this study adapts Klamer's (2017) five-sphere model to identify the values underpinning the practices of *centri sociali*. The research draws upon secondary data from literature on the commons and grassroots cultural practices, ultimately emphasizing the role of these practices within community cohesion, cultural enrichment, and questioning the conditions for the sustainable governance of *centri sociali*.

Activism, resistance, and the battle for urban space in Turin

In 1995, a group of self-defined social anarchists suddenly occupied an abandoned building in the Aurora neighborhood, a semi-centrally located area of Turin. Originally, the building was a kindergarten, while the surrounding area at one time was a working-class suburb. Later, at the time of the occupation, the area was characterized by general degradation, and populated largely by vulnerable groups but also active local subjects who were working to improve the living conditions (Aurora Lab, n.d.). Prior to the occupation, the neighborhood was described as follows:

> the noisy presence of a disco had generated thefts and damages, disturbing the neighborhood with the many parked cars, and the screams and

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> troubles until late at night. Two streets away, a supermarket was used as the gathering point of drunk and desperate individuals, illegally recruited as cheap labour force. Drug trafficking and crimes proliferated – and still persists – with fights and frequent wounds, sometimes killings.
>
> (Lenna, Randazzo, and Trimarchi, 2020, p. 5)

The motivation for the occupation, of *Asilo Occupato*, as it would subsequently come to be known as, was the collective's strongly held belief that both the state and local administration were unable to manage the neighborhood without fueling inequalities. To address this gap, the group began to carry out community-based activities, including, among other things, a community garden, social dinners, and maintenance work. After a short period of eviction in 1998, the building was eventually re-occupied by the group, who sought to fight what they saw as the processes of exploitation, exclusion, and repression (Falconieri, 2019). Their objective was to contribute toward the wellbeing of the community who lived in the area. Their protest also consisted of "effective daily actions of care and social assistance" (Lenna, Randazzo, and Trimarchi, 2020, p. 4), as well as taking care of an abandoned building in a degraded area.

In the initial stages of their occupation, the activists encountered skepticism from some locals, who hoped that the building would soon be cleared. This can be discerned in an interview with one of the locals, who said: "like everybody, we thought that their presence would degrade the area. They were crooked and dirty – at least it seemed so to our aesthetic sense – dressed in black and 'poor.' Poverty always scares, also when it is not ours" (Lenna, Randazzo, and Trimarchi, 2020, p. 5). However, later on, despite the illegal nature of the group's action, the local community began to realize that the occupants were not robbing people or committing violent acts, and thus gradually began to support them. For instance, one local noted in an interview that if the Municipal administration had no use for the kindergarten, then it was not entirely unreasonable for the space to be given a different use, potentially as a social center, rather than simply allowing it to remain abandoned and have the space go to waste. Another local resident recalled the various activities that transpired during the occupation, such as, for example, the community garden, the repainting of the façade, and the dinners that were organized to raise funds for poor tenants who were facing eviction (Lenna, Randazzo, and Trimarchi, 2020). The occupants were thus both preventing and standing up against the speculative transformation and ensuing gentrification that had already begun in 2014 in the other half of the district via the project Nuvola Lavazza. Although many people complained about the alleged problems generated by the occupation, others appreciated and strongly supported the acts of solidarity, care, and social assistance, the community-based and co-housing activities, not to mention the courage shown by the occupants in their fight against this speculative process.

Despite both the many beneficial actions carried out as part of the project and the mostly positive reaction from the local community, the absence of a regulatory framework underpinning the project's implementation ultimately led to the final forced eviction on February 7, 2019, by the public authorities. The activists were held responsible for engaging in criminal activities against state power and were reported to have been involved in various violent acts across several Italian towns, including arson attacks against symbolic places such as banks or embassies. They were also accused of targeting the Centers for Accommodation and Repatriation (formerly CIE) as part of their efforts to influence national migration policy, as the management of these centers was deemed to be biased and incorrect (Lenna, Randazzo, and Trimarchi, 2020). The administrative reaction provoked, in turn, tension and protests within the area, causing various damage to both people and buildings. Later, a range of hypotheses and suggestions were put forward in an effort to imagine a new future for the old kindergarten. Today, some clearer ideas about this new future have emerged, to the point where the Palazzo Civico has stated that they will publish a tender to identify concessionaires who could restore the building to safety and begin new projects. This announcement was made by the Deputy Mayor Michela Favaro, who stands on the sidelines of a commission on the cultural heritage of the Municipality. Multiple ideas have been put forward regarding the future use of the space, including, among others, a retirement home, or a Shoah museum (Molino, 2022). The reaction to the eviction from the Mayor Chiara Appendino, other politicians and police officers was one of tremendous satisfaction. Appendino said she was planning to devote the complex to non-profit organizations and associations with social purposes, "while denying any possibilities that the building itself could be sold within a wider plan of real estate disposal and sale" (Lenna, Randazzo, and Trimarchi, 2020, p. 5). However, not all of the neighbors were happy with the eviction, as a small crowd of protesters tried to oppose it, and were then subsequently arrested. Today, the project is no longer active as the collapse of the Asilo Occupato totally halted the dissemination of the social center.

A tale of cultural and community-led reappropriation in Naples

The next case study is Naples in 2012. Ex Asilo Filangieri is a 16th-century complex located in the city center, in an area which both belongs to the city council and in 1995 was added to the UNESCO World Heritage List (Borchi, 2018). One day, a collective of artists and knowledge-workers, known as "La Balena", suddenly occupy the complex. At that juncture, the city of Naples was already a hub for bottom-up cultural and artistic initiatives, with various empty buildings being occupied and transformed into centers for artistic production, such as, for example, Officina 99 or Lanificio (Froment, 2016). This vibrant atmosphere began to emerge at the beginning of the 1990s, in response to the introduction of several labor and welfare policies, which served as the catalyst for various community-based and shared practices to spring up that reused abandoned spaces and created innovation (Laino, 2018). In 2007, Naples was chosen to host the Universal Forum of Cultures, with the Ex Asilo Filangieri being selected as the venue for this event (Borchi, 2018). There were two main reasons for the occupation. First, it served as a protest against delays in the restoration works of the building in light of the Universal Forum of Cultures (the building was deemed to be in unsafe condition) and the subsequent abandonment of the space by the city government (Marella, 2017). The second reason for the occupation was to shed light upon the prioritization of hosting one-off mega-events over ongoing cultural provisions within that area. That is to say, the local administration was exploiting it for large, remunerative one-off events, without any consideration for the local community (Froment, 2016). In contrast to this approach, the occupants managed the space as a commons, basing their decisions upon consensus-making, and, hence, taking the community into great consideration.

Given the indifference of the local administration toward the building, the collective gave birth to a collaborative and creative environment for the local community, where a variety of cultural and social activities took place and everyone was welcome to both participate and contribute their ideas. The cultural and artistic events and activities that were organized sought to give the Ex Asilo new life (Borchi, 2018). The collective made up seven thematic round tables (the library, the garden, the cinema, theater and drama, visual arts, music, and self-government) and met up once a week to organize projects and activities (Ex Asilo Filangieri, 2018). Due to the positive outcomes that were generated, a few months after the occupation, the Municipality assigned access and use of the building over to an open community of knowledge-workers and not solely the original occupants.

After almost four years of occupation, the local city council, which was at that time led by Luigi De Magistris, granted the occupants formal rights over management of the complex, thus regularizing their position. This regularization process formed part of the city council's interest in the commons, which subsequently led to the creation of the "Assessorato ai Beni Comuni" (Department for the Commons) that encouraged the participation of citizens in the management of public spaces. Ex Asilo Filangieri was formally recognized by the city council as one of the seven urban commons of Naples (Comune di Napoli, 2016). In light of this recognition, the social importance of the place was officially acknowledged by the city and the occupants obtained the right to carry on their work there legally. The success of this project derives from the legal form that was adopted by both the community of artists and knowledge-workers and the local government in order to regulate the access to and use of, and access to, the complex. The legal form is a customary law or regime of "uso civico", that grants access and use of the complex to local communities, mostly for grazing and timber-related activities.

> The recall of the old experience of usi civici is double-sided: on the one hand it recalls old collective property rights which epitomise an

> alternative to the individual private property model of modern law; on the other the usi civici model is assumed to be a possible legal scheme that can formalise the stable experience of self-government, democratic participation and communing.
>
> (Marella, 2017, p. 80)

Later, the local government institutionalized the management regulation, renaming it "Dichiarazione di uso civico e collettivo urbano" (Micciarelli, 2014), marking the enforceability of the regulations regarding access to and use of the commons.

A social and political commitment to the revitalization of urban space in Bologna

Bologna is a vibrant historical Italian city that has served as a hub of cultural and economic exchange, a cradle of Italian music, alongside being the setting for many political conflicts. It is against this backdrop that, in 2012, a group of activists created the local community center *Làbas*, by occupying a previously abandoned military complex in via Orfeo, the former Masini barracks. The venue, located in a neighborhood in the historical center with high-value real estate, consists of various buildings, which formed part of the ancient Sant'Omobono convent complex. Through their occupation of the venue, Làbas collective intended to rescue the degraded area, and return it to the neighborhood, the city and the community. For over five years, Làbas organized cooperative, supportive, and sustainable political and social projects involving students, workers, including precarious ones, unemployed people, and pensioners that aimed to radically transform a present that was characterized by misery, exclusion, racism, precariousness, and environmental and cultural degradation. The laboratory, which was primarily driven by university students, included various projects, initiatives, events, and practises within the field of bottom-up social and informal welfare services, such as, for example, actions to support the migrant population, Italian courses for foreigners, a nursery school, a riders' union and Làbimbi, a recreational-educational project intended for children. Moreover, the initiative also provided job research and an orientation desk to help support unemployed people of any kind. Together with the social purposes, Làbas was also a cultural and creative space. More specifically, it included a public library, as well as literary and artistic workshop called "Quartieri Urbani", which was a music-dedicated space that included a rehearsal room and a workshop area.

The urban and social fabric of Bologna underwent many changes in the years following the occupation, which, in turn, led to the emergence of new discourses and projects of urban regeneration that were largely characterized by uncertain outcomes. This also derived from both the institutional void pertaining to the fruition of the commons and the inefficiency of temporary local regulations, which were primarily based on the short-term logic of responding to specific calls for funding or proposals, rather than being driven by a long-term strategic vision. Moreover, the area in which the occupation initially took place was characterized by general abandonment, degradation, and real estate speculation, which made it the perfect site for the emergence of collaborative projects of urban regeneration. The administrative reaction following the occupation was strong and ruthless. On August 8, 2017, Làbas was violently evicted via a controversial intervention by the police, in order to guarantee the progressive regeneration process of the area sought by the Municipality, which involved the construction of a hotel and prestigious residential spaces (in the following years such regeneration projects have, however, stalled). From the eviction day onwards, a campaign to reopen Làbas began, which saw over a thousand people gather on August 30, 2017 in a public assembly and over 15,000 people participate on September 9, 2017 in the #RiapriAMOLàbas event.

The success of the mobilization as well as the reputation that the occupation had gained over the years ultimately enabled Làbas to find a new home in Vicolo Bolognetti and thus begin a new challenge. Since the eviction, which was criticized by both the local community and various social and political figures in the city, a mobilization campaign managed to bring almost 15,000 people to the square to demand the reopening of Làbas. The involvement of the community prompted the Municipality to negotiate the availability of a new space within the "quadriportico" of Vicolo Bolognetti, a former convent complex in the historic center owned by the Municipality, not far from the old headquarters of the Masini barracks. The social and political activity of the collective and their new space were subsequently formalized, between the end of 2017 and 2019. Indeed, this phase consisted in the acknowledgement of the positive nature of the occupation and the will to officialize it. This was realized through the adoption of a participation mechanism known as the "Patto di collaborazione tra associazioni e Comune" (Pact of collaboration between associations and the Municipality) (Zinzani and Proto, 2020). The political and social action carried out by the collective had a positive impact upon the surrounding area and its inhabitants, being recognized and supported by the majority of the local community, especially during the period 2012 to 2017. The project is still ongoing and thus serves as a powerful example of how abandoned buildings can potentially be revitalized in an alternative manner to privatization and real estate speculation.

A theorization of the knowledge commons and the case of *centri sociali*

These three aforementioned cases of activism are powerful examples of social and political commitment and the reappropriation of urban space by local communities: three tales of *centri sociali* (social centers). The chapter aims to explore what specific values underpinned both the establishment and commitment of *centri sociali* and helped to sustain them over time. The latter represents the manifestation of cultural activism within urban contexts, and "they are typically located in industrial areas where the youth population is more likely to face problems such as poverty and lack of cultural provision, therefore more in need of a space to experience creative, cultural and political activities" (Borchi, 2020, pp. 16–17). In so doing, the chapter contributes toward extant studies on the knowledge commons by focusing on the relation between *centri sociali*'s dense bundling of culture, space, and community and their interaction with the local government. Originally employed to describe natural common pool resources, the concept of the commons has evolved over time to encompass shared human-created resources. Specifically, its significance has grown notably within the realm of knowledge sharing (Hess and Ostrom, 2007). Borchi has conducted studies exploring the emergence of *centri sociali* as a form of the knowledge commons, insofar as they constitute a good example of resources that are being used by a group of appropriators for social and cultural purposes within an urban context (2017, 2018, 2020). The author analyzes the city as the cradle of social movements promoting the redistribution of rights and an alternative notion of justice. The city is precisely where the commons can be utilized to foster a sense of community (Ruggiero, 2000), in most cases against neoliberal policies (Borchi, 2018). In this sense, *centri sociali* can be defined as the knowledge commons within the urban environment, where interconnectedness, a sense of belonging, and mutual belonging serve as the primary cultural resource. Next, a second level of cultural resources also typifies *centri sociali*, namely the production of contemporary art (e.g., visual, performative), like in the case of Ex Asilo Filangieri (Borchi, 2018), and in some cases the maintenance and/or the valorization of the occupied building, like in the case of Teatro Valle Occupato (Borchi, 2018). Generally speaking, at the international level, these illegal practises lie at the root of several temporary activist movements, such as the Occupy Movement in 2011 (Raekstad, 2018), an international socio-political movement that expressed opposition to social and economic inequality, and more permanent groups, such as the Kunsthaus Tacheles in Berlin.

The chapter aims to further develop the examination of *centri sociali* through an exploration of the vitality (Morea and Sabatini, 2023) that the underground (Cohendet et al., 2021) brings to urban communities, notwithstanding the troubled relation with local administrations due to an institutional void (Stephan, Uhlaner, and Stride, 2015). Both Marella (2017) and Lenna, Randazzo, and Trimarchi (2020) have shed light upon the nature of this aforementioned relationship, that is "necessarily complex and dynamic, often contradictory and even conflictual" (Marella, 2017, p. 255). There are two main reasons for this tension. First, the activist genealogy of *centri sociali* positions them in principled opposition to the prevailing neoliberal urban order and its managerial governance arrangements. Second, there is a legal indeterminacy: in Italian law, the "commons" lack a clear definition and thus "represent the epitome of the crisis of the public/private dichotomy in property law" (Marella, 2017, p. 63). As a consequence, the collaboration between local administrations and commons is in some instances conflictual (evictions), sometimes legislative, without ever encompassing a cooperative governance (Borchi, 2017, 2018, 2020; Marella, 2017; Lenna, Randazzo, and Trimarchi, 2020).

This study is grounded in a conceptualization of value that challenges traditional economic perspectives, emphasizing instead a shift toward sustainability, justice, and creativity within the cultural and creative sectors. While early analyses often justified these sectors via economic metrics (European Commission, 2010; KEA, 2006), this chapter argues for the application of a VBA (Klamer, 2017), which rejects the reductionist view of traditional economic perspectives that evaluate cultural and creative sectors primarily via economic metrics. Klamer's (2017) approach offers an alternative lens, focusing instead on both qualitative outcomes and the articulation of values by organizations. More specifically, it aims to build a bridge between disciplines and stimulate the further development of the VBA in terms of understanding cultural and creative sectors. The values and qualities associated with cultural goods are best understood through experiential practices, as both Klamer (2003) and Kaszynska and Crossick (2016) have argued. These values are dynamic, context-dependent, and often realized without full awareness of either their societal or transcendental implications. In this respect, the VBA challenges the traditional economic distinctions between private, collective, and public goods. The approach instead promotes quality-based evaluations that align with the qualitative objectives of cultural and artistic organizations. In accordance with this approach, this chapter attempts to offer ways to evaluate, rather than valorize, *centri sociali*. While valorization is a dynamic process of value production through which goods come to acquire worth, which involves moral choices and societal processes, evaluation involves assessing or judging in relation to certain criteria, thus reaffirming or rejecting existing values. In this sense, the success of *centri sociali* is here assessed based on their positive impact upon the community, contributions to culture, active community involvement, environmental sustainability, perceptions of authorities and stakeholders, and their long-term viability. This evaluation focuses on the qualitative outcomes and considers diverse perspectives, in line with the VBA.

Methodology

This chapter addresses the conflictual creation of an identity and sets of values within the practices of *centri sociali*. The research relies heavily upon previously analyzed cases that have hitherto not been documented as examples of the commons, such as the Asilo Filangieri di Napoli and the Asilo Occupato di Torino. These cases have been studied previously by scholars like Marella (2017), Borchi (2018, 2020), and Lenna, Randazzo, and Trimarchi (2020). In addition, the chapter draws upon studies of grassroots artistic practices, focusing in particular on the case of Làbas, as discussed by Morea and Sabatini (2023). To enrich the analysis further, the chapter also includes secondary data gathered from websites and online articles. These sources are particularly valuable in that they provide insights into the ongoing dynamics, evolution, and practical impact of these *centri sociali* within their respective communities. By capturing the contemporary and evolving nature of these spaces, this data helps to build a more nuanced understanding of both how they function and the values they promote.

The analytical approach adopted in this chapter is based on Klamer's (2017) five-sphere model. This framework is particularly well-suited to the study of *centri sociali*, insofar as it provides a comprehensive view of how individuals and organizations pursue their goals and values within different spheres of life. These five spheres represent distinct domains in which values are created and expressed. By applying this model, the chapter aims to uncover the unique values that characterize *centri sociali*, and, in so doing, move beyond the traditional economic approach. The framework helps to identify not only the economic or social contributions of *centri sociali*, but also their broader cultural, civic, and personal significance. To support this analysis, the chapter includes a summary table that applies the VBA to the specific cases studied, highlighting how the different spheres interact to shape the dynamics and values of *centri sociali*. By employing this method, the chapter provides a richer understanding of the complex roles that *centri sociali* play within their respective communities, and moreover, underscores the importance of considering multiple dimensions of value within their analysis.

Findings

The analysis of *centri sociali* is visually presented in Figure 9.1, which illustrates how the five-sphere model applies to these practices. This model, specifically adapted for *centri sociali*, underscores the different areas in which they create and sustain value.

Within the *social sphere, centri sociali* provide spaces for community gatherings and cultural activities. They are often collaboratively managed by the community itself. The social sphere plays a pivotal role in this context insofar as it involves fostering relationships among community members, collaborators, and users. This sphere is where stronger bonds can be established among participants, new members can be brought into the fold, and a deeper sense of belonging can be reinforced. The *cultural sphere* involves the promotion of cultural activities, including art exhibitions, concerts, performances, and debates and is where *centri sociali* can effectively showcase their cultural and artistic endeavors, thus drawing the public closer toward shared cultural values. In so doing, it provides new ways of promoting cultural and social ideals through artistic events and public discussions. Although *centri sociali* do not constitute literal families, members often share a profound sense of belonging as well as a common purpose. In this sense, the *oikos sphere* can be seen as representing members' active involvement within supporting the social center, both financially and emotionally, in order to ensure its stability and

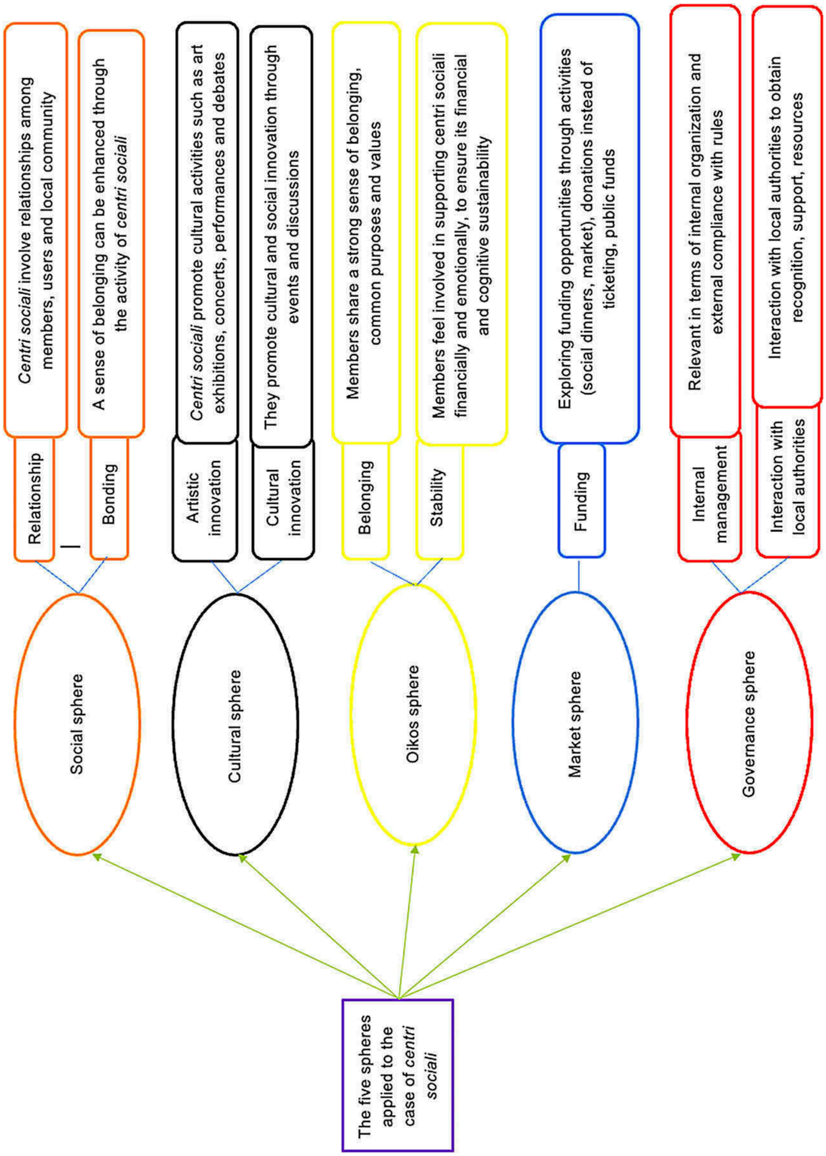

Figure 9.1 The five-sphere model applied to *centri sociali*
Source: authors' own elaboration.

sustainability. Despite the fact that *centri sociali* generally avoid any purely commercial orientations, there is nevertheless potential within the *market sphere* to explore funding opportunities or collaborations with external partners, including the organization of social dinners or markets for raising funds. The *governance sphere* holds relevance with regard to both the internal management of the *centri sociali* and their adherence to local laws and regulations. It thus plays a crucial role in terms of establishing an effective organizational structure and ensuring compliance with regulatory requirements. Moreover, engagement within the governance sphere may also entail interactions with local or regional authorities to secure public support or resources. These five spheres collectively contribute toward designing the dynamics of *centri sociali*, facilitating community engagement, cultural enrichment, financial sustainability, and effective governance, of which are required to maintain and sustain the value that is generated.

The analysis of these cases was conducted through the lens of the VBA in order to explore how the value is generated, maintained, or dismantled, as well as how these experiences prove useful for further practices. The analysis demonstrates how although the five spheres are not equally present within the three cases, their presence and weight nevertheless vary from one case to another. To illustrate these differences, we provide graphical representations for each case (Figure 9.2), where the five-sphere model (Klamer, 2017) was adapted by adjusting the sizes of the squares and circles (see also Yalcintas in this volume). These visualizations serve to illustrate the varying relevance of each sphere within the different cases.

In Asilo Occupato, the social sphere was nurtured by community-based activities that fostered interpersonal connections and strengthened participants' sense of belonging. Initiatives such as the repainting of the façade, the community garden, and the social dinners exemplify this dimension, as they created occasions for collective participation and mutual care. Alongside these, the cultural sphere was shaped by activities aimed at artistic expression and cultural exchange, such as self-organized workshops, which contributed to cultivating a shared cultural identity within the community. The market sphere was limited to commercial activities, specifically the fundraising efforts that were carried out by the residents during social events. These activities sought to both support the poor inhabitants within the area who were living in difficult conditions and secure stable financial resources to sustain the ongoing activities of the *centro sociale*. The governance sphere is not predominant in this case. In fact, at the time of the occupation, the activists were structured as a small company, with each having their own role and function, but they were acting outside of any regulation. The analysis of this occupation proves that the occupants did not look to engage in a constructive dialogue with the local administration. Rather, they appeared to be singularly focused on fighting state power, even resorting to violent action in this regard, which overshadowed the positive intentions of the group and shed light on the subversive nature of their occupation. On the other hand, the

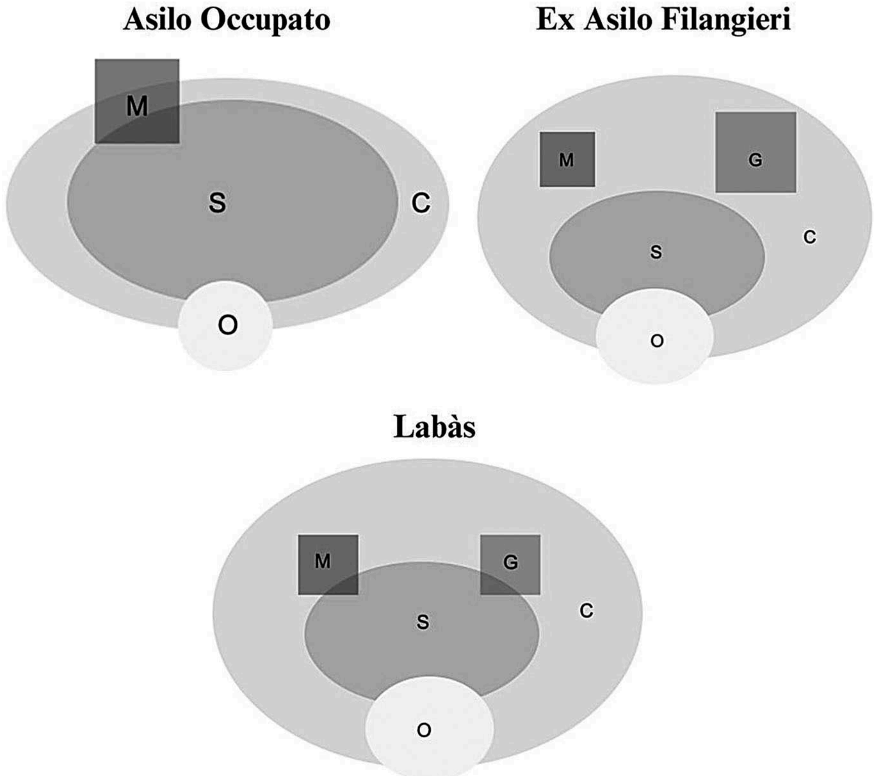

Figure 9.2 An assessment of the value produced within the three cases according to the five-sphere model
Source: authors' own elaboration.

administration also barely sought out any form of cooperation with the occupants, acting only for violent and propagandistic purposes rather than for reasons of security. The absence of any compromise with the local administration eventually led to a forced eviction by the public authorities.

In Ex Asilo Filangieri, the social sphere is widely touched, insofar as the project gave birth to a creative and collaborative environment. Within the social center, everyone had the "feeling of being socially important" (Sennett, 2021, p. 167), actively taking part in projects there and proposing new ones. The cultural and artistic events and activities, as well as the thematic round tables, all nurtured the cultural sphere of the Ex Asilo. The project favored the enhancement of the community's sense of belonging and its common will to pursue a collaborative and vibrant environment, which was one of the main contributing factors to the project's success, thus perfectly matching the oikos sphere. This is particularly evident if we consider the fact that only a few months after the occupation, the use of the building was assigned to an open community of knowledge-workers to support the initial occupants. With regard to the market sphere, no fee was required to attend any of the events that took place at Ex Asilo. All concerts, shows, screenings, and meetings could be entered for free. However, a contribution was appreciated by the members insofar as it helped to lower their expenses and provide the spaces with the suitable means of production for entertainment, art, and culture operators to be able to carry on with the political, legal and cultural experimentation (Ex Asilo Filangieri, 2018). The project can thus be said to fit well within the Italian scenario of self-governed commons, where occupants work independently and use consensus as a decision-making tool. The peculiarity of this particular case was that almost four years after the occupation, the Municipality formally recognized the occupants, thus regularizing both their position and their right to manage that building (Borchi, 2018). Marella (2017) stated that this administrative reaction was legally predicated upon two elements:

> the practice of commoning as a management regime to be established in the building and shared by an open community for the perpetual benefit of all, and a regulatory draft of the building's terms of use that the community would define and upon which the local authority would then agree.
>
> (p. 80)

For all of these reasons, the governance sphere is thus incredibly strong in this case.

Even in the Làbas case, the social sphere is predominant, bringing together various groups and individuals who were promoting an alternative vision of the city and urban regeneration that deviated from the profit-driven logic of the market and instead promoted mutualism, solidarity, and the defence of common goods. Since its foundation, Làbas represented a fairly heterogeneous urban, social, and political reality, which placed the community at the center (Labasbo.org, n.d.). Together with its social purposes, Làbas was also a cultural and creative space. Its public library and the wide variety of cultural and artistic activities it engaged in all constitute the cultural sphere of the *centro sociale*. The Làbas collective, through a variety of activities, appeared to foster the idea of an inclusive space, promoting the empowerment of a diverse community who were encouraged to propose bottom-up projects (oikos sphere). The social center refused any market logic, promoting itself rather as an alternative to privatization and real estate speculation. In its capacity as a self-sustaining project, Làbas was continuously looking for new alternative economies to be able to self-finance. A good example of this logic, which represents the market sphere of Làbas, was the "Campi Aperti" project, a farmers market that took place in the venue of Làbas, where local farmers' associations would bring its stalls of organic and km0 products to promote cooperation and solidarity. Moreover, a variety of projects and initiatives were being carried out in collaboration with other associations and projects, such as "La Zecca: fucina musicale" (the aforementioned music workshop), "Làbas Playground – Basket antirazzista" (a popular and supportive basketball initiative in the heart of Bologna), and many others. Thanks to the network it created over the years, it was possible for Làbas to resist multiple evictions and continue to self-sustain itself. The urban and social fabric of Bologna underwent many changes in the years following the initial occupation, which led to the emergence of new discourses and projects of urban regeneration that were all characterized by uncertain outcomes. This also derived from both the institutional void pertaining to the fruition of the commons and the inefficiency of temporary local regulations, which were mostly based on the previously mentioned short-term logic of calls' logic rather than on a long-term perspective. Moreover, the area in which the occupation initially took place was characterized by general abandonment, degradation, and real estate speculation, which made it the perfect ground for the emergence of collaborative projects of urban regeneration. As for the governance sphere, the collective was always deeply skeptical about the participatory processes and mechanisms promoted by the Municipality, advancing, on the other hand, the right to preserve certain public spaces from privatization and real estate speculation, promoting instead a self-governed initiative. However, despite the collective's initial skepticism, ultimately an agreement was reached between 2017 and 2019 through the adoption of a Pact of collaboration between the associations and the Municipality.

Discussion and conclusion

The juxtaposition of social, cultural, oikos, market, and governance spheres constitutes a pragmatic framework for assessing the multiple dimensions of *centri sociali*. The figures presented aim to provide a concise snapshot of the findings, while simultaneously allowing for critical comparison with extant literature.

The social sphere is integral to all the cases examined, as *centri sociali* are designed as spaces for community gathering and cultural activities, often jointly managed by the community. As seen, *centri sociali* are known for fostering strong community ties (Ruggiero, 2000; Borchi, 2018;). However, while Ex Asilo and Làbas exhibited robust links between community members and local residents, characterized by collaborative relationships, the bond within Asilo Occupato appeared to be more contentious and less cohesive. This divergence challenges the general assumption in extant literature that *centri sociali* universally foster strong communal bonds (De Tullio, 2018).

The cultural sphere is also present within all three cases, which is in line with the recognition in extant literature concerning the importance of cultural and artistic initiatives within *centri sociali* (Ruggiero, 2000; De Tullio, 2018). These spaces bring the public closer to shared cultural values through events such as art exhibitions, performances, and public debates. However, the results show that the cultural sphere is less prominent in Asilo Occupato than in the other cases, thus suggesting variability in the emphasis placed upon cultural activities within different *centri sociali*.

The oikos sphere, which reflects the strong sense of belonging and shared purpose among members, is well-developed in Ex Asilo and Làbas. Both projects encouraged inclusivity, welcoming anyone who was interested to join the center and contribute ideas for activities. This strong sense of belonging, which is crucial for the sustainability of such initiatives (Gielen and Dockx, 2018), is somewhat less emphasized in Asilo Occupato, thus highlighting potential challenges in fostering a unified community.

With regard to the market sphere, while *centri sociali* generally avoid purely commercial orientations, they do engage in fundraising activities and partnerships with external entities, such as local businesses. These activities are crucial for ensuring financial stability, as can be seen in other *centri sociali* (Ruggiero, 2000). This sphere is evident within all three of the cases studied here, where fundraising efforts were used to support ongoing activities and address the needs of the local population.

The governance sphere plays a crucial role in the internal management and legal compliance of the *centri sociali*. The experiences of Asilo Occupato, Làbas and Ex Asilo show varying degrees of success in overcoming these challenges. Asilo Occupato's failure to comply with the legal framework led to its eviction, reflecting the risks of non-compliance highlighted in the literature (Lenna, Randazzo, and Trimarchi, 2020). In contrast, Làbas managed to maintain a constructive dialogue with the authorities, resulting in a cooperation Pact with the Municipality. Ex Asilo stands out as a model of successful collaboration with public institutions, leading to the creation of a Department for the Commons that promotes citizen participation in the management of public spaces (De Tullio, 2018).

These findings challenge the assumption that *centri sociali* are uniformly sustainable and community-oriented from their outset, and suggest instead that the absence of regulation of the commons can either contribute to or hinder their long-term viability (see Sabatini in this volume). Furthermore, publics and communities should be treated as heterogeneous and fundamentally unpredictable—closer to co-creation processes than to stable, homogeneous demand—which helps explain cross-case divergence in social ties and governance outcomes (see Trimarchi in this volume). This research thus underscores the complexity of sustaining *centri sociali* within an evolving urban landscape. Rooted in a VBA, it highlights the role of *centri sociali* in fostering community, culture, and social interaction. The different outcomes across the three cases call for a reassessment of the strategies used to cultivate and sustain the commons in contemporary society, as discussed previously in the literature (Gielen and Dockx, 2018; Lenna et al., 2020; Morea and Sabatini, 2023).

Aimed at policymakers and practitioners within the fields of urban planning, cultural policy, and community development, this chapter provides a comprehensive framework for evaluating community-led spaces such as *centri* *sociali*. Specifically, it provides insights into successful practises, regulatory challenges, and the intrinsic values that contribute toward sustainable projects. Finally, it advocates for a holistic approach to encourage a shift in institutional logic by inviting community-driven practises into policy-making and informing policymakers of the relevance of such practices.

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10 Valuing Digital Culture 3.0

Carolina Dalla Chiesa

Introduction

One basic intuition about how we value cultural goods is that we can attribute value to culture without either owning or consuming a cultural good (Van den Braembussche, 2002; Snowball, 2008). While this touches upon one of the fundamental characteristics of art, namely that it is a public good (Abbing, 2002), it also sheds light on the manifold ways in which cultural goods exert experience attributes, whereby actually owning a product is perhaps the least relevant option available. The success of subscription formats for nearly all cultural goods at the present juncture says something relevant about how we value our art consumption experience in the digital age. Coupled with a powerful cost-efficient solution, digital subscription formats rapidly adapt to contemporary ways of living, which, despite what critics might say, have survived the consumer sovereignty test. This format has now expanded to numerous digital practices, some of which are more collective (e.g., Wikipedia, Wattpad), while others are more individual (e.g., audiovisual streaming services). As I will discuss later in this chapter, within all cultural practices (including digital ones), the "medium can be the message" (McLuhan, 2005). Be that as it may, the medium in and of itself cannot fully explain how people consume its content. For example, podcasts can be listened to in groups or individually; partygoers can listen to music together as much as they listen to it individually; crowd funding can be used for both strictly commercial purposes and civic engagement projects. As such, this chapter focuses on practices as a means of devising digital culture, rather than on its intermediaries.

As digitalisation expands into ever-more areas of life, it is worth exploring how exactly they become valuable digital creations and what processes are involved in the valuation of the cultural goods emerging within the digital context. Is this process any different from how we value non-digital creations? This chapter does not aim to answer these questions in an exhaustive manner as any attempt to do so would far exceed the remit. Having said that, I do still wish to provide a few interpretative lenses through which to explore the phenomenon of digitally shared creations from the perspective of their practices,

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coupled with an economic view of how digitalisation impacted the flow of new creative content. I focus upon specific key examples that best illustrate the values of digital culture from an economic-sociological perspective (Swedberg, 2009). Moreover, I focus upon how the "valorisation of culture" (Hutter and Rizzo, 1997; Klamer, 2007) is a consequence of using, sharing, and reproducing "digital culture", which for the purposes of this chapter is understood as the modes of living, experiencing, sharing, and creating that are embedded within digital tools (see, for example, Horst and Miller, 2020). In this chapter, social media tools such as TikTok, Discord, Twitch, and Podcasts are used as illustrative examples of so-called practices of "digital culture", whereby *practices* typically represent an amalgam of meaning, objects, interactions, and processes that can be empirically observed in the way that people use digital tools, and which give meaning to their actions (see, for example, Schatzki, 2010) and thus justify their choices (Boltanski and Thevenot, 1991).

The concept of "platformisation", which is understood as the pervasiveness of digital intermediaries in most spheres of life (Van Dijck, Poell, and Waal, 2019; Poell, Nieborg, and Duffy, 2022) is already well-established within extant literature, and has helped to usher in a wide range of new or reinterpreted cultural and creative practices that are mediated through digital tools such as aggregators, two-sided markets, or simply online platforms. Once regarded as a generational pattern, internet-based tools can no longer be considered restricted to specific age brackets or socio-economic backgrounds.[1] The pervasiveness of the digital intermediation of cultural products, that is, "platformisation" (Van Dijck, Poell, and Waal, 2019; Poell, Nieborg, and Duffy, 2022), may imply critical or normative connotations towards both the over-exposure to intermediation via online platforms and the oligopolistic features of giant online marketplaces and various "two-sided markets" (Rochet and Tirole, 2003). This chapter adopts a different stance in that it aims to argue not how the ubiquitousness of digitalisation has driven culture towards the massification[2] of digitally based interactions, but rather how these novel forms of intermediation unveil often-unseen value(s), which can be better understood from the perspective of the practices and their values. Within the field of cultural economics, understanding the value of digital practices is critically important in as far as digital culture has a place alongside other more traditional forms of culture or established cultural goods and services. Based on this and the fact that niche creators and audiences are achieving ever-wider access as a result of new online intermediaries with fewer entry-barriers, digital creation abounds, in turn, promoting what Waldfogel (2017) refers to as a "golden age" of cultural production that is often guided by less canonical views of culture represented within the forms of creation, reproduction, and consumption of culture.

In this chapter, I aim to discuss how independently created digital content, often produced by amateurs, can give rise to novel forms of assessing cultural value (Klamer, 1997). I follow Sacco, Ferilli, and TavanoBlessi's (2018) term

"Culture 3.0", here, to refer to several successful, creator-led forms of cultural participation and sharing practices. The chapter develops the argument that the valuation processes of digital culture foster various benefits (i.e., knowledge, information, entertainment, and sociability) for both creators and audiences. As the boundaries between creators and producers are increasingly blurred, benefits spill over to supply and demand and further overlap spheres of value often conceptualised as separate. In accordance with Klamer's (1997) value-based approach (VBA), I discuss how the different spheres of value intertwine post-digitalisation.

The effects of digitalisation on cultural production

In 2021, against the backdrop of the COVID-19 pandemic and the attendant lockdowns, *The New Yorker* magazine published an article arguing that the "creator economy" is here to stay. "A lattice of new platforms and tools purports to empower online creators" (Chayka, 2021, p. 1). Additional signs that the "influencer" economy is fading can be discerned in the fact that virtually all online content produced for social media is now referred to as "creator's content". In a piece for *The Atlantic*, Lorenz (2019) discussed how the term "creator" was initially marketed by YouTube to replace the term "stars", which inevitably implied that only a select few could produce content. The rebranding of the content creator as simply "creator" has also been supported by lowering the entry barriers for creating novel cultural content and increasing the network effects of online intermediaries. Indeed, a cursory glance at novel social media (e.g., TikTok) immediately shows you that there are more seemingly common people adopting an influencer role and marketing products but also sharing news, information, scientific data, historical facts, and several other forms of content that were typically the sole province of traditional media and established institutions. While the openness of sharing online content generates various positive externalities, it also raises unavoidable ethical and moral concerns regarding authors' rights and the traceability of knowledge – that is, most importantly, the consequences of the propagation of fake news and the polycentricity of information networks (Hidalgo, 2016).

Technological changes prior to the 21st century created the conditions for the cultural industry revolution we witnessed thereafter. As Sacco, Ferilli, and TavanoBlessi (2018) suggest, such technological changes did not mean that the masses necessarily accessed culture or the means of producing culture, but rather that reproducibility became technologically possible. With a wider consumer pool, higher educational attainment, and socioeconomic advancement, many consumers were ready to welcome commercially distributed (cultural) products. The shift towards a so-called "Culture 3.0" changed the forms through which people create and share content online. Consumer goods such as smartphones, tablets, and their applications collectively function as the "means of production" for the amateur audiovisual content shared via

YouTube, TikTok, Discord, Twitch, and Podcasts, for example. Such novelties – which will eventually be replaced by new tools – warrant the attention of cultural economists, specifically in exploring the social and economic value (s) of these newly created cultural products, some of which bear arts-related characteristics or even challenge the canonical views of the arts and culture. In fact, with the expansion of "art" towards the all-encompassing view of the "creator economy", one must conceive of podcast-makers as also being producers of cultural content, thus blurring the boundaries between the anthropological notion of culture (see, for example, Wagner, 1975) and the strictly economic view of the same term (see, for example, Throsby, 2001).

Digital platforms have also introduced new forms of governance, data organisation, online interactions, and content production, ultimately transforming how creators produce, distribute, and make content accessible to consumers (Van Dijck, Poell, and Waal, 2019; Srnicek, 2020). Niche amateur producers have rapidly been converted into professionals (Anderson, 2006; Brynjolfsson, Hu, and Smith, 2006), thereby contributing towards the disintermediation of traditional gatekeepers and further replacing these with more dispersed forms of participation and reintermediation. These processes have contributed to a reduction in transaction costs in both market and non-market exchanges, which, in turn, has allowed the culture to reach new audiences through online patronage and crowdfunding, for example (Brent and Lorah, 2019). Thus, independent creators can increasingly access a myriad of new intermediaries and tools to help them create, produce, and distribute cultural content. The online ecosystem available to independent creators yields both pecuniary and non-pecuniary benefits,[3] typically exerting community benefits alongside financial returns – as in the case of crowd funding, for example (Dalla Chiesa, 2021). For early-stage career artists, digital creators, and content developers, niche platforms offer a first step towards securing financial sustainability and business creation. In short, niche creators abound, cultural production is oversupplied, and markets are heavily dependent on quality signals often provided by selectors and certifiers (Caves, 2000). The road to cultural production is a rather uneven one for all the "long tail" of creators (Anderson, 2006) without access to well-known certifiers, networks, and reputations. As artists often must wear multiple hats to make ends meet (Throsby and Zednik, 2011), digital tools, two-sided markets, and online platforms often provide a means to disseminate and finance cultural production before, during, and after its creation.

A seemingly critical interpretation of these developments is that they reveal the ubiquitous presence of platforms within most spheres of life (Poell, Nieborg, and Duffy, 2022) with significant market power (Nuccio and Guerzoni, 2019) and algorithmic management of audiences (Stark and Pais, 2020). Yet, to better understand how the practice of valuation unfolds (e.g., online matchmakers, social media websites, and digital tools), it is crucial to incorporate ethnographic methods and interpretive reasoning to explore the "native's point of view" regarding the use, benefits, and relevance of digital culture.

Culture in the narrow sense can be valued both "as a good as an idea" all at once (Klamer, 1997). Culture is also said to supply a "dual" market: the market for goods and ideas (Throsby, 2001). As established earlier, some contemporary forms of creative production are increasingly shared online as a public good (e.g., one neither needs to have a TikTok account to access TikTok content, nor does one have to pay for it in any form other than via attention that is subsequently transformed into pecuniary benefits to the creators via advertising). While this model is by no means new, it reiterates earlier arguments from Potts et al. (2008) that cultural markets can be seen as social network markets given some of their public good characteristics, positive spillovers, and non-market exchanges, which make the typical industrial classification of "what creatives do" increasingly hard to pin. The argument follows that within complex service economies, the traditional DCMS[4] (and others) classification system, which is based on occupations, careers, and actual output, overlooks a number of creative activities that occur outside pre-existing industrial scope but nevertheless produce goods with symbolic and economic value. Consumer-generated content and user-led innovations are good examples of these markets in which dispersed users and producers abound, and the boundaries between both are blurred (Hippel, 2005).

Consequently, while some projects remain either firmly place-based or emerge in a form that conveys attachments to local traditions and cultural heritage, many contemporary cultural productions that are shared online have *glocal*[5]characteristics (Pratt, 2012), which, in turn, leads to patterns of consumption that are fomented as much by commonality in space. When it comes to circumventing cultural production, algorithmic management may offer a replacement for the territorial component. Contrary to the widely held view that cultural markets are strongly territorial (Lazzeretti, Boix, and Capone, 2008), the type of cultural production propelled by online platforms is more dispersed, open, flexible, and demand-driven than its local counterparts. As such, addressing the "merit good" characteristics of cultural goods is harder when creation and production are de-territorialised. Consumers may consume certain types of goods (namely, social media content, online TikTok dances, information shared on YouTube, crowd funded projects, etc.) not for their intrinsic merits per se (e.g., heritage, national culture, local values, and traditions) but simply because the content that is shared online grabs their attention more than others due to specific tastes and preferences. I argue that cultural economists and social scientists, in general, should first acknowledge these as a form of "culture" (a digital culture manifestation or practices) alongside other, more established or traditional cultural goods and services, and further investigate how the processes of *valorisation* or *valuation* (which are used interchangeably in this chapter) intertwine with various spheres of value (markets, governments, households, societies, and culture), thus creating new valuation spheres through its practices. In this sense, a broader anthropological notion of culture (see, for example, Sahlins, 1999) is useful, given its emphasis on understanding local practices, interactions, and meanings.

Sharing online practices: TikTokers, Podcasters, Twitchers, and YouTubers

Contemporarily, both amateur and professional creators[6] widely utilise TikTok, Twitch, Podcasts, Discord, and YouTube channels to create and share new content. There are no signs of this being a temporary trend. Through ephemeral and (sometimes) relatable videos, creators gauge audiences' interest, thus competing over one of the scarcest resources: attention (Lanham, 2006). The three channels are grouped here due to the similarity in their mechanisms for sharing content with low entry-barriers. While their uses diverge and infrastructural components are certainly different, some similar attributes emerge with respect to a creator economy 3.0: the dispersion of content production and sharing has dramatically altered the valuation of culture.

To mention a few examples, a quick search of TikTok and YouTube using the keywords "book review", "album review", or "movie review" will immediately take you to content from a number of amateur reviewers who have a considerably larger audience than traditional magazines and journals with specialised staff. There has not only been a shift in power with respect to reviewing cultural products, when it comes to amateurs creating all sorts of content and emerging creative markets, social media apps have also contributed towards expanding the possibilities to outreach audiences, thereby, allowing young, original creators to carve career paths within creative domains. Technical perfection is also less relevant than authentic videos, with "real" content tending to be more likable than expensive productions with evident advertising purposes. In fact, the creator economy 3.0 values authenticity above all, preferring to hide advertising whenever possible. The instant fame and recognition accorded by social media platforms like TikTok testifies to how people value more ephemeral, relatable, and often banal content. While, on the one hand, this lends support to the notion of quantity over quality,[7] it perhaps also helps us investigate the world of cultural consumption via less serious goggles, more ephemeral interactions, and a certain impromptu nature. In order to navigate the spheres of novel content sharing, cultural creators must care less about the purity of art and traditionalism if they are to further engage with younger audiences.

Filming short videos from home, inside one's house, or engaging in any sort of discussion appears to have been boosted by platforms like TikTok, with short images, videos, and interactive tools having rapidly conquered the online space. In terms of valuation, it is relevant to understand how these manifestations overlap across the *public and private spheres* of consumption and production, while also blurring consumption and production. Especially in the case of TikTok, creators are also consumers of the platform and, as such, may receive the same benefits irrespective of their position within the value chain.

When it comes to YouTubers, aside from being one of the first general-purpose websites where amateurism abounds, its value also derives from the easy access to amateur and professional content in which socioeconomic conditions are restrictive. The same applies to podcasts, whose productions have become increasingly educational, informative, and critical in distributing knowledge as the information commons. Indeed, scholars increasingly use podcasts as a form of science vulgarisation and knowledge sharing, in the process, bridging the gap between academics and non-academics. Besides the educational value of informative podcasts and YouTube videos, these channels also function as a form of entertainment qua a background pastime when engaging in routine activities (e.g., jogging with podcasts, driving a car while using streaming services, or watching free YouTube videos about special interests).

The public good attributes of these channels allow both several creators to convey ideas (old or new) and audiences to access previously restricted content. In contexts in which audiences lack the sufficient means to access streaming platforms and regularly bear the already relatively low costs of these channels, free TikToks, YouTube videos, and audio podcasts become a widely accessible form of knowledge distribution, information shuttering, as well as its counterpart, that is, fake news. One cannot overlook the double-sided nature that the extreme decentralisation of information brings in the sense of often unveiling empirically invalid claims and truths that benefit from a rather amoral online space of minor regulation. Nonetheless, it is vital to understand how much of the diverse content produced online overruns the seemingly problematic forms of information sharing.

One could critically question the "limited" cultural value of what is being created and disseminated through these online short videos, audio files, and images. Such preoccupations do not stand the test of the anthropological view of culture, which does not favour cultural content based on its intrinsic merits. Rather, it is often more about how people attribute meaning to them, as, typically, things do not hold value in and of themselves (Geertz, 1973). Instead of engaging in the much-debated issue of the ontology of value, perhaps a better frame through which to view this issue – in accordance with cultural economists' concerns – is to inquire about how consumption practices create value within various spheres of value in line with Klamer's (1997) approach: from public to private spheres, from markets to households, and even from governments to society (e.g., when policymakers use crowd sourcing[8] as an effective means through which to gauge the legitimacy of public-purpose debates). The value(s) of contemporary manifestations of (digital) culture is better viewed from the perspective of their practices and the uses that people make of them within the context of their daily lives. Methodologically speaking, this particular focus lends itself to quantitative and qualitative methods that inquire about consumption and production patterns as much as their meanings, especially via ethnographic-driven methods which are best suited to inquire about values and meaning-making experiences.

Navigating various spheres of value applied to digital culture

Cultures, in the broad anthropological sense, hold enormous creative capacity (García-Canclini, 2005). Digital culture, too, possesses the potential to express boundless creativity under a structural context of both low-entry barriers for creators and low costs to distribute content. In this sense, then, the internet can be seen as a social infrastructure through which value is created, especially when public good attributes are present (Frischmann, 2014). From the perspective of its practices, digital culture conveyed through channels such as podcasts, YouTube videos, and TikToks can yield a number of benefits to both creators and audiences. I contend that there is no significant differentiation between the values that are attributed to consumers or producers or public or private spheres of value, given that creators enjoy the same benefits as audiences. The processes of valorisation of digital culture often intertwine with several attendant benefits: knowledge, entertainment, sociability, and information. In some cases, entering these domains in order to be entertained can also yield information and knowledge. In other situations, accessing digital content to be informed can yield sociability benefits, especially if this content is consumed collectively. The reasoning here is no different from going to the movies, for example. Moviegoers enjoy both the content and the process of going together with their peers. Similarly, accessing knowledge through YouTube videos can yield entertainment if the content is attractive. In all these cases, the premise of grabbing much-disputed attention prevails (Lanham, 2006). Creators know such mechanisms and may attempt to grab attention by creating more appealing content formats. From the audience's perspective, this process brings positive spillovers as acquiring knowledge and information can be transferable. From a critical point of view, however, tailoring content to hook viewers introduces a moral debate over both the control of information[9] and the extent to which consumers need protection.

As is the case in most cultural markets, demand will demonstrate the extent to which audiences appreciate a certain form of art, creation, or content. Thus far, we have seen enough examples of how digital content displaces traditional cultural products – a phenomenon that, to some, has nefarious consequences, but that nevertheless potentially demonstrates how the structures of cultural markets are changing post-digitalisation.

In the image below, I portray a stylised, ideal-typical view of the benefits provided by digital cultural content as well as how audiences value them through sharing practices in line with Klamer's (2017) VBA. While *knowledge* can provide specific content (e.g., learning languages through YouTube), being *entertained* means that audiences consume digital content as a pastime, sometimes sharing it with peers (*sociability*) or being *informed* through non-traditional channels. These practices often take place at home but are then shared to the public via online means, thereby blurring the boundaries between private and public space. Most content creation that propels what we call "digital culture" (see, for example, Horst and Miller, 2020) is currently developed by amateurs within the private sphere, and thus only mimics the production of public interest (see, for example, podcasts) and explores impromptu creativity that is often marked by experimentation. We can arguably contend that more than digital value-creation emerges from *oikos, markets*, and *society* (Klamer, 2017),[10] perhaps in combination with one another.

Central to the stylised model (Figure 10.1) below are the practices of sharing entertainment, knowledge, information, and sociability within online domains that typically serve to blur the lines between public and private spheres (e.g., musicians sharing music online from their homes and engaging with audiences in ways that extend far beyond musical content). On some platforms like Twitch, creator and audiences interact not only to consume or distribute content, but also to connect with creators and viewers, socialise, entertain, and share knowledge.

The mechanisms through which contemporary digital creations are produced, distributed, and valued are characterised by a few central aspects that blur the boundaries between markets and non-markets, as well as the loci of value-creation, which I contend are found more frequently than in other cases in the *household*, which bears some similarly with what Klamer (1997) refers to as the Oikos. The two short items below are intended as key aspects worth investigating in the process of valorisation of (digital) cultural practices, namely, *how they happen* (through market or non-market mechanisms) and *where they happen* (the locus of the value-creation). The *why* question appears to be less relevant from the perspective of cultural economics, as the reasons why culture exists, and changes can be regarded as more of the domain of anthropologists.

Blurring the public and private spheres

If the so-called 'creator 3.0' economy blurs the boundaries between supply and demand (Potts et al., 2008), then any attempt to provide a clear-cut distinction between creators and audiences will inevitably be flawed. Given that not all interactions are mediated by markets and some social media interactions cannot be fully considered markets in themselves, we can thus argue that it is best to approach the value of digital culture by mapping how market mechanisms are used for non-market creations (e.g., TikTok) and vice-versa. The framework of the "double public good" model (Sable and Kling, 2001) yields valuable insights into how to assess the contribution of networked goods, such as content that is shared online. With a wide spectrum of value – both market and non-market ones – the notion of the "double public good" can show how externalities occur simultaneously on the supply and demand sides, especially when it comes to acknowledging how cultural content can produce multidimensional values, which are ever-changing depending on the audience (Hutter and Rizzo, 1997). In this sense, it is worthwhile to explore the emergence of "amateur economies" within developing cultural goods since the spheres of production have been rapidly changing and, in some

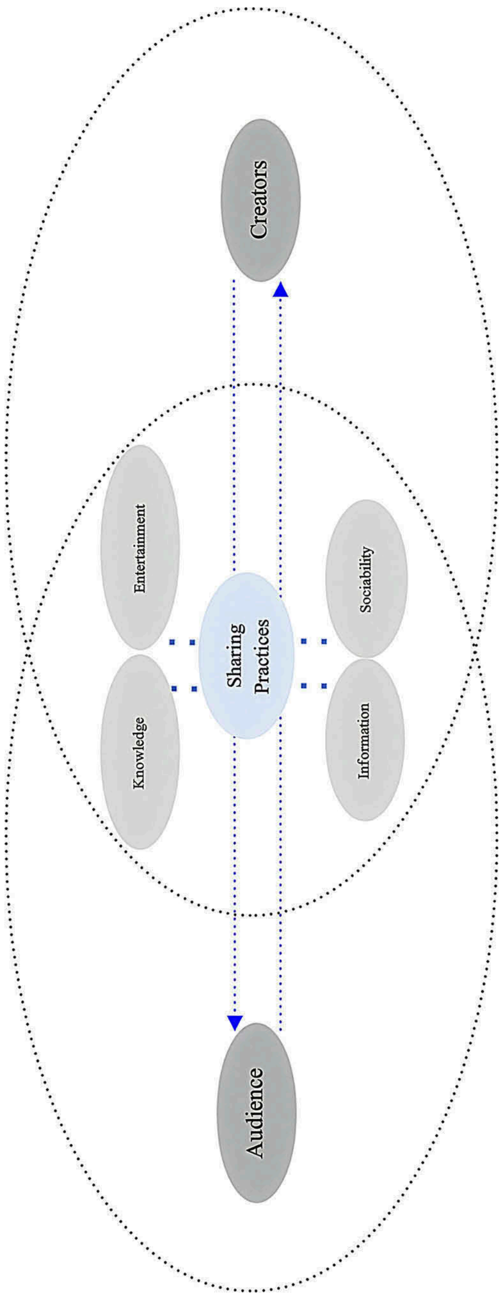

Figure 10.1 Stylised spheres of values
Source: author's elaboration

cases, shifting towards home-based formats. This may result from a greater flexibilisation of working hours and formats.

Creating from home

Where precisely does creation take place? If "everyone" can potentially become a creator (given sufficient access to the means of production), the question of who belongs to the creative industries and how to value these contributions becomes harder. I argue that – faithful to both an economic and anthropological approach to cultural production – any value judgement about the content of such creations is objectionable.[11] Thus, investigating the *loci* of value creation can generate powerful insights into the valorisation processes of digital culture. As aforementioned, online content creation most often pervades the *oikos* sphere, where the household becomes both a justification for content creation and the place where value creation occurs. Both as a result of the democratisation of culture and innovation (Hippel, 2005) and cheap access to technologies (Waldfogel, 2017) within the long tail, creators can *do-it-themselves* from home: podcasters, YouTubers, and TikTokers, gamers, thus represent a revolutionary wave of newly-made creators who are transiting from amateur to professional domains and exploring novel credibility signals.

Amateurisation and impromptu authenticity

While we cited amateurisation of creative economies as an important consequence of digitalisation, it is important to clarify its precise meaning. Across various creative sectors, artists, and creators engage in a wide range of different art forms using novel intermediaries like Twitch, Discord, YouTube, TikTok, and others. For example, the artists who are not on these platforms may feel the pressure to develop impromptu art, constantly produce new creations often marked by mistakes, experimentation, and gigging. We see this phenomenon as the expression of a performative authenticity that is inherent to the process of creating online. Mistakes and experimentation are openly disclosed, and indeed valued by the audience who are searching for relatability. This type of creation thus fits with the "new amateur" trend noted by Prior (2018), where the advancements of platformisation have led creators to bypass traditional gatekeepers and distribute their art online (Pérez-González, 2013). Gigging on platforms is thus a genre in and of itself governed by experimentation, improvisation, and amateurism, which, ultimately, makes it a distinct format of cultural products.

Concluding remarks

Contemporary forms of cultural creation pose challenges with respect to assessing their values, both economic (associated with market exchanges) and symbolic (associated with meanings attributed to either market or non-market exchanges). In theory, scholars should undertake an extensive research strategy to map the cultural values that are associated with dispersed forms of creation and distribution. The underlying argument of this chapter is that digitalisation does not homogenise cultural expressions; on the contrary, it allows individuals to partake in a collective yet dispersed form of cultural participation and further utilise new intermediaries to enlarge the scope of their tastes, while, simultaneously, also blurring the boundaries between both creation and consumption and the public and private spheres of value.

This chapter challenges the prevailing assumption that mass consumption or "commercial cultures" (see, for example, Cowen, 1998) lead to the loss of intrinsic values of culture, as per Walter Benjamin's (2008) aura of authenticity. The more content is available online, and the more creators feel empowered to produce videos, audio, images, games, products, and so on, then the more cultures become *hybrid* (García-Canclini, 2005). In this sense, digitalisation does not homogenise cultural expressions; on the contrary, it allows individuals to partake in a collective yet dispersed form of cultural participation and further utilise new intermediaries to enlarge the scope of their tastes. Time will tell if this has an all-homogenising effect upon culture-making or pulverises tastes and preferences. This chapter provides a valid argument for unveiling how culture lies in the eyes of the beholders as much as in the eyes of creators. The values of culture thus undergo rapid changes with the advancement of tools, platforms, technologies, and intermediaries that blur the boundaries between both creators and consumers and the private and public spheres of life. As such, valuation processes have to first and foremost pose the question of (a) where content is created, (b) how the content is distributed, and (c) under which conditions these novel creations are consumed. By so doing, one can thus understand the values that are associated with new digital creations from a VBA, paying especial attention to its practices, uses, and benefits to all users, regardless of their respective status within the value chain.

Klamer's view of valuation processes greatly contributes towards this understanding, allowing us to place value within the stylised spheres in which interactions take place. By understanding that some values pertain to society, public, private, markets, or non-market domains, we can thus better explore how digital cultures navigate throughout them all, often blurring some boundaries while revealing one privileged locus of creation, the household, where many local, amateur, and digital productions are created. For further investigation, it is worth exploring both whether and how the ubiquitous digital culture sharing can also produce negative consequences for either so-called public values or the oikos in its capacity as an archetypical place in which practices are expected to differ from those within the market. For researchers, the way ahead perhaps lies in understanding how value spheres potentially overlap based upon the practices of contemporary users of digital creations. Finally, rather than dissolving such important discussions by focusing upon the intermediary (i.e., the platform itself), we can further inquire more directly with creators and consumers about both how digital content affects consumption patterns and the increasing scope of what it means to be a "creator" within a post-digitalised world.

Notes

1 Although different types of digital tools are used in particular socio-economic ecosystems, scholars have discussed the widespread utilisation of, for example, smartphones within less privileged countries as a tool for renewed economic exchange and social interactions.
2 For further reading on mass culture and critical views on the ubiquitous effects of the commodification of culture, see Macdonald (1953).
3 We follow Hurst and Pugsley's (2017) distinction between the pecuniary and non-pecuniary benefits applied to small businesses. Non-pecuniary benefits pertain to all those direct or indirect benefits that result from sociability, recognition, status, freedom of choice and self-fulfilment.
4 UK's Department of Culture, Media and Sports.
5 Short version for "global and local".
6 This chapter uses the term amateur, digital creators, and content creators to refer to a wide array of makers producing and distributing content using digital formats. The term "artist" is purposely avoided herein as far as it requires further discussion regarding the desacralisation of the "arts" towards popular culture and less traditional forms of sharing artistic content (see Abbing, 2022).
7 In a non-academic publication, Potts (2014) discusses this effect in relation to transportation costs, production costs, and quality. Once the barriers of transportation and high production costs are removed, a higher quantity of products floods the market. Using this Alchian-Allen theorem, the author ponders over how the internet has become a channel for low-quality sharing: "It means that cats-doing-funny-things is now relatively cheaper than say German Opera". The outcome for creators is that they have to try and win the attention game by conveying more types of content in higher quantity as a market test. For our purposes, this reflection matters in that it provides a structural reasoning for how the valuing of digital culture typically encompasses several benefits (knowledge, information, entertaining, and sociability), rather than pertaining to a single anchoring value.
8 According to Brabham (2008), crowd sourcing can be defined as the outsourcing of ideas, concepts, and innovation.
9 Hayek (1945) would openly disagree with any form of information control. This is a rather difficult topic since the rise of extreme right populism online.
10 One sphere of value that is rarely seen in the case of digital culture is the "government", which enters such spheres either as an object of critical comment or as a user of advertisement space.
11 This means that imposing a merit-based hierarchy between forms of cultural production is simply not helpful for understanding the impact of contemporary creators boosted by social media platforms. The value-judgements about rapid, ephemeral, and often "superficial" content often betray a certain elitism that is similar to the one that speaks of high and low cultures (Bourdieu, 1993), which is not helpful for exploring the contemporary expressions discussed in this chapter.

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11 George Orwell, the Fairy Story, and the Managerial Revolution

Literary Criticism as a Value-Based Economic Approach

Manuel-Julian R. Montoya

Introduction

In 1946(a), George Orwell published a critique of James Burnham's book *The Managerial Revolution* (1941). Burnham, a political theorist, and philosopher, gained significant notoriety for his predictions regarding capitalism and the emergence of the new technocrats that he believed would dominate after the end of World War II. Orwell's critique was in response to the popularity of Burnham's ideas, which, although entirely based on failed predictions about the war's outcome, indirectly romanticized Nazi Germany and popularized the idea that an emergent technocracy would establish a new world order. While much has been made of Orwell's positions regarding populism and the rise of fascism, I have chosen to review the critique of Burnham for another reason altogether. Herein, I describe how Orwell positioned speculative reasoning as both a response to the popularity of "managerial" culture and a form of realpolitik that he believed was dangerous to civil society. In so doing, I propose a value-based economic approach that derives from a form of literary critique. From this perspective, Orwell's turn to speculative fiction can thus be understood through the lens of cultural economics, which is driven by a specific understanding of economic heterodoxy that is unaccounted for within economic instrumentalism. Specifically, I first examine the concept of "the presumption of one reality" as a thread that ties together both literary and economic problems, and second, introduce the concept of the "fairy" in a similar vein to Orwell's critique of managerialism.

James Burnham's *The Managerial Revolution*

Burhham's socio-political treatise, *The Managerial Revolution*, proposed that following World War II, a social class that he referred to as "managers" had emerged that were slowly replacing the old ruling class of the aristocracy and monarchy. He believed that these managers would take over the means of production because their technical expertise would be required to administer processes that were once owned and managed by wealthy families, bourgeois owners, and monarchs. As a philosophical text, it proposed that capitalism

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and socialism would be replaced by some hybrid system which the managerial class would dominate. As a contemporary political commentary, it predicted that Nazi Germany would be the victors in World War II. Burnham's prediction was based upon his perception of Germany's military and political managerial class, whom he believed were pragmatic and therefore less likely to rush into battle, including a conflict with the Soviet Union. All these points converged in the figure of the "manager", who would herald a new social order focused more on skill and the pursuit of technical mastery.

The popularity of Burnham's book coincided with an emergent movement of 'managerialism' within society, characterized by a rise in vocational training, technological growth, and infrastructural investment, especially after World War II. Some responses to the Burnham book were extremely positive. Indeed, a growing number of business experts and economists believed that the United States (US) had inherited a massive competitive advantage in the global economy following the war, and there appeared to be an urgent need to fill the gap in the global economy with US-based production. This would require a populist movement that encouraged laborers to believe that the time had come for skilled labor to rebuild a world desperate for an economic point of reference. The establishment of international institutions, such as the World Bank and International Monetary Fund, emanated from this praise of managerial culture. Later, a national security research apparatus reinforced the idea that it was ultimately the scientific community that defeated the Nazis and, henceforth, "the technosciences" were segregated from other fields of study. For decades, references connecting technocrats to a "post-capitalist" class (Drucker, 2012) cited Burnham, serving both as a call to action and cause for concern. As technocrats received ever-more public and private funding to conduct research with commercial potential, the humanities and arts were increasingly devalued – to the point where such endeavors came to be regarded as a luxury of a retired ruling class. As other forms of knowledge fell to the wayside in a world that was ostensibly only made possible by technocracy, Orwell stepped forward and challenged these notions equipped with little more than the idea of a fairy.

Orwell's critique

Orwell's 1946 critique of *The Managerial Revolution* exhibited a great deal of admiration for Burnham's intellectual skill, especially as a political philosopher. His concerns lay more with the way Burnham's work had been (and could be) interpreted, especially by people who were sympathetic to fascism and, hence, saw his power-centric logic as a potential means through which to resolve the polarized political landscape of the time. The bases for Orwell's critique are partially summarized as follows:

1 Burnham's predictions about the war were wrong. He thought the Nazis would prevail because they were better managers, without qualifying any of the insidious politics and violent methods that informed their desire for efficiency.

2 Managers were uncritically characterized as apolitical pragmatists. Burnham romanticized “managers” as transcendent political figures who were less interested in ideology than they were in the maintenance of their own skills as instruments of progress.
3 He did not account for the dramatic changes in mechanical reproduction that would (and indeed did) occur as well as the profound impact of those changes upon society; therefore, he simply could not have foreseen the complexities of the technocracies that he predicted.

Orwell believed that Burnham’s romanticization of technocracy was based upon the false assumption that technical skill translates into a mental acuity for understanding power and geopolitics, which he illustrated by referencing public opinions about the war:

> Suppose in 1940 you had taken a Gallup poll, in England, on the question “Will Germany win the war?” You would have found, curiously enough, that the group answering “Yes” contained a far higher percentage of intelligent people – people with IQ of over 120, shall we say – than the group answering “No” … In every case the less-gifted person would have been likelier to give a right answer.

We know that Orwell would eventually come to think that this was a problem related to populism. He believed that populism was a false reality, one that was projected in order to hasten our immediate desire for things to “happen”. The desire to overthrow elites “always carried a host of politicians ready to succeed the atrocities of their predecessors, which no one bothers to consider during the revolution” (Bounds, 2009, p. 15). Within this false (or superficially projected) reality, only certain skills rose to the top of the political field. For example, scientists and technicians evidently were deemed to be of higher value to nations by virtue of the fact that their work could be weaponized *and* commercialized. Orwell would later reference this very point in his novel *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, where the fictitious “Party” employs information control specialists who are responsible for erasing history and controlling the narrative that preserves both the Party’s power and economic importance. Orwell explicitly attributed this literary decision to his critique of Burnham (Wadhams, 1984). It appeared incredulous to Orwell that Burnham, a thinker who had embraced Marxism earlier in his career, could not see the irony of a new capitalist technocracy that disavowed Marx’s most venerated principles, namely the production of hierarchies based upon the commodification of labor.

According to Orwell, Burnham was attempting to reduce politics to the hunger for power, rendering it as a “natural instinct that does not have to be explained, like the desire for food” (1946a, p. 169). Each iteration of Orwell’s critique expresses the idea that management, in a sense, was being secularized as a perverted meritocracy, where a person’s skill is ordained by the public as making them a member of a special group of people charged with maintaining the machines of progress. Moreover, he was extremely skeptical of the proposition of "elites without elitism", on the grounds that Burnham never considered why people search for power in the first place. To be "managerial" in Orwell's estimation was suggestive of an exceptionalism within an increasingly technocratic society. He was concerned that the important work of scientists, teachers, public servants, and business owners would be elevated above "everyday" human beings as a result of this false populism:

> The rise and fall of empires, the disappearance of cultures and religions, are expected to happen with earthquake suddenness, and processes which have barely started are talked about as though they were already at an end. Burnham's writings are full of apocalyptic visions. Nations, governments, classes, and social systems are constantly described as expanding, contracting, decaying, dissolving, toppling, crashing, crumbling, crystallizing, and, in general, behaving in an unstable and melodramatic way. The slowness of historical change, the fact that any epoch always contains a great deal of the last epoch, is never sufficiently allowed for. Such a manner of thinking is bound to lead to mistaken prophecies, because, even when it gauges the direction of events rightly, it will miscalculate their tempo.
>
> (1968, p. 7)

According to Burnham's definition, managers were a new class of social beings whose power derived from their ability to drive rapid results. What Orwell points out in his critique is that it is the "tempo" of these results that ultimately forms the basis of managers' social capital and legitimizes their interpretation of the unfolding of history. While philosophers and artists were engaged in slow, contemplative work, the manager-qua-scientist was doing "real world" work that connected technological knowledge with almost-immediate commercial validation. Orwell feared a world where history became an easily manipulated piece of melodrama, while those who helped to craft a longer, more epochal conception of humanity would become disparaged and isolated from civil society. Over time, this would come to inform Orwell's conceptualization of anti-intellectualism. In fact, Orwell would later paraphrase this desire for power that he first articulated in his critique of Burnham in both *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and *Animal Farm*:

> Power worship blurs political judgement because it leads, almost unavoidably, to the belief that present trends will continue. Whoever is winning at the moment will always seem to be invincible.
>
> (1968, p. 45)

Part of what Orwell found so disturbing about *The Managerial Revolution* was that it condemned the effects of Hitler's agenda, while, simultaneously, admiring its political rhetoric and logic. Burnham predicted that the Germans would win in large part because of the importance that Hitler placed upon realism as a political instrument. Although Burnham disavowed the atrocities of the Holocaust, he was somehow able to draw a distinction between the technocracy's ambitious technocrat's specific yearning for power from the rhetorical message that Hitler conveyed. As a rhetorical tool, Hitler admonished elitism, while, simultaneously, celebrating those who gained power that was not "inherited". One of Hitler's principal rhetorical devices was to disparage the laziness of the elitists whom he believed caused the Austro-Hungarians to collapse during World War I. He martyred the expediency of German soldiers during the first World War, while denigrating the French and British by referring to them as the "inventors of boredom", a trait often used as a populist device to incite violence among those suffering under harsh economic conditions. This culminated in a rhetoric of progress that Orwell believed lay at the heart of managerialism. Orwell suggested that by creating a class of "managers", society was also using the suffering of everyday people to create standards and practices that were designed to limit and contain people's experiences within a convenient set of bureaucratic processes. While not intrinsically sinister necessarily, this form of Weberian disenchantment would nevertheless result in the production of a singular social imaginary. What makes it sinister, for Orwell, is that in the ideological state apparatus' desire to maintain and reproduce its legitimacy, it seeks to discredit any departure from its projected reality. He proceeded to note that the demand for better weapons and technologies accelerated society's vulnerability to fascism, which, in his words "will use the economic nonsense of technology to create one reality that is no one's reality but for those in power" (Orwell, 1941b, p. 170).

It is worth pausing for one moment to unpack what Orwell views as a creation "of reality", because in this above statement there is an explicit connection drawn between economy and the literary perspective that he embodied. Orwell is employing what we now refer to as a "social imaginary", that is, a set of conditions that serve to produce the moral and economic order wherein individuals identify with the collective system that constitutes daily life. Charles Taylor (2002) posits that in a Western context, the idea of a social imaginary is born from three interrelated structures of modernity: the economy, the public sphere, and self-governance. These connections are deeply intertwined and, ultimately, are what gives civil society its legitimacy. In other words, the way we imagine society determines what value we place upon the things we consume and produce, as well as how we choose to allocate resources. When one talks about the health of an economy, for example, then one might be referring to a handful of concepts within the public sphere, such as the value of a currency, interest rates, taxes, stock market performance, GDP, unemployment, and governmental budgets. Each of these concepts has a shared meaning and symbolic content that represents both individual and collective needs and wants, the availability of financial resources, and whether or not these resources satisfy someone's personal conditions for prosperity and security. All these factors represent a tension between the self and the collective and, hence, contribute towards how we as individuals make choices in what we call "the economy". Orwell's critique identified an important aspect of this social imaginary, namely the fact that it naturalizes the presumption of one reality being the index of progress. It is this precise need, if fueled by a romanticization of technology, that Orwell suggested turns the idea of a harmonious social imaginary into a fascist state. It was against this backdrop that Adam Smith produced his foundational economic theories that would later become the impetus for creating the international world economic system following the end of World War II. The constant reproduction of discovery that captured Western society's imagination was about reproducing crises, which took the form of challenges that scientists and explorers used to measure growth and prosperity only after immediate political gains were achieved.

Frustrated by the rhetoric surrounding realism-qua-pragmatism, which he later referred to as "misplaced realism", Orwell's skepticism would eventually lead to an embrace of speculative fiction. Orwell characterized the period between the Spanish Civil War and the end of World War II as a time when populism formed part of an effort to create an international world order. He argued that the Spanish Civil War grew out of fatigue from propaganda and the manipulation of realism, which, in turn, opened the door for fascism to take over (Orwell, 2016). While his accounts of the Civil War in *Homage to Catalonia* serve as a stark reminder of this, Orwell became increasingly disillusioned with the journalistic narration of the "real" and turned his attention instead to fictional work, which he saw as "the means to break the tools of the realists" (Orwell, 2021, p. 142).

To achieve this, Orwell returned to Burnham's romanticized "managerial class" and the concept of realpolitik to write *Animal Farm*. Moreover, in order to capture the politics of the time, he needed to escape from the trappings of the news and express himself through speculative fiction. He had grown frustrated with the fact that populism had become a way to command reality, offering little distinction between Nazi Germany, Stalinist Russia, and Roosevelt's *New Deal*, while, simultaneously, ignoring the demagoguery that was universally benefitting from this discourse. The final lines of Orwell's critique read as follows:

> That a man of Burnham's gifts should have been able for a while to think of Nazism as something rather admirable, something that could and probably would build up a workable and durable social order, shows what damage is done to the sense of reality by the cultivation of what is now called "realism".

Realism had become the final and most dangerous "ism" for Orwell on the grounds that it replaced complex politics with populism. "Now is the time to act, not think" has long been the calling card of effective politics, but as many (including Orwell) have noted, such anti-intellectualism also serves as the instrument for the erosion of civil society. Irrespective of one's politics, the moment the "real" can be established without the ability to critique itself is the precise moment at which people are erased and marginalized. Hence, in its initial publication in 1945, the title of Orwell's masterpiece was *Animal Farm: A Fairy Story* (Orwell, 1989). Although the "Fairy Story" part was subsequently removed from later editions, this remains an underappreciated detail of Orwell's ethos.

To comprehend this further, it is instructive to turn to Orwell's long-held fascination with dystopian literature. As a form of speculative fiction, books like Zamyatin's *We* or Huxley's *Brave New World* profoundly influenced Orwell's character development. Posner (2000) describes Orwell's depictions of the pigs in *Animal Farm* as an extension of the "technocratic despot". Of the three pigs who control the farm, Squealer, the propaganda machine, constantly changes the farm's rules depending on what mode of power justifies having control over it. In the case of Napoleon, his obsession with humans and "how they move the world with their machines" causes him to adopt a "Two legs superior, four legs inferior" mentality (Orwell, 2021, p. 145). This is disseminated as a vision of progress among the animals until several of them come to realize that this is nothing more than a way to focus power on Napoleon, who has learned to walk on his hind legs. When this switches to a "four legs superior, two legs inferior" mentality once Snowball attempts a populist revolt, then Posner (2000) suggests that the pigs are revealed to be technocrats who have learned to manipulate the farm based on the technological logic that provides the most direct vision of a better life for the animals at that time. They are the "cleverest of all animals" because they have "learned how to politicise the technology of the farm in such a way that their role as bureaucrats is justified" (Posner, 2000, p. 29). This serves as the template for the Ministry of Truth in Orwell's next novel, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. There, the ministry is housed in a monolithic pyramid, which is designed to remind people of the technological achievements of humankind. Like the farm, the ministry of truth are technocrats-turned-bureaucrats whose primary purpose is to control the narrative whereby society defines progress and, by extension, communicate to the masses about how a "good life" should be lived. In both cases, the "unstable or melodramatic" way in which history unfolds connects technology to power.

While the Burnham critique may likely be the turning point of this concern, ultimately, his social criticism manifested though speculative fiction in which fairies served as Orwell's response of choice. Orwell called his work a "Fairy Story" as a nod to the fairy tales of early modern literature. Over time, the fairy tale has become part of a larger discussion subsumed by the term "speculative fiction", a term with a long and complicated history. In the next section, I define magic realism as well as its key traits because it was a contemporaneous literary movement to Orwell's work. From there, I explain both its connection to the larger umbrella of speculative fiction and why these literary modes do the work Orwell employed to address his concerns about fascism and authoritarianism.

From magic realism to speculative fiction

Within literature, magic realism (or magical realism) is defined as both a mode and genre wherein supernatural or fantastical elements are considered real within the confines of the story (Zamora and Faris, 1995). Notable examples of writers who have been described as magic realists are Gabriel García Márquez, Toni Morrison, and Salman Rushdie. It is a far-reaching form of literature that gained popularity in the early part of the twentieth century. Unlike the fantastical literature of the Victorian era, where uncanny and fantastical figures appeared explicitly as supernatural beings, magic realism espouses an "in universe" acceptance of these figures. Hence, ghosts, immortal beings, or creatures with exceptional powers are all deemed to be normal and/or "real" in a way that is validated as part of the "order of things" within the story. In this way, magic realism (as a successor to the fairy tale) can thus be said to capture experiences and perspectives that extend beyond the immediate setting of a story. Immortal or ghostly characters (e.g., Flapping Eagle in Rushdie's *Grimus* or Toni Morison's titular character in *Beloved*) are able to import historical legacies such as slavery and other historical traumas into events that are happening in the present moment. The acceptance of "nonsense as real" allows these stories to present multiple realities simultaneously, through the inclusion of characters and supernatural elements that represent a greater depth of experience and complexity. This genre gained popularity at a time when writers outside of Western media were receiving increased attention; the Latin American Boom and the increased prominence of writers from the Indian Subcontinent and Africa associated magic realism with postcoloniality and the genre was often viewed as both a response to, and celebration of, cultures and perspectives that were subsumed by modern colonialism.

The literary criticism that focused on and legitimized magical realism served as an important theorizer of speculative reasoning, which, in turn, both validated and made it possible to talk about fantasy and the supernatural in a sophisticated manner. When asked about why he relied so heavily upon "superstition and magic" to tell his stories, García Márquez famously responded that "there is nothing magic about magic realism". He added that, "telling the stories" he once heard his "ancestors tell" was "the telling of a more complete world" and to do so was not the meanderings of simple folk, but of people who "embody their history even when no one else can withstand it" (Bell, 2010, p. 26). This served as a direct rebuke of the commonly held belief that magical elements in storytelling were a mark of unsophistication often associated with people from the Third World. Faris (2024, p. 14) would later refer to this exchange as a defense of "ordinary enchantments", which is a reference to the Weberian notion of disenchantment with Western modernity. Magic, in this sense, then, "reifies the experiences of the alienated, exploited, and ignored" (Zamora and Faris, 1995, p. 31). Over time, a larger constellation of literature has come together under the umbrella of "speculative fiction". According to Marek Oziewicz, speculative fiction encompasses a broad range of literary genres, including some sub-genres of science-fiction (i.e., weird fiction), dystopia, fantasy, and horror. The key trait through which he defines speculative fiction is its focus upon possible realities (future and past) that "departs from imitating the 'consensus reality' of everyday experience" (Oziewicz, 2017, p. 3). Like magic realism, there are considerable debates among the initiated as well as between literary theorists concerning what role the "unreal" plays in developing a story, which, in turn, have prompted debates over what precisely differentiates science-fiction from fantasy. Oziewicz aptly describes these nuances as having significant political value. He writes:

> An inherently plural category, speculative fiction is a mode of thought-experimenting that … accommodates the non-mimetic genres of Western but also non-Western and indigenous literatures – especially stories narrated from the minority or alternative perspective. In all these ways, speculative fiction represents a global reaction of human creative imagination struggling to envision a possible future at the time of a major transition from local to global humanity.
>
> (2017)

For our purposes, the departure from "consensus reality" is what is most relevant. Regardless of whether we are talking about a ghost story or a post-apocalyptic film, all forms of speculative fiction align with Orwell's principal critical ethos – that to avoid the ideological pitfalls that catalyze authoritarianism, one must avoid being skeptical of the presumption of one reality that technocratic logic hastily promotes.

The presumption of one reality and the figure of the fairy

> The fairy is the quintessential architectural figure of our time. Fairies are gatekeepers to possible worlds and with each Fairy is a corresponding door they keep and maintain. The presence of the fairy, whether it be the Shakespearean, the whimsical folk, or the modern gothic variety reminds me that to create a world, you can build a door and be done with it, or you can ponder investing in a fairy door. It costs me time. It distracts me, but every film I make must have one, and it is worth every second I ponder them so that I can invite the most people to the fantasy I have witnessed.
>
> (Guillermo Del Toro, Mexican filmmaker and author)

Del Toro, a vanguard of contemporary speculative fiction, has expressed his affection for "fairies and their various forms" on numerous occasions. Famous for imagining lush and expansive worlds, Del Toro's fascination with fairies both reminds us of the "investment" needed to craft a multidimensional story and, at least so I claim, directly establishes a link between the affectual elements that I believe lay at the heart of Orwell's concern.

It is a well-established precept in literary theory that in order to construct a reality, you must have excellent "world-making" elements. Based on Paul Ricour's concept of "worlding and worldmaking", Claudia Breger (2017, p. 229) proposed that making a fictional world is a "multidimensional, 'multivectoral' assemblage of heterogeneous elements". A story's layering of place, bodies, and sensical details provide the blueprint for how "characters, narrators, implied and actual readers, and authors" all exchange values. The degree to which a world is "layered" enough to contain ideas allows those exchanges to become increasingly heterogeneous (Breger, 2017, pp. 230–231). Consequently, non-sensical characters (e.g., a zombie or ghost) and non-sensical places (like Guillermo Del Toro's *Pan's Labyrinth*) are dependent upon the effectiveness of the story to make their presence felt (by both characters inside and readers outside) as real and vital to a believably conceived world. For example, a dystopian story about a zombie apocalypse can operate as a post-nationalist fantasy (implying the question: are nations still relevant?). However, to do so it must create conditions within the story that directly connects the plague to broader social problems central to the legitimacy of the state. In early American gothic literature, Charles Brockden Brown's *Ormond* challenged notions of Republican idealism through an uncanny figure (Ormond) who could turn into yellow fever in post-Revolutionary Philadelphia. That rhetorical outcome (i.e., to challenge the viability of America as a new nation and reveal its vulnerabilities) was dependent upon connecting the historical context of the plague to a gothic presentation of Philadelphia in which the people there experience the specter of the plague through romantic and often socially exploitative exchanges. Recently, media like *The Walking Dead* and *The lLast of Us* have expressed similar storytelling aims; they question the vulnerability of human institutions through novel representations of zombie-like infestations. The degree to which either of these stories provides layers of sensical context is dependent upon the way that the non-sensical elements are baked into (to coin a phrase) the cake of the story. Ultimately, the order in which these ingredients are used, the effect of these interactions, as well as the context that it produces matters, which is why storytelling of this kind has the regenerative social potential that it does. This has become a widely utilized trope within popular culture, be that in the multi-verse stories that make up the Marvel and DC comics' media enterprise or stories from satirical shows like *Rick and Morty.* Indeed, the idea of a plurality, a multi-verse, is quite literally everywhere at this juncture.

As one of these figures, the fairy is a catalyzing, threshold ingredient. Both in folklore and more formal literary modes, fairies maintain the boundaries between different realities and serve as harbingers of worlding or worldmaking as a story is being constructed. To theorize this further, imagine that a fairy could be a person, place, or a thing. Dr. Strange in the recent Marvel film, multi-verse storyline, the Goblin King in Jim Henson's *Labyrinth*, or the Cheshire Cat in *Alice in Wonderland* all serve as intermediaries for how other characters (and viewers and readers) access the other worlds that converge within the story. Orwell's titular *Animal Farm*, Borges' *Library of Babel*, or Neil Gaiman's *Fiddler's Green* from his *Sandman* stories all serve as both locales and characters within their respective stories that invite and often guide the narrative and connect readers to the story. Within each of these cases, a fairy is an entity (person, place, thing/event), often seen as uncanny or supernatural from outside of the story but wholly normal from within the story, who breaks, navigates, or reconstitutes systems that contain the ideological presumption of a singular reality. If this type of storytelling is less an immutable subject and more of a dynamic logic that inheres within a story, then this means that we can view people in the "real" world as also possessing these same qualities. A natural disaster, for example, or a geopolitical crisis (like the 2008 financial crisis) causes widespread upheaval of the social and economic systems that maintain what we perceive to be the prevailing world order. In a sense, these events have qualities that are so out of the ordinary that they manifest alternative economic values that may in fact have already been there. From the vantage point of analyzing Orwell's critique, these events can thus be said to serve as figures that are part of the "multidimensional, 'multivectoral' assemblage of heterogeneous elements" that Breger references (2017, p. 234). Fairies are speculative figures that can be imported across any form of media or text, who contain within them the promise of an economic heterodox that is often discussed but rarely observed in practice.

Economic fairies?

Realism occupies a complicated position within economics. It is predicated on the allocation of resources as determined by laws of supply and demand and is legitimized by the empiricism of rational actors. And yet there are, and indeed always have been, powerful speculative elements within economic theory. For example, theories of supply and demand ultimately rely upon the figure of the invisible hand to explain the development of markets. It was speculative economic theory (the fantasy of a European Currency Unit for example) that forecasted and imagined the European Union long before it contained any pragmatic or realpolitikal implications. At one point, Brazil, Russia, India, and China (BRIC) were little more than the musings of a Goldman Sachs analysis of the global economy, but has now evolved into a formidable economic community that even now represents a "West vs. the Rest" idea of a multi-polar global economy. Moreover, the evolution of economics from its beginnings within moral philosophy has never really seen it depart from the sense of the human and by extension its storytelling ability to imagine other possible worlds.

So, what is the fairy figure within the field of economics? Tony Lawson suggests that realism is not the same as instrumentalism, a distinction that opens economic theory up to more plasticity. Lawson purports that instrumentalism is "that part of realism that assumes that all value has an easily detectible practical approach", which is a very dangerous proposition. Much like Orwell, who was concerned with the precise moment that ideas and practices turn into unchecked ideology, Lawson distinguishes between those abstractions that help economists think broadly about value and those that reinforce paradigms and institutions that reproduce the tyranny of the social imaginary. That is not to say that pragmatism has no place within economics; rather, the suggestion is if we heed Orwell's warning, that this should never be at the expense of acknowledging the possibility of other worlds. Within this distinction, there is room for nonsense as real, the fantastic as functional, within the so-called dismal science.

Rather than closing the doors on such heresies, it is important to note that more affirming and comprehensive conceptions of economics have emerged. In the early 2000s, the concept of "Varieties of Capital" proposed the hybridization of economic systems based on more diverse conceptions of institutional and ideological development (Hall and Soskice, 2001). More recently, the work of Arjo Klamer (2017) to establish a "value-based economic approach" (VBA) has supported a more salient conception of economic heterodoxy. His conceptualization of the VBA proposes different domains and spheres whereby value is developed and assigned across social, cultural, and economic spaces. In effect, the VBA contains a multi-verse and allows humanistic inquiry to form part of the economist's toolkit. To access the spaces between the market, governance, culture, social, and oikos spheres, cultural economists would be well-served to search for fairies, that is, intermediaries who are capable of maintaining the pliable and dynamic thresholds between them.

The recent turn to cultural economics, fueled by an appreciation of handmade products and craft markets, fulfills the concerns of those scholars who for generations maintained a strong interdisciplinary connection between human, social, and physical sciences. Within economics, critical inquiry is rare as a methodological practice. However, the more that the intangible parts of life and society come to captivate the marketplace and the more that the disjuncture of media fractures how individuals imagine society, the more that both literature and the study of storytelling are required to understand the economic multi-verse that has now taken center stage.

Concluding thoughts

Automation will replace nearly two-thirds of all labor within this century. Populist ideologies have proliferated, and social media has changed perceptions of reality at a fundamental level. Tech entrepreneurs have become powerful elites who access the sphere of politics at the highest echelons. One cannot help but wonder what Orwell would have thought of the time we live in. Orwell challenged us to rethink our own authority over the myriad lived experiences we encounter, especially in a world where the most marginalized in society struggle to be recognized as "real". Orwell understood the tension between institutions and their agendas and the social values that disseminate its values under the auspices of institutional change – as was the case with the class hierarchy established through the "managerial revolution". Among the cacophony of voices at that time that led to massive war and conflict, Orwell knew that the greatest threat to humanity was not our differences and values, but rather our propensity to dominate the narrative of "the real".

Throughout this discussion, it is all too easy to focus too heavily upon the fantastical elements of the "fairy" story, and consequently, disregard this brief exercise as an overindulgence driven by a cult-like fascination for the fantastical. That would be an acceptable criticism were it not for the very "real" implications for people's everyday lives. In recent discussions with some of my closest colleagues, it becomes evident that my current intellectual work is informed heavily by an historic wildfire that consumed my New Mexican hometown for much of the past year. The Hermit's Peak Calf Canyon Fire, caused by a controlled burn initiated by the federal government, nearly destroyed the nearly 400-year-old village of Mora and its surrounding communities, a place that by some measures can be classified as one of the poorest counties in the United States, a place that has witnessed the end of Spanish colonialism, one of the last sites of the Mexican-American War – a place (like much of New Mexico) that embodies the magic realist ethos. As people lost their homes, and as families reckoned with losing the place that sustained a unique and valuable cultural identity, replete with its own economic values, a whole world was literally and figuratively at risk. It is in its recovery that the village can be said to have experienced a particularly Orwellian turn. Because much of Mora's economy can be classified as "informal", many people will find themselves in the position of finding their suffering and loss sufficiently "unreal" to merit attention. Those without insurance, without receipts or ledgers have found themselves foreignized by the appraisal/actuary system that is used to compensate survivors. As events like these reveal a pattern of alienation and disenfranchisement for economic choices that are no less real than any other, one may find that the managerial structure intended to serve them will undermine the diversity of realities the fire revealed. That fire, the floods that followed, and the people who endured them will evoke for generations to come a similar desire for fairies that George Orwell once valorized. The adage "there is nothing magic about magic realism" thus presents itself as a challenge to economists to explore and analyze the myth and the market in tandem. It is common to hear people refer to the present moment as Orwellian, and, indeed, I do not think that it is a coincidence that we often return to Orwell as a guide for explaining the changes in society that, frankly, cannot be adequately described with the prevailing tools of "reality". While the managerialist would say that what society needs is "real world experience", I believe Orwell would respond by saying "which one?".

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12 Cultural Leadership and its Value(s)[1]

Anna Dempster

Introduction

When I was invited to join the Royal Academy of Arts (RA), London, in 2016, as *Head of Academic Programmes*, little did I imagine that I would find myself at the centre of a fascinating debate on cultural leadership. Extending beyond what is normally offered in a museum-style 'learning programme', designed to focus children, teachers, and schools, I recommended that the RA should provide a more varied educational offer and more for the public, pitched at a variety of backgrounds and interests. Recommending that the RA draw on its broad range of activities and existing network of experts, the RA could, I suggested, offer a programme which included not only (1) the visual arts for which it was known, but also (2) courses in the history of art that were aligned with exhibitions as well as contemporary issues and most radically, (3) the teaching of Art Business and commerce, which better reflected its *actual* range of the RA's activities. As a leading player in the art market and artworld eco-system, the RA had the opportunity to inform both theory as well as practice and, in so doing, make a real impact on understanding the impact and the concept of 'value' in and of the arts and culture. Such a strategic shift would enable the RA to provide education to many more people, in many more ways, and extend far beyond the long-established RA Schools, which offer post-graduate-style (but not university accredited) programmes to a small group of students. When the Royal Academy celebrated its 250th Anniversary in 2018, we launched the RA's first accredited Master's degree programme – the Executive Master's in Cultural Leadership – offering unparalleled access to the Royal Academy's experts, cultural knowledge, and social networks. Revenue generated from a range of educational activities including this MA, were designed to contribute to philanthropic activities and could also enable free places on courses and classes, creating opportunities for more people, in more ways.

Given that many arts organisations in the UK are insufficiently (or not at all) funded by the government and often depend on fund-raising activities and private donations, the prospect of a revenue generating educational programme at the RA was seen as highly attractive by senior management at the

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time. On the other hand, the idea of offering education with a price-tag, which introduced potential barriers-to-entry, was fundamentally at odds with the liberal views widely held in the arts, including amongst Royal Academicians, and the belief that access to the art and culture (including art-education) is not a privilege, but a basic human right.[2]

Conceptual framework

So, what is 'cultural leadership'? At its simplest, it implies leadership within the cultural, creative, or artistic spheres. However, it is also a type of leadership that places 'culture' at its core. The term is both intuitive and complicated by the inclusion of 'culture' alongside 'leadership' – themselves highly contested concepts that have inspired considerable academic debate in both theory and in practice.

For my definition of culture, I draw on the theoretical foundations and pioneering work from the field of cultural anthropology specifically concerned with 'cultural meaning', which includes the role of norms and values. Drawing on seminal scholars such as Bronislaw Malinowski (1944) and Clifford Geertz (1973), we understand culture as a set of behaviours, beliefs, or practices, framed and informed by exchanges, signals, symbols, rituals, and are demonstrated through a range of articulations and communications that unite a group, identify them to each other, and distinguish them from others. The pioneering work of Marcel Mauss (1954) on gift and exchange also remains highly relevant to the arts and cultural spheres, which are characterised by intrinsic motivations and relations based on reciprocity. This conceptualisation has implications for how culture is both determined and maintained.

While a detailed discussion of 'leadership' is beyond the scope of this chapter, suffice to say that the term 'leadership' has inspired an extensive literature and body of research including in the fields of business and management. To summarise, I propose that leadership is fundamentally about (1) motivation, (2) enabling a unity of purpose (for a group or organisation), and (3) a direction of travel (including application of strategy). Leadership requires both aptitude (skills) and attitudes (behaviours). It is now widely accepted that leadership can be taught and learnt as well as a personality trait. Ultimately, leaders are judged by their performance and 'success', however that is defined. In this respect, Peter Drucker's (2013) pithy statement that 'the only definition of a leader is someone who has followers' raises the questions of who? why? when? and how?, the very things that make the study of leadership both interesting and a challenge.

In the mid-1990s in the UK, the term 'cultural leadership' entered mainstream policy debates driven by concerns that there was a distinct lack of strategic management and leadership skills in museums, arts, and cultural organisations. This rather gloomy view of leadership in the arts coincided with the then Labour government's 'rebranding' of the 'Arts' into the 'Creative *Industries*', which transformed them both conceptually and rhetorically into potential sources of economic wealth and national differentiation. This rebranding of culture demanded that attention be paid to the economic and financial performance metrics applied in other industries, such as demonstrable outcomes, 'efficiencies' and measures of 'value-add'. However, this economically dominant approach was limited with respect to identifying the underlying value drivers as well as clusters of value which ultimately motivated both participants and audiences.

Cultural leaders for a culture-full future

My vision for the RA's new 'academic programme' was less about 'training' or the provision of 'tools' and 'techniques', and more about 'transforming' and 'inspiring'. The mission statement which I wrote for the new Masters in Cultural Leadership was: 'to nurture, develop, inspire and graduate world-class cultural leaders; to foster individuals who can have a profound and positive impact; and to develop the requisite skills, knowledge and capabilities for effective leadership and support of the arts and culture. For me, this required instilling a deep sense of respect for both artists and makers, a nuanced understanding of the complex network of relationships and broad range of stakeholders, as well as appreciation of the interactions, specific risks and uncertainties, and subtle and fragile inter-dependencies, which, together, enable the creation of art.

My core argument was that if people in positions of power had a better understanding of what motivates artists, makers, and creatives, they would be better able to enable a sense of unity and direction, encourage and support artistic and cultural production. Specifically, the new generation of cultural leaders needed to recognise the inherent uncertainty of artistic endeavour, the highly risky, yet collaborative, nature of the creative process, to better manage it (Dempster, 2009). This would allow participants to better mitigate risks while increasing rewards which would, in turn, generate underlying value and create a more resilient and sustainable artworld, a *true* 'eco-system' for the arts and culture (Dempster, 2014).

Research and case study

For the remainder of this chapter, and with specific reference to the value-based approach (VBA), I will explore the same questions What *is* 'cultural leadership'? and why do we need it? in the context of another fascinating creative sector – that of classical music, and specifically chamber music.

The theory: music and leadership

Although, there is not a great deal of management literature that takes as its context the music sector, Peter Drucker's (1988) seminal work which suggests that an organisational leader can be viewed 'as a conductor of a symphony orchestra' remains both insightful and controversial. Anticipating the knowledge and information economy, Drucker argued that the 'information-based organizations' (of the future) will require highly knowledgeable, inter-dependant specialists who demand a very different kind of management and leadership. Innovatively, Drucker makes use of the symphony orchestra metaphor to explain how within such organisations, players share a common mission (to interpret and perform music); they all concentrate on the same central objective (the creation of great music), and these understood and shared goals unite and unify them. The objective can be achieved only because 'they all have the same score' and 'everyone knows what everyone else is doing at all times including the conductor' (Drucker, 1988). In general, only those leaders who are themselves accomplished and respected experts can provide leadership in such organisations.

While much of his argument is familiar across the arts and creative sector, critiques of the 'conductor-leader metaphor' have highlighted the somewhat romanticised view of such organisational life. For example, Henry Mintzberg (2019) objected to what they saw as Drucker's championing of a 'maestro myth of management' as if 'with a flick and a wave, harmony descends', as well as criticising its over-emphasis on the individual and highly visible, potent (often male!) actors. Mintzberg rejects the view of the 'heroic leader' as a sort of managerial pipedream in which 'obedient (skilled, unified and self-motivated) players …' all play to the same tune (Mintzberg, 2019).

While this debate makes use of the metaphor of the orchestra, I would argue that other genres of classical music, namely chamber music, provide an even more interesting alternative by which to understand leadership and management in the arts, creative industries and cultural sphere with concrete significance for leadership today.

An alternative approach: understanding leadership in chamber music

A specific genre of classical music, *chamber music*, or *Kammermusik*, has its roots in the music '*di Camera*' (or room), originally hosted in the private rooms of stately homes, castles and palaces and patronised by elites as a form of private entertainment. Although dating back to the Middle Ages, chamber music only really took off in the 17th century. Most musicians would agree that it is associated with some of the greatest music ever written for string instruments and the pianoforte and some of the greatest composers of all time – the works of Haydn, Mozart, later Beethoven, Brahms, followed by Schubert, Mendelssohn, Schumann, and then the romantics, Debussy, Ravel, and Fauré, to name a few.

Despite its origins, by the 18th and 19th century, there was an enormous growth in terms of both the community of amateur (and professional) musicians and broader and more diverse audiences. Although chamber music offers a remarkably varied and rich repertoire, it requires relatively few players, only a few instruments (usually trios or quartets) and a relatively small space. It works well in the domestic setting, shared among family and friends, with each musician being 'in conversation' with the other players. Chamber music is characterised by its intimacy, direct engagement and communication between players, collaboration within the group, and the close immediacy of the audience. In spite of these intrinsically accessible qualities, chamber music continues to suffer from the widespread perception that it is an elite artform which has implications for people engaging in the artform and attracting participants.

What differentiates chamber music the most is that, unlike the symphony orchestra (or band), *there is no conductor* (or band leader). Rather, chamber musicians create sound by listening to each other, co-operating with one another, and co-ordinating their performance to achieve the same goal. Individual musicians are collectively involved in creating the music and have complete control over what they do. Hence, the function of 'leadership' is shared, distributed, and taken in turns. Each individual player must communicate directly with one another in what is a fundamentally *collaborative* activity where co-creation lies at the very heart of the artform. It is perhaps unsurprising, then, that chamber musicians often reflect upon a feeling of empowerment, as they each play a pivotal role in the decision-making process and are directly responsible for artistic success (or failure). When it is successful, the outcome of this collective creation has results which are *demonstrable, immediate*, and *audible.*

Research methods

In order to assess cultural leadership through the lens of VBA, this chapter draws on the methods of case study research and cultural anthropology which requires that the researcher spends time 'in the field', engaging in participant observation and collecting not only quantitative data, but qualitative data, concerned with experiences, perceptions, beliefs and behaviours and often characterised by 'thick description' (Geertz, 1973). A case study approach has been shown to be appropriate for both the development and application of the VBA (Petrova, Graça, and Klamer, 2022, see also Petrova and Klamer (2026) in this volume), insofar as such methods allow for the exploration of new contexts and constructs, both for illustrative purposes and the iterative process of theory building and theory testing (Eisenhardt, 1989).

Beginning with a basic archival search of historical articles and news items using the Dow Jones/Factiva database, using the search term 'Pro Corda', the focal case study organisation, resulted in only 173 records of which 33 were duplicates. Given the national significance of the organisation, the remarkably low number of news stories demonstrates the limitations of using secondary (news) sources for conducting research on such small- and medium-sized organisations which appear to operate largely off the radar of the national press and may not have the capacity to run large-scale marketing campaigns or even pay for substantive online visibility. The effective collection of primary data, therefore, becomes much more important in such cases and involves spending time in the field, engaging in participant observation, and conducting formal and informal interviews. The primary data collection for this research was conducted in 2023 with a range of Pro Corda staff, including course leaders, tutors, and the CEO as well as less formal conversations with participants and their families. These sources collectively proved useful for understanding the nuances of the organisation, range of stakeholders and audiences, impact on participants as well as its organisational context, structure, management, and ultimately, leadership. According to Petrova, Graça, and Klamer (2022), the VBA methodology stipulates that the evaluator must leave it up to the protagonists to determine the values and stakeholders that are most relevant to their organisation. That is to say, there is neither an *a priori* determination of the vision or mission of the project under evaluation nor any *pre-defined* metrics for assessing their success. This was also an important element of the methodological approach adopted within this case study.

Interviews were exploratory in nature and conversational in style, which enabled the interviewee to both direct the discussion towards areas they were interested in and explore topics which they themselves deemed to be important and relevant. The interviews were semi-structured in terms of the topics explored, with key themes being included across all the interviews. Prior to the interviews participants were sent a list consisting of only four general questions:

- Reflect upon your role, motives and the organisation's purpose/aims
- Reflect upon your own working practices and that of your organisation(s)
- Reflect upon how and where your own activities and those of your organisation creates value, and for whom
- Reflect upon the necessary qualities and characteristics that are required of leaders in your profession/sector

The interviews were manually transcribed and coded by theme. The findings were subsequently mapped along different dimensions of the 'value clusters' (personal, social, societal, transcendental), in accordance with the theoretical and methodological tenets of a VBA (Petrova, Graça, and Klamer, 2022; Petrova and Klamer, 2026).

The majority of the respondents felt most comfortable when reflecting upon value within the dimension of the 'personal' and 'social' clusters. The respondents provided concrete examples concerning both how and where the Pro Corda contributes towards and creates value in these areas. It proved to be much more difficult to illicit reflections related to the region of the 'transcendental' cluster, albeit through further prompting this cluster subsequently proved to be fundamental to their activities.

The case study: Pro Corda Trust

One of the most established chamber music schools in the UK, *Pro Corda Trust* (or the *National Chamber Music School*) was founded in 1969, by violinist Pamela Spofforth and cellist Elizabeth Hewlins. Frustrated by the lack of opportunities for young musicians outside of London, they sold their home to fund the school and purchase the historic Leiston Abbey for the new music school. Today, Pro Corda, a charitable company limited by guarantee, provides education in chamber music for young people who are aspiring professionals, enthusiastic amateurs as well as those with special educational needs (SEND).

Alongside a small administrative staff, a dedicated team of senior Programme Directors and specialist tutors, many of whom are themselves accomplished professional musicians, design, teach, and administer courses across a variety of levels and locations. Since 2008, Pro Corda has been led by Chief Executive and Artistic Director, Andrew Quartermain, a professional concert pianist who continues to perform alongside being responsible for the day-to-day operational running of the Pro Corda while reporting to a board of Trustees. Having attended Pro Corda from age 14 to 18, Quartermaine went on to graduate from the Guildhall School of Music and the University of Cambridge. At the age of 30, Quartermain became Pro Corda's youngest Chief Executive and has overseen its strategic direction and operations ever since.

Much more than a chamber music school, staff at Pro Corda pride themselves on introducing participants to broader life skills which can enable them to 'perform' and succeed in all aspects of life, alongside instilling the specific values that are required for the creation of chamber music. These specific values include 'listening' and 'following' as well as 'initiating' and 'leading', collaboration, co-creation, and communication, sharing and respecting each other, and accepting different views and perspectives. In many ways, the organisational structure of Pro Corda, which is flat apart from the CEO who has over-arching responsibility and a co-ordination role, is conceived as a 'community of equals' which also reflects the ethos and philosophy of chamber music itself.

As a concert pianist, Quartermain and Pro Corda Course Directors have a deep understanding of real-world practice as well as a network of world-class professionals, many of whom are similarly motivated by inspiring the next generation and promoting chamber music more broadly. Dominic Moore, who also attended Pro Corda from the age of 8 to 18 and met Quartermain aged 13 and is now the *Course Director of Senior Music* (the track for aspiring professionals) explains how in this role 'I feel "the most a musician" when coaching of young players, creating *together*, helping them *evolve* and *develop*. Helping them *feel* and *be* creative, *making music* … [its] all about *musicianship*.'[3]

Quartermain has overseen a number of major capital campaigns and redevelopment projects, including, among others, the refurbishment of the Abbey's 14th-century *Lady Chapel* into a performance and teaching space, the re-thatching of the medieval barns, adaptations to the 14th-century Guesten Hall and its subsequent conversion into a concert hall and practice space. In 2020, Pro Corda negotiated a complicated deal to purchase the freehold of the entire site from English Heritage (who continue to oversee the Abbey ruins). Initiatives enabling increased equality, diversity, and inclusion, such as, for example, the addition of many accessibility features across the site and a collaboration with Chelsea Flower Show to create a special 'sensory garden' have been a hallmark of Pro Corda's strategy.

As well as the residential courses in rural Suffolk and Saturday classes in central London throughout the year for 'talented young musicians', Pro Corda's portfolio has expanded to include the annual *Pro Corda Music Festival* – a chamber music festival in partnership with secondary schools nationwide, alongside residential courses for young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), '*Create Together*' which reflects Quartermain's vision to reach greater numbers and more diverse audiences. In 2019, Quartermain diversified the Pro Corda offer by establishing an adult learning programme for amateur pianists called *Piano Sanctuary.* The inclusion of 'fish and chip concerts' appealing to the local community, as well as special programmes for local schools in the rural county of Suffolk, also helped to increase local engagement, build a local audiences and ongoing loyal support.

As well as these initiatives, Quartermain also introduced a new focus upon music education for SEND children, particularly children with autism. Moreover, he created opportunities for children from less-privileged backgrounds through scholarships, bursaries, and school partnerships. He cites the provision of education for children with SEND as 'that of which I am the most proud'.[4] The fact that a number of Pro Corda's alumni have gone on to become world-class professional musicians testifies both to the founder's vision, the quality of the education and the ongoing commitment of a small but dedicated staff. The fact that many more children and adults engage with the Pro Corda programme, who have no aspirations to become professionals, attests to its broader reach, significance and relevance.

Pro Corda describes itself as 'a family' which implies loyalty and longstanding relationships. This ethos has supported the organisation in the most challenging of times such as the devastating COVID-19 years (2020–2022) in which the national lock-down meant critical revenue from courses, classes, and performances disappeared, while the costs of maintaining historic buildings and a heritage site continued to mount.

In many ways, Pro Corda exemplifies a 'successful' arts organisation. It has survived for over 50 years, remained true to its founding principles, delivered transformative experiences while, simultaneously, growing and diversifying to reach new, larger, and more diverse participants and audiences. Moreover, it has proven to be resilient in overcoming catastrophic events such as the COVID-19 pandemic, which literally silenced and shuttered much of the cultural world. And yet, in spite of its many achievements and the fact that it celebrated its 50th anniversary in 2019, Pro Cord Trust, like many small- and medium-sized arts organisations in the UK, finds itself in a highly precarious position, with its future, and even survival hanging in the balance and far from secure.

Cultural leadership, risk, and uncertainty

In September 2023, Quartermain formally announced that Pro Corda was leaving its long-standing, and much-loved home, of Leiston Abbey. Given that many participants' experiences of Pro Corda were wrapped up with its location, this was a major decision. The move was framed as an 'opportunity to remodel our programmes and strengthen our reach as the national provider of chamber music education'.[5] While acknowledging that 'these changes represent the biggest remodelling of Pro Corda in its history', Quartermain explained that this shift would better enable Pro Corda to achieve its mission to 'reach the heart of classrooms and school halls up and down the country, widening our access as never before at a particularly crucial time nationally', as well as bringing chamber music to a broader and more diverse audience. As the implications of this decision rippled through the Pro Corda community, the impact upon both the organisation and chamber music education in the UK more generally remains uncertain.

The VBA provides an expedient framework through which to understand how and why Pro Corda creates value for participants and stakeholders as well as why the shift in strategy over time and, more recently, the physical move from its historic location is so significant for the organisation.

As an educational institution, one of Pro Corda's greatest assets – and perhaps also one if its most significant liabilities – is its location at Leiston Abbey, Suffolk. Founded in 1182 before subsequently being moved inland from the swampy coastline in 1363, Leiston Abbey is one of Suffolk's most impressive monastic ruins. The romantic ruin and its Georgian farmstead, nestled in the heart of the remote Suffolk countryside, is not lost on visitors and is also central to many Pro Corda participant experiences. Both the isolated location and otherworldly quality of the Abbey landscape – as its ruins and ancient farmhouse buildings emerge from the fields on a misty morning – provides an immersive experience. The setting's unfamiliar and otherworldly qualities have both an equalising and inspiring effect. Isolated and removed from the distractions (and comforts) of daily life, it encourages a focus on the core aim of Pro Corda: creating music together.

In spite of its qualities, as Klamer (2014) says, 'the care of old stuff is expensive'. Hence, to provide adequate facilities for students and attract fee-paying customers, the small Pro Corda team dedicate significant time and resources to the basic upkeep of the site and buildings, which, after all, were originally built as a monastery rather than a music school. Moreover, any development plans are complicated by the relationship with English Heritage, a nationwide organisation that has ultimate control over the heritage site and ruins. According to Klamer (2014), the true value of archaeological and heritage sites is dependent upon the involvement of a range of stakeholders, and the more people who are involved in the creation of shared meaning, experiences, and memories, the more value it contains. The question is, however, when does the balance tip from an organisation, whose primary mission is the education of musicians and musicianship, to supporting the preservation of its historic home?

As well as the need to maintain its site, the decision to leave Leiston Abbey was driven by the development of the Sizewell C Nuclear power plant on the Suffolk coast, which lies just three miles east of Leiston, or a 6–9-minute drive. This major national government project represents enormous uncertainty and risk to the Pro Corda and Leiston's viability as a music school venue as a result of the potential impact of construction activity, noise, vibrations, and traffic which could last for decades. Significant concerns have similarly been raised by many local residents, businesses, and organisations across the county of Suffolk. However, the UK government's prioritisation of energy security and contributing low carbon options to the national grid is undeniable, even though the effect upon local communities and organisations is unclear and puts Pro Corda's future at risk.

This case exemplifies both the complex demands placed upon cultural leaders and the precarious nature of cultural leadership as arts and cultural organisations so often operate at the knife edge. Cultural leaders must balance their organisation's core mission, which is often tied to the vision of its founders, with the need to adapt to the practical demands of a contemporary and public-facing organisation. Above all, it serves to illustrate the critical importance of understanding *evolving* cultural organisations *in context* as well as underscoring the embedded nature of individual organisations and the enormous impact of contexts, not just in terms of the competition, but rather in relation to institutional frameworks, and changes in communities and networks. Buffeted as they are by external factors, which are often beyond their control, risks and uncertainty are compounded. The pressing need to account for both internal and external pressures means that Pro Corda is at a historic crossroads.

Value-based approach analysis: cultural leadership and value creation

Both the way in which Pro Corda Trust creates and adds value for its stakeholders and the role of cultural leadership within the value creation process can be understood through a VBA lens, which provides a useful framework for understanding cultural leadership.

According to VBA, the creation of value can be understood in terms of four key dimensions or 'value clusters' – *personal, social, societal*, and *transcendental* (Klamer, 2017; Petrova, Graça, and Klamer, 2022; see also Petrova and Klamer (2026) in this volume). While this is the case in any sector of human endeavour, it is arguably especially relevant within the arts and cultural sectors where value is both conceived and created through the manipulation of symbolic goods, real and perceived needs, and known and as-yet-unknown desires. It follows, then, that the activities of cultural leaders within these sectors would also be reflected across these four dimensions. In the interest of brevity, a summary of the study's main research findings is presented below.

The personal dimension

The interviewees provided a range of reasons within the personal dimension and value clusters to explain their involvement in Pro Corda. The simplest example provided was that they had a history with the organisation and returned there to teach. Another recurrent reflection was how *personally* rewarding it was to see the growth and development of young musicians as individuals.

Both the tutors and Course Directors explained how the learning experience is carefully designed to engage with students at the *individual* or personal dimension – directly and personally, and to respond to individual needs in a highly personalised and bespoke way – albeit through the mechanism of shared, collective, and collaborative experiences. Using high-level experts to train future experts, is both very costly and not very scalable. However, it is a highly effective approach not only for teaching future professionals but also for imparting to all students an understanding of generic skills, such as, for example, the demands of a high level of commitment and focus. Course tutors described how they sought to enable personal development (at the individual dimension), while, simultaneously, instilling a deep appreciation of collective action, collaboration, and shared outcomes. This included acquiring mutual respect for other members of the group and a sense of responsibility, both at the dimension of the individual and shared across the group as whole. The Course Directors explained how chamber music helps participants to develop 'listening skills' in a much more profound way than one would learn through involvement in an orchestra, where one hears the instruments in one's own group (e.g., the violin section) but finds it more difficult to hear instruments in other sections, which leads to the reliance on the conductor. By contrast in chamber music each musician must simultaneously listen to both themselves and the other musicians, thereby developing multi-dimensional listening skills.

Several interviewees provided poignant examples of how students with social or behavioural challenges had been transformed by their experience of chamber music and Pro Corda. For example, one very shy and anxious individual, described as 'very much *within himself*' was able to gain through the experience of playing in a small group ensemble not just the skills but also, most importantly, the *confidence*, which transformed them from someone who was very shy to someone who could perform in front of a sizeable audience, a skill that was relevant not just for music but also for their life more generally. In this case, the Course Director explained how the activity of putting oneself in positions of stress and anxiety (playing in front of an audience) could help individuals learn how to best manage this anxiety. This could help them acquire a sense of achievement and gain confidence, which, in turn, led to further aspiration and motivation or a desire to achieve.

The interviewees also reflected upon both how personally rewarding it was to see young people grow and develop and how their own commitment to the organisation centred around a personal desire to promote and encourage the chamber music genre as a whole and the benefits that it can illicit not just as an artform but in different aspects of people's life.

The social dimension

The need to be able to operate on a 'social dimension' was an important recurring theme in the interviewees' accounts. The ability to adapt, including in rapidly changing circumstances and even in moments of crises, was mentioned on several occasions and identified as a personal quality of the CEO who was well-known for being able to respond effectively, either in times of crisis or when under pressure. The tutors described how they regarded this to be an important quality of a professional musician and, therefore, something they wanted to pass on to their students. The ability to respond to changing circumstances, rapid problem-solving, and 'turning things around' from a bad situation to one that was acceptable or even good was deemed to be a professional skill. This was associated with the ability to 'work under pressure', which was taught through practice and performance within a 'safe' environment amongst peers, family, or friends.

The importance of both being part of and contributing towards a wider community was also mentioned several times in the interviews. Indeed, engaging with the local community was a key driver in the CEO's choice of Pro Corda activities, ranging from the regular 'fish & chip concerts' for locals to special programmes for local schools in the immediate, and relatively deprived, area of rural Suffolk. The interviewees described the importance of such activities in terms of the social value that was created.

The societal dimension

Although less explicitly stated, a number of the interviewees referred to the importance of creating value at the societal dimension. This was perhaps most prevalent in the descriptions of Pro Corda partnerships with schools, especially those focused on children from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds. A Course Director from a partner school explained how, on the one hand, the Pro Corda Festival followed a sort of competitive model which mimicked a sports competition, a model which was arguably more familiar to the children and gave participants a feeling of being part of a 'team', 'competing', and 'winning' to use the language of sports. On the other hand, a senior Pro Corda administrator also explained that it was not designed as a standard music competition with 'winners' and 'losers' but rather designed in such a way as to enable acknowledgements across different categories, including, amongst other things, '*chamber champions*' who were seen as making innovative and exciting contributions, thus emphasising musicianship and experimentation rather than purely technical music skills. In the place of awards, scholarships and bursaries are offered, often to the most disadvantaged, or those who made the most progress, rather than the highest achieving children or ensembles necessarily, which shifts the emphasis away from 'winning' to 'progressing' to the next stage of the musical journey.

The conscious inclusion of students and schools from less-advantaged areas and backgrounds alongside some of the highest achieving schools in the country is carefully designed to break down social barriers, enable shared experiences, provide opportunities to learn from each other, and create shared experiences which are characterised by diverse participants. The interviewees reflected upon how the mere act of taking part was a transformative experience for both the children and the teachers, not to mention the parents and guardians, families, siblings, and careers of the children. The longer-term impact upon both individuals and the school was seen to be substantial, in terms of both how schools can communicate and celebrate their achievements to the wider public and the network of relationships that are formed between schools (teachers and pupils) across the country, which serve to create additional value within the societal dimension.

Several of the interviewees reported how the inclusion of children from a diverse range of backgrounds represented an important means through which to sustain the entire genre of chamber music in the future, namely in terms of making it more relevant, topical, and timely.

The transcendental dimension

Perhaps the least theoretically developed and most difficult to define cluster within the VBA approach is the 'transcendental dimension'. However, both this case study and associated research demonstrates that it is in fact these very transcendental values which permeate most, if not *all, strategic* concerns for artistic, creative, and cultural organisations and participants. In several of the interviews a direct connection was made between personal and transcendental values, motivations, and drivers, thus indicating the fundamental and re-enforcing relationship between personal and transcendental values. Indeed, the most coveted value of the personal dimension was in fact transcendental in nature, that is, the experience of Pro Corda literally enables individuals to *transcend* the limitations of their daily, mundane, and normal life and instead exceed expectations, overcome limitations *through* the experience of, among other things, music, artistry, community, and creation. The experience of chamber music at Pro Corda allowed participants to both transcend those boundaries that are created at the social and societal dimensions and create both the idea/concept and subsequently the possibility/reality of further possibilities for individuals. The value of these transcendental experiences for those children, young people and families who may have never otherwise had these opportunities was particularly remarkable. Moreover, the impact of the Pro Corda experience on audiences and other stakeholders, such as the families or guardians of participants, or teachers and schools – was described by the interviewees as creating significant and substantive value. It enabled them, alongside Pro Corda students, to 'transcend' their commonplace everyday reality and imagine more alternative for themselves and their children. It provided direct and tangible, indeed *audible*, evidence of what could be achieved by enabling, learning, and practicing co-operation, collaboration, and communal co-creation.

Indeed, I would suggest that one of the key findings of this study and its associated research is that the transcendental dimension (or transcendental value cluster) *permeates all the aims and activities of people who engage in creative endeavours in an authentic manner.* Achieving the transcendental is both a fundamental driver and core aim and ambition of those who participate in the arts, including both for students and teachers. Both the creation of transcendental value and the experience of this transcendental process is also a remarkable biproduct that can be experienced by audiences, families, supporters, and many other stakeholders, which is simply not captured within standard economic analysis and certainly does not end up on a balance sheet.

The most important aim for cultural leaders is to somehow *make the transcendental possible.* In order to encourage and enable the transcendental dimension, they must have the vision, skill, and ambition to operate within and understand each of these dimensions, while, simultaneously, managing the mundane operational reality and requirements of running an organisation.

Cultural leaders and value: discussion and conclusions

When asked to reflect upon the 'qualities and characteristics' that they believe to be important for cultural leaders to possess, several interviewees reflected on how a cultural leader must almost *embody the values* which are reflected in the cultural organisation. That is to say, they expected there to be an authentic link between the leader's personal self and the organisation's values and aims. This aligns with Drucker's (1988) view that if a *cultural* leader genuinely understands the requirement of a specific activity (for example the making of music) and also embodies this activity (are a professional musician), then they have the necessary legitimacy among their peers which empowers them to enact a plan of action or organisational change. Gaining acceptance among fellow experts and peers in the field builds trust and loyalty which, in turn, allows cultural leaders to make difficult (and risky) decisions. In the face of uncertainty, they can do so *only* with the support of their followers. The interviewees also expressed an expectation that a cultural *leader* must be able to appreciate the personal dimension of individual motivations, while, simultaneously, not losing sight of the social and societal dimension of values. Nonetheless, in line with Mintzburg's (2019) perspective, the interviewees remarked that a cultural 'leader' is only as good as those around them, namely their collaborators and co-creators, which underscores that a 'leader' cannot simply opt to 'go it alone'. Therefore, Cultural Leaders are those individuals who both understand and contribute towards the creation of value across the personal, social, societal, and transcendental dimensions. Ultimately, however, they are determined by their followers and only as good as their team and supporters.

Chamber music provides an especially interesting model for understanding leadership within cultural organisations and beyond. This is because it requires commitment at the individual level but also commitment towards shared goals and experiences. Only through collaboration, co-creation, and mutual respect is it possible to create value at the personal, social, societal, and, ultimately, transcendental dimensions. This is possible only if each participant understands, respects, and appreciates how to 'listen' and 'follow', as well as 'initiate' and 'lead'.

Notes

1 This research would not have been possible without the support of the amazing people at Pro Corda Trust. Special thanks go to Andrew Quartermain (CEO, 2008-2025), and course tutors, Dominic Moore, Caleb Sibley, Sophie Hinson, Anita Stevens, as well as all Pro Corda staff and supporters for sharing their wealth of experience, knowledge, and insight.
2 The Art Newspaper ran with the headline 'Royal Academy launches new £34,000 postgraduate course. But who can afford it?', while the chief executive, Charles Saumarez-Smith, explained that 'We wanted to explore the area of public education, which is revenue engendering as well as socially valuable.'
3 From an interview with Dominic Moore, Friday 26 May 2023.
4 Interview with Andrew Quartermain, 17 March 2023.
5 https://procorda.com/2023/09/01/the-next-chapter/

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13 Resilience and Relevance

The Strength of Small Museums in the COVID-19 Era

Aldo Do Carmo and Demi Karijowiredjo

Introduction

When thinking of museums, iconic institutions like the Louvre, the Met, or the British Museum come to mind. These large museums house world-renowned collections, overshadowing smaller museums, which typically focus on niche subjects, regions, or events, offering a unique charm, providing intimate and personalized experiences – their guides highlight nuanced details, contrasting the grandeur of larger institutions. Despite their cultural value, small museums receive limited attention even from major associations as the International Council of Museums (ICOM), which lacks dedicated committees or publications for them.

The COVID-19 pandemic in early 2020s forced 90% of museums worldwide to close temporarily, with 15% at risk of permanent closure (figure later proved overestimated), predominantly small museums (NEMO, 2020). Now, with the benefit of analytical distance and the passage of years, we can examine how small museums navigated this crisis. This study explores why some small museums survived, using Aldo Do Carmo's Cultural Valorization model (Do Carmo, 2020), inspired by Arjo Klamer's value-based approach (VBA) (Klamer, 2017). The research aims to uncover strategies that enabled these museums to endure, focusing on their adaptability, community engagement, and resource management during unprecedented challenges.

Small museums as cultural organizations

Although small and large museums share conceptual similarities, they differ significantly in practice. Cultural economist Bruno Frey describes large art museums as "superstars", referring to globally renowned institutions (Frey, 1998). However, this label doesn't apply to small museums, which operate more like small businesses compared to large corporations. Giancarlo Dall'Ara, in a pamphlet by the Italian National Association of Small Museums (APM), argues that small museums are not merely scaled-down versions of large ones. Viewing them as such has hindered their ability to connect with their local communities, attract visitors, and fulfil their purpose (Dall'Ara, 2010).

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To distinguish small museums comprehensively, Aldo Do Carmo (2020) proposes specific criteria: they must meet ICOM's museum definition, being often specialized in a single theme, artist, or region, typically employing a handful of paid staff, who handle multiple roles, and relying on volunteers for key functions. Small museums also maintain strong ties to local communities through volunteers and audiences. These characteristics highlight their unique identity and operational challenges.

The purpose of a museum constitutes its essence

Museums vary widely in their purposes. Strategy experts emphasize "vision" and "mission" to define organizational goals and methods. Luca Zan (2007) criticized the use of "mission" in cultural organizations, arguing it can obscure reality, overemphasize intentions over actions, and neglect the role of individuals and their strategies within organizations. The deeper question to ask is: why does the organization exist?

Instead of "vision" and "mission", we propose focusing on "core purposes" as introduced for corporations (Collins, 1996; Collins and Porras, 2009). Core purposes reflect an organization's fundamental reason for being, distinct from financial goals or strategies, which may change over time. For museums, purpose aligns with ICOM's definition (ICOM, 2022), emphasizing cultural and educational roles rather than profit – highlights that not-for-profits, including museums, measure success beyond financial metrics, focusing on how well they serve their purpose (Rosewall, 2014).

Small museums face unique challenges. Unlike large museums with financially valuable collections and broad attention and support, small museums must balance their cultural purposes with limited resources. Can they remain faithful to their purposes while securing legitimacy and funding? This question underscores the tension between their cultural missions and operational realities, particularly in a competitive and resource-constrained environment.

The importance of being in balance

Hybrid organizations combine two or more distinct identities which typically do not coexist (Albert and Whetten, 1985). In cultural organizations, this duality is evident in the coexistence of normative (cultural, artistic) and utilitarian (economic, managerial) elements. Symphony orchestras are an example: conductors and musicians embody normative identity through their artistic performance, while administrators handle utilitarian tasks (Glynn, 2000, 2006). Aldo Do Carmo (2020) applies this framework to museums, distinguishing between "Cultural Activities" (e.g., exhibitions, educational programs) tied to the museum's purpose, and "Support Activities" (e.g., collection conservation, management, fundraising) essential for operational sustainability.

These two identities are interdependent: Support Activities enable Cultural Activities, while the latter justify the former. However, their differing natures require distinct analyses. As a visitor, one expects not only cultural and educational experiences (Cultural Activities) but also practical conveniences like information, seating, shops, and clean facilities (Support Activities). Ultimately, a museum's ability to remain open and functional hinges on the effective integration of these dual roles, balancing its cultural mission with operational demands.

Cultural Activities

Cultural Activities involve utilizing museums' cultural goods, primarily collections, to fulfil their mission through exhibitions, research, publications, and educational programs. These offerings help museums communicate meanings, ideas, and perspectives, enabling audiences to engage with collections as shared goods and contribute to cultural discourse.

Collections and exhibitions as vehicles for value

A museum's core is its collection. ICOM's definition highlights key functions – research, collection, conservation, interpretation, and exhibition – centered around heritage. While some museums focus solely on collections, former Smithsonian director Stephen Weil argued that collections extend beyond physical holdings. Exhibitions can include objects accessed via loan, gift, or excavation rights (Weil, 1985). This expanded concept emphasizes reachability over ownership, allowing museums to maximize cultural value.

Arjo Klamer defines goods as tangible or intangible assets with value that people willingly invest in. Museums' collections align with this concept, serving as means to realize values (Klamer, 2017). Just as artists express artistic values through their work, museum curators use collections to convey institutional messages and values through exhibitions, texts, guides, digital media, and exhibit design. Museologist Waldisa Rússio purports that exhibitions function as museum goods:

> An exhibition is a message transmitted through objects… a discourse that can be narrative, descriptive, interpretative, or explanatory… scientific, aesthetic, or poetic… It informs, communicates, registers, and questions.
>
> (Rússio, 1986 p. 139)

In this sense, exhibitions are dynamic statements open to interpretation. Their purpose is to inspire audiences to engage critically. However, this engagement requires an active audience willing to contribute, as Robert Storr emphasizes:

> Good exhibitions have a definite but not definitive point of view, encouraging analysis and critique.
>
> (Storr, 2006 p. 14)

Through collections and exhibitions, museums foster dialogue with audiences, inviting participation and co-creation of meaning. By doing so, museums offer their goods as shared goods.

Collections and exhibitions are shared goods

Klamer (2017) introduces shared goods as assets jointly experienced rather than individually owned. A classic example is friendship, which exists only through mutual participation and contribution.

> The practice of a shared good … consists of all activities and interactions that are directed at generating, sustaining and valorizing the good.
>
> (Klamer, 2017 p. 76)

Shared goods lack strict legal ownership; rather, stakeholders collectively contribute and benefit. Museums formally own and curate artefacts, but their significance emerges through audience engagement. Visitors, whether experts or casual attendees, shape the meanings and relevance of exhibitions through their participation.

Co-creation: transforming collections into shared goods

A museum visit demands active engagement. Unlike amusement parks or sports stadiums, museums are not designed solely for passive entertainment. Instead, museum visitors "contribute" to a broader cultural conversation (Klamer, 2017). Mere presence or contemplation is not enough; visitors must invest effort in interpreting and responding to exhibits. Museums facilitate encounters with new meanings, ideas, and values, expecting visitors to engage and "co-create" personal interpretations.

> Art requires an effort, such as looking, seriously looking, and some degree of reflection or exploration. … The visitors may subsequently become aware that art is a shared good. … Art is a conversation.
>
> (Klamer, 2017 p. 84)

For museums, co-creation is not just an outcome but a fundamental purpose. Exhibitions serve as primary communication channels, fostering meaningful exchanges between institutions and visitors. This essence of Cultural Activities underscores museums as spaces of shared intellectual and artistic engagement.

The Support Activities

Since Cultural Activities are not self-sustaining, Support Activities are necessary to help museums fulfil their purpose. The distinction between these activities is clear: museum directors discussing collections or curators explaining exhibitions engage in Cultural Activities, while marketing professionals analyzing audiences, fundraisers planning campaigns, accountants managing finances, and other staff like clerks, guards, and janitors participate in Support Activities.

However, these roles sometimes overlap – curators, and educators may need to handle support tasks, while support professionals may contribute to cultural goals. Aldo Do Carmo proposes to categorize museum resources into four clusters: Collection-related, Non-collection-related, Finance-related, and Stakeholder-related activities (Do Carmo, 2020).

Collection-related activities

Collections are fundamental to museums, making their preservation crucial. While this study advocates shifting from a "collection-centric" to a "values-centric", or "meanings-centric" approach, conservation remains essential, even for small museums. Carl Guthe emphasizes:

> The first obligation of a museum is to recognize and assume the responsibilities inherent in the possession of its collections, which are held in trust for the benefit of the present and future citizens of the community.
>
> (Guthe, 1957, p. 1)

Museum collections involve two key aspects: (i) acquiring artifacts and (ii) technical conservation. Small museums rarely purchase artifacts due to financial constraints:

> Small museums, almost without exception, cannot afford to purchase articles for the collections … Occasionally, a small museum may have funds for purchasing objects.
>
> (Guthe, 1957, p. 3)

Conservation and restoration are vital for small museums, as neglecting these can jeopardize the entire collection.

Non-collection-related activities

Non-collection-related activities include daily operations, strategy, and marketing, which ensure resources are allocated effectively. Richard Mason and E. Burton Swanson explain:

> In organizations, the decision-making function is the responsibility of management. … Resources are acquired, allocated, motivated, and manipulated under the manager's control. They include people, materials, plant and equipment, money, and information.
>
> (Mason and Swanson, 1979, p. 71)

Good decision-makers must avoid extremes in "managerialism" (over- or under-management), "bureaupathology" (over- or under-bureaucracy), and "marketization" (over- or under-marketing) (Do Carmo, 2020). Managing at the edges of these three gradients may threat the very existence of the museum since may detour from the very purpose.

Infrastructure management is particularly crucial, as museum buildings play a key role in both identity and collection conservation. Thus, maintaining facilities should be a continuous priority of museums managers.

Finance-related activities

Financial gain is beneficial but secondary for non-profits. Small museums generate revenue primarily to sustain their mission, as Ellen Rosewall states:

> Financial management … is the responsibility of every not-for-profit organization … Efficient, safe systems … help ensure that the mission of the organization is accomplished.
>
> (Rosewall, 2014, p. 131)

Given the financial constraints of small museums, their financial strategies should focus on budgeting and funding.

Budget

A well-structured budget is essential for financial control. Gary Edson, in ICOM's museum management handbook, stresses:

> Financial management … is one of the most difficult aspects of museum management … It is essential that all staff … understand financial principles, budgeting, and expenditure control.
>
> (Edson, 2004, in Boylan, 2004, p. 140)

Even if museums anticipate covering expenses, cash flow issues can arise. Diversified income sources can mitigate these risks, as Rosewall notes:

> Spreading income between multiple sources is not only practical, it protects the mission by ensuring stability even when one source is endangered.
>
> (Rosewall, 2014, p. 133)

Funding sources

Economic theory identifies two primary financial sources: government and market. However, in the case of museums, society represents an additional and significant source. Arjo Klamer's VBA offers a valuable framework for understanding and interpreting these revenue streams through his Five Logics Model (Klamer, 2017), which categorizes funding according to distinct perspectives.

Government Logic – Subsidies: Governments support museums through policies and incentives.
Government Logic – Grants: Foundations fund museums through bureaucratic applications.
Market Logic – Sponsorships: B2B partnerships between museums and corporations.
Market Logic – Intra-sector Transactions: Payments between museums for artifact exchanges or consultancy.
Market Logic – Retail: Revenue from ticket sales, guided tours, museum shops, space renting, cafes, and restaurants.
Social Logic – Donations: Large or small gifts from individuals who support the museums' causes.
Oikos Logic – Ownership: Indirect funding by artists and volunteers willing to put in precious time at the expense of their private time while forsaking income.

These income sources can be balanced in various ways. Some museums depend on only one or two of them, yet they could diversify their funding streams, as the Nobel laureate economist James Tobin (1958) advocated, emphasizing the importance of diversification for organizational stability and risk minimization.

Stakeholder-related activities

Introducing the designation "stakeholders", R. Edward Freeman defines:

> Any group or individual who can affect or be affected by the achievement of an organization's objectives.
>
> (Freeman, 1984, p. 46)

Based on Freeman (1984), Do Carmo (2020) suggests that stakeholders in small museums may be categorized into three groups: Internal, External, and Audiences.

Internal stakeholders – the producers of content

According to ICOM, museums acquire, conserve, research, communicate, and exhibit. These functions are carried out by internal stakeholders, who directly influence museum decisions.

Board of Trustees: Guardians of the museum's purpose, overseeing directors, strategy, collections, and finances.

Initiators: Founders or owners who shape the museum's direction.
Culture-related Professionals: Curators, museologists, conservators, and educators who drive the museum's cultural mission.
Support-related Professionals: Managers handling strategy, marketing, fundraising, finance, operations, and maintenance.
Volunteers: A defining feature of small museums, requiring proper motivation and management.

External stakeholders – the co-producers of content

External stakeholders assist internal stakeholders in production and can be divided into five groups:

Policymakers: Government officials shaping cultural sector policies.
Foundations: Organizations providing grants based on their cultural missions.
Sponsors: Businesses seeking to align their brand with museum prestige.
Donors: Individuals or groups supporting museums financially for altruistic or personal reasons.
Society: The ultimate stakeholder, benefiting from museums' cultural impact.

Audiences – expert visitors and casual visitors

Museum visitors typically engage only briefly and have limited direct influence over institutional operations. This study adopts the distinction proposed by Aldo Do Carmo (2020) between expert and casual visitors.

> **Expert visitors**
> These individuals engage with museums in a professional capacity, seeking information, insight, and inspiration from exhibitions, programs, and collections. They include museum professionals, artists, critics, journalists, researchers, teachers, and students.
>
> **Casual visitors**
> Regardless of cultural background, casual visitors experience museums more freely, interpreting exhibits in their own ways. Their evaluations often extend beyond the exhibitions themselves, encompassing factors such as the quality of the restaurant, the cleanliness of facilities, the availability of seating (which helps mitigate museum fatigue), and the selection of items in the museum shop. Although they engage with museums differently, casual visitors may still feel inspired to interpret exhibitions and contribute to their broader meaning.

Conceptual model

This study applies Aldo Do Carmo's (2020) concept of Culture Valorization to small museums, emphasizing sustainability through a balanced integration of Cultural and Support Activities. Cultural Activities focus on value creation, while Support Activities encompass collection-related, non-collection-related, finance-related, and stakeholder-related tasks. By aligning these functions, small museums can fulfill their cultural mission while ensuring long-term viability and continued relevance within their communities.

Methodology of the investigation

This study employed a qualitative, exploratory design grounded in phenomenology, emphasizing introspection and subjective interpretation. Data were collected through 14 semi-structured interviews – 12 conducted face-to-face and two online – all in Dutch. The interviews, guided by the conceptual model above, comprised approximately 15 open-ended questions. Non-probability purposive sampling was used until data saturation was achieved. All interviews were analyzed thematically using both inductive and deductive coding in NVIVO. Transcriptions underwent multiple reviews to ensure the preservation of meaning (Do Carmo, 2020).

Findings

Cultural Activities

In line with the ICOM (2022) definition, the small museums examined in this study emphasized a strong cultural mission centered on preserving and sharing heritage tied to specific geographical areas, locations, or artifacts. They regarded themselves as custodians of cultural assets, carrying an educational responsibility to connect their collections with contemporary issues. This commitment was evident in their exhibitions, educational programs, and related activities, both before and during the COVID-19 pandemic:

> Our current temporary exhibition has the theme “trees”, which is clearly linked with the Staring family … Trees are, in any case, a modern item. So, I always look for the link between the past and the present. … We contacted Natuurmonumenten … so they could tell us something … about the problems that currently exist with the trees.
>
> (Museum Staal)

However, interviewees who prioritized education expressed concern over the lack of educational programs caused by limited time and staffing. Apart from municipal museums, most institutions demonstrated a deep commitment to their collections and actively sought to enhance public appreciation. They also acknowledged the dual nature of their custodial responsibilities, balancing both the advantages and challenges of ownership.

Trends such as environmental sustainability, diversity, and inclusion played a significant role in shaping these museums’ Cultural Activities, aligning with

ICOM's (2022) definition. While there was widespread agreement on the importance of engaging with these trends to maintain community relevance, some museums faced difficulties integrating them, citing misalignment with their core missions.

Support Activities

Collection-related activities

During the pandemic, museums used the extra time to enhance object documentation and collection procedures. This work was generally overseen by volunteers or part-time staff, who focused on developing a catalogue raisonné – a task often neglected in small museums but now elevated to a priority, surpassing other collection care concerns.

Storage limitations, a longstanding challenge, were further exacerbated by the pandemic, consistent with findings by Gerstenblith (2007) and Museums & Galleries NSW (2011):

> There is no money to arrange expensive climate solutions, we have no storage because we are a small museum.
>
> (Purmerends Museum)

Improved understanding of their collections also prompted discussions about deaccessioning. The pandemic revealed that certain objects were thematically irrelevant or lacked provenance, complicating their justification for retention. One interviewee described deaccessioning as a complex and politically sensitive process:

> Well, we [as a museum] want to get rid of that, … because we do not think it fits in with our current plans …. However, … the collection is owned by the municipality, … ultimately, it comes down to the fact that there is quite a lot of opposition to the disposal of that collection. That is something political and … very sensitive topic.
>
> (Museum Maassluis)

Non-collection-related activities

Interviewees primarily self-managed non-collection-related activities. Despite the severe disruption caused by COVID-19 and the resulting museum closures, many did not perceive this period as particularly difficult. Instead, they used the time to refine operational frameworks and prepare for renewed public engagement. Most small museums focused on professionalization and innovative audience engagement strategies, particularly in marketing.

A key concern was keeping volunteers involved. Interestingly, none of the museums reported losing volunteers during the pandemic. Directors attributed this to maintaining open communication and occasional personal contact:

> It was important that we kept in good contact with them. We sometimes visited them … We also did this to make it clear that we really wanted to maintain contact …, because if you do nothing, there is a chance that some volunteers will simply walk away.
>
> (Museum Kennemerland)

Small museums tend to operate with minimal bureaucracy, allowing greater flexibility for volunteers. However, during the pandemic, they adhered strictly to government safety guidelines. Few museums documented their COVID-19 procedures – some considered doing so after the interviews, while others remained indifferent, anticipating future changes in regulations.

Marketing posed a major challenge, as most museums faced financial, time, or staffing constraints. Their activities included updating websites, managing social media, and occasionally publishing articles in local newspapers. Municipal museums, however, showed a clearer understanding of their target audiences:

> We focus on three target groups: … foreign tourists …, culture lovers …, and Gouda locals.
>
> (Museum Gouda)

This finding contradicts studies by Kawashima (1999) and Komarac, Došen, and Škare (2017), which argue that small museums lack audience awareness. One possible explanation is the increasing integration of municipal museums within the tourism sector (Vapnyarskaya, 2021).

Finance-related activities

Financial oversight was handled by the treasurer and director, sometimes with assistance from external accounting firms, ensuring financial control. All museums studied held Dutch tax-deduction ANBI (Public Benefit Organisation) status before the pandemic.

Despite financial challenges, most museums reported resilience, benefiting from reduced variable costs:

> Because we were hardly ever in the building, we also had no electricity costs, for example. … The advantage was that we had no [or fewer] expenses.
>
> (Museum de Griffioen)

Municipal subsidies, a key income source, remained stable, providing security. Additionally, museums accessed government COVID-19 support packages covering staff salaries, though their heavy reliance on volunteers limited its impact on overall costs.

Grants and sponsorships were less common among small museums. While some previously applied for exhibition grants, these efforts declined due to temporary closures. Museums that maintained sponsor relationships focused on keeping them informed through online activities, helping to sustain or even increase sponsorships.

Donations were primarily collected through "Friends of the Museum" programs, with some experiencing growth due to strong communication strategies. In-kind donations were more common than financial contributions during this period.

Retail revenue (e.g., entrance fees, museum shop sales, and cafes) is generally not a major income source, so lockdowns did not impose significant financial strain.

Non-municipal museums without subsidies relied on revenue from directors' secondary employment or reserve funds established by founders. These buffers helped them weather the crisis and could serve as models for financial resilience in future crises.

Stakeholder-related activities

Interviewees managed stakeholder relationships, identifying volunteers as their most vital stakeholders given museums' strong dependence on them. Municipal museums – and some non-municipal ones – maintained close connections with local governments, benefiting from both financial and relational support:

> Local governments mainly influenced us before and during the coronavirus period because they lobbied for the province. They also try to represent the interests of museums within the province.
>
> (Streekmuseum Krimpenerwaard)

However, all museums reported limited contact with national policymakers, revealing a perceived disconnect between small museums and national-level policy or funding.

Audience segmentation was minimal, as museums made no distinction between expert and casual visitors. Limited marketing capacity likely contributed to this information gap. Although the conceptual model proposed such distinctions, this shortcoming represents a valuable avenue for future research.

Concluding remarks of the investigation

The museums offered further insights into their pandemic experiences, illuminating broader challenges to organizational sustainability. A key realization that emerged after COVID-19 was that museums are not only cultural institutions but also essential social spaces. Interviewees emphasized the indispensable role of volunteers and the non-monetary value museums provide to their communities:

> The coronavirus period has made us realize that we are more than a cultural institution. We are truly a social institution because you are also a social safety net for a very large group. … I think it is great that we have learned that and that it is important to pay attention to it. This social aspect is certainly included, and I also communicate this to sponsors: "You support us not only because of the cultural aspects but also because we mean something to others."
>
> (ABC Architectuurcentrum Haarlem)

Finally, some interviewees argued that the role of museums should be reconsidered by both government and society in the post-pandemic context. Criticizing the delayed reopening of cultural institutions, they called for greater recognition of museums' societal contributions:

> More attention should be paid to how museums can contribute to making [the city] more liveable … and even to solving problems.
>
> (Cacaomuseum)

These reflections highlight the need for stronger acknowledgment of small museums' impact on their local communities.

Conclusion

In an era of social distancing, such as during the COVID-19 pandemic, the museum sector faced unprecedented challenges. While larger institutions demonstrated resilience through financial and structural capacity, small museums confronted greater vulnerability. Research on small museums remains limited, and even less attention has been given to how these institutions balanced Cultural and Support Activities during the pandemic. To address this gap, this qualitative study explored the question: How did small Dutch museums sustain themselves through the COVID-19 pandemic?

Based on exploratory qualitative research, findings show that although Cultural Activities largely halted, these institutions adapted by reallocating resources to strengthen their Support Activities. They remained committed to their core missions – preserving and interpreting cultural heritage while maintaining relevance to contemporary society. This dedication was reflected in improved cataloguing, enhanced collection care, and increased organizational professionalization. For some, deaccessioning became necessary, introducing further complexity into decision-making processes.

Volunteer management emerged as the most pressing challenge. Many feared disengagements due to reduced activities, yet these concerns proved unfounded. Interviewees described deliberate efforts to maintain volunteer relationships through consistent communication and occasional personal visits, fostering continued commitment. Despite strictly adhering to government health guidelines, museums preserved their informal, non-bureaucratic character. Few, however, formally documented these protocols – an omission some later reconsidered, while others deemed unnecessary due to the unpredictability of future crises.

Marketing presented another difficulty. Limited financial and human resources constrained outreach efforts, leading most museums to rely primarily on social media for updates. While formal audience assessments were rare, many remained sensitive to visitor feedback. In particular, municipal museums, demonstrated clearer audience awareness, often distinguishing between local and tourist segments.

Financially, small museums proved more resilient than expected. Their low dependence on visitor-generated income and continued municipal subsidies ensured relative stability. Many retained sponsors, sustained donations through "Friends of the Museum" programs, or drew upon reserve funds. Ongoing collaboration with local governments provided both financial assistance and moral support. However, interviewees consistently noted weak connections with national policymakers, emphasizing a sense of exclusion from broader cultural policy discussions. None of the museums reported distinguishing between expert and casual visitors, reflecting limited audience segmentation.

Beyond operational survival, the pandemic prompted reflection on the broader social role of small museums. Interviewees highlighted their importance as community spaces – places where volunteers and visitors find belonging and shared purpose. This recognition underscored museums' dual identity as cultural and social institutions. The crisis revealed their value not only in preserving heritage but also in fostering community resilience.

Although small Dutch museums temporarily interrupted their Cultural Activities, they shifted their attention to the often-neglected Support Activities. However, this shift alone is not sufficient. This study reveals that small museums intuitively embody key principles of the VBA, in the sense that their protagonists are intent on the realization of their values (Klamer, 2017). They do so in social context, contributing and stimulating contributions to their shared goods, by engaging and maintaining strong local networks – volunteers play a critical role in this process. Through cultural valorization, that is, creating and sharing cultural goods, museums realize values that hold deep significance and give purpose to human action. The values that they generate with their museums extend far beyond financial measures; values are collectively realized through ongoing social and cultural engagement.

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14 Transforming Academia

How a University Absorbs New Values and Norms to Generate Societal Impact

Jilde Garst and Mariangela Lavanga

Introduction

Contemporary society faces multiple ‘grand challenges’ (Ferraro, Etzion, and Gehman, 2015) or ‘wicked problems’ (Rittel and Webber, 1973) that threaten the long-term survival of humankind. Tackling these challenges requires our systems and institutions to transition towards a more sustainable and equitable society. While change is urgently needed, there are differing visions with respect to the direction, scope, and speed of this transition. These challenges are inherently complex, uncertain, and interconnected, demanding collaboration across a wide range of organisations and institutions in terms of knowledge exchange and research (Ferraro, Etzion, and Gehman, 2015; Hart et al., 2015). This chapter analyses how an organisation attempts to change its values from within to reframe its position in society, in view of these ‘grand challenges’. The chapter focuses on the Design Impact Transition (DIT) platform, one of the Strategic Initiatives of Erasmus University Rotterdam to experiment with new ways of carrying out research, education, and engagement. Universities have been criticised for being ivory towers for too long and are now changing how they organise, evaluate, and incentivise research, education, and engagement. In so doing, universities need to reframe their position and legitimacy within society at large – especially given the sustainability challenges we collectively face at this juncture – a process that artists, cultural organisations, and cultural and creative industries have also undergone. This chapter serves as a follow-up to the chapters on the humane economy (Klamer, 2026), value formation, and conflict (Wincewicz-Price, 2026), institutional change (Petrova, 2026), and can be viewed as a companion piece to the chapter on realising the values of science (Yalcintas, 2026). Furthermore, this chapter serves as a good introduction to ‘prepare the soil’ for a value-based assessment and evaluation.

For centuries, the primary role of universities has been to provide highly skilled labour, research ideas, and theories through which we understand the fabric of society and the natural world around us. However, this knowledge does not automatically lead to changes in our societal systems. Researchers have argued that the gap between academic knowledge and societal action

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has become even larger, thus indicating that scientific fields are becoming self-referential, closed systems (Vogt and Weber, 2020). Furthermore, the activities of academics appear to increasingly take place in silos within universities, separating the different disciplines in a manner that discourages collaboration and knowledge sharing (Hart et al., 2015). Therefore, in recent years, universities have been challenged to produce the action-connected and interdisciplinary forms of knowledge that are required for sustainability transitions.

Collaborations between universities and society foster not only the exchange of (technological) knowledge but also of values and norms (Bölling and Eriksson, 2016). This exchange occurs bi-directionally. On the one hand, both the process and results of scientific research can influence what is deemed to be acceptable and desirable within society. On the other hand, while scientists often like to portray their research as rational and value-free, every decision within the research design process is grounded in a set of values and norms that prescribe what is considered ethically acceptable and academically relevant (Vogt and Weber, 2020). When discussing their research with societal actors, scientists receive feedback upon these values and norms, which, in turn, can lead to adjustments, allowing research to become both *for society* and *with society* (Stilgoe, Owen, and Macnaghten, 2013). Without such exchanges, academic values and norms can become detached from the rest of society, thus hindering knowledge sharing. Both the personal drive of academics to contribute towards sustainability challenges and the decreasing legitimacy of academia have evoked reflexive conversations within the academic community upon what precisely constitutes "academic excellence" at this juncture. This context provides us with an opportunity through which to explore value changes within organisations in response to societal transitions.

Previous research has identified the processes within organisations that can lead to them adopting a "new" value in response to external and internal pressures (Garst et al., 2021). By adopting a new value, the individuals within these organisations develop their own definition of the value and translate this value into the designing of requirements for their formal and informal practices and procedures. However, these studies and frameworks on value absorption tend to focus upon a singular value and, as such, do not consider the position of this value in comparison to other organisational values. As organisations attempt to maintain their legitimacy within an everchanging society, their value set is often reconsidered with multiple new values coming to be promoted, existing values being challenged, and their translations into performance requirements being re-configured. During this transformation, organisations are faced with multiple logics and objectives. Consequently, within this chapter we explore which practices can support a university in creating a new value set that balances the multiple visions of the organisation's purpose within society. Our chapter contributes towards extant theories on changing values within sustainability transitions by connecting academic discourses from three separate fields: engineering ethics, cultural economics, and organisation theory.

Conceptual framework

Before delving into our case study, we, first, must frame exactly what we mean by value. In this chapter, we distinguish between 1) 'social value creation' as the output of organisational practices that has a beneficial impact on society as a whole and can be directly or indirectly measured and 2) 'values' qua beliefs about desirable end states as the input of organisational practices (Garst et al., 2021; Schwartz and Bilsky, 1987). To frame our investigation, we analyse the overlap between three theoretical approaches: 1) Value-Sensitive Design, 2) Value-Based Approach, and 3) Values work within business management.

Within value-sensitive design (VSD), the focus is on integrating multiple values within the design of an artefact or process. Building on engineering ethics, VSD scholars have developed a three-stage framework (Friedman, Kahn, and Borning, 2002). First, those values that are relevant to the design must be discovered – that is, conceptual investigation (Friedman, Kahn, and Borning, 2002). This is analogous to the value-based approach (VBA) (Petrova, Graça, and Klamer, 2022). In order to discover the values that are relevant to a given context, VSD scholars emphasise the need for inclusive deliberation via stakeholder engagement, public debate, and philosophical reflection (Stilgoe, Owen, and Macnaghten, 2013). Similarly, through holding participatory workshops, VBA scholars facilitate the articulation of values, self-reflection practices, stakeholder involvement within values articulation, and the evaluation of the organisational changes. Second, within both VSD and VBA, societal values are specified for the express purpose of helping them become more concrete. Within VSD, the outcome of this translation of values into norms and then subsequently into design requirements is also referred to as a value hierarchy (van de Poel, 2013). These are similar to the proxies used in VBA, where, for example, artists and creatives articulate both the social and cultural values underpinning their practices and how they realise them through different stakeholders. Within both of these frameworks, the final step is verification, which in a VBA involves assessing the impact upon the value-based practices and in VSD comprises assessing 'whether values have been successfully embodied in design' (Nissenbaum, 2005, LXIX).

Although also relevant to our research, the VSD framework has primarily been applied for project-level analyses (e.g., new product development) and discusses how neither the design process relates to organisational values nor the tensions arising from changes in values. To investigate how organisations (e.g., universities) act upon values, we turn to the field of organisational culture and their concept of 'values work'. Values work captures how an organisation institutionalises a value, both formally and informally (Gehman, Treviño, and Garud, 2013). Originally focusing on how internal discourse and practices give a value meaning in an organisation, scholars have extended values work to include interactions with external stakeholders (Watson et al., 2018; Garst et al., 2021). An example of such a 'open values system' perspective is the Garst et al. (2021) framework that describes how an organisation needs specific knowledge-related capabilities to respond to value changes in the external environment.

While providing interesting insights in how practices transform organisational values and vice versa, a drawback of these studies is that they often focus on one specific value (e.g., health) (Garst et al., 2022). Consequently, the studies do not show how organisations respond when multiple of their value practices are challenged and the organisation is pressured to reflect on its institutional logics. While the VSD and VBA framework capture the interconnectedness between values and design, they lack insights in organisational responses to value conflicts when these values are challenged.

To investigate how an organisation responds when multiple of its values and related practices are challenged, the insights of three approaches – VSD, VBA, and values work – are combined in one framework (Figure 14.1). First, the framework depicts how an organisation's behaviour reflects its practices, norms, and values, together forming its institutional logic. Second, it shows that while the tension between two organisations is most visible at the behavioural level, the tensions can reflect a larger conflict between institutional logics. To extend this framework to capture challenges to multiple values, this study investigates such a scenario in our own academic system.

Research design

The case: transformation within the University and the DIT platform

Our case study is an academic institution: the Erasmus University Rotterdam (EUR), a public university in the Netherlands comprising ten disciplinary

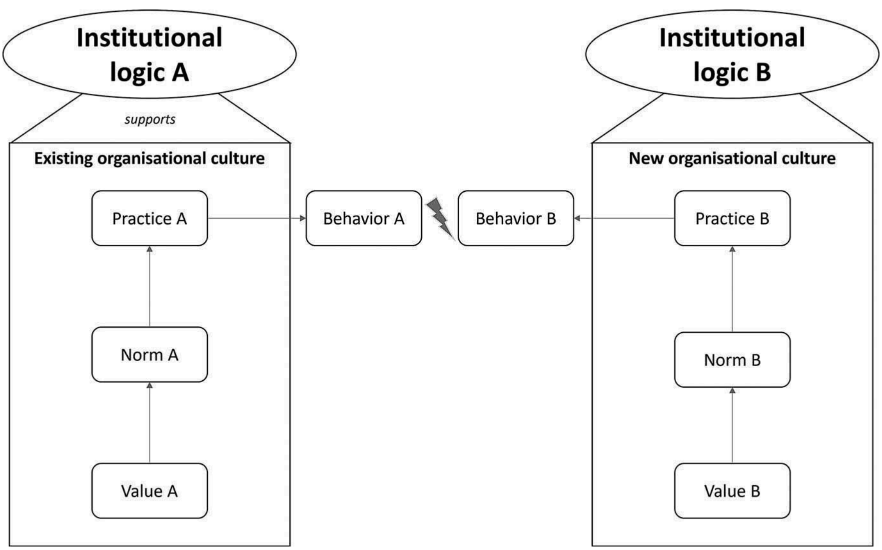

Figure 14.1 Conceptual framework of value conflicts
Source: own elaboration.

faculties, including an academic medical centre. Several developments over the last few years have triggered a discussion within the University about its purpose, values, and position within societal transitions. In 2020, the new 'Strategy 2024: Creating Positive Societal Impact, the Erasmian Way' was launched along with several strategic initiatives. Our study focuses on one of these strategic initiatives. Assigned by the Executive Board, the DIT platform was launched in November 2021 to act in relation to two strategic pillars: sustainability and design. Bringing together academics and students from different faculties, non-academic staff, and external stakeholders, the temporary platform aimed to 1) experiment with new forms of academic research, education, and engagement that extends beyond 'academia as usual', 2) to explore how such experimentation could be permanently integrated within the University's infrastructure. As such, the DIT platform can be classified as both a place for experimentation and an experiment in and of itself. A full overview of the activities of the DIT platform can be found in the appendix.

Method through which to investigate and realise the values of DIT

The DIT team used a transition approach to problem structuring and sense-making, which, in turn, created a new narrative for change. To this end, team members have engaged in several internal self-reflexive workshops over the past several years. Within this context, our research team has collected diverse data: policy documents from the University (e.g., the strategy, strategic reviews, policy papers), video/audio of University events, and focus groups or workshops with the DIT team. Moreover, several external policy papers and scientific papers were analysed if the DIT team deemed that these represented their vision. This data was collected between September 2022 and April 2023, but several documents also pre-date this data collection period. Furthermore, two VBA researchers conducted a workshop with the DIT team in April 2023, with the express purpose of analysing the DIT value proposition and seeing how this could be realised through the existing institutional context of the University. These VBA scholars facilitated the DIT team in both articulating their main values and identifying the practices and qualities that supported the realisation of these values. The workshop was recorded, and copious notes were taken. The resulting data was subsequently analysed abductively, using a coding scheme based upon the aforementioned points along with the addition of codes for narrative and behavioural patterns.

A new narrative for change at Erasmus University Rotterdam

Two conditions can be underscored for the legitimacy of the university within society: 1) scientific integrity in decision-making, and 2) bringing societal benefit (Hessels, van Lente, and Smits, 2009). While both conditions have been under discussion at Erasmus University, only the first condition has subsequently been formalised into standards for academic conduct. Scientific integrity captures values such as scientific relevance and novelty, methodologically sound design, and the substantiation and verifiability of claims. Multiple systems are in place to enforce these values in the form of standards and common practices. However, scholars are increasingly concerned about the effectiveness of these systems. With respect to scientific research, they have raised issues pertaining to scientific novelty (Chu and Evans, 2021), the substantiation of claims (Ioannidis, 2005), the peer-review process (Bornmann, Mutz, and Daniel, 2010), slow publication processes (Petrou, 2022), and the consistent manifestation of fraud (Retraction Watch, n.d.). In terms of academic education, the quality assessments based upon student evaluations have been called into question with respect to several criteria: their validity (i.e., do students have the expertise to evaluate all aspects of educational quality?); their reliability (i.e., are the evaluation results representative if less than 20% of the students complete the survey?); and their proneness to bias and discrimination (Boring and Philippe, 2021).

These concerns require critical reflection upon how values are translated and prioritised within both the evaluation and incentive systems for academic research and education. As part of this reflection, the DIT platform focused on the second condition for legitimacy: societal benefit to meet 'human needs and preserve the planet's life-support systems' (Hart et al., 2015, p. 1). According to the DIT documents, this condition requires the prioritisation of both other values and other design requirements of the academic system. However, in acting upon this focus, the DIT narrative is not about defining 'a just and sustainable future', but rather about what an academic institute and community should look like in order to be able to design this future, and moreover, which values should be realised within such a system. The values that are critically important within the DIT narrative can thus be said to be more procedural values that describe how the academic practices should be conducted rather than substantive values pertaining to the artefacts that are produced by academic research and education (Dignum et al., 2016).

In our analysis of the documents written by the DIT team, four procedural values were repeatedly mentioned as being relevant for the ideal academic system that could help to tackle sustainability challenges.

Transdisciplinary academia

One recurring concept within the DIT documentation is transdisciplinarity, which extends beyond the mere collaboration between scientific disciplines to instead refer to a new scientific environment whose norms and rules concern a form of ownership that does not lie with one particular discipline. The underlying rationale for promoting transdisciplinarity is that the complexity and interconnectedness of sustainability challenges prevent them from being solved by merely a single discipline or academics alone (Ferraro, Etzion, and Gehman, 2015); rather, it requires 'collecting, understanding and integrating different types of knowledge … from different disciplines and backgrounds … and integrating different … thought styles' (Wittmayer et al., 2022, p. 12).

Reflexive academia

The second recurring value within the DIT documents is reflexivity. According to the DIT platform, academics should not only focus on rationality and facts but also reflect upon their values and norms as academics (Wittmayer et al., 2024). While academics like to portray their activities as rational and value-free (Vogt and Weber, 2020), any research or educational activity has normative elements. This is because the design of research and education is based upon a set of values, such as, for example, ethical acceptability, scientific rigour, and societal relevance (Stilgoe, Owen, and Macnaghten, 2013). Our academic values influence the way we perceive and investigate sustainability challenges. Sustainability challenges are evaluative; every person has a different view on their causes and solutions (Ferraro, Etzion, and Gehman, 2015). Given that academic values and norms co-determine which societal norms and practices are either upheld or challenged, academics can thus be said to shape both the speed and direction of societal transitions (Wittmayer and Schäpke, 2014). Therefore, in order to reflect upon and challenge academic values and norms, the DIT platform thus develops and integrates reflexivity exercises and instruments within their activities.

Engaged academia

In describing academic activities, a third activity is referred to alongside research and education: engagement. Making scientific knowledge accessible to audiences outside of the scientific community is an important activity for universities (Hessels, van Lente, and Smits, 2009). For the DIT team, engagement requires not merely one-way communication but rather 'processes of dialogue, engagement, and debate, inviting and listening to wider perspectives from publics and diverse stakeholders' (Owen et al., 2013, p. 38). By acknowledging that universities are not the only knowledge creators, universities thus have to invite other societal actors to share their knowledge and co-create a common understanding of our world and alternative paths for the future (Greco et al., 2022). This socially robust knowledge requires science and innovation *for society, with society*, involving societal actors within both the design and execution of academic research and education (Stilgoe, Owen, and Macnaghten, 2013). In order to share and co-create these actors must perceive that there is a strong degree of procedural justice within the dialogues, which require high levels of inclusiveness, openness, and trust (Callon, Lascoumes, and Barthe, 2009). With respect to the DIT activities, students, academic, and non-academic staff are all trained in the competencies needed for such dialogues.

Mission-driven academia

Finally, the DIT team promoted mission-driven academia to create a positive impact and prevent a negative impact – that is, do good and not harm.

Traditionally, the researcher is an observer who systematically collects, analyses, interprets, and reports objective (or intersubjectively recognisable) results (Wittmayer and Schäpke, 2014). Moving beyond this role of a passive observer, action-oriented research instead experiments with alternative norms, rules, and institutions to organise social life (Loorbach, Frantzeskaki, and Avelino, 2017). This experimentation is combined with anticipatory techniques through asking questions such as 'What is [un]known, what is likely, what is plausible, and what is possible' (Stilgoe, Owen, and Macnaghten, 2013, p. 1570). These mission-driven and anticipatory activities aim to tackle the inherent uncertainty of sustainability challenges (Ferraro, Etzion, and Gehman, 2015) as well as the unpredicted consequences of academic activities: 'Research occasionally generates radical changes that are unpredictable and often not associated with those pre-defined social goals' (Guston, 2008, p. 940). Consequently, DIT experimented with new anticipatory methodologies – for example, participatory scenario development and back casting – and training in future-thinking competencies (Wittmayer et al., 2022).

Value conflicts arise in the promotion of new norms and artefacts

In designing experiments for research, education, and engagement, the documents describe several tensions between the four values of the DIT team and other values in the University's existing value system (Figure 14.2).

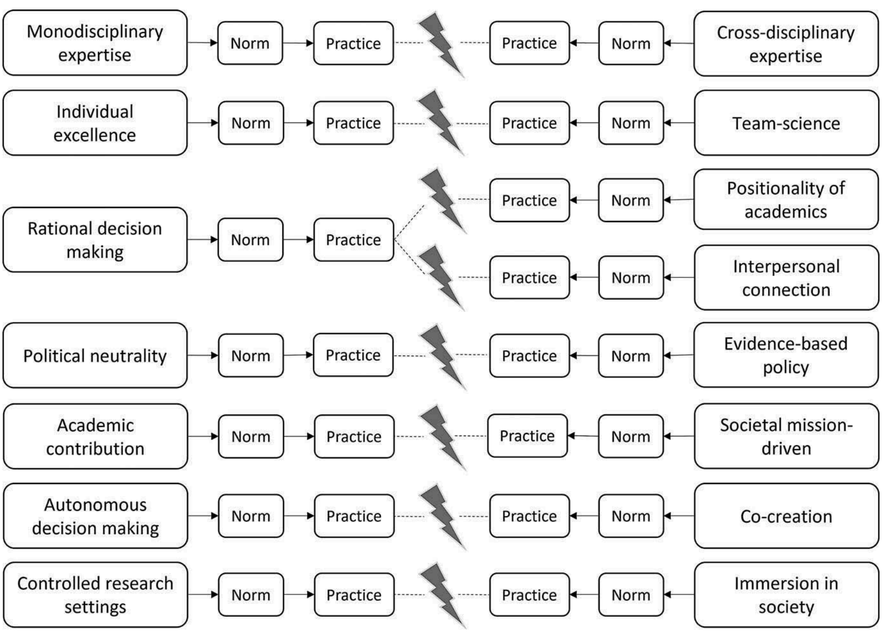

Figure 14.2 Conflicting values in academia
Source: own elaboration.

The focus upon disciplinary academic excellence hinders the institutionalisation of cross-disciplinarity: monodisciplinary practices conflict with cross-disciplinary practices:

The drive towards individual excellence and competition stifles the search for collaboration and co-creation: practices striving for individual excellence conflict with collaborative science practices;

The emphasis upon rationality overshadows the importance of normative considerations and experiences of emotion within decision-making: practices promoting rational decision-making conflict with practices focused upon positionality and interpersonal connection;

The neutrality of science within the political arena conflicts with the positioning of research and education as calling for specific forms of policy action: practices promoting political neutrality conflict with practices to support evidence-based policy development;

The focus upon knowledge-driven, academic scholarship within our education leaves scarce time for developing the competencies that are needed for tackling sustainability-related challenges: practices emphasising the academic discourse conflict with societal mission-driven practices;

The need for autonomy within decision-making in order to preserve scientific integrity creates tension with the shared decision-making promoted by co-creation: practices promoting autonomous decision-making are in conflict with co-creation practices;

The need to produce generalisable results in which all variables are controlled hinders the need for immersive research practices that allow for experimentation within a specific context: practices safeguarding controlled research settings are in conflict with practices that promote immersion within society.

Reflections from the VBA workshop

At the start of the VBA workshop, the DIT team members shared their frustrations with the position of the DIT platform within the EUR organisation. While the DIT team seeks to cultivate an inclusive environment that is open to multiple alternative views on the academic value system, the DIT team indicated that their community has in actual fact created a subculture that is not perceived as a legitimate alternative to the prevailing culture. For example, the team received signals that people outside of their community perceived the DIT platform as being radical or activistic (‘DIT practices an alternative way not recognised by the dominant system’). In promoting change, the DIT staff feels the rigidity of the bureaucracy that enforces the prevailing value system – especially within transdisciplinary education. Frustration with both the perceived resistance and slow pace of change ultimately led the DIT team to distance themselves from the dominant culture (for example, the participants mentioned 'lots of ego & mediocrity'; 'they protect each other's back, and they are not curious'; 'on multiple occasions they referred to "us" and "them"'). DIT staff recognised that there was both a lack of a common vocabulary and different perceptions of the connection between values and practices ('there is a lack of common language'; 'we practice these values whilst the dominant system thinks or has the self-illusion of practising them'). The DIT team agreed about both the need for a shift in mindset, culture, and practices within the existing value system but also regarding the limited power of their community to convince others about these new values and practices.

In order to understand the nature of the challenges facing the DIT team, VBA researchers had each team member identify the values that drove them. All of the team members shared values like freedom, learning, creativity, self-development, fulfilment, flourishing, justice, equality, good future, connection, and equity. Following Schwartz (2012),[1] these personal values were subsequently grouped into different clusters, which each encourage behaviour. With respect to DIT, these clusters pointed to 'openness to change' and 'self-transcendence' as being the foundation for collaborative and transformative practices, curiosity, openness, and willingness to challenge established norms.

After identifying the team's values and intentions, their real actions were subsequently mapped in order to investigate whether their activities were in alignment with their values. The DIT staff articulated the practices they wanted to contribute towards. In accordance with the VBA methodology, the practices were arranged into four clusters: 1) transcendental, 2) societal, 3) personal, and 4) social (regarding smaller communities and teams). The participants discussed at least six main practices that were identified: 1) education practices, 2) research practices (at the organisational and personal level), 3) sustainability practices, 4) reflexive practices, 5) flourishing practices, and 6) community practices (Table 14.1).

Table 14.1 Overview of DIT practices based on VBA clusters

Transcendental	*Societal*
Educational practices Research practices Reflexive practices (at the organisational level)	Sustainability practices
Personal	**Social**
Flourishing practices Reflexive practices (at the personal level)	Community practices

Source: workshop notes and own elaboration.

Finally, the DIT team engaged in the exercise of articulating the qualities of the practices, which is to say that they focused upon what skills and competencies are required for these practices. One key observation was that the qualities of the education and research practices overlapped, such as creativity, making personal connections, and analytical skills. While the interconnectedness between education and research practices is widely accepted, the DIT team indicated that the connection with reflexive practices was less common. Qualities such as emotional intelligence, awareness of values, and dealing with uncertainty were reported as being vital for reflexive practices. The DIT team concluded that their role within academia was not only to experiment with reflexive practices and provide training in related competencies but rather also to integrate these practices within the day-to-day routines of academia by connecting them to research and education practices.

The DIT platform as a strategic initiative ran until the end of 2024. When discussing the next steps, the DIT team expected that several educational and research practices developed by the DIT platform would be recognised and valorised. For example, the team succeeded in having its transdisciplinary and mission-driven master's program accredited within the existing academic system. The DIT team had several conversations with both the Board and the different faculties to develop a more permanent position for both the DIT platform and its practices at EUR. The valorisation of sustainability and reflexive practices could prove to be more challenging as they are rarely implemented within EUR in a routinised manner. The ambition of DIT is to integrate these practices and assess whether the organisation of the EUR increasingly sees the value of reflexive and sustainable practices.

Conclusions

This chapter delved into transformative academia and the new values that universities need to play a transformative role within societal transitions. The investigation focused upon the experience of the DIT team in experimenting with new forms of education, research, and engagement at their University, while simultaneously functioning as an experimental structure in itself. The absorption of new values within an organisation is a dynamic process with manifold tensions, trials, and errors (Garst et al., 2021). Observing the activities of the DIT team yielded two key observations, which provide avenues for future research in this area: 1) tensions between embeddedness and social identity; and 2) alleviating fears over change.

First, the DIT team started a process of embeddedness, moving from its experimental status to an accepted and recognised part of the existing structure. The conversations over the temporary nature of the DIT platform and its sustainable practices testify to a tension between the need for embeddedness and its social identity. In attempting to engender organisational change, should the DIT platform only function as a temporary structure whose practices subsequently become embedded within the

University or should the DIT platform be embedded as a whole structure in order to preserve its entire value set? When attempting to advocate for the second option to the University's leadership, the DIT platform could maintain the social identity it has established through its community. As O'Reilly, Chatman, and Caldwell (1991, p. 492) indicates, 'pervasiveness and importance of values in organisational culture are fundamentally linked to the psychological process of identity formation in which individuals appear to seek a social identity that provides meaning and connectedness' (Ashforth and Mael, 1989). Without the DIT platform to connect to, the individuals who identify with its value system might have a hard time pushing for organisational change.

At the same time, the DIT team struggled with their social identity. Rather than being accepted as change makers or agenda setters within their University, the DIT team perceived itself as being framed as a radical and activist subculture. Moreover, while the University's leadership acknowledges that organisational change is needed, the complete value system, that is, values, norms, and practices developed by the DIT platform, is not (yet) perceived as a legitimate alternative to the prevailing value system. In the months following the VBA workshop, the conversations on embedding led the EUR leadership to acknowledge several DIT practices as partial alternatives, thus allowing them to coexist with the old value system. These outcomes point towards the first strategy.

The second observation centres around the DIT team's struggles to overcome fear of change within a mature organisation. In its capacity as a changemaker, the DIT team readily acknowledges that it should not only evoke survival anxiety – if nothing changes, the organisation will not survive – but also must mediate anxiety over learning. The latter could take the form of fear over 1) loss of power or position, 2) punishment for temporary incompetence, 3) loss of personal identity, or 4) loss of group membership (Schein, 2010). While scholars have shown the existence of these fears, there is scarce knowledge regarding which practices could alleviate these fears. The DIT case shows that by introducing new values, the norms that belong to the pre-existing values become less important. This re-prioritisation has consequences for competence evaluation – for example, research and education evaluations – as well as challenging pre-existing positions of authority and power. Such challenges can in turn evoke fears over losing one's personal identity or group membership. The conversations with the DIT team testify to the fact that organisational change requires reflexivity over the consequences of value re-prioritisation as well as the development of practices needed to alleviate related fears.

This study has focused upon the tensions between different values when an organisation is changing from within, how important the translation of values into specific norms and practices is, whether these translations need to be adjusted in light of changes in our environment, and how the DIT platform facilitates this process of translation and change. Even though our case study of the DIT platform offered a limited implementation of the VBA, it nevertheless sheds light upon how an organisation can apply a VBA to articulate its values. Through participating in the VBA workshop, the innovations the DIT platform brings – connecting research and educational practices to reflexive practices, both at the personal and organisational level – became clearer. While self-reflexive practices, such as the VBA workshop, are rarely engaged in within academia, they are extremely relevant for facilitating change within an organisation's values and practices.

Note

1 Schwartz's (2012) theory of Basic Human values is explained in detail in Chapter 16 by Petrova and Klamer (2026).

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Appendix A

Table 14.2 Activities and outputs of the DIT platform

Main publications of the DIT platform

Name	*Description by the DIT team*	*Date*	*Link*
DIT Narrative for Change	DIT was established to challenge hierarchical structures within the university and create space for transdisciplinary collaboration. The narrative is a collaborative, evolving document that captures DIT's mission, methods, and future vision.	2021	https://www.eur.nl/en/media/2021-11-narrative-changedit-platfor-merasmus-university-rotterdam2021
Transformative Research: Knowledge and action for just sustainability transitions	In this working paper, DIT defines 'transformative research', including its principles and challenges. Inspiring practical examples are also shown.	2021	https://www.eur.nl/en/media/2021-11-dit-working-paper-1dit-platfor-merasmus-university-rotterdam2021
A university in transition: Analysis of Erasmus University Rotterdam	This report, written by Jilde Garst and the Design Impact Transition (DIT) platform, provides an analysis of the strategic gaps present in EUR's Strategy 2024 and its implementation. It concludes that to realise its strategy, EUR must initiate new institutional structures.	2023	https://www.eur.nl/en/media/2023-03-university-transitionanalysis-erasmus-university-rotterdam-its-struggles-respond-society
Obstacles to engaged scholarship at Erasmus University Rotterdam (and lessons for change)	This policy brief, based on 32 interviews with EUR staff, finds that engaged researchers face several obstacles at EUR. It concludes that EUR can only achieve its mission to create a 'positive societal impact' if we fundamentally change our structures, culture, and practices.	2023	https://www.eur.nl/en/media/2022-10-engaged-scholarship-erasmus-universityobstacles-and-lessons-change

Main publications of the DIT platform

Name	*Description by the DIT team*	*Date*	*Link*
Navigating force conflicts: A case study on strategies of transformative research in the current academic system	This paper, published in the Journal of Cleaner Production, explores how researchers navigate challenges as they strive to do more transformative work. It shows that researchers typically choose between two ideal-typical strategies, ‘transforming through research output’ and ‘transforming through research process’. The paper concludes that policy-makers need to take choices on those strategies into account if they are to leverage the potential of transformative research to tackle sustainability challenges.	2023	https://www.eur.nl/en/media/2023-05-1-s20-s0959652623015329-main
Transforming universities	This paper, published in the academic journal Sustainability Science, argues that the current institutional model of universities is inadequate to contribute effectively to societal transitions towards just and sustainable futures. Taking the Erasmus University Rotterdam as an example, this paper illustrates the problems with the dominant (twentieth century) model of universities in the social sciences and explores what strategies universities can develop to transform.	2023	https://www.eur.nl/en/media/2023-06-loorbachetal-2023-sustainabilityscience
Neither right nor wrong? Ethics of collaboration in transformative research for sustainable futures	This paper, published in the academic journal Humanities and Social Sciences Communications, examined ethical challenges faced by transformative researchers and aimed to work with university ethical review boards in how to address those.	2024	https://www.nature.com/articles/s41599-024-03178-z

Main publications of the DIT platform

Name	*Description by the DIT team*	*Date*	*Link*
Institutionalisation of Transdisciplinarity in Research Organisations – A Review of Key Dimensions	In this working paper, DIT addresses the enabling and hindering factors for transdisciplinary work within research institutions. Through a comprehensive literature review, DIT identifies nine key dimensions that influence the institutionalisation of transdisciplinary work.	2024	https://www.eur.nl/en/media/2024-06-dit-working-paper-2institutionalisation-td0

Main publications of the DIT platform

Project	Description by the DIT team	Participants	Year
Education			
Sustainability Transitions Minor for Undergraduates	The Sustainability Transitions Minor provides students with the necessary knowledge, skills, and mindset to radically transform the world. DIT used the pedagogical method of problem-based project-oriented learning (PPL) in which the students defined a persistent problem and developed an intervention to address the problem. The students formed small interdisciplinary teams to develop a shared transition analysis of a specific persistent challenge and planned a transformative intervention. The Minor is embedded in the Erasmus University College.	+/- 25 students each year. The Minor is based in Erasmus University College, but with lecturers spanning multiple EUR faculties.	Since academic year 2020–21

Main publications of the DIT platform

Name	*Description by the DIT team*	*Date*	*Link*
Master of Arts in Societal Transitions	To educate leaders who can interpret, develop, direct, and facilitate transition processes, DIT has developed the transdisciplinary Master Societal Transitions. It is a full-time, one-year program that kicks off in the academic year 2023/2024. Instead of writing a traditional thesis, students will design and facilitate an intervention for a sustainability challenge as their graduation project. The master provides students with personal leadership training, where they will learn to understand their role within societal transitions, communicate about them, and become active leaders for change. Their learning journey is supported by reflection sessions. The master is embedded in the Erasmus School of Philosophy (ESPhil).	+/- 40 students each year. The master is based at the Erasmus School of Philosophy (ESPhil) but with an educational program spanning multiple EUR faculties. New specialisation tracks will start in the coming years.	Since academic year 2023–24
Summer School 2023 'Design and Transitions: Emerging Theories and Practices at the Intersection'	This summer school provided a space for critical and creative interdisciplinary dialogue between the disciplines of design (research) and transitions (research). It facilitated the co-creation of theoretical knowledge that transcends their disciplinary boundaries. Although typically operating in isolation, the fields of Design and Transitions (including their scientific foundations and frameworks, norms, and methods) are increasingly regarded as complementary in the pursuit of achieving sustainable, just, and resilient futures. During this summer school, DIT explored this emerging field together, while learning about theories and practices that are emergent and/or relevant at the intersection.	+/- 30 students from a range of universities worldwide	2022–23

Main publications of the DIT platform

Name	*Description by the DIT team*	*Date*	*Link*
Summer School 2024 'Transformative Research Unlocked'	DIT collaborated with the Sustainability Transitions Network and specifically its early-career researcher network (NEST), as well as the Dutch Research Institute for Transitions (DRIFT) to organise a week-long summer school to help researchers apply transformative research methods. Participants learned about different research methods for sustainability transitions research and reflected on their roles as transformative researchers.	+/- 30 students from a range of universities worldwide	023–24
Transformative Education Workshops for EUR Educators	Teachers find themselves in a new role: instead of content experts, they become coaches. Their most important skill is to be present and to truly listen to what is happening, which can be difficult. They often need to adjust processes based on what they hear. In this workshop, DIT aimed to reflect with EUR teachers on their role as transformative educators and how to combine that with their drive to contribute towards a sustainable and just society.	15 teachers from multiple EUR faculties	2022–23 2023–24

Main publications of the DIT platform

Name	*Description by the DIT team*	*Date*	*Link*
Research with societal partners			
Radical Imagination in Transitions & Transition Ateliers	Together with the DOEN foundation, DIT researched the connection between academics and artists to imagine a sustainable and just future. Social art practices were combined with scientific approaches to explore transformative possibilities. The project highlights the potential of creativity in transition research. Transition Ateliers will be organised in the coming years as a follow-up of the research and embedded in DRIFT at Erasmus University. They will explore and implement creative practices to accelerate societal transitions. Transition ateliers will make radical alternatives visible and actionable by engaging communities in creative problem-solving. The goal is to mobilise broader societal participation in sustainability efforts.	Together with DOEN foundation	2022–23 2023–24
Just Fashion Transition	This research project aims to accelerate the fashion and textile transition by collaborating across universities, disciplines, and with societal partners to drive systemic change toward a just, sustainable industry. Key outputs, including academic papers and a European Environmental Bureau report, have been integrated into education and shared through presentations and workshops with diverse audiences. We actively engaged in projects such as the HORIZON EU-funded FABRIX and the Convergence Resilient Delta Starter Grant funded Toward Textile-form Futures,	Together with a wide range of stakeholder	Since 2021

Main publications of the DIT platform

Name	*Description by the DIT team*	*Date*	*Link*
	while exploring de-growth and wellbeing economy approaches with global partners (Institute for Sustainable Futures / University of Technology Sydney, Australia and Lund University, Sweden). A professional video on Sustainability and Fashion has been developed for the series Impact in Sight by Erasmus University, and the Just Fashion Transition magazine has been published with the Engagement & Research Service (ERS) of Erasmus University Rotterdam. This research is embedded in the Erasmus school of History, Culture and Communication (ESHCC).		
Funding & Governing Transdisciplinary Sustainability Research Programmes: Lessons from 5 years of ACCEZ	Working closely with the team of ACCEZ, a transdisciplinary research program funded largely by the regional government and seeking to transform the way knowledge is produced for sustainability transitions in South Holland, DIT has designed and conducted a collaborative research process investigating how programs of this nature should be funded and governed to maximise their transformative impact.	Together with ACCEZ	2022–23 2023–24

Main publications of the DIT platform

Name	*Description by the DIT team*	*Date*	*Link*
Engagement			
DIT Days (DIT Day 2022: Imagining Science for Change; DIT Day 2023: EUR 2043, Imagining the University of the Future; DIT Day 2024: How to Transform a University)	Every year, the DIT day brought together the EUR community and external participants to discuss and learn about science for change. How can we tackle some of today's most pressing societal challenges? And how can science become a force for positive change in doing so? What could EUR look like in the year 2043? And what would we have to do today to make those futures a reality? How can universities undergo transformation to better address societal needs? Participants engaged in discussions on transforming academia and addressing global challenges. The event fostered collective imagination for a better future.	>250 participants	2021–22 2022–23 2023–24
EUR Sustainability Dialogues & Sustainability Summit	The objective of the EUR Sustainability Dialogues – a series of debates within and across schools – was to form the starting point for change. Through these debates, DIT aimed to both challenge and open up academic discourse within EUR and its schools as well as engaging with sustainable transitions in a more proactive and participative way. DIT wanted to establish a more reflexive and (self-)critical culture amongst the EUR community.	Dialogues: >500 participants, including every EUR faculty Summit: >70 participants	2023–24 2024–25

Main publications of the DIT platform

Name	*Description by the DIT team*	*Date*	*Link*
	The Sustainability Summit targeted students and staff from Dutch universities to discuss the role of academia in fostering a just and sustainable society. It provided a collaborative space for the participants to exchange ideas and strategies for integrating sustainability into education, research, and institutional practices. It aimed to build a unified movement within Dutch academia focused on addressing climate and societal challenges through education and collaboration.		
Sustainability in Education showcase	What are the challenges associated with teaching about sustainability and how can our teachers at EUR overcome these challenges? These questions were central to the Sustainability in Education Showcase, which was organised as part of the Erasmus Sustainability Day, 2023. Educators from a wide range of EUR schools presented their educational activities and engaged in rich conversations with an audience consisting of both staff and students about the issues and opportunities of sustainability education.	+/- 30 participants, both students and teachers from multiple EUR faculties	2022–23
PhD Learning Community for Action-oriented research	In this monthly study group, DIT connected early-career researchers at the EUR in a peer learning community. The study group aimed to create an informal safe space for learning together about conducting research that is engaged, action-oriented, or transdisciplinary, and connects closely with societal challenges.	+/- 20 participants per year	2022–23 2023–24

15 Realising the Values of Science within the Twenty-First Century

How to Avoid Academic Inflation in Higher Education?[1]

Altuğ Yalçıntaş

Introduction

Within this chapter, I utilise Arjo Klamer's value-based approach (VBA) (2016, 2017) in order to explore the harmful impact of the increased pervasiveness of both market and governance logics within the higher education sector. Specifically, I argue that there is a need for a value-based academic redesign, both in the Global North and the Global South, where policymakers and university administrators (private and public) would prioritise academic values over economic and political benefits. Ultimately, I conclude that scientific values are degraded when for-profit companies (e.g., recruitment agencies, publication houses, accommodation services, etc.) and governments come to play larger roles within the higher education sector.

Academic inflation is a critical part of the problem with respect to the degradation of scientific values within the twenty-first century. In my previous work on academic inflation in Türkiye (Yalçıntaş 2017; Yalçıntaş and Akkaya, 2019a, 2019b), I defined academic inflation as a condition characterised by an inflated demand for higher education, which, in turn, results in an increase in the supply of university diplomas within the job market. Classical university models are not always designed to address a system in which the demand for higher education exceeds the supply of available jobs for graduates. "As an organization attempts to maintain its legitimacy in a dynamic environment", as Jilde Garst and Mariangela Lavanga (2026) argue, "its complete value set is often reconsidered with multiple new values being promoted, existing values being challenged, and their translations into performance requirements being re-configured". However, this is a far from straightforward issue. Academic inflation devalues scientific research because students, who lack sufficient information about the labour market, create a high demand for certain academic departments. As a result, young graduates struggle to find positions that offer sufficiently high wages, attractive working conditions, and job security. Consequently, a university degree in and of itself is not sufficient for securing a good job. Young graduates have to improve their soft skills (such as teamwork), acquire technological skills like learning programming languages (R and Python), and gain international experience in order to be eligible to apply for new job openings.

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However, academic inflation not only causes problems for students; it also causes problems for researchers. Under intense pressure to publish an increasing number of articles in ever shorter periods of time, researchers are often simply not incentivised to work on long-term, original projects. Instead, many researchers are involved in questionable research practices, including, among other things, predatory publishing, data manufacturing, and ghost authorship.

Private companies also have a keen interest in knowledge production. They seek to appropriate large and complex data about people's political and intellectual preferences. This process, in turn, harms the realisation of values within academic institutions, in as far as commercialisation comes to dominate the way in which universities are governed.

Sciences and values

Both science and the production of new knowledge cannot be entirely divorced from values. The notion of a value-free approach to science, humanities, and the arts is both unrealistic and wholly impractical. In order to establish a more pragmatic and effective mode of scientific practice, it is essential to recognise that science encompasses more than merely facts. Rather, science should involve trust, responsibility, and accountability.

Below, I summarise Klamer's VBA (2016, 2017), which I believe can help us both comprehend the degradation of scientific values and propose what actions should be taken in response.

Klamer's VBA is predicated upon the realisation of values within five different spheres (Figure 15.1). The oikos (O) represents the home where individuals begin their intellectual journey by interacting with their family, friends, and colleagues. Society (S) is the sphere of reciprocity, collaboration, and cooperation, where individuals communicate with one another. In the market sphere (M), goods become commodities which are accorded prices, and are exchanged and commercialised. The governance (G) sphere is characterised

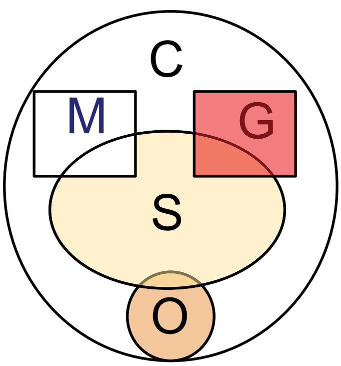

Figure 15.1 Klamer's original visualisation
Source: Klamer, 2026.

by formal rules and regulations. Finally, the culture (C) sphere is the one in which all of the other spheres are embedded, and consists of rituals, customs, and norms.

Klamer is *Doing the right thing* (2017). These spheres each have their own unique characteristics and, hence, should be clearly delineated from one another. Within a well-functioning academic environment, as Lyudmila Petrova (2026) also posits, the values within each of these spheres should be well-balanced. For instance, the values inherent to the cultural sphere, such as goodness and beauty, should not exclude those values that are located within the market sphere, such as the willingness to pay and private property. The rhetoric that predominates within each of these spheres should also be harmonised with one another. Consequently, when someone violates the rules and regulations within a particular sphere, then they should be punished accordingly. In this respect, the logics that are inherent to each of the spheres should thus also be idealised.

In its static form, the borders in the above visualisation are more or less clear, albeit it is important to underscore that the spheres do often overlap with one another. Indeed, As Klamer himself notes: “I will not deny that overlaps among spheres occur, that the logic of [the market] may operate in [society] and [oikos], and that [society] works in [market] and [governance].” (2017, p. 137). One must note here that although Klamer provides information about the five different spheres, he does not elaborate on the sizes of each sphere in great detail. For instance, within his visualisations (Figure 15.1), the society sphere is always larger than the market sphere, while the government sphere does not overlap with the oikos sphere. One final point about the sizes of each sphere is that they can both change over time and across communities. Within its present state, however, the sizes are given. This is significant insofar as a dynamic visualisation could help us understand the differences between academic institutions located within the Global North and those in the Global South. Below, I outline my perspective on how to develop Klamer’s visualisations for the express purpose of initiating further discussion about a dynamic VBA (Figure 15.2).

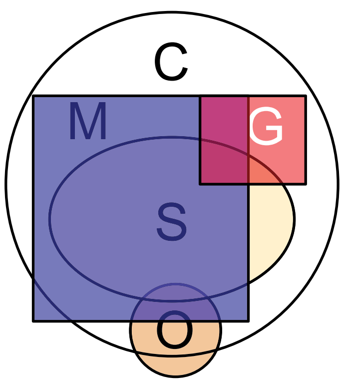

Figure 15.2 Modification of Klamer's visualisation – Academic Inflation 1

Within Klamer's approach, scientific practice is often represented within the social sphere, which I wholeheartedly agree with. This is because the values of science, such as trust and accountability, are absolutely integral to society. However, the market logic within science can come to dominate the logics of government, society, and even the oikos. The commercialisation of academic knowledge production serves to profoundly transform the values of science in such a way that researchers become sellers while readers become the buyers of scientific knowledge. This, in turn, leads to a radical shift within academic knowledge creation in which the commercialisation aspect redefines scientific values, effectively turning researchers into marketers and readers into the consumers of scientific information. Publishing houses make large profits from publishing articles without providing any form of compensation to authors, referees, and editors. Indeed, "prestigious" journals are often placed behind a paywall system which forces research institutions to invest heavily to provide access for their members. As a result of this process of commercialisation, publishers hold exclusive rights to all published content.

Private academic institutions impose short-term contracts upon their research staff, who are then forced to publish as many articles as possible in order to extend their contracts until the point that they are able to secure a permanent position within their home institutions (or oikos). These permanent positions are increasingly scarce within these private institutions, whose management encourages their academic staff to compete for research funds and grants within the market sphere (Figure 15.3).

The logic of governance can also dominate the logics of the market, society, and oikos. Within state-owned research institutions, especially in the Global South, researchers are compelled to rigorously defend their freedom of speech against regulatory constraints over their expression. When these researchers voice their opposition to the political establishment, they risk having their government funding withdrawn. Within the Global South, academics can face dismissal, detention, or imprisonment even. Moreover, there is a discernible

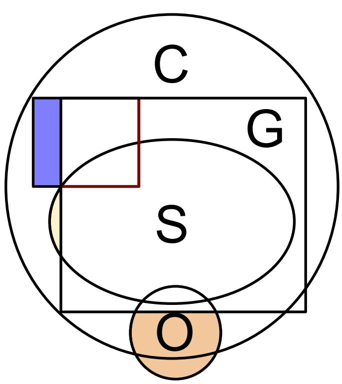

Figure 15.3 Modification of Klamer's visualisation – Academic Inflation 2

trend of allocating new academic positions preferentially to those who are aligned with the government, thus seemingly indicating the widespread practice of political nepotism within the contract awarding processes of these institutions. Such manipulation even extends to the imposition of political agendas upon researchers by governments, in such a way that resembles the operations of business firms. However, it is important to stress that this trend is not exclusive to the Global South; rather, it is also evident in the Global North where researchers' career advancement often hinges upon their ability to promptly secure research grants. Failure, in this regard, can lead to a researcher's dismissal, particularly if this is coupled with politically charged remarks. Consequently, self-censorship has become common practice among researchers working within these environments.

A holistic approach is therefore necessary, one that strikes the requisite balance between the logics of the market and governance spheres and the intrinsic values of the scientific community and individual values. By acknowledging and harmonising these diverse factors, we can help to both engender and maintain a "human economy" (Klamer, 2023) and cultivate a sustainable scientific endeavour. How can we do this?

What is academic inflation?

Academic inflation is a consequence of the expansion of both market and governance logics into knowledge production. At this juncture, students, researchers, and private companies produce knowledge not only for its own sake but also to enhance their chances of finding jobs that yield higher salaries, greater reputational value, and more political power. Let me elaborate upon this point a little bit further.

Academic inflation refers to the devaluation of university degrees when the labour market is not growing in real terms. This means that there are no new and/or better job opportunities being created for researchers and students. Simply put, the more people with a university degree who enter the labour market, the more the real value of diplomas decrease. The increased competition between individuals who are demanding the same pay and possessing similar skills to one another results in a gradual rise in the minimum conditions that are required for employment. Consequently, jobs that previously only required a high school diploma now require a university degree, while jobs that once required only a university degree now require a master's degree. In parallel with this, candidates are now increasingly expected to provide evidence of their foreign language proficiency, work experience, and extracurricular activities (for additional information on the concept of academic inflation, see Hasseln and Jackson, 2010; Yi and McMurtrey, 2013; Robertson, 2006).

Inflation is not only a problem for the economy; it is also a problem for the higher education sector. Academic inflation leads to several issues, including, among others, university graduates being unable to find jobs or be paid a salary that is commensurate with their education level and skills (skills mismatch), academic staff not being allocated in the most objective way possible (nepotism), and the emergence of several cases of scientific misconduct in the process of academic knowledge production. Furthermore, the increase in plagiarism cases, conflicts of interest within research fund allocation, and the rise of "predatory publishing" worldwide also all stem from academic inflation (Wible, 2016; Yalçıntaş and Selçuk, 2016; Yalçıntaş and Wible, 2016; Yalçıntaş, 2018).

Academic inflation is the primary reason why high unemployment rates have become structural and permanent, especially for young people. This situation, in turn, produces many negative consequences not only for students but also for researchers. Although university administrators (public and private) are expected to "play in balancing various stakeholders and competing demands over space and time", as Anna Dempster (2026) posits in her chapter in this volume, they are increasingly involved in practices that are far removed from the notion of universities as a public service. Private universities, on the one hand, that are established, funded, and operated by for-profit companies are not able to continue to exist without encountering any problems pertaining to their academic independence. Public universities, on the other hand, that are established, subsidised, and managed by governments are not able to continue to exist without encountering any problems related to their academic freedom.

Each new university that opens its doors will naturally lead to an increase in terms of both the number of academic staff and student quotas. The academic staff that will fill these new positions and the students who will fill these new quotas will both serve to increase and intensify the scientific activities of universities. This, in turn, will result in the expansion of academic markets, in as far as more academic staff will be available to educate more students. A highly educated and skilled young population contributes towards further economic growth. In other words, if an economy continuously requires evermore educated and skilled individuals over a certain period of time, then an increasing number of universities will respond to these needs.

When the individuals who secure places in newly opened universities go on to complete their education and begin the process of looking for positions in the labour market, then the number of degrees that are produced by that country's university system also increases. As a result of this process, in precisely the same manners that the central bank increases the money supply, the supply of degrees within circulation then increases in the labour market. In other words, the number of individuals with degrees increases relatively among those who are either looking for new jobs or want to change jobs. When new employment opportunities for educated workers are constant, then the number of degrees does not result in academic inflation. This can be observed historically in countries such as South Korea, Greece, Denmark, and Norway (Sorensen, 1994; Fägerlind and Strömqvist, 2004; Psacharopoulos and Patrinos, 2004). However, under the conditions of academic inflation, the minimum requirements needed to apply for a job tends to increase, and the working classes who deserve (or at least think they deserve) higher wages and better working conditions are subsequently forced to settle for lower-paying positions with worse working conditions. Academic inflation thus causes individuals with the same educational qualifications to settle for jobs that pay less and require fewer skills. In exactly the same way that inflation leads the national currency to lose value against foreign currencies when an economy is not growing, increasing the degree supply when academic markets are not expanding also leads to a decrease in the real value of national degree qualifications.

Academic inflation not only creates problems for those working within non-academic positions but also results in structural changes within the labour market for academics. The most important of these consequences is that academic staff are required to meet heavier conditions during both the appointment and promotion processes. For example, today, more publications, overseas experience, and knowledge of at least one or more foreign languages are required in order to attain assistant professorship positions that once required only a doctoral degree. Against this backdrop, candidates without educational qualifications obtained from "prestigious" institutions within the US and EU have hardly any chance of attaining an academic position that opens up within universities.

Since the commercialisation of the Internet, many academic journals and publishing houses have emerged that publish research articles and books in exchange for payment. These publications often do not require peer-review processes, and in some instances publish papers without editing. Moreover, within this unpaid labour economy, academics typically do not receive any payment for their writing, editing, and refereeing activities.

Academic inflation also gradually reduces the efficiency of education as well as the originality of the curriculum itself. Each higher education institution is forced to provide basic education that is expected to be provided by institutions at a lower level, and academic staff and students are forced to participate in extracurricular activities. The most prominent indicator of this process is the increase in the number of cram schools and private courses, which are widespread in countries such as Türkiye, Greece, and Indonesia (Tansel and Bircan, 2006; İnal and Baykal, 2014). The reason why students prefer to receive additional education in cram schools is that as a result of academic inflation, they feel that they have not received the education that they need within the university system itself. Students who undertake postgraduate education within areas in which they are deficient have a better chance of succeeding in the examinations that increasingly form part of job interviews. Cram schools that provide education after students have graduated from their degree programs also means new job opportunities for academic staff. Although there are many reasons why academics prefer to teach at cram schools, the most important reason is that they are not paid the wages they deserve, as a direct result of academic inflation.

To summarise, academic inflation derives from an increase in the supply of degrees within the labour market without any corresponding increase in the demand for educated workers. As Carolina Dalla Chiesa (2026) also aptly demonstrates in her chapter in this volume, "niche creators abound, cultural production is oversupplied". In other words, academic inflation occurs when the relative weight of university graduates in the job market continues to rise, despite no discernible improvement in a country's academic performance or any new high-paying jobs with job security being created for university graduates. This culminates in a situation where the minimum qualifications required for a job tend to increase, which means that workers who deserve better wages and working conditions are subsequently forced to settle for lower-paying positions. Academic inflation not only creates problems for those working within non-academic jobs but also results in structural changes in the academic job market. For example, academic staff face a much higher burden with respect to both the appointment and promotion processes. Furthermore, the real value of a degree qualification within a country experiencing academic inflation also decreases.

Commercialisation of scientific values

Why does the supply of university degrees within the job market continue to increase? It is my contention that higher education is a form of conspicuous consumption. That is to say, students neither view higher education institutions as part of a nurturing process that will expand their intellectual curiosity and capacities nor as part of an educational process that will endow them with mastery, skill, and competence. Rather, they see higher education as a form of conspicuous consumption that will above all provide them with prestige within their respective professional careers. Consequently, higher education is now just yet another fashion good within many countries, a transformation which is leading to the emergence of a new leisure class with degree-level qualifications.

According to Thorstein Veblen (1889 [1994], 1918), conspicuous consumption is one of the most important social processes in as far as it is said to provide individuals with the cultural camouflage that is required for survival. Conspicuous consumption comes in many forms, including, among others, the consumption of sophisticated drinks, expensive clothing, and pleasurable and stimulating narcotics. In this respect, conspicuous consumption also operates as a kind of intellectual activity for the members of the leisure class. The higher education sector is thus somewhat of a prerequisite for being able to engage in this activity, in as far as attaining their educational qualification helps individuals to acquire the prestige of the leisure class. The education that one receives within this process does not enable a member of the leisure class to acquire an industrial profession; on the contrary, higher education exempts individuals from working in low-status jobs that are often labour-intensive, such as, for example, craftsmanship.

Higher education is the most important cultural process with respect to perpetuating the habits of conspicuous consumption within contemporary societies. In this process, the scholastic disciplines that individuals become a part of, thus can be said to reinforce the belief that conspicuous waste enables individuals to be prestigious. According to Veblen, this is the reason why (higher) education was the profession of the clergy, which was the primary source of the leisure culture for centuries. When the systematically organised body of knowledge expands, then the distinction between "esoteric" and "exoteric" knowledge becomes clearly evident. Whereas esoteric knowledge leads to no economic or industrial outcomes, exoteric knowledge allows for the emergence of a form of knowledge that facilitates economic and industrial benefits through industrial processes. According to Veblen, this distinction is the same as that between higher education and "lower education" (Veblen, 1889 [1994], p. 367). The reason for the continued existence of institutional rituals and practices, such as, for example, the culture of wearing caps and gowns at universities, graduation ceremonies, academic councils, and positions like rectorships and senatorships is that higher education institutions, which sustain the culture of conspicuous leisure, are essentially an evolved form of scholasticism. While scholasticism has largely dissipated within contemporary society, the ensuing void has been filled by higher education, which continues to fulfill scholasticism's function of sustaining the archaic (and barbaric) exhibitionism and leisure within human society.

Although higher education serves the function of transmitting the culture of conspicuous leisure from the "upper" classes to the "lower" classes, the problem with contemporary higher education is not its attachment to scholastic disciplines, but rather the commercialisation (politicisation) of higher education within universities. The commercialisation of higher education is what causes conspicuous leisure, in the modern sense of the term, to transform into conspicuous consumption. Today, both the money and time that one spends on higher education are the ultimate expression of one's financial wealth, in as far as higher education qualifications are what help individuals exempt themselves from working in the industrial professions.

Veblen never denied the role played by higher education in the dissemination of industrial knowledge. On the contrary, he repeatedly emphasised that in modern human societies, engineering, that is, a profession requiring a university level of education, is the most important activity in terms of creating matter-of-fact knowledge. According to Veblen, the real problem is the sabotage of the mastery process created by engineers by the businessmen that he refers to as "captains of industry". Veblen argued that the principal contradiction in industrial economies is not, as Marx claimed, between capitalists and the proletariat, but rather between engineers and these captains of industry (i.e., the class who owns immense wealth and controls industrial capital). The defining feature of the captains of industry is that their actions are driven by a predatory instinct, as opposed to a craftsmanship instinct, within the production process. Simply put, the objective of the captains of industry is to plunder the profits generated from industrial processes to the detriment of the engineers who make the generation of these profits possible in the first place.

This is precisely what Veblen demonstrated and criticised in his *The higher learning in America: A memorandum on the conduct of universities by businessmen* (1918). By virtue of imposing their administrative methods upon institutions that are expected to produce matter-of-fact knowledge, businessmen have ultimately brought about the degeneration of academic culture. According to Veblen, this process became more complex with the discovery of higher education as a form of conspicuous consumption by businessmen. Businessmen operating within industries such as defence, petrochemicals, and steel, alongside appreciating the R&D support that emerged as a result of the funds they provided to universities, also regarded higher education as a source of prestige that benefitted their activities in those sectors they were active in. In so doing, they turned research activities supported by donations and various "philanthropic" purposes (Veblen 1918 [2003]: 187) into an advertising mechanism as well. Notwithstanding this, businessmen also managed to bring university administrations under their control through a system of a board of trustees, which granted them the ability to direct the course of academic research. For Veblen, universities operating under both the direction and control of businessmen made researchers accountable to non-researchers through the mechanism of performance audits. Consequently, the productivity in knowledge production processes was taken out of the control of those who produce it (i.e., teachers and students) and came under the control of businessmen.

Conclusion

The critical question to be asked here is the following one: is higher education worth it? *The Economist* published a report on the transformation of the higher education system across the world and asked the same question in its issue that was published on 28 March 2015. The opening statement of the report read as follows: "The American higher education model is spreading. It is good at producing excellence but needs to get better at providing access to decent education at a reasonable cost." The report, which states that higher education systems, especially in the US, which oscillate between excellence and equity and are based upon the Continental European system, cause universities to move away from a sustainable structure due to increasing numbers of students, academic staff, overcrowded classes and student accommodation, rising fees, rising prices of course materials, non-refundable educational loans, increasing plagiarism and misconduct, and inflated passing grades. All of these take us from the *massification* of higher education, which used to refer to "the democratisation of higher education" to the *mess*ification of the higher education system.

Of course, the problems encountered with respect to education and the acquisition of new skills by individuals should not be reduced to a simplistic cost-benefit analysis. The benefits that higher education provides to individuals across their lifespan cannot be measured solely through quantitative data. However, the inability of the higher education sector, which justifies increasing costs in order to provide quality education in exchange for the tuition fees collected from students, leads to a set of structural problems (Merrow, 2005; Rossi, 2014;Schmitt, 2018). Individuals may not evaluate higher education within a cost-benefit framework, and, as such, the efficiency of the demand for higher education may not be measured quantitatively from the perspective of students. However, the efficiency of the contemporary supply of higher education is evaluated within a complex cost-profit context from the perspective of higher education institutions. Based upon this fact as well as other similar examples, I conclude that the academic knowledge production processes that we have observed being systematically commodified from the 1980s onwards have rapidly moved away from the purpose of training individuals to be intellectuals or scholars. Therefore, the question of whether higher education is worth it has more to do with the fact that both private and public universities that market science as a commodity use various back-door methods as part of their education and teaching activities that sabotage individuals' intellectual development processes (see Veblen, 1921 [1977] for the concept of sabotage). Consequently, many of the students who are convinced to study at both private and public universities must give up on many of the dreams they had prior to entering these schools after they graduate from them. They must do so because universities, acting in an analogous fashion to hunters, are ultimately turning both their students and their families into their prey or victims as a consequence of academic inflation.

Note

1 I would like to thank Arjo Klamer, Anna M. Dempster, Lyudmila Petrova, and YounSun Won for their useful comments. I am grateful to the editors of this volume for inviting me to write this chapter that relies upon my prior work on academic inflation within Turkey (see the reference list). Any remaining errors in the chapter are mine alone. In the preparation of this manuscript, I also utilised artificial intelligence tools in order to spell-check and correct any grammatical issues. It is important to stress that my use of these AI tools was strictly limited to enhancing the clarity and readability of the text, particularly given that English is not my first language. I wish to affirm that the content of this work, including the development of the written arguments and the formulation of the ideas, arguments, and conclusions are entirely my own work, and, as such, did not involve the use of any AI tools. This disclosure is made for the express purpose of ensuring transparency and adherence to the ethical norms of academic writing.

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Part III

Value-Based Assessment and Evaluation

16 The Quality Evaluator

A Value-Based Approach to Assessing Cultural, Social, and Societal Values[1]

Lyudmila Petrova and Arjo Klamer

Introduction

Cultural and creative organisations increasingly operate in environments defined by complexity, uncertainty, and social interdependence where culture is not only about producing goods or services, but it is also about nurturing relationships, shaping identities, and generating meanings (Klamer, 2017; O'Connor, 2024; Polivtseva, 2024[2]). As many of the authors of this volume argue, scholars, policymakers, and practitioners alike have become aware that the significance of culture cannot be adequately captured through solely quantitative indicators such as audience numbers, ticket sales, or economic multipliers (see Petrova, Graça, and Klamer, 2022). Yet, traditional evaluation frameworks often fail to reflect these dimensions, reducing the complexity of cultural production to measurable outputs and efficiency-driven processes.

The demand for accountability has led to a proliferation of impact studies, assessment tools, and performance indicators that prioritised what can be counted over what is experienced or valued (Holden, 2006; Matarasso, 2019). While such mechanisms aim to provide legitimacy, they often undermine the qualitative, participatory, and transformative nature of cultural activity. As a result, cultural and creative organisations are facing pressure to justify their existence within systems of funding and governance that increasingly prioritise market logic. Not surprisingly, many cultural organisations and practitioners share experience of being asked to "translate" their work into languages of economics or policy that fail to capture its real essence (Belfiore, 2022; Polivtseva, 2024). In parallel with this, it is not always straightforward to find the appropriate approach and methods through which to investigate and communicate precisely how the work of artists and creatives impact upon and benefit different people, communities and society as a whole.

In this chapter we argue that, while organisations are asked to quantifying results and then judging them accordingly, what precisely constitutes social cohesion, good music, good care, and good education simply cannot be captured in numbers and call for qualitative forms of evaluation. Such an evaluation is necessary for determining a) the relevant qualities, and b) how these qualities are worthwhile or impact upon others? It also raises questions as of

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how to determine that a social or cultural organisation is doing well, that governmental organisations are achieving their goals or that commercial organisations are realising their non-commercial objectives.

The Quality Evaluator (QE) proposed in this chapter is designed to answer these questions by evaluating whether the important cultural and social values of projects, programmes, organisations and policies are being realised or not. More specifically, it is a method that is capable of accounting for changes within the values of protagonists and stakeholders, which, in turn, means that it can function as an indicator of impact. Consequently, it provides feedback to the protagonists – organisers, entrepreneurs, supporters – to understand how well they are doing. The QE is theoretically grounded in the value-based approach (VBA) that forms the focus of this book, which, among other things, draws a clear distinction between purposes and instrumental goals (Klamer, 2017).

This chapter discusses both the conceptual foundations and empirical application of the QE. In order to shed light upon the different stages of the QE we will provide examples from our previous work (see Klamer, Petrova, and Kiss, 2022; Petrova, Graça, and Klamer, 2022; Petrova et al., 2025). Section 2 briefly outlines the conceptual framework. Section 3 outlines the methodological foundations and stages of the QE, emphasising its participatory and context-sensitive design. Section 4 provides an application of the QE across different case studies. Section 5 introduces both a discussion connecting empirical insights to broader theoretical implications and concluding remarks on the methodological contributions and potential of the QE in evaluating the impact of (cultural) organisations.

Conceptual framework: values and valuation of practices

The conceptual foundations of the Quality Evaluator (QE) are rooted in the value-based approach (VBA),[3] which on organisational level provides an alternative to both conventional, economic evaluation and instrumental models of cultural governance.[4] The VBA, as developed by Klamer (2017) and further elaborated through empirical research (Klamer, Petrova, and Kiss, 2022; Petrova, Graça, and Klamer, 2022), is built on the premise that people and organisations act upon what they value. Culture, in this perspective, is a domain where meaning and purpose emerge through human interactions, aspirations, and shared practices. To evaluate culture, we argue, is to make visible the values that motivate these practices, the ways they are realised, and the transformations they undergo.

The logic of valuation in the value-based approach

In the VBA, valuation is understood as a process rather than an outcome (Vatin, 2013). It involves both *valorisation*, that is, the generation and negotiation of values within a community and *evaluation*, that is, the reflective assessing the extent to which those values are realised. Therefore, evaluation assumes judgement based on established criteria and does not generate new values but rather affirms or challenges pre-existing ones, whereas valorisation refers to the active creation of value through which goods, practices, or relationships acquire meaning and worth (Petrova, Graça, and Klamer, 2022). For example, the pursuit of a "good family" as a social value can mean that members of the family spend more time together – an act that serves to valorise family life. This valuation process acknowledges that values are dynamic and socially embedded. They are shaped by context, relationships, and experiences (see Wincewicz-Price, 2026 in this volume). In cultural practices, then, valuation is a process where participants continually define, affirm, and reinterpret what matters to them, for example realising their purposes.

The VBA distinguishes between *purposes* and *instrumental goals* (Klamer, Petrova, and Kiss, 2022; Petrova, Graça, and Klamer, 2022). Purposes express qualitative aspirations, such as fostering belonging, creating artistic meaning, or promoting justice, whereas instrumental goals refer to quantifiable means to achieve those purposes, such as attendance numbers or financial revenue. A recurring problem in cultural policy and organisation governance is the combination of the two. What can be measured (the instrumental) is often mistaken for what is meaningful (the purposeful). The QE addresses this by prioritising the articulation of *purpose*, ensuring that evaluation captures not only what an organisation achieves but also *how* and *why* it matters.

To assist the process of articulating purposes and to capture the *multi-faceted nature of values* (Scharfbillig et al., 2021) in terms of qualities, the QE distinguishes four interrelated clusters of values (Klamer, 2017; Klamer, Petrova, and Kiss, 2022; Petrova, Graça, and Klamer, 2022), each motivating different individual and/or group behavior and attitude (Figure 16.1).

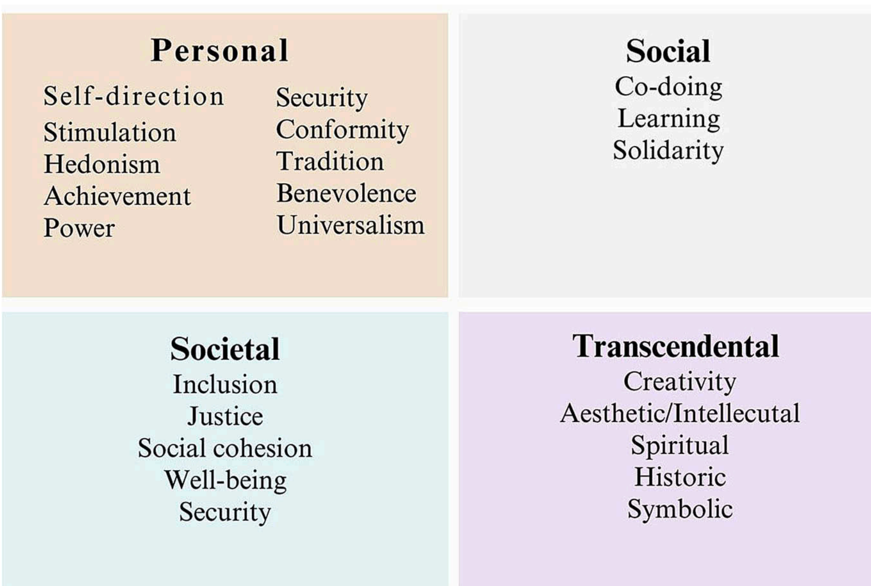

Figure 16.1 Clusters of values
Source: authors' elaboration of Schwartz (1992) and Klamer, Petrova, and Kiss (2022).

Personal values are drivers for individuals' behaviour and relate to individual growth, autonomy, and achievement (Schwartz, 1992). Social values are those that define relationships among peers in groups and communities' members who are familiar with each other. Societal values are those that concern broader collective goods and societal dimensions (society as a whole, citizenship, etc.). Both social and societal values also play a crucial role in shaping individual behavior (Scharfbillig et al., 2021). They significantly influence socially recognised norms of conduct and may at times outweigh personal values, as individuals seek to align with group or community identities, and avoid social exclusion. Transcendental values transcend personal preferences and social norms, reflecting universal principles. Some cultural values, particularly those related to truth, beauty, harmony, morality, and spirituality, may be seen as transcendental. However, many are contextually and socially shaped by historical, cultural, and individual factors. The transcendence qualities of art and culture depend on their purpose, influence, and depth of meaning.

These clusters serve as a heuristic framework for articulating the range of values that cultural organisations pursue. The interplay and tensions between these clusters form the backbone of qualitative evaluation in the QE. Evaluation within the VBA approach, then, seeks to determine the extent to which these desired qualities are achieved through specific activities.

Value realisation through (cultural) practices

Values and qualities are not abstract entities but are enacted and realised through experiences (Dewey, 1939) and as such they are seen as characteristics of shared practices (Klamer, 2017; Petrova, Graça, and Klamer, 2022).[5] Friendship, for instance, derives its quality from the practice of being a friend, just as artistic excellence arises through the practice of art. Cultural values also reflect the complexity of cultural production. For example, an artist may simultaneously balance between beauty as transcendental meaning, personal fulfilment, social connection, and societal change. This implies that cultural value is comprehensible only through lived engagement which take place within a concrete context. Hence, standard matrix is difficult to apply to its evaluation.

The interaction between *values, practices, stakeholders*, and *context* lies at the heart of this conceptual framework. Values define what is important and worth striving for. Practices are the means through which these values are realised, for example, curating, educating, preserving, or producing. Stakeholders deliberately create, negotiate, or change meanings and relationships. Context shapes the possibilities and constraints of value realisation, encompassing governance models, financial mechanisms, and other social, cultural, economic, and political practices.

To facilitate the interaction of these three dimensions, the QE bridges them by enabling organisations to assess not only possible outcomes but also whether and how *values* evolve and/or change and which conditions facilitate the process. Building upon the argument that values are not fixed, the QE suggests that the value attributions will vary, both for the different stakeholders and different contexts. People, therefore, participate in and contribute towards shared goods for different reasons and will value a good or practice differently. For example, artists may value a work of art on the basis of its innovative intellectual-aesthetic merits, whereas a buyer of the work may perceive the work as being perfect to hang above the couch in their living room. Another important aspect is that the methodology of the QE stipulates that the evaluator must leave the determination of the relevant values and stakeholders to the protagonists. In other words, there is neither an a-priori determination of the vision or mission of the project and/or organisations under evaluation nor pre-defined metrics for assessing its success.

In the following section, the chapter translates this conceptual framework into a practical methodology. It explains how the QE operationalises the principles of the VBA to capture the dynamics of values in action and to assess the quality and impact of cultural organisations, projects and activities.

Methodology: the Quality Evaluator in context

The QE is designed to assess how cultural organisations and initiatives realise, negotiate, and transform their core values in practice. The QE treats evaluation as a learning and reflective process in which participants themselves co-articulate what constitutes quality and success of their organisations and projects. The approach is iterative, context-sensitive, and participatory. Its aim is not to judge performance but to identify meanings and changes that leads to transformation.

The stages of the Quality Evaluator: data collection and analysis

Building on the conceptualisation of the process of value realisation developed in Chapter 4 in this volume (Petrova, 2026), here the QE unfolds in five iterative stages that collectively create a QE process of reflection and evaluation: 1) articulation of core values, 2) defining value proxies, 3) stakeholder mapping, 4) assessing changes in values: expected vs. experienced, and 5) visualisation and reflection. The following section 4 provides concrete illustrations and practical guidance for each stage of the QE process.

Each stage of the QE employs a combination of qualitative methods, for example, semi-structured interviews, participant observation, and facilitated focus groups and quantitative methods such as surveys. Typically, a QE assessment takes place during a several months and involves iterative feedback loops. The evaluator works closely with a small core team within the organisation (often including leadership, staff, and/or external stakeholder representatives) to ensure that reflection is integrated into ongoing practice rather than treated as an external audit.

Through a thematic analysis, data are analysed through coding against the four VBA value clusters (personal, social, societal, transcendental). Coding captures both explicit references to values (e.g., “we care about equality”) and implicit references (e.g., emotional tone, decision-making patterns). Triangulation across data sources – interviews, observation notes, workshop materials – enhances reliability while maintaining qualitative richness. To preserve participants' input, validation sessions are held where preliminary findings are discussed and refined collaboratively (stage 5). The aim is to ensure interpretive accuracy and foster participants' ownership of results.

From measurement to meaning: the role of the evaluator and ethical considerations

The core of the QE evaluation can be defined as a *reflective practice* rather than measurement. People value through doing, and their actions in turn give meaning to values. Consequently, the QE does not seek to impose an external standard, instead, it reveals relations between stated purposes, everyday practices, and experienced outcomes. This requires an interpretive methodology grounded in dialogue and mutual understanding between participants and evaluators. Evaluation, therefore, becomes a means of facilitating collective reflections, by asking not merely "what happened" but "what is important" and "how did it matter?" In this respect, the QE resonates with participatory and action-research traditions (Reason and Bradbury, 2008), where inquiry is conducted through co-creation, dialogue, and shared sense-making.

The evaluator's role in the QE is fundamentally relational. The evaluator acts as a facilitator, helping the organisation and/or community to articulate tacit values and identify the gaps between intention and practice. Further, rather than acting as an external expert, the evaluator facilitates a process of co-inquiry, helping participants uncover their own evaluative criteria. This requires trust, sensitivity, and a deep understanding of both cultural contexts and social dynamics. Ethically, the QE follows principles of informed consent, transparency, and reciprocity. Since participants co-produce data and interpretation, they also are engaged in the process of how results are shared and applied.

Application of the QE

The application of the QE within different organisations, projects and activities, demonstrates its capacity to make visible the complex interplay between values, practices, stakeholders, and contexts. To illustrate each individual stage and the benefits of applying the QE for impact assessment, we will refer to different case studies, some already presented in other publications (e.g. Klamer, Petrova, and Kiss, 2022; Petrova, Graça, and Klamer, 2022; Petrova et al., 2025).

Stage 1: Articulation of core values

The process begins with the identification of the organisation's *core values* – those principles or qualities considered most fundamental to its mission. This stage is typically facilitated through workshops, semi-structured interviews, and collective brainstorming. The goal is to shift away from outputs (e.g., "we reached 500 participants") toward meanings and experiences (e.g., "we strengthened community trust" or "we expanded artistic experimentation"). Here, the participants are asked to describe the ideal behind pursuing certain goals and articulate what specific qualities (e.g. attributions of values) characterise this ideal.

To illustrate this stage, Box 16.1 provides some examples of culture-related practices that we have previously evaluated.

Box 16.1 Value maps of cultural practices: case studies

This box introduces value mapping across three different cases: *Costruire Belezza* project, *Oral History Group*, an informal network that operates as a cultural commons, and the *Creative Community*, a funding programme of the Arts Council Malta.

Costruire Bellezza (CB) is a long-term, interdisciplinary design and anthropology laboratory founded in 2014 in Turin to promote social inclusion and cohesion through creative collaboration. It brings together homeless people, design and anthropology students, social workers, and local citizens to co-design and craft furniture, food, and gardening projects. Through these participatory workshops, CB fosters skills, empowerment, and self-esteem among marginalised individuals while reshaping community relationships. CB is guided by values of beauty, sharing, belonging, equity, optimism, human flourishing, and innovation (Figure 16.2). It treats beauty as a shared, transformative experience to build social and personal well-being among marginalised people. Through creative co-production, it fosters solidarity, dialogue, and personal growth, by reimagining of community relationships.

The *Creative Communities Programme* (CCP) by the Arts Council of Malta funds art and culture projects that strengthen community bonds. It supports

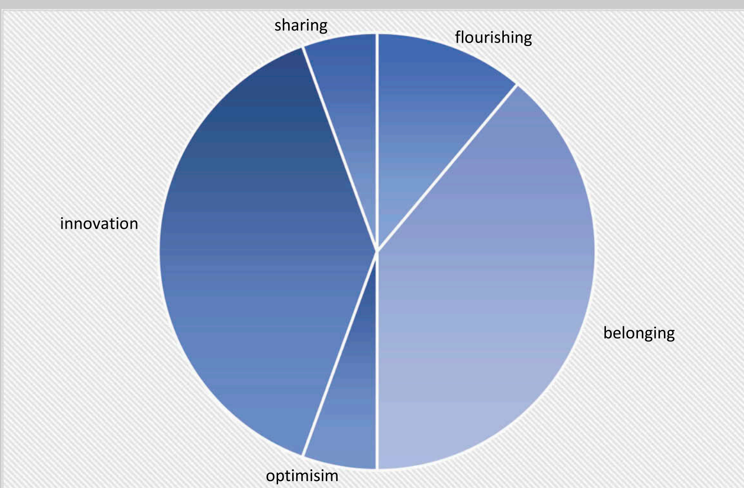

Figure 16.2 Costruire Belezza Value Map
Source: authors' elaboration.

initiatives led *by* and *for* local communities to foster inclusion, diversity, and cultural exchange. The programme promotes art, social cohesion, inclusion, trust, and well-being through community-led cultural projects (Figure 16.3). Its values are diversity, participation, and co-creation between artists, creatives, and citizens. By supporting skill development and shared cultural experiences, the programme strengthens community well-being and cultural sustainability, positioning creativity as a catalyst for personal growth, collective empowerment, and long-term social transformation across Malta's diverse communities.

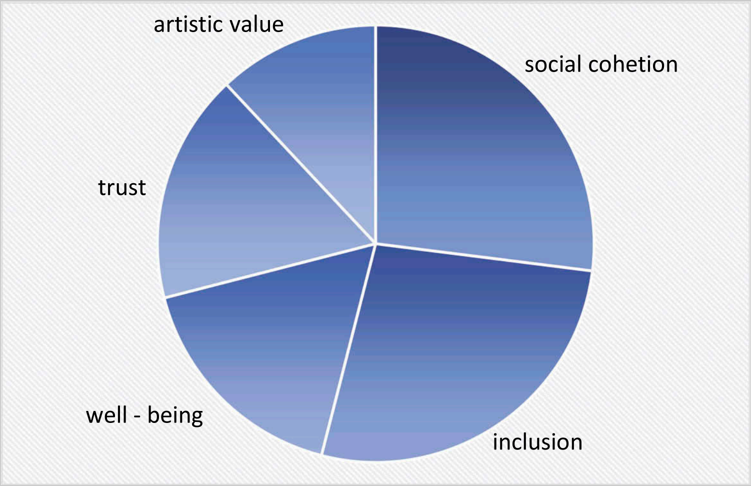

Figure 16.3 Creative Communities Programme value map
Source: authors' elaboration of Petrova, Graça, and Klamer (2022).

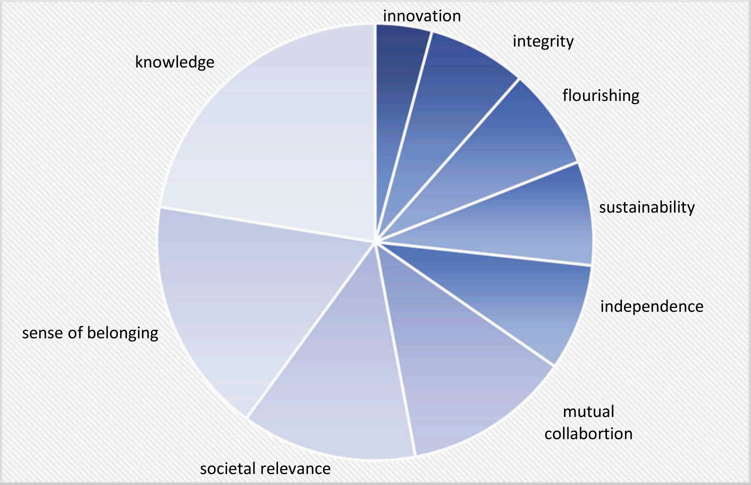

Figure 16.4 Oral History Group value map
Source: authors' elaboration of Petrova, Graça, and Klamer (2025).

The *Oral History Group* (OHG) is a grassroots, volunteer-driven network in Greece dedicated to collecting, preserving, and sharing oral histories of marginalised and everyday people. Operating without formal leadership or major funding, OHG embodies core values of knowledge, integrity, solidarity, belonging, inclusivity, flourishing, and independence (Figure 16.4). It preserves marginalised voices through honest, collaborative storytelling while fostering empathy, trust, and shared purpose among members.

Stage 2: Defining value proxies

Once values are articulated, participants collectively determine how these can be observed or experienced in practice. These operationalisations are known as *proxies* – qualitative indicators that stand for abstract values. For instance, "trust" may be proxied by collaborative decision-making or open communication; "innovation" may be reflected in experimental curation or risk-taking.

Importantly, the QE does not standardise proxies across organisations, activities or policies. For example, all cases illustrated here share common pursues for (1) creativity and knowledge through storytelling and exchange, (2) inclusion and belonging through social participation and equality, and (3) innovation and transformation through turning creativity into empowerment, institutional learning, and new ways of being together. However, each context generates its own vocabulary of meaning, thus preserving for each case the authenticity of the evaluative process (Table 16.1).

Stage 3: Stakeholder identification and mapping

Cultural organisations and/or projects often involve diverse actors – artists, curators, peers, volunteers, funders, policymakers, audiences, and others – each embodying distinct value orientations. After articulating their values, the QE allows to identify the internal[6] and external[7] stakeholders best positioned to assess each value (Petrova, Graça, and Klamer, 2022). Table 16.2 illustrates various type of stakeholders across the three case studies, for example *Costruire Bellezza* (CB), *Oral History Group* (OHG), and *Creative Communities Programme* (CCP).

Stakeholders' expectations and priorities are then gathered, typically through surveys or panels, to determine which values hold greatest significance. During the event or series of events, organisers, artists, volunteers, and community members engage and observe, together creating a participatory evaluative framework that captures multiple perspectives within the QE process. This mapping of internal and external stakeholders makes power relations visible and helps reveal value differences between different groups (see Box 16.2, Figure 16.5).

Table 16.1 Proxies of core values across three different case studies

Value	*Costruire Bellezza (CB)*	*Oral History Group (OHG)*	*Creative Communities Programme (CCP)*
Inclusion & Belonging	• Co-design with marginalised groups (e.g. homeless people); • Equal participation and shared authorship; • Building trust; • Being part of a caring, creative community.	• Equal participation of volunteers across Greece; • Representation of marginalised voices; • Emotional connection through storytelling; • Mutual respect, care, and solidarity within the group.	• Encouragement of participation from diverse communities and age groups; • Co-created art fostering cultural diversity and strengthened belonging; • Inclusion as cultural accessibility and equality.
Creativity & Knowledge	• Design and craft as a medium for skill-building and self-expression; • Knowledge co-creation between designers, anthropologists, and participants; • Artistic making as a process of learning and empowerment.	• Collection and preservation of personal oral histories of ordinary people as collective knowledge; • Ensuring diversity of historical narratives; • Preserving oral traditions; • Strengthening intergenerational knowledge transfer; • Historical rigor.	• Artistic and creative expression as a tool for community empowerment; • Exchange of cultural knowledge between artists and citizens; • Development of creative skills and confidence; • Knowledge-sharing through participatory cultural production.
Innovation & Transformation	• Social innovation through design anthropology; • Transformation of stigma (homelessness) into creative agency; • Experimentation with co-design and care-based, methodologies for social workers; • Reframing beauty as social healing.	• Creation of digital archives for oral histories; • New collaborative and self-organised forms of historical preservation; • Transformation of public memory through shared narratives; • Empowerment through cultural participation.	• Innovation in community engagement through arts; • New partnerships between citizens, artists, and institutions; • Cultural participation as a driver of social change; • Transformation of communities through creative collaboration.

Source: Authors' elaboration.

Table 16.2 Internal and external stakeholders of *Costruire Bellezza* (CB), *Oral History Group* (OHG), and *Creative Communities Programme* (CCP)

Project	*Internal Stakeholders*	*External Stakeholders*
***Costruire Bellezza* (CB)**	• Project founders and coordinators (designers, anthropologists, social workers); • Homeless and vulnerable participants; • Design and anthropology students; • Workshop facilitators and volunteers.	• Local communities and residents; • Public institutions; • NGOs and welfare organisations; • Cultural institutions and design schools; • Media and funders supporting social design.
***Oral History Group* (OHG)**	• Volunteer members and coordinators; • Oral historians, researchers, and educators; • Interviewers and storytellers; • Community archivists and editors.	• Local communities providing stories; • Universities and academic partners; • Cultural heritage organisations and archives; • Policy makers and civil society networks; • Media audiences accessing oral histories.
***Creative Communities Programme* (CCP)**	• Project coordinators and facilitators; • Artists and cultural practitioners; • Local participants and community groups; • Arts Council Malta team (programme management).	• Local councils and public institutions; • NGOs and community-based organisations; • Educational institutions and cultural centres; • Funders and policymakers; • Broader Maltese public engaging in cultural events.

Source: authors' elaboration.

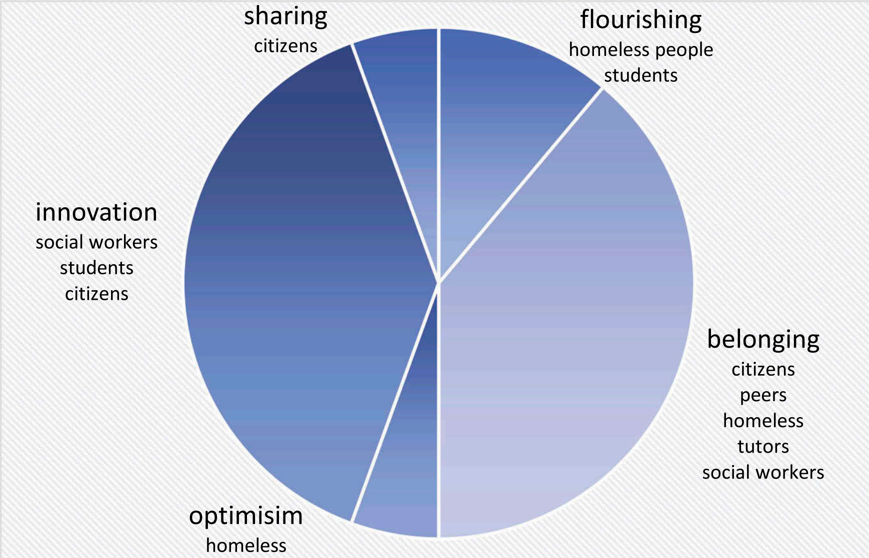

Figure 16.5 Relationships between values and stakeholders within *Costruire Bellezza*
Source: authors' elaboration.

Box 16.2 Value and Stakeholders maps of cultural practices: case studies

Here we aim to illustrate how different stakeholders in the *Costruire Bellezza* project contribute to and experience key shared values (Figure 16.5). Each value is linked to specific groups reflecting their roles and benefits within the co-design process. Flourishing connects homeless participants and design students, representing growth and creativity. Equity and optimism relate to homeless people and tutors, symbolising fairness, empowerment, and hope. Belonging involves citizens, social workers, tutors, and associations, expressing inclusion and community cohesion. Sharing is driven by citizens through collective participation and generosity, while innovation arises from collaboration among social workers, designers, and tutors, highlighting experimentation and new social practices. Together, these relationships show how *Costruire Bellezza* transforms social interaction into shared value creation through design and care.

Stage 4:Assessing changes in values: expected vs. experienced

A distinctive feature of the QE is its focus to register *change.* In the beginning of the process (Stage 1) participants are asked to describe both the *values they expected* to realise and then after a certain period or concrete completed activities, they are again asked to describe the *values they actually experienced* during or after the activity/project. Comparing these two dimensions reveals whether, and how, transformation occurred – individually, collectively, or organisationally (see Box 16.3). This process may involve surveys, focus groups, or reflective interviews. In practice, many organisations find this stage transformative in itself: articulating differences between expectation and experience often leads to deeper awareness of organisational culture.

Box 16.3 Value shifts in cultural practices: case studies

Close look at the case of *Costruire Bellezza* projects illustrates shifts in values between initial expectations (light grey bars) and actual experiences (dark grey bars bars) among participants in a project (Figure 16.6).

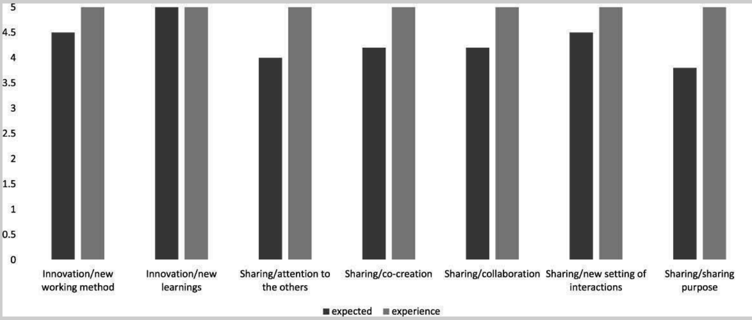

Figure 16.6 Value shifts within *Costruire Bellezza*
Source: authors' elaboration.

Across the values presented, participants generally experienced positive increases, meaning their engagement led to deeper realisation of intended values. Artistic quality, social cohesion, and trust show a notable positive shift, indicating enhanced creativity, connection, and mutual respect through participation. Well-being, collaboration, and inclusion also show increase, suggesting strengthened community bonds and empowerment. In a few categories, the difference is smaller, implying expectations were already high or well met. Overall, the chart demonstrates that participants' experiences exceeded their initial expectations, evidencing meaningful qualitative growth in social and cultural values, which illustrates CB's impact.

Stage 5: Visualisation and reflection

The final stage involves synthesising findings into *Value Maps* – visual representations of the relationships among values, stakeholders, and perceived changes (see Figures 16.2, 16.5 and 16.6). These maps are used as discussion tools in final reflection sessions, where participants interpret the patterns and identify strategy, governance, or partnership. This stage concludes with a narrative report that combines qualitative insights with visual mapping. The document can also serve as both a reflective analysis and a guide for future planning. For example, in the case of the Arts Council Malta, where multiple events were analysed under one programme, the QE captures a pattern of cultural learning where small and community driven cultural organisations mature, they move from producing cultural goods to producing relationships that sustain collective meaning.

Discussion and concluding remarks

The QE's application within the cases brings a few insights relevant for evaluation of qualities. It reveals a complex yet coherent picture of how values, practices, and stakeholders interrelate within different contexts. In this chapter we explore three interconnected dimensions emerging from the QE process: (1) the impact of arts and culture emerges from balancing interrelated cultural, social, societal, and economic values; (2) reflexivity and participation as modes of collective agency; and (3) contexualising.

Impact as balancing between interrelated values

The fact that cultural good yields multiplicity of values, their impact emerges not from maximising a single value but from balancing a combination of interrelated ones, for example cultural, social, societal, and economic. These findings demonstrate that evaluating cultural organisations, projects, and policies require methodologies that can analyse complexity, plurality, and transformation. The QE's focus on value articulation and change provides precisely such an instrument, one capable of translating the intrinsic nature of culture into practical reflections for governance. Additionally, transformation in stakeholders' understanding of their own purpose often precedes measurable social or institutional change, that is, change in perception can signal impact. And finally, the QE promotes a distinctive, innovative practice within the evaluation field by co-creating meaning and, as such, strengthens trust among different stakeholders involved.

While standard impact evaluation methods capture mostly instrumental values, the QE captures also intrinsic and relational values and broadens the impact through multiple value realisation. Organisations' analysis based on QE yields depth of understanding of motivations, ethics, and beliefs behind different choice they make. Organisations can combine QE with standard impact methods to produce more holistic, credible, and socially informed valuations. This integration can not only strengthen methodological validity but also enhance the interpretive power of valuation outcomes, thereby offering a richer foundation for strategy design, stakeholder engagement, and well-informed decision-making.

Reflexivity and participation as modes of collective agency in the QE process

A second major insight concerns the role of reflexivity and participation as mechanisms for cultivating collective agency. QE promotes stakeholders' participation in evaluation as both method and outcome. Engaging stakeholders in evaluation through co-creation of value narratives enhances both the accuracy of insights and the legitimacy of the valuation results.

This reflexive practice goes beyond consultation or feedback mechanisms. It invites stakeholders to articulate *why* certain values matter and *how* they can be realised. Applying the QE is a co-creative process in which researchers and participants collaboratively define the values that guide artistic and organisational practice (Petrova, Graça, and Klamer, 2022). Through dialogue, they identify both the values themselves and the criteria for evaluating their realisation. The VBA researcher facilitates this reflection, supporting participants in translating their qualitative intentions into tangible indicators and a shared evaluative vocabulary. This process not only deepens collective understanding of purpose and impact but also strengthens communication among stakeholders by making implicit values explicit and operational. The participatory design of the QE transformed evaluation into a dialogical practice, that is, an encounter among actors who reflect on their shared commitments and lived experiences. In doing so, the QE generate a specific culture of evaluation based on open, deliberative, and co-creative principals.–

From a methodological perspective, this participatory reflexivity transforms the evaluator's role. Instead of being an external assessor, the evaluator acts as a facilitator, enabling participants to become co-authors of their evaluative narratives. This shift aligns with critical approaches to cultural evaluation (Belfiore and Bennett, 2010; Soini and Dessein, 2016), which argue that value is not discovered but *co-produced* through social interaction.

Contextualising and the limits of standardisation

Cultural organisations operate within specific cultural, historical, and social contexts. This embeddedness is not a limitation but a defining feature which ensures that the organisation's purpose remains responsive to its evolving identity and stakeholders' needs. However, it also challenges governance and funding frameworks that favour uniform evaluation standards and quantitative indicators. The QE's contextual sensitivity directly addresses this issue. By allowing organisations to define their own evaluative categories and proxies, it treats each cultural project, organisation, and activity within its own environment in which meanings are contingent upon local histories, relationships, and power dynamics.

At the same time, this emphasis on context raises methodological and policy questions. How can findings derived from context-sensitive evaluations inform broader cultural policy? How can funders balance accountability with respect for diversity? The QE suggests a possible pathway: instead of imposing uniform metrics, funders could require value-based reflection processes as part of reporting mechanisms, thereby supporting learning rather than compliance. This approach would align with emerging frameworks in the European cultural policy landscape that advocate for "evaluation as dialogue" (KEA, 2019; Vervoort et al., 2024).

Contextualisation, then, is both a methodological condition and a policy requirement. It suggests recognising that values are locally generated, relationally sustained, and dynamically transformed. Evaluating such phenomena demands methodologies, like the QE, that can accommodate ambiguity, pluralism, and change without reducing them to simplified indicators.

Concluding remarks on the QE methodology

The QE responds directly to the growing demand from cultural organisations, foundations, social enterprises, and public institutions for methods capable of capturing qualitative outcomes – those dimensions of value and impact that extend beyond conventional quantitative evaluation frameworks.

Grounded in the value-based approach (VBA), the QE represents a significant methodological innovation in the field of evaluation in the cultural sectors and beyond where interrelated value systems operate. By connecting assessment in the revealed values and experience of cultural practice, it redefines what it means to evaluate quality and impact. The application of the QE in multiple cases demonstrate that it not simply a method for gathering data – it is a social process through which values are explicitly articulated within a group and/or among individuals, thus shared. First, it moves evaluation away from a paradigm of *measurement* toward one of *meaning- or sense-making* where value is not a static attribute but a dynamic *process* of interpretation and transformation. Evaluating impact, therefore, means asking how values are realised and changed through interaction. The case studies confirm that impact of culture unfolds as values change: participants experience shifts in what they consider meaningful, worthwhile, or possible.

By understanding evaluation as a process of co-creation of meanings, the QE helps organisations bridge the gap between intrinsic and instrumental values, for example between what matters to them and what is expected by external stakeholders. In this way, it supports both alignment between purpose and practice and legitimacy through communication of value narratives to external stakeholders, for example funders, policymakers, communities.

The QE offers methodologically integrated framework of impact evaluation, first by bridging multiple disciplinary perspectives – economics, sociology, cultural studies, and management[8] – and by positioning values at the core of the analysis. Second, by involving diverse stakeholders in articulating and interpreting values, it fosters shared ownership of findings and enhances organisational learning. And third, by detecting value transformation offers a robust qualitative indicator of impact, that can complement quantitative measures.

The QE also has its limitations and presents challenges while implementing. First, its qualitative and participatory nature demands time, trust, and facilitation skills. For example, subjectivity of value interpretation requires additional attention from the evaluator/facilitator guided by trust, transparency, and reflexivity. Organisations with limited resources may find it difficult to dedicate sufficient capacity to reflection processes. External support, training, and integration into existing evaluation practices are therefore critical for successful implementation. Second, translating QE findings into governance, policy, or funding frameworks remains a challenge. For example, policymakers often seek quantifiable evidence to justify funding allocations, whereas QE results are inherently interpretive. Bridging this gap calls for new hybrid models that combine qualitative narratives with complementary quantitative insights (see Crossick and Kaszynska, 2016; Belfiore, 2022).

Addressing these challenges does not undermine the QE's benefits, rather, it points to its transformative potential. By confronting complexity rather than simplifying it, the QE opens pathways for methodological pluralism and ethical evaluation. When combined with other evaluation approaches, it can bring values-based understanding of impact within complex systems.

Notes

1 The chapter draws on previous work by Petrova and Klamer, among others GLAMMONS project, which has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement number 101060774.
2 For further discussion on this see also the chapters of Klamer (2026), Trimarchi (2026), Petrova (2026), Wincewicz-Price (2026), and Handke (2026) in this volume.
3 For extended conceptual framing of the QE through the VBA, see Klamer's (2026) and Petrova's (2026) chapters in this volume.
4 See for example the chapters of Montoya (2026), Garst and Lavanga (2026), and Yalcintas (2026) in this volume.
5 See for example, the chapters of Bille (2026), Coate, Van Loon, and Weber (2026), Dempster (2026), Ferrero and Pinto (2026), Hofland-Mol (2026), Morea and Dekker (2026), and Won (2026).
6 Internal stakeholders are those directly creating or facilitating the projects (e.g., coordinators, participants, artists, volunteers).
7 External stakeholders are the broader ecosystem (e.g. funders, institutions, local communities, policymakers, and the public, who benefit from or influence the project).
8 See the chapters of Handke (2026), Do Carmo and Karijowiredjo (2026), Montoya (2026), Garst and Lavanga (2026), Vermeulen and Loots (2026), and Yalcintas (2026) in this volume.

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17 Articulating the "Value" of Cultural Products

The Case of Australian Books

Bronwyn Coate, Julienne van Loon and Millicent Weber

Introduction

Value is, by definition, important. Value is the worth that we ascribe to objects, ideas, places, and people; ultimately, it is how we determine what matters to us. Given that much of what matters to us and has worth is not amenable to being measured by price, the question of how then to articulate value in a meaningful way remains. For cultural goods and heritage, this is especially pertinent insofar as the arts and culture receive attention as an area of policy focus and often rely on public support. In this chapter, we explore how the value-based approach (VBA) can be used to both make sense of and articulate the value of a specific type and form of cultural good, namely local books. Our discussion draws upon principles outlined in the chapter by Klamer (2026) in this volume about the humane economy and demonstrates how new sources and dimensions of value can arise (see the chapter by Wincewicz-Price (2026) in this volume). Furthermore, we later "prepare the soil" for a value-based assessment and evaluation. Specifically, we consider the case of Australian books that encompass a range of genres and topics that include literary and historic works as well as more mainstream and popular titles.

Local books present an ideal opportunity to apply a VBA because of their relationality in connecting not simply authors and readers but also people and place. This connection between people and place is a recurrent theme across the chapters in this volume, including, among others, the contributions by Hofland-Mol (2026) that address the value of local craft and Bille (2026) who considers the shared value generated by live theatre within Denmark. Turning our attention towards that which is distinctly local has relevance in the context of globalised cultural markets whereby homogenising forces give rise to a certain form of global blandness in which giants dominate, in turn making local cultural products increasingly distinctive and important for their cultural specificity (Appadurai, 1996). In the case of Australian books and literature, the value of the local is evident in titles such as Bruce Pascoe's *Dark Emu* (2014), a popular history that reconsiders the "hunter-gatherer" tag bestowed by settler Europeans to pre-colonial Aboriginal Australians. In addition to being a runaway bestseller, Pascoe's book also generated

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widespread national debate, re-igniting the so-called "History War" arguments about colonial history in Australia and forcing many readers to re-assess their understanding of their own local landscapes (van Loon, 2023). Another example is the novel *Monkey Grip* by Helen Garner (1977), set in Melbourne's inner northern suburbs, and subsequently made into a popular film of the same title in 1982. Garner's work is widely acknowledged as having influenced, through its distinctive representation of local alternative-lifestyle sub-culture, both the cultural geography and the real-estate boom in the inner Melbourne suburbs of Collingwood, Fitzroy and Carlton in the proceeding decades (Potter and Seale, 2020). Recognition of the centrality of the local is also reflected in Australia's recently released cultural policy, Revive (Office of the Arts, 2022), which uses the tagline "a place for every story, a story for every place" in the marketing and promotion of the newly welcomed policy. Importantly, Revive draws extensively upon recent research that evidences the way in which arts and culture shape local communities (Gattenhof et al., 2022).

Within the realm of the local book industry, individuals will typically have different levels of engagement and beliefs about the value of local books to themselves individually, as well as in relation to the collective or public benefit that they yield. In this respect, the question of *value for whom* takes on importance with regard to understanding perceptual variations in the value accorded to something like local books across different cohorts or segments within society. Closely associated questions pertaining to the relative value of different types of books (even specific book titles) and books by different authors are also of significance.[1] Whether the focus is on literary works that become further consecrated through the bestowal of awards and prizes such as the Miles Franklin Literary Award,[2] or whether attention is directed towards more popular titles such as fast fiction, self-help guides, children's books or cookbooks, all books can reflect value and produce meaning. Naturally, however, these sources of value are not universal across individuals in a given society. Rather, different books activate different dimensions of value for different individuals. It is important to note though that the collective benefits deriving from the multiplicity of value dimensions that are activated speak to the power of the local book.

One further consideration is perhaps so simple that it might even lead us to question precisely what a book is at this juncture. This is becoming increasingly evident as reading habits change across the globe. For instance, recent evidence shows that rates of reading are steadily falling in the United States (National Endowment for the Arts, 2022) and Australia (Creative Australia, 2023), while in the Netherlands researchers have found that lower reading frequency is associated with declining reading scores and literacy (Luyten, 2022). These experiences testify to both global changes in reading habits and the profound impact that digitalisation has had on how the written word is consumed. In light of these shifts, taking a step back to think about exactly what a book is also forces us to think about what features and characteristics we value in local books in the first place.

In accordance with a VBA, we argue that perceptions of value are relational and can be understood within the framework of the five-sphere model (Klamer, 2016, 2017, see also chapters by Klamer (2026) and Petrova (2026) in this volume), which encompasses family, social, societal, transcendental as well as personal and natural values. Beyond these relational values, market and governmental practices are also relevant and play a vital role in shaping the institutions that impact public infrastructure. For example, the provision and ease of access to public libraries, and public policy, such as the support that is accorded to authors reflect values that are operationalised into practices.

As Petrova (2026) discusses in her chapter within this volume, institutional change is the result of a process of negotiating tensions between socio-economic values and institutional settings, particularly when these are in conflict with one another. Furthermore, she addressed that market and governmental practices are also influenced and shape relationships through the process of valorisation that in some instances can result in radical change and change norms. Together, relationships and practices mould the landscape in which the processes of valorising local books take place. Similarly, Morea and Dekker (2026) in their chapter show that for many cultural assets, such as public art, their values are inevitably contested. Both these examples and the call to consider the case of local books demonstrate that when it comes to valuing a cultural product, be it public art or local books, there is no one-size-fits-all approach. While we may articulate public value in broad positional terms, each book elicits different values within the specific individuals involved in its production, circulation and reception, which, in turn, makes the aggregation of a complex system of books difficult. However, insofar as diversity of cultural expression is itself also valued, then this plurality is a good sign and testifies to a fertile print cultural ecology, rather than constituting a reason to shy away from this important task.

This chapter is structured as follows. First, we delineate the limitations of price as an arbiter of value and make the case for why a VBA has an important role to play in articulating value for heritage such as local books. From here, we then delve into the dimensions of value that can be applied to the Australian book industry, underscoring that both perceptions of these and their relative weight or importance differ between stakeholders. Here, we focus our attention upon educational value and drill down into this as a specific aspect of the social value dimension. We then conclude considering implications for future research and cultural policy.

Value beyond price and the limitations of traditional economics

In recognising the importance of being able to articulate value for a wide range of arts and otherwise intangible cultural heritage, the emergence of a VBA is welcome insofar as it constitutes a useful alternative framework to narrower models in mainstream economics for carrying out interdisciplinary research into questions of value. While, broadly speaking, value is often assumed to be synonymous with price within mainstream economics, within cultural economics it is recognised that value can and does typically exist "beyond price" (Hutter and Throsby, 2008). For individual consumers, the recommended retail price of a particular book may provide a monetary approximation that is more reflective of the cost of producing a book than its actual worth necessarily (Thompson, 2010). In cases where a book has sufficiently moved a reader to the point of eliciting a significant response, then the price can be said to fail to reflect the full valuation of the host of ancillary benefits that the book's consumption has engendered. Conceptualising price in terms of the cost of a book for consumers is consistent with Adam Smith's (1776) understanding of prices deriving from the cost of production rather than reflecting value per se. In addition, externalities associated with the act of cultural consumption, in this case, reading a book and potentially sharing this experience with others, means that the value generated in monetary terms actually conceals the full extent of the value that is generated. As Bille argues both in her chapter in this volume (Bille, 2026) and her Presidential Address at the 22nd International Conference on Cultural Economics (Bille, 2024), the act of cultural consumption produces externalities that benefit not only individual cultural consumers but society at large.

The issues that arise with regard to the question of value underscore the complexity of the endeavour of trying to define, measure and articulate the value of local books. Failing to take into account the multiplicity of sources of value for any given cultural product means that the resulting measure of its true value will necessarily be incomplete and understated. In this respect, focusing merely on one set of value dimensions, such as the economic, for example, equating the value of Australian books narrowly with the revenues generated from sales, ultimately downplays the total value they generate. While some economists assert that in efficient markets determining prices on the basis of the interaction between the forces of supply and demand provides the best yardstick of value, there is abundant evidence from a range of cultural markets that suggests that cultural products like books are not uniformly normal economic goods (Frey, 2003). For starters, predicting the utility derived from reading a particular book is uncertain when the book has not previously been read, and indeed part of the value and reading pleasure even stems from both the newness and serendipity of surprise (which is why, say, we experience more enjoyment when we read our favourite novel for the first time than we do with subsequent re-reads). While a book consumer may have read other titles by the same author and/or may have read reviews of a particular book in order to formulate an idea of the expected utility of a particular book, the actual satisfaction the book will bring can only be known once the book has been read. In this regard, the judgment of expected utility that guides decision-making is able to be expressed as *ex ante* expected value (Bille Hansen, 1997), although given the uncertainty about the actual pleasure, enjoyment or satisfaction of cultural products like books which cannot be truly known until consumption has occurred *ex post*, it is natural that errors between forecasted expected value and actual value may come to light once the book has been read. In this respect, the learning-by-consuming approach (McCain 1979, 1981; Brito and Barros, 2005) posits that when consumers are uncertain about their tastes, then they will learn their own subjective preference structures through a process of consumption experiences, which generate either positive or negative feedback. Consumers who receive positive feedback about certain types of books (such as procuring enjoyment from reading titles selected for the shortlist of the Miles Franklin Literary Award) are more likely to increase future consumption of works that are in this vein, while those who receive negative feedback (such as when a shortlisted title for the Miles Franklin is not enjoyed or finished) will consume fewer similar titles. However, preferences expressed in such terms still mask both the non-use benefits and perceptions of the collective benefit that may also be valued, but not necessarily factored into a book consumer's utility function.

Without deviating too far from traditional neoclassical assumptions, non-market valuation techniques such as contingent valuation (Noonan, 2003), which are applied in the case of cultural goods and services including heritage sites, provide numerous examples of how the limitations of price as an arbiter of value are recognised but also effectively become reinforced when non-market value becomes monetised through estimates of willingness to pay or willingness to accept compensation. Coate and Hoffmann (2022) further point out how the distinction between price and value becomes entirely redundant in empirical analyses dominated by neoclassical assumptions, and advocate for the increased uptake of behavioural methods and approaches within the field of cultural economics. As an extension of their call to revitalise the toolkit used by cultural economists, we can add a VBA.

A conceptual framework to operationalise a value-based approach: the case of local books

Social, cultural and economic value

A VBA emphasises art and culture as social practices and expressions, whereby value derives from the characteristic of being shared and the relationships it gives meaning to, in contradistinction to the goods that are typically modelled within standard economics. As the five-sphere model developed by Klamer shows, the core driver of value creation is the everyday relationships that exist outside of market and governmental structures. Ultimately, it is within society and through home-based and community-based relationships that cultural expression finds its meaning. Additionally, within the social sphere, it is via the logic of reciprocity, reflected in acts of contribution making, gift giving, gift exchanges and participation, that outcomes reflecting the qualities of cooperation and collaboration arise. In what Klamer (2017) refers to as the "oikos" or home sphere, relationships centre around the notion of a shared fate and sense of interdependence that is associated with family and kinship. It is within the cultural sphere, however, where Klamer asserts that all other spheres are transcended: "this sphere is related to the good, the beautiful, the truth, to God or to karma, harmony, the sacred, or whatever suggests transcendence" (2017, p. 154).

Building from the five-sphere model, we can use the concept of relational processes to connect specific traits and characteristics to our core value dimensions. As a starting point, for cultural products, such as books, a VBA recognises that sources of value emanate from economic, social, and cultural sets of dimensions (Klamer, 2016). Table 17.1 attempts to map value dimensions with their associated indicators. This builds upon the earlier influential work by Throsby (2001) who distinguishes between economic value and cultural value. Throsby argues that both are separate and important and that together they comprise the total value of the arts and culture. According to Throsby's multifaceted definition, cultural value includes those harder to quantify dimensions that are related to an artform's characteristics, such as its aesthetic, spiritual, social, historical, symbolic and authenticity qualities.

Klamer's (2016) VBA recognises a third distinct dimension related to social value. For Klamer, the distinction between cultural, social and economic values is principally understood in terms of the different spheres in which sensemaking occurs, where the centrality of relationships is emphasised in terms of both generative and underlying forms of value. Crucially, the relationships that cultural engagement, practice and expression facilitate are moderated across economic, cultural and social domains and lie at the heart of the value of culture and cultural expression as something distinctly human and relational.[3] Klamer argues that cultural practices occur within a social environment which influences both the value of things and *why* they are valued in that way. In the foundational work he carried out to establish a VBA, Klamer states: "Incorporation of relationships and values beyond measure will require a shift in focus and most likely in method. We will for example, have to do more interpretative work and rely less on our analytical models" (Klamer, 1997, p. 24).

Measuring relationships and relational processes as they occur across social, cultural and economic dimensions, while desirable, need to acknowledge the limitations of traditional economic approaches and should be approached with care. At present, there is a paucity of frameworks for operationalising a VBA that are amenable to culturally specific forms (such as local books). There are notable exceptions in this regard, including Klamer, Petrova and Kiss's (2022) work on festivals, Petrova, Graça and Klamer's (2022) work within cultural communities, Petrova's (2020) framework for the visual arts, as well as earlier work by Klamer and Zuidhof (1999) in relation to heritage. By drawing upon Klamer's (2017) five-sphere model that identifies the relational drivers that underpin value, whether that be social, cultural or economic in nature (or a combination of any of these distinct dimensions simultaneously), we can begin to map the relational processes that drive value creation as summarised in Table 17.1.

Table 17.1 Mapping the value dimensions for cultural goods and services and indicators

Social value dimension		*Cultural value dimension*		*Economic value dimension*	
Indicators of social value	Description	Indicators of cultural value	Description	Indicators of economic value	Description
Education	Culture's role in learning as content and inspiration including cultivation of taste to drive future cultural consumption	Aesthetic	Possessing beauty, harmony, relationality to site, etc.	Employment	Generation of jobs, income of artists and creatives
Health	Culture's role (especially active engagement) in promoting health via wellbeing, combatting loneliness, etc.	Spiritual	Religious significance, inner qualities that extend beyond specific faith	Revenue	Income generated from the market sale of cultural products
Diversity	Culture's role in expressing plurality of cultural expression	Historic	Historical connections, reflection of conditions at time it was created, etc.	Contribution to GDP	Contribution of a cultural product to an industrial sector and the broader economy
Inclusion	Culture's role as empowering to diverse individuals and communities and as a democratising force	Symbolic	Conveyors of meaning	Positive externalities	Spillovers including liveability/placemaking, contribution to innovation
		Authenticity	A work is real and what it purports to be	Willingness to pay / willingness to accept compensation	Non-market valuation for public goods in the arts and culture

Articulating a characteristic of social value for a specific cultural product: the case of articulating the educational value of local books

In seeking to operationalise a VBA we can then drill down into the various traits and characteristics of the value dimensions that are activated by a particular cultural product. To do this in Figure 17.1 we adapted Klamer's (2017) five-sphere model concerning the relational drivers of value for the arts and culture that recognises the market (M), governance (G), oikos or home (O), social (S) and cultural (C) spheres. For illustrative purposes, we focus our attention on the cultural product of books and consider the social dimension of value, specifically the characteristic of education that books stimulate as they engage minds and spur interaction. Certainly, the well-documented educational benefits of books make this an obvious place to start when it comes to articulating the value of local books.

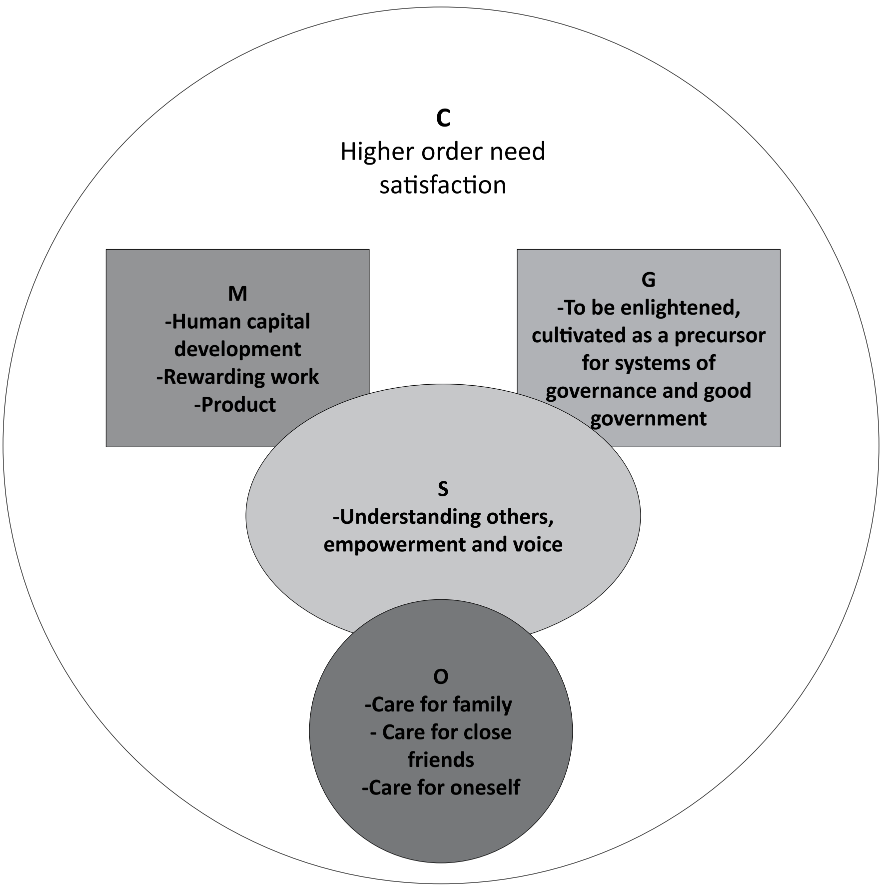

Figure 17.1 Conceptualising the educational valorisation of local books within different spheres

As Figure 17.1 demonstrates, if we focus on the educational benefits of local books, then we can begin to imagine how these benefits transpire and influence relationships across the spheres. For instance, in the oikos or home sphere we might expect a family with children to place value on a book's role in educating the young and inspiring young readers to pick up books for both the collective and personal pleasure they bring. At a societal level, a book's educational value is activated when it enables insight and understanding into the experiences of others, or, alternatively, when it empowers under-represented groups to have a voice and be recognised. Within the context of the market economy books may be regarded within the context of education as playing a crucial role in aiding human capital development, which, ultimately, supports people's efforts to find rewarding work. A further benefit stemming from the education that books enable is that citizens use books as a learning resource and, more generally, through wide diverse reading habits can cultivate general knowledge and empathy, both of which are key precursors for the establishment of democratic systems of governance and supportive of social functioning more broadly. At the apex of Figure 17.1 is the cultural benefit deriving from the satisfaction of higher-order needs. These needs related to self-actualisation and self-fulfilment are irrevocably linked to self-esteem and the satisfaction one gets from realising their potential (Maslow, 1954). In the specific case of education, we can here think about how books educate us to activate the pathways to these higher order needs that are commonly associated with living a good life.

An instructive case study to illustrate the above is the Australian children's book publishing phenomena known as *Bluey*. The *Bluey* series (which as of September 2024 comprises 85 book titles) is a media tie-in based on the popular Australian-made children's television series originally co-commissioned by ABC Children and BBC Studios. The titular character, Bluey, is a six-year-old blue heeler pup who, according to the publisher Penguin Random House's by-line, "loves to play" (Penguin, 2024). The book series includes sticker books, lift-the-flap books and board books targeted towards pre-school aged children. Notably, *Bluey* creator, Joe Brumm, is said to have had a "particular creative vision" for the distinctively local content of the original television series, including avoiding "any form of co-production that would compromise the series' distinctly Australian qualities" (Potter, 2020). Focussing on a particular title in the series, for example *Bluey: Fruit Bat* (2019), in relation to Figure 17.1, we can find evidence of benefits in the oikos or home sphere, through the exploration of brief narratives or parables of value (Meyrick, Phiddian and Barnett, 2018) shared by readers on social media site Goodreads, where 56% of readers give the book a five-star rating. Importantly, titles such as *Bluey: Fruit Bat* (2019) can also contribute towards long-term social wellbeing if they encourage adults to read more regularly to their children. Recent research shows, for example, that "children who were exposed to more storybooks showed a greater inclination to read for pleasure and in turn, had more advanced literacy skills as adolescents" (Australia

Reads, 2023). In this respect, this benefit could be said to span across several of Klamer's spheres, starting with the social sphere, before ultimately impacting upon the cultural sphere due to its potential influence upon the satisfaction of higher order needs.

Towards a framework for mapping relational processes and value dimensions

While the benefits generated from cultural products like local books can be observed both directly and indirectly, it is informative to consider the relational processes that produce the ensuing benefits. By understanding these relationships, we can better understand the value that is created. This is further addressed by Petrova (2026) in this volume, when she describes articulating value proxies that while not necessarily being precisely amenable to the measurement required to produce an indicator, are nevertheless still useful for expressing and describing potential benefits. In her chapter, Petrova draws a clear distinction between social and cultural relationships and emphasises qualities such as belonging and identity within social relationships, while for cultural relationships she refers to the relationships that spawn from aesthetic and intellectual experiences associated with cultural production and consumption. Informed by this understanding, Figure 17.2 illustrates the relational processes that drive the core value dimensions as well as their constituent characteristics and traits that were identified in Table 17.1. By elevating the status of relationships, the VBA can be said to be people-centred by design as well as being reflective of the principles of sustainability that have come to dominate new approaches to modelling the circular economy. Rather than environmental sustainably, the VBA offers a framework in which cultural sustainability lies at the core.

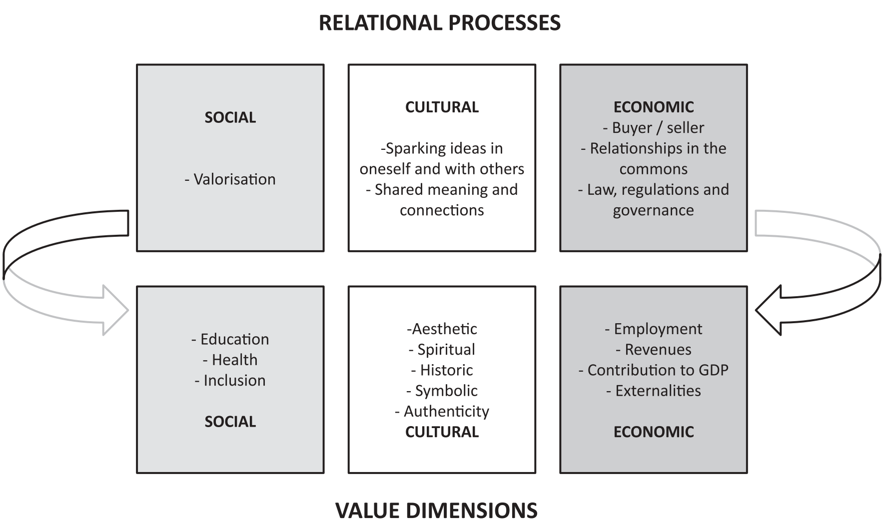

Figure 17.2 Framework to link processes that drive relationships and value dimensions

Once we focus upon the specific educational benefit that local books are capable of imbuing, we can perhaps now begin to sense the possibilities if the VBA were to be rolled out on a grander scale to encompass the full gamut of benefits created across each of the core value dimensions. In Figure 17.2, we tease some of the potential connections between relational processes and their corresponding value dimensions, albeit the values activated are by no means set or settled and would necessarily differ within different individuals at different points in time. Across all spheres, including within homes, throughout communities, arts organisations, cultural institutions and all levels of government, there is a tacit agreement and understanding that the arts generate value for the societies they serve (Hutter and Throsby, 2008; Belfiore, 2015; Holden, 2016). Yet when it comes to articulating that value and linking it to specific art and cultural forms, such as local books (or even specific book titles), challenges arise. Indeed, the way in which the contributions of different art forms, including local books, are understood, assessed and articulated remains largely piecemeal, a fact which is also reflected in the longstanding academic and governmental debates over the most effective ways to report on the value of arts and culture. Belfiore notes that there are "two defining issues of contemporary cultural policy debates: cultural value and the challenge of its measurement" (2015, ix). Meyrick, Phiddian and Barnett (2018) argue that the challenge is not a data collection issue, but rather a conceptual issue. Indeed, as a step towards Australia's new cultural policy, the consultation process that called for submissions to seek opinions from the arts and cultural sectors and other interested stakeholders revealed the widespread sense of crisis within the cultural sector about the challenges of measurement and accountability. For instance, novelist and editor Ashley Hay (2022), in her submission to the National Cultural Policy consultation, directly addressed the high-ranking public servants and political agents charged with the arts and cultural policy re-think, stating:

> You will receive many submissions about the contribution Australia's artforms make to the economy, and the high levels of engagement of Australia's public with artforms of all kinds. These facts and figures speak their own important volumes. But the "value", for want of a better word, of this work lies way beyond these kinds of figures.

Within the context of local books, what individuals and communities value (a sense of connection, belonging, wonder, empowerment, imagination, aesthetic enjoyment, challenge, new knowledge and perspectives, etc.) and what is typically measured (sales revenues and employment outcomes) are, as Hay points out above, not aligned. The requirement for arts and cultural projects or events that receive public support to demonstrate markers of value to others outside the project, thereby evidencing positive and measurable impacts upon communities and individuals, is far from a recent development and remains a persistent problem (Gattenhof et al., 2022).

The aforementioned five-sphere model that is discussed more fully in Klamer's (2026) chapter in this volume, points to the centrality of relationships when discussing how value from the arts and culture is generated, expressed and articulated. We can apply a VBA to complex cultural goods such as books by identifying different proxies through which the type of value in question is experienced (for further examples see Klamer, Petrova and Kiss, 2022; Petrova, Graça and Klamer, 2022; and Petrova, 2020). Our VBA seeks to identify and articulate these different aspects of the sources of each dimension of value. To this end, Table 17.1 and Figure 17.2 also draw upon frameworks developed by Throsby (2001), Holden (2006), Brown and Novak (2007, 2013) and, more recently, Fancourt and Finn (2019). These approaches provide frameworks that attempt to conceptualise an approach for articulating or evaluating culture in connection to an area of interest that is given focus. Throsby's (2001) cultural value framework suggests specific characteristics or qualities of culture from which cultural value (as distinct from economic value) is derived. In contrast, Holden's (2006) approach incorporates behavioural insights that emphasise the intrinsic benefits associated with the consumption of art and culture. Brown and Novak (2007, 2013) also recognise the importance of the psychological benefits associated with art and culture and emphasise an approach to valuation based on enhancing quality of life, while Fancourt and Finn (2019) frame the benefits of arts and culture within the context of health and wellbeing outcomes. Certainly, the appeal of each of these approaches in drawing attention to different areas of interest spanning health, wellbeing and psychological outcomes, is that they are also indicative of the increased emphasis that is placed upon social prescribing within arts and cultural policy that aims to shift and influence health indicators via cultural engagement (e.g., Redmond et al., 2019). In light of the framing provided by Klamer's five-sphere model, we might also suggest that the discourses within each of the spheres, especially the social sphere, are not static and will rather shift to attune with broader social values that change and develop in new directions over time.

One of Klamer's insights that we deem to be particularly relevant relates to the recursive quality of valorisation. In other words, ascribing value is a process which can itself impact upon the value of a good, hence making it paramount for care to be taken with measurement. An act of valorisation functions as a signal, which, in turn, can influence behaviour and conceptions of value. For instance, for those who are either time-poor or information deprived, recommendations stemming from reviews provided by literary critics may guide their perceptions of the value of a book, irrespective of whether an individual has read it or not. In a similar vein, Wincewicz-Price's (2026) chapter in this volume explores in greater detail the limitations of rational choice and its restrictive assumptions that fail to account for non-economic values. Even so far as economising behaviours concerning the arts and culture can be predictably irrational (Coate and Hoffmann, 2022), we can still appreciate the need for more expansive frameworks for recognising both the complexity of value and its granularity. We also see evidence of valorisation at times becoming a form of gatekeeping that innocuously can signal which books, stories and authors one should read. The extraordinary market presence and popular success, for example, of the aforementioned *Bluey* tie-in series, which has benefited enormously from the influence of visual-culture and global broadcasting success, risks clogging up bookshop space and taking reader attention away from children's books authored and published from socially and culturally diverse perspectives. As children's literature scholar Kathy Short has pointed out, "the continued lack of diversity in children's literature is devastating for children as readers, many of whom rarely see their lives and cultural identities within a book" (2018, p. 293). Indeed, the trend towards a few highly-visible, high-sale book titles, at the expense of a "long-tail" of diverse, lesser-known titles by lesser-known authors, is a well-documented trend not only in relation to books (White, 2017) but also in terms of other types of cultural products (see Rosen, 1981).

Conclusion

Informed by research and evidenced by its absence within policy domains, there is a need to develop valuation models and approaches that are holistic in nature. This point is further emphasised in favouring a people-centred approach (Donovan, 2013). In this chapter, we have addressed valuation as stemming from processes of valorisation or the articulation of an experience of certain value, over and above valuation as evaluation (see Vatin, 2013). By applying evaluation approaches to the local book industry that go beyond counting and reporting metrics such as book sales, borrowing, the number of e-book downloads or subsidies paid to support authors and the publishing sector, we can start to build a more comprehensive picture of the transformative potential of local books, both for individuals and communities. However, as a starting point identifying the dimensions of value in and of themselves may be charged and shaped by the beliefs and values of individuals and societies collectively. For those of us who have had the opportunity to discuss this point with Arjo Klamer personally, including in conversations facilitated at VBA workshops in Venice as well as at his home in the Netherlands, when it comes to articulating the value of culture, one is tempted to ask, "what about the music?" or in this particular case: "what about the books and stories?". It is a curious thing that what is often lost or most neglected in efforts to measure and articulate the value of culture is the intrinsic benefit that derives from the cultural good itself.

It is also important to note here that the lack of uniformity in the task of articulating value and its complexity, while representing challenges, do not constitute a reason for shying away from the effort needed to articulate value; if anything, it makes it all the more important to address in an era characterised by cultural policy reset not only in Australia but internationally. Australia's *Revive* calls for "a place for every story and a story for every place", and we emphasise the importance of ensuring local books have their place in the development of cultural valuation.

Notes

1 As an example of applying a VBA to a specific book the authors adapted research by van Loon into a media article for The Conversation (2023) on *Dark Emu* by Bruce Pascoe. The ensuing comments and debate that this piece generated highlighted the disparity in perceptions around the value of Pascoe's influential book which is indicative of its social and political value.

2 The Miles Franklin Literary Award is one of Australia's most prestigious annual literary awards, and recognises a novel "of the highest literary merit" that "presents Australian life in any of its phases" (Perpetual, 2026).

3 Value is produced both in the relationships and interactions between agents that collectively create a book—through the labor of authors, agents, publishers, editors, publicists, media organizations, and so on—and in both the real and perceived relationships that readers have with authors, intermediaries and other readers, that overdetermine the reader's experience of a book. Indeed, we see the crisis-level reckoning of the threat posed to book publishing by Generative Artificial Intelligence such as ChatGPT as stemming from the centrality of (human) relationality to value production in the book industry (see: Weber, 2023).

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18 Organizational Strategies as Guiding Principles for both Making and Measuring Impact within the Arts and Cultural Sectors

A Helpful Decision Tree

Marjelle Vermeulen and Ellen Loots

Introduction

The arts and cultural sectors have become accustomed to having to justify their reliance upon public support structures and explain the value that they generate for society (Hutter and Throsby, 2008). These justifications come in different forms: alongside their economic impact, arts and culture are also said to positively impact upon society at large by virtue of embodying certain characteristics of public or common goods (Towse, 2019). More specifically, they have the capacity to "trigger reflection, generate empathy, create dialogue, and foster new ideas" or help people think critically and question both their own and other people's experiences due to the excitement, colors, feelings, magic, metaphors, and danger that the arts can offer (Anttonen et al., 2016, p. 19). The demand for insights into the effects of arts, culture, and creativity has increased in recent decades across the globe. This emergent interest in these outputs, which some view as an issue of "transparency", comes from a diverse range of stakeholders, namely national, regional, and local governments (Raad voor Cultuur, 2020), public and private funds, and arts and cultural organizations. Researchers have endorsed this need for social impact measurement within the cultural and creative fields (e.g., Vermeulen and Maas, 2021), which, in turn, has expanded the toolbox for measuring impact. However, both economic and social impact studies have been criticized for reducing the broad and valuable contributions of organizations to quantifiable – frequently financial – indicators. Nevertheless, social impact studies are expedient as far as they potentially disclose as well as reinforce the values that lie at the core of an organization's mission, strategies, and activities. Ideally, impact measurement should rely upon organizational values and strategies (Petrova, Graça, and Klamer, 2022), and help to support those organizations that not only want to *prove* but also *improve* the impact that they have, both within and upon society (Ebrahim, 2019).

The fact that impact assessments are conducted to either prove or improve impact touches upon the question of *why* organizations measure impact in the first place. While our understanding of *how* to measure impact has also

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increased in recent years (see, for example, the value-based approach), there is a scarcity of knowledge regarding *what* organizations should be measuring if they truly want to understand how to bring their values to individuals and/or society at large. This chapter sets out to address this lacuna in extant knowledge, by systematically exposing what organizations need to measure in order to understand their impact, at the highly concrete level of their activities, outputs, outcomes, or influence. We provide a tool that can help them in this endeavor, which comes in the form of a decision tree. Hence, it appears challenging for organizations to first distinguish their substantive goals or *purpose* from quantitative indicators of their performance (Petrova et al., 2026), and secondly, to then get on with the work of understanding the impact they are generating, both within and upon society.

Our tool is inferred from the work of Ebrahim (2019) and intends to facilitate setting up an impact measurement process. In his theory, Ebrahim distinguishes between four different strategies typically adopted by organizations: a niche strategy, an integrated strategy, an emergence strategy, and an ecosystem strategy. These strategies – ways to achieve long-term performance – are characterized by distinct levels of uncertainty over the cause-effect pathway of an organization's activities, and distinct levels of control over the outcome of an organization's activities. We will explain how these strategies can help the process of determining *what* an organization that wishes to engage with impact studies should primordially measure. Although Ebrahim's framework was originally developed for the social sector, during the course "Assessing the Impact of Culture and Creativity in Society" at Erasmus University, it became evident that it could also be employed within the cultural and creative sectors (Loots and Vermeulen, 2022). This is because many organizations within the arts and cultural sectors embrace values that are social in essence. The chapter provides several examples from the cultural and creative fields and exposes how the decision tree can be applied. For illustrative purposes, most of the examples pertain to the important theme of DEAI, but the tool can be used by organizations with a wide range of other foci.

Translating organizational values into a mission for impact

Organizations are increasingly wanting to engage with impact. However, with policymakers and financers framing this issue primarily in terms of transparency and legitimacy, *measuring* impact may ultimately prevail over *making* impact. Focusing solely upon measuring impact prevents organizations from learning whether or not they are doing the right things (see, for example, Klamer, 2017). Measurement post hoc does not yield insights into the extent to which an organization has succeeded in translating its values into action, nor can it tell us whether these actions were appropriate to achieve their ambitions. Simply put, measuring impact at the end of the chain rather than intertwining it throughout organizational processes does not do justice to impact.

Organizations frequently know *what* they are doing, and *how* they are doing it even. However, fewer organizations can explicitly state *why* they are doing the things they are doing. Gaining insight into what this *purpose* is constitutes the starting point for becoming influential. Organizations should begin with the question "why" they do what they do. The value-based approach (VBA) underscores that people's values are reflected within the qualities they seek in the activities of organizations with which they engage. Any evaluation, then, "focuses on the question of to what extent the relevant values or qualities are realized with certain activities" (Petrova et al., 2026). Starting out from this intrinsically motivated ambition, organizations can then subsequently determine how they shape these values and make an impact. This can be made concrete through a vision (the ideal picture) and mission (acting upon this vision). Whether a mission is purely artistically driven, or also socially driven, differs across each organization. But the mission is nevertheless the starting point for a broader strategy that addresses questions such as: Who are we doing this for? How do we handle it? When is the right time? Ideally, organizational values should function as the starting point for what an organization will eventually strive to realize. By doing so, any impact that the organization is seeking to make would be based upon what it considers to be vital, which would be interwoven within all of its actions.

Impact measurement is then useful in terms of helping an organization to know whether its values have been rightly and effectively translated into strategic priorities and activities. Impact measurement is specific to each organization, with distinct measurement approaches and distinct ways of involving their stakeholders. Even in instances where organizations have the same values, such as, for example, within the cultural field, where many organizations value inclusivity and via their activities seek to contribute towards a more inclusive society, organizations will still realize this value in different ways and employ distinct strategies to do so. The tool proposed in this chapter takes into account this specificity and helps organizations to get started with their impact measurement process.

Impact measurement within the arts and cultural sectors

Researchers have attempted to take stock of the different ways in which the arts and cultural sectors impact upon society (Anttonen et al., 2016). Within research, the notions of "social impact" and "societal impact" have been used interchangeably to broadly denominate this impact. Here, "social" commonly refers to both people and the relations between people, while "societal" refers to the society that individuals live in which faces challenges and opportunities. In our course at Erasmus University, for example, students have engaged with the MovieZone program of EYE Film Museum in Amsterdam, which aims to connect youngsters from diverse backgrounds (social impact) and introduce them to audiovisual content with the hope of contributing towards a media sector that is more diverse and inclusive (societal impact) (Loots and Vermeulen, 2022). The social and societal impact of an organization commonly relate to one another, and henceforth, we will use the notions interchangeably.

How *can social impact be determined and measured?*

Two tools that help organizations to understand *how* impact can be achieved are the impact value chain (see, for example, Clark et al., 2004) and the Theory of Change. They depict a sequence of inputs, activities, outputs, outcomes, and impact (Figure 18.1). Inputs are the resources (financial, human, logistic, etc.) required to realize an activity, while outputs are the immediate and direct results of the activity and can include, for example, the number of visitors to an exhibition. The outcomes are the changes that result from the outputs, such as, for example, the level of inspiration that people gain from visiting a museum. The impact is the highest order of effects that can be generated via an activity, or the achievement of the mission impact. Impact value chains and Theories of Change have been frequently applied within both the non-profit sector (see, for example, Ebrahim and Rangan, 2014) and cultural and creative fields (Loots and Vermeulen, 2022). Cultural and creative organizations that want to know how to approach an impact process can find a step-by-step guide in an article by Vermeulen and Maas (2021). More knowledge is increasingly being developed around *how* social impact can be made visible and measured. By comparison, knowledge regarding *what* needs to be measured when an organization wants to gain insight into the impact it has achieved remains underdeveloped.

The impact of *what*?

It is frequently argued that social impact measurement must start with the question: "the impact of *what* do I want to measure?" (see, for example, Belfiore and Bennett, 2009; Ebrahim and Rangan, 2014). Although this question appears relatively straightforward to answer, in practice, organizations routinely struggle with it. While the mission statement of an organization can serve as the starting point for answering this question, many mission statements are overly long or vague. Translating the mission statement of an organization into impact goals makes it possible to be more concrete about *what* the purpose of an organization actually is.

Step 1: Clarify the level at which the impact is intended to take place

An organization may value outcomes at the level of individuals, such as, for example, setting goals for visitors or participants, which would mean that visitors or participants would be the eventual beneficiaries. Equally, an organization may value societal outcomes in terms of setting goals for the wider

Figure 18.1 Impact value chain
Source: Authors' elaboration of Clark et al., 2004.

society, such as, for example, social cohesion, justice, or sustainability (Ebrahim, 2019). The level of an organization's impact goals ultimately influences what an organization should want to measure. For example, while the wish to generate impact with respect to the reflections, attitudes, and empathy of *individuals* is shared by many museums and performing arts organizations, it cannot be taken for granted that their activities all generate impact at the *societal* level.

Step 2: Identify the level of uncertainty about the cause-effect pathway and level of control over the outcome

When determining what to measure, organizations face practical conditions or constraints that guide some of the choices they make in their impact measurement decisions. Here, we rely upon Ebrahim (2019) who refers to two elements that characterize the relationship between an organization's activity (or set of activities) and the eventual outcomes the organization achieves via this activity (or activities): the level of *uncertainty about the cause-effect pathway*, and the level of *control they have over the outcome* (Figure 18.2).

First, the *level of (un)certainty* about cause-effect pathways has been an important theme within the management and accounting literature for decades. In relation to impact, this concerns how certain an organization is that its activities will lead to specific outputs and outcomes. Some activities have clearer cause-effect pathways than others, and the less ambiguous a cause-effect

Figure 18.2 Contingency framework for measuring social performance: four strategies
Source: Authors' elaboration of the contingency framework for measuring social performance of Ebrahim (2019).

pathway is, the more likely it is that the impact goals can be achieved. The rule of thumb, here, is that a high level of uncertainty about the relationship between an intervention (cause) and the intended impact goals (effect) complicates the realization of values: it is difficult for an organization to know which behaviors by which relevant stakeholders should be stimulated in order to achieve the intended goals (Ebrahim, 2019). This, in turn, makes it difficult to both *ex ante* determine the critical success factors of an intervention and understand which interventions would successfully contribute towards an organization's mission. Depending on the certainty of the cause-effect pathway, an organization can decide *what* to measure within its impact measurement. Ebrahim explains that in cases where the level of uncertainty about the cause-effect pathway is low (such as, for example, in the case of evidence-based interventions, as the effect of tested medicines upon health outcomes), then measuring at the output level is sufficient. In contrast, many interventions exist in which there is a high level of uncertainty about cause-effect pathways and limited evidence for the cause-effect pathway. An example of this would be advocacy or lobbying activities that can often include lengthy negotiations, but of which the influence upon the eventual changes is uncertain.

Second, the level of *control* an organization has over its outcomes is a practical constraint that serves to influence what an organization can measure. It concerns the degree to which an organization can control its activities and the conditions to better manage and generate its (long-term) outcomes. In some cases, the level of control over an outcome can be very high, such as, for example, when an organization conducts and coordinates multiple interventions to achieve the desired impact goal. The higher the number of interventions to achieve the desired impact goal, the more the organization has control over the outcome. In other words, organizations that coordinate multiple activities simultaneously to achieve a desired outcome, are more likely to realize the desired effects than organizations that organize only one activity and do not manage how their influence develops in the longer term.

Box 18.1 The level of (un)certainty over the cause-effect pathway and the level of control within cultural organizations

Within the cultural and creative fields, there is generally limited insight into *cause-effect pathways*. Do organizations contribute towards a more inclusive society? How does music affect health and wellbeing? Although evidence is slowly accruing in this respect, it is nevertheless context-dependent and not generalizable. Therefore, it is safe to acknowledge the low certainty of cause-effect pathways of artistic, cultural, and creative interventions. We can illustrate this through the example of a Diversity & Inclusion Code of Conduct within the cultural sector in the Netherlands. To improve diversity and inclusion within the cultural and creative sectors, the initiators of this code of conduct provide a suite of tools, such as training, workshops, and self-assessment scans. The aim of this code of conduct is to change the knowledge and behavior of various stakeholders. The level of *uncertainty over the cause-effect pathway* is high because of the wide range of activities in place and the fact that various stakeholders (local authorities, employers and employees, and artists and creators) must all be receptive to the topic, become aware of its importance, be willing to change their behavior, and eventually embed diversity and inclusion within their daily practices. To better *control* the intended outcomes, organizations can develop programs rather than isolated activities. An example of this is the Van Gogh Connects program ran by the Van Gogh Museum in Amsterdam. Through this program, the museum intensively focuses on one specific target group and organizes multiple interventions (Vermeulen, 2021).

Four strategies that can serve as the baseline for impact measurement choices

We have explained how the levels of uncertainty and control jointly relate to how an organization can come to understand its impact. These components result in a two-by-two matrix that depicts the various strategic combinations of organizations with social missions (Figure 18.2). Ebrahim's theory distinguishes between four different strategies that organizations can adopt: a niche strategy, an integrated strategy, an emergent strategy, and an ecosystem strategy. Through these strategies, Ebrahim (2019) refers to "how an organization seeks to achieve long-term performance" (p. 26). These strategies help to determine *what* an organization should measure, as each strategy is characterized by a distinct level of uncertainty over the cause-effect pathway and a distinct level of control over the outcome. It should be noted that this is a wholly theoretical model, and that there will be some organizations that exhibit characteristics of two or more of these quadrants. As Ebrahim (2019) puts it, "in reality, an organization may deploy multiple strategies simultaneously. In the end, it falls upon managers to design the performance systems best suited for social change" (p. 206).

Strategy 1: Niche strategy (low uncertainty – low control)

Organizations that adopt a niche strategy have good knowledge about both the causes and effects of their activities (*low uncertainty*). Within this strategy, interventions are specific and delineated, and mostly have a short-term focus. However, the level of *control over outcomes is limited*. Ebrahim distinguishes between two value propositions within this strategy. The first value proposition concerns interventions where direct outputs are the desired result, rather than longer-term outcomes. An example of this would be temporary shelters or emergency food aid, in which case the (countable) outputs of the intervention are a means to an end. The second value proposition pertains to interventions where there is strong evidence about the cause and effect and "output measures can serve as a reasonable proxy for outcomes" (Ebrahim, 2019, p. 42). Because of the low level of uncertainty about the cause-effect pathway, and because the cause-effect upon outcomes is well known (such as, for example, the effect of medicines upon health outcomes), then outputs serve as a proxy for outcomes.

Strategy 2: Integrated strategy (low uncertainty – high control)

Similar to the niche strategy, an integrated strategy is characterized by a good knowledge of the cause, the effect, and the pathway from cause to effect (*low uncertainty*). Organizations that adopt this strategy do not organize a single intervention. Rather, within this strategy, one activity is not enough to make a real impact, and thus the integration of several activities either independently by the focal organization or by means of a collaboration, is necessary to achieve the desirable outcomes. This type of integrated strategy, therefore, comes with a portfolio of activities. When the interventions are well coordinated, then the level of *control over the outcomes is likely to be high*. Organizations that deploy an integrated strategy are recommended to measure outputs and outcomes at the level of the individual, albeit that in some cases, it is also possible to measure societal outcomes.

Strategy 3: Emergent strategy (high uncertainty – low control)

An emergent strategy points to the fact that impact "emerges" as the result of several activities over time. As a strategy, it is characterized by relatively poor knowledge about causes and effects: the level of *uncertainty about the cause-effect pathway is high*. Furthermore, the emergent strategy is characterized by a *low level of control over the outcome*. Different types of activities fall under this strategy. For example, it is difficult to predict how lobbying or advocacy activities will be received by relevant stakeholders (the cause-effect pathway), while the level of control over the intended outcomes is limited. While an advocacy organization may have set long-term goals, it nevertheless operates within a dynamic context characterized by quickly changing circumstances. In cases like these, it is recommended to measure the influence of the activities, which is also referred to as "interim outcomes".

Strategy 4: Ecosystem strategy (high uncertainty – high control)

Within an ecosystem strategy, the focal organization is part of a larger ecosystem in which a larger societal issue is jointly addressed. Here, the intended outcomes are formulated for the longer term. However, the cause-effect pathway of the intervention is complex and poorly understood (*high uncertainty*). Because of the complexity of an ecosystem, different actors are involved, and the interventions of multiple actors are orchestrated "in order to produce outcomes that no single actor could produce alone" (Ebrahim 2019, p. 44). Each actor brings their own expertise. Because collaboration is needed to solve a societal problem, this strategy is characterized by a *high level of control over outcomes*. The difficulty of measuring the impact of such an ecosystem stems from the fact that the effects of the separate interventions are difficult to measure due to the many non-linear (interactional) effects among the interventions within the collaboration. To measure the collective impact of the ecosystem, it is recommended to measure individual as well as societal outcomes, in conjunction with the formulated impact goals. Solely measuring the collective impact provides information on the impact of the combined interventions of the actors only, rather than on the impact of single interventions. This implies that an organization can only make claims about *contributing* towards societal impact, instead of claiming *attribution* (Ebrahim, 2019).

It is important to mention here that one strategy is not better than the other. That is to say, there is no value judgment associated with which strategy an organization decides to adopt: the strategy simply determines what is relevant for the organization to measure. Furthermore, an organization can apply different strategies, side-by-side, and thus apply distinct measurements alongside each other.

Box 18.2 Examples of the four strategies from the cultural field

1 Niche strategy: Within the cultural field, organizations that solely focus on emergency or relief measures are rare. However, during the COVID-19 pandemic, some organizations adopted such a specific focus. Queens Museum in New York, for example, functioned as a food pantry in response to overwhelming societal needs. As a single intervention with a clear cause-effect pathway (*low uncertainty*) that lacked the ambition to alleviate the problems of hunger in the world or the unequal access to resources (*low control over outcomes*), the museum can be said to have temporarily adopted a niche strategy. Counting the numbers of distributed food packages (outputs) would thus be enough here.

2 Integrated strategy: An example of an integrated strategy within the cultural sphere is that of an organization that wants to increase the levels of diversity and inclusion within its organization. One concrete intervention such as developing a vacancy for a position in which a preference is expressed for someone with a bi-cultural background is not enough to achieve the impact goal of increasing diversity and inclusion. The Van Gogh Museum in Amsterdam set up an entire program for this (*low uncertainty* and *high control*), with the express aim of reaching specific groups and making itself more appealing to these groups, which involved the museum cooperating with education institutes and organizations with a social mission (Vermeulen, 2021).

3 Emergent strategy: Typically, (higher) education institutes for vocational training within the arts or for the creative professions adopt an emergent strategy. For example, the Amsterdam Fashion Institute stipulates that it

wishes to "guide students to become the designers of the future fashion industry and change it in a sustainable direction". Whereas the cause-effect pathway between specialized training and obtaining a certificate and improving one's chances in the labor market may be quite certain (individual level), this is not the case for the cause-effect pathway between providing education and having a positive impact related to societal challenges (societal level) (*high uncertainty*). At the same time, the educator possesses *limited control* over the intended outcome. When the causal logic is complex, as it is in this aforementioned example, then it is recommended to measure the influence (interim outcomes) instead of the intended individual or societal outcomes.

4 Ecosystem strategy: Organizations adopting an ecosystem strategy face difficulties and complexities in attempting to solve a social problem (*high uncertainty*). An organization that seeks longer-term performance and is reliant on an ecosystem strategy is the Dutch National Knowledge Institute Cultural Education and Amateur Art (LKCA). Between 2021 and 2024, LKCA has investigated how it can make cultural education accessible to every child. The cultural education field is seen as an ecosystem for learning and development, characterized by collaborations between various professionals. In this case, while it is difficult to measure the impact of each of these interventions, it is possible to measure the collective impact. Therefore, it is recommended to measure both the individual and societal impact, such as, for example, the effect upon the development of the children (individual level), and/or whether the cultural education system has become more accessible for children in society (societal level).

A tool for organizations to get started with impact measurement

Based on the above, we developed a decision tree to support organizations within cultural and creative fields to get started with their impact measurement (Figure 18.3). This decision tree outlines what an organization should focus on in terms of measurement, based upon the practical constraints of the cause-effect pathway and level of control plotted in the two-by-two matrix and related to the four strategies. The decision tree is based upon how an organization is *currently* trying to fulfil its mission.

As aforementioned, even if cultural organizations have similar ambitions based on the same values, both the ways in which they shape these ambitions and the strategies they adopt to realize these values may differ. Consequently, *what* organizations should measure, for example in relation to DEAI, may also differ.

The starting question is whether the organization provides one single focused intervention to realize its value(s), or whether it has a portfolio of interventions. A single intervention means that an organization is striving to achieve its mission by means of an activity that consists of one component. A

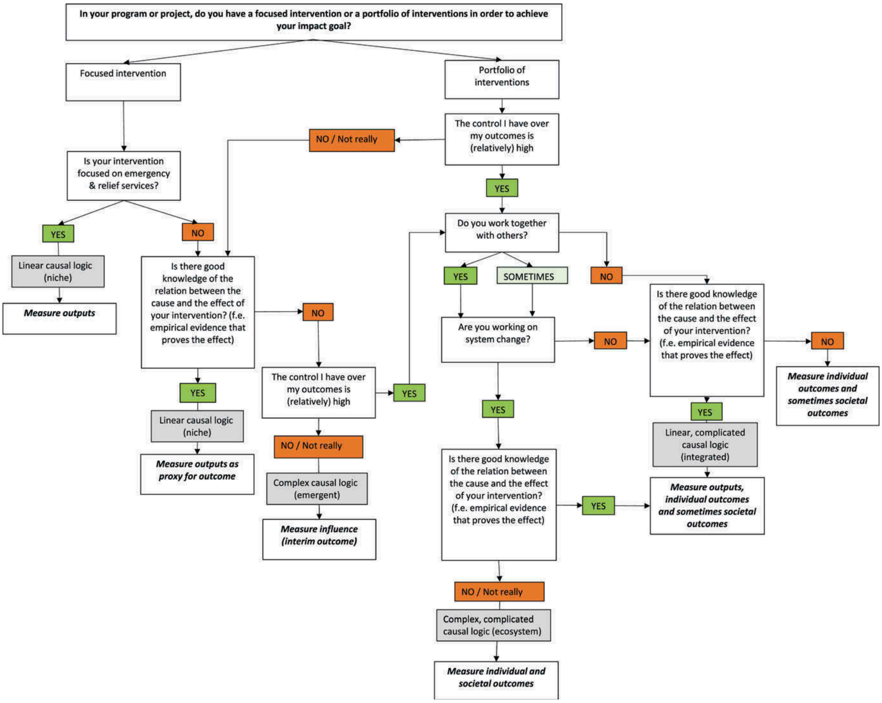

Figure 18.3 Decision tree to help organizations get started with impact measurement: what to measure?
Source: Authors' elaboration.

portfolio of interventions can contain a combination of different activities, but also a program consisting of different components. In practice, within the cultural sector, there are barely any examples of organizations that carry out an intervention that consists of just one focused component.

Applying the decision tree

The Van Gogh Museum, Binoq, and Women Connected are organizations in the Netherlands that pursue diversity and inclusion and served as case studies for the students who took part in the course at Erasmus University. The Van Gogh Museum aims to become more accessible and relevant for young adults from a bi-cultural background in Amsterdam. Binoq provides a variety of services to assist individuals in their professional development, with the express aim of increasing the diversity of profiles within management and supervisory positions within the cultural sector. Women Connected is a non-profit arts organization that strives to create a supportive and empowering community for women, through the visual and performing arts.

We first walk through the decision tree in relation to the example of the Van Gogh Museum. The museum aims to increase inclusion, equality, and justice. Through the program "Van Gogh Connects" of workshops and guided tours, the museum organizes activities with various stakeholders, such as educational institutions and social initiatives, to become more accessible to young adults. This is how it seeks to make the museum more inclusive to a diverse visiting public. At the same time, the museum is cognizant of the fact that the organization can only be inclusive for others if it itself becomes more inclusive. That is why an internal program on inclusive employment runs parallel to the Van Gogh Connects program. Translating this into the decision tree, the museum thus applies a portfolio of interventions as part of its efforts to increase diversity and inclusion. Because the interventions are designed in collaboration with the target group and with social initiatives that are familiar with the target group, the level of control over the intended impact (an inclusive visiting public) is relatively high. Therefore, in the decision tree, we can opt for "yes" here. Because the museum regularly collaborates with other partners, at the next point in the decision tree, we can opt for "sometimes". The museum, however, is not aiming at systemic change, because the program does not solve the issues of inclusion and diversity in the city of Amsterdam more broadly, let alone contributing towards systemic change at the regional level or beyond (which leads us to answer "no"). The museum has a relatively good understanding of the relationship between the cause and the effect of the intervention, because it possesses insights into the empirical results of previously conducted pilot studies. The active elements from each of these pilot studies have been developed throughout the years, leading to a program that consists of effective elements. Therefore, according to the decision tree, the Van Gogh Museum can be said to use an *integrated strategy* (strategy 2) in its efforts to enhance diversity and inclusion.

Let us now do the same exercise for Binoq, an organization that provides advice, conducts research, and develops training. In the Atana program "Diversity on Top", talented people take part in the supervisory boards of cultural organizations for one year to learn what board membership entails. Simultaneously, Binoq trains board members to enhance the inclusive climate within their organization. As part of its efforts to increase diversity and inclusion, Binoq combines different activities and components. In the decision tree, we can thus choose "portfolio of interventions". The next step concerns the level of control over the outcomes. As Ebrahim also points out, organizations with educational purposes typically have social objectives, but achieving these depends upon a multitude of things other than simply transferring knowledge. Binoq may be able to build knowledge, train skills, and facilitate experiences among talented individuals, but whether or not the inclusive climate within cultural organizations changes as a result of their initiatives is not within the control of Binoq. Similarly, whether or not young people from diverse backgrounds will feel at ease within their future professional careers depends upon many factors that lie beyond the control of Binoq. As such, the level of control over the intended outcome is limited, which means that we would select "no" at this point in the decision tree. Moreover, because there is scarce evidence of the effect of the training on the inclusivity of the supervisory boards, then the insights into the relationship between the cause (the training) and the effect (inclusiveness) are limited. In the decision tree, the option "no" would thus be chosen once more. According to the decision tree, Binoq displays a complex causal logic in its pursuit of inclusion. The strategy that best fits the program "Diversity on Top" is thus the *emergent strategy.*

Finally, Women Connected works closely with women from many different backgrounds. In order to create a supportive and empowering community for women by means of visual and performing arts, it organizes rehearsals and arts and crafts workshops. Additionally, lobbying and marketing activities are relevant to achieving its goal, and it attaches great value upon networking to realize this community. Within the decision tree, we would thus choose the option "portfolio of interventions". Its motto "impact by design" reflects its intentional holistic approach. The control that Women Connected attempts to exert over their intended impact is therefore relatively high. Within the decision tree, this translates into a "yes" at this point. In its pursuit of a supportive and empowering community for women, Women Connected does not just work *for* women, but rather works *with* these women. Women Connected also wants to cause systemic change, hence its collaboration with other stakeholders including welfare agencies that have similar goals. As the students put it in their study:

> The core mission underlying the practices of Women Connected is to transform the social and institutional systems (and beyond) through soft activism, believing that the following elements they value highly are inextricable in the process: artistic valorisation through high-quality theatrical productions and social equality in terms of women's rights, diversity and inclusion.
> (Fischer-Beker et al., 2023)

Consequently, this results in "yes" being selected in the decision tree. However, the knowledge of the relation between the cause and effect is limited because of the scarcity of knowledge on the effects of the interventions upon systemic change. Therefore, the decision tree tells us that Women Connected adopts an *ecosystem strategy.*

Box 18.3 What to measure?

After the decision tree has led to the identification of the current strategy adopted by an organization, the next step is to think about *what* to measure. Our suggestions remain relatively abstract in this respect, because these outputs and (interim, individual, societal) outcomes differ for each organization and because there are other tools (such as a Theory of Change) that can help to establish these.

With an integrated strategy, organizations like the Van Gogh Museum would do well to measure outputs, individual outcomes, and, albeit to a more limited extent, perhaps even societal outcomes. The degree of inclusive thinking and acting from employees and the feeling of inclusion among young adults in Amsterdam would serve as examples of so-called "individual outcomes".

With an emergent strategy, organizations like Binoq would do well to measure influence (interim outcomes). Concretely, the organization should not measure the degree of inclusion within supervisory boards, but rather the degree to which board members have started to think and act more inclusively as well as the degree to which young talented people have developed themselves professionally.

With an ecosystem strategy, for organizations like Women Connected, measuring individual and societal outcomes is the most suitable option. We can think here of the empowerment of the participating women but also the transformation of the societal and institutional systems (both within and beyond Rotterdam).

Discussion, conclusion, and recommendations

While there is an observable trend of cultural organizations seeking to measure their impact, our contention is that impact *measuring* should serve impact *making*, which is to say that although measuring is an essential part of making impact, making impact should not occur without an organization first shaping its impact goals based upon its purpose. Many cultural organizations possess these purposes, and indeed several of them have similar purposes, such as, for example, those related to DEAI.

The chapter addresses *what* organizations should focus on if they wish to measure their impact. The examples of the Van Gogh Museum, Binoq, and Women Connected demonstrate that cultural organizations can pursue similar ambitions (such as diversity and inclusion) but can manage them in their own ways. Depending upon how these ambitions translate concretely into programs and activities, organizations can be mapped in a different strategic position within Ebrahim's contingency framework (2019), which we used as the starting point for measurement decisions.

In this chapter, we have introduced a decision tree that serves as a tool through which to classify organizations or their programs into such a strategic position. By means of this mapping exercise, organizations can understand which types of measurement are more salient for organizational impact studies. The examples illustrate that measuring outputs (counting numbers) is frequently not the best course of action to take, whereas measuring outcomes, either at the individual or societal level, represents a much more promising prospect.

Three remarks are useful here.

1 The tool helps to determine broad categories in the sense of outputs, outcomes, and influence, rather than providing organizations with concrete examples of measures. Determining the variables that are relevant for an impact study should ideally follow from extant literature or previous studies.
2 The suggested approach is value-based, in the sense that what organizations should measure is specific and strongly dependent upon their purpose.
3 To make adequate use of the proposed decision tree, an organization can (but must not) apply it to distinct components (programs, activities, impact goals) of its operations.

We recommend that organizations, both within and outside of the arts and cultural realms, should prioritize making impact (to *improve*) over solely measuring impact (to *prove*). Organizations can make an impact by relying on frameworks such as that of the VBA and its five spheres (personal, social, government, market, and cultural; see Klamer's (2026) chapter in this volume), either in conjunction or not with the development of an impact value chain or Theory of Change to map *how* the values are realized. In determining *what* to measure, the proposed decision tree helps to give organizations insight into the level of (un)certainty of the cause-effect pathway and the level of control they have over the intended outcomes, and consequently, the ideal approach to impact measurement. We recommend that organizations relate to the examples elaborated within this chapter and rely on previous work, while, simultaneously, taking up the challenge to engage with impact in an original manner such that it reflects the specific purposes that the organization wishes to achieve.

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19 Non-Market Value of Theatres

Willingness-to-Pay for Externalities or Willingness-to-Contribute towards the Cultural Commons

Trine Bille

Introduction

As a cultural economist, I am profoundly interested in understanding the value of culture as well as figuring out how to measure it. Alongside this, I am also keenly interested in cultural policy and how to guide cultural policy decisions. In the late 1990s, I carried out a traditional contingent valuation (CV) study of The Royal Danish Theatre (Bille Hansen, 1997; Bille, 2002), with the purpose of estimating the total economic value (both use- and non-use values) of the theatre.

I recently returned to the question of valuation, and along with several colleagues conducted a CV study of museums and theatres in Denmark in 2020, which made me reflect on the topic once again. Some of the results from our project showed that non-users' willingness-to-pay for theatres through their taxes cannot easily be interpreted as a rational decision grounded in the utility of specific non-market benefits the theatre provides (Bille and Storm, 2024; Bille and Honoré, 2025). The purpose of this chapter is to explore and propose a re-interpretation of these results, by drawing upon the value-based approach (VBA) to economics and thinking in a different way about the existing preference theory, shared and common goods, and willingness-to-pay (WTP) versus willingness-to-contribute (WTC).

Within cultural economics, both the values of arts and culture as well as debates around public support have captured researchers' attention from the early days of the field. Market failures have been the most prevalent explanation for public support of the arts (Frey and Pommerehne, 1989; Throsby, 2001), and arguments in favour of the public subsidizing of art are mainly grounded in the notions of the public goods or positive externalities (Snowball, 2008).

Theatres provide clear private good components which benefit attendees of a performance in the form of use value. However, the individual valuation of cultural goods and services is only partially reflected in market demand, as cultural goods may also have important non-use values. These non-use values are normally categorized as option value, existence value, prestige value, bequest value, education value (for further explanation, see: Frey and Pommerehne, 1989; Bille and Schulze, 2006). Furthermore, it has been argued that

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cultural goods can, among other things, enhance identity, provide education, personal development, integrate individuals into society, along with encouraging experimentation and entrepreneurship that drive economic growth (Klamer 2002; Bille, 2024).

Over the last 30 years, many economic valuation studies, which primarily use the contingent valuation method (CVM), have been conducted, in order to measure the economic size of the non-market value of different cultural goods and services and cultural heritage, including theatres (Bille Hansen, 1997; Noonan, 2003; Wiśniewska and Czajkowski, 2019). Theoretically, these arguments are predicated on the idea that the arts and culture are public goods or provide positive externalities.

There are, however, manifold challenges associated with the CVM and other stated preference methods pertaining to potential biases (such as, for example, hypothetical biases, strategical biases, embedding effects, etc.). One common criticism of the CVM is that in some instances respondents do not display sensitivity towards differences in the magnitude of the good that is under valuation. This type of result goes against rational marginal utility theory, and, in so doing, questions the validity of the studies and invalidates their usefulness for policy analysis. Defenders of the CVM argue that scope insensitivity and other biases derive from poor survey design, which can come in many shapes (for an overview of this topic, see Lopes and Kipperberg, 2020).

One of the most prevalent explanations for scope insensitivity is the so-called "warm glow" behaviour, which implies that the WTP provided does not necessarily reveal a true preference for the good under analysis but could instead reflect moral satisfaction in contributing towards a worthy cause. As shown by Kahneman and Knetsch (1992) the WTP may reflect an attitude rather than a rational preference towards the specific situation described.

Critiques of the CVM have used this argument to dismiss the method, on the grounds that it is unable to provide results that are in accordance with the expectation of traditional marginal utility theory. But perhaps it is not so much the method itself, but rather the traditional theories which are somehow misconceived in this context? Perhaps the respondents are willing to contribute to a worthy course, or a shared or comment good – and perhaps this is the relevant question?

These questions are explored by first drawing on some of the empirical findings of our recent CV study of Danish theatres (Bille and Storm, 2024; Bille and Honoré, 2025), and second, by discussing and interpreting some of the results from the perspective of a VBA by utilizing the concept of common goods and WTC, and contrasting them to the standard economic concepts of public goods, externalities, and WTP. Perhaps the results should rather be understood in terms of the WTC towards a common good (culture)? This is in line with Kahneman's critique, but at the same time, is it perhaps the WTC and not the WTP for a change in utility which is the truly relevant measure in a context, where we can potentially understand culture as a shared good?

The chapter is structured as follows. In the next section, the standard economic approach, that is, private and public goods, WTP and utility are briefly explained, while in section 3 the VBA to economics is outlined along with its attendant concepts like the commons, shared goods, and WTC. In section 4, some of the results from our CV study are presented and interpreted through lenses of the VBA. Section 5 concludes the chapter by providing some avenues for future research.

The standard economic approach

Economics is traditionally defined as the study of the allocation of scarce resources to satisfy unlimited wants. Such a definition necessarily implies choices and opportunity costs, and when it actually comes to allocating these scarce resources, some measure for comparing the value of these competing wants must be applied. In the case of the existence of public goods or externalities, there are no market prices to rely on due to the nature of public goods (non-rival and non-excludable) (Samuelson, 1954; Stiglitz and Rosengard, 2015).

Both the CVM and other related stated preference methods, such as, for example, choice experiments (CE), attempt to assign an economic value to a public good by assessing what the demand function would be if demand could be expressed via the normal market channels. These estimates can be aggregated across consumers to achieve a total value, which can then be compared with the costs of providing various levels of the good in order to determine if the supply is warranted and, if so, how much. In a CV study, the social demand curve can be tracked by asking respondents their WTP for different levels of a good or service. The CVM, so called because the valuation is contingent upon the given scenario, asks respondents directly how much they would be willing to pay or willing to accept in compensation (WTA) in a hypothetical market situation in order to conserve, expand, or lose some public good.

This method is grounded in the standard assumptions of classical economics. This includes the assumption that consumers are rational and make decisions based upon their own self-interest, which is based on the assumption that consumers have perfect information about the products or services they are buying and are able to weigh up the costs and benefits of different options in order to maximize their own utility. Other important assumptions are, among other things, that consumers have consistent preferences and make decisions based on those preferences over time, and that consumers make decisions based on marginal utility, namely the additional utility they acquire from consuming one more unit of a good or service. Furthermore, stated preference methods assume that consumers are able to put a price on the utility they attain from consuming a public good or a quasi-public good.

There are of course many challenges associated with stated preference methods pertaining to potential biases (such as hypothetical biases, strategical biases, embedding effects, etc.), and there are many technical issues and guidelines on how to conduct the best possible stated preference studies (payment formats, WTP/WTA, cheap talk, etc.). Debates over the applicability of the method have continued for decades in various arenas, including the *Journal of Economic Perspectives* (Carson, 2012; Hausman, 2012; Kling, Phaneuf, and Zhao, 2012).

One common criticism of the CVM is that in some instances respondents do not display sensitivity towards differences in the magnitude of the good that is under valuation. This bias, commonly known as embedding effect or scope insensitivity, calls into question economic theory according to which individuals prefer a larger amount of goods to a smaller amount. The failure to adhere to this assumption has been highlighted in earlier applications of CVM within the field of environmental economics (Kahneman, 1986; Desvousges et al., 1993), as well as in valuation studies in cultural economics. Wiśniewska and Zawojska (2023) found that the WTP for a 25% and 50% increase in theatre offers in Poland were not significantly different, with the same pattern also being observed for a 25% and 50% reduction in the offers. Snowball (2005) reached the same conclusion in her valuation study of art festivals in South Africa, where she introduced two levels: 25% and 50% reduction. These results are difficult to interpret within a traditional utility-based economic framework.

Scope insensitivity and embedding effects have been used as an argument to invalidate both the reliability of current WTP measures and the use of CV for policy analysis (e.g., Hausman, 2012). Critiques of the CVM have connected the bias with the warm glow behaviour, that is, the WTP provided does not reveal a true preference for the good under analysis but rather reflects moral satisfaction in contributing towards a worthy cause. As demonstrated by Kahneman and Knetsch (1992), when it comes to public goods, the WTP may reflect an attitude rather than a rational preference based on the specific situation described, which means that changing the scope of the good will only have a small effect on the WTP, resulting in the embedding effects.

Defenders of the CVM argue that the embedding effect derives from poor survey design, which can take manifold forms (for an overview of the issue, see Lopes and Kipperberg 2020; Baldin and Bille, 2023). Evidently, both scope insensitivity and the embedding effect remain controversial issues within the field.

The value-based approach

Many years after Samuelson's theory of public goods (Samuelson, 1954), the notion of "common goods" (or commons) emerged (Ostrom, 1990) as an important addition to ideas around private and public goods. The term "commons" refers to resources that are shared and accessible to a group of individuals or to the public at large. These resources can include natural resources like air, water, and land, as well as social and cultural resources, such as, for example, knowledge, language, and traditions. The concept of the commons emphasizes the idea that these resources should be managed and used in a way that benefits the collective group, rather than being privately owned or controlled for the benefit of only a few individuals or entities.

Ostrom (1990) demonstrated that in some cases goods that apparently fail in the market can nevertheless continue to function in a sustainable manner. In her case studies, non-excludable and partly rival, open access resources such as fisheries, grasslands, and water basins were still provided even in contexts in which the State would not intervene. This was due to a particular process of valuation which, in Ostrom's analysis, exerted specific institutional arrangements. Such a process entailed a sense of stewardship, trust, and cohesiveness among a group of individuals whose lives, for generations, depended on the resource. In this way, the future of common pool resources is dependent on how the local community value them.

The social regulation of common pool resources provides a conceptual starting point for the VBA. Ostrom (1990) places emphasis upon the social practice of governing a common pool resource, to which the VBA adds the concept of shared goods. Examples of shared goods are friendship, community, family, knowledge, art, music, religion, and so on and so forth. While at first glance these shared goods resemble Buchanan's club goods (Buchanan, 1965), they are nevertheless different in one crucial respect: shared ownership. That is to say, you share the good with other people and you need to contribute towards keeping it alive.

In the VBA, the distinction between "purpose" and instrumental goals is crucial (Klamer, 2017). Two of the most basic concepts within the traditional economic approach are utility and preferences. While it is utility and preferences that drive consumers' (citizens') decisions within the traditional approach, it is the actual "purpose" of an activity which is deemed to be most important within the VBA.

Allied with the prioritization of "purpose" instead of "utility" is the distinction between WTC and WTP, which is the notion used in standard economics. Ultimately, shared and common goods rely on the WTC. WTP refers to the maximum amount of money that consumers are willing to give up in acquiring a particular good or service. It is the concept used in CV studies, and it is typically measured using surveys that ask consumers to state how much they would be willing to pay for a particular (change in a) product or service. WTC, on the other hand, refers to the maximum number of resources (such as time, effort, or money) that individuals are willing to give up in order to support a particular cause, purpose, or public good.

Consider, in this regard, civil non-profit organizations like the Red Cross, Greenpeace, or Save the Children. When representatives from these organizations ring your doorbell and ask for a contribution, you might be willing to contribute towards the purpose of the organization. In most cases, this is not a specific additional project that they are asking you to contribute towards, but rather the ongoing general activities of the organization. When you contribute, you do not have full information about either all the activities they are engaged in or what the marginal benefit of your contribution would be. In other words, they are not asking for your WTP for a specified change in the activities (where you are able to consider your marginal utility), but rather they are asking for your WTC to a broadly defined purpose.

The same argument could be raised in CV studies of cultural activities, where it can often be difficult, and in most cases simply uninteresting, to ask about respondents' WTP for a change in activities; rather, the policy interest is in knowing citizens' WTC towards some specified cultural purpose or types of cultural institutions, such as theatres.

This idea will be taken further in the next section where a VBA interpretation of some of the results of our Danish CV study of theatres will be discussed.

A value-based interpretation of a Danish contingent valuation study of theatres

In this section both the data and method of our recent Danish CV study of theatres is described, followed by some results published in Bille and Nyborg Storm (2024) and Bille and Honoré (2025), which will be discussed based on the VBA framework.

Data and method

The study is based on data that was collected from a large survey developed by the author. The survey was conducted in Denmark in the spring of 2020 and distributed to a representative sample aged 18 years or older. Statistics Denmark created the sample and distributed the survey. In total, 4,450 individuals received the survey, of which 1,929 responded.

The questionnaire was designed as a CV study, which included several follow-up questions that will be explained below. The payment format was tax payments, based on the fact that taxation is the current financing model for Danish theatres and because we wanted to measure the total economic value, including the non-market values and value to non-users. The survey design was based on current guidelines for CV study (Johnston et al., 2017). This includes a "cheap talk" where the respondents are made aware of their budget constraints. Prior to being sent out in the actual survey, the questionnaire was tested in several focus groups to examine whether the respondents understood the questions correctly, and it was corrected accordingly.

Within this context, it is interesting to note that the most common and general feedback from the focus groups concerned the difficulties they had in understanding that they were being asked to value and disclose their WPT for the goods (theatres) based on the utility and benefit they received from them. Several scenarios were tested, including the possible loss of a specific theatre in their neighbourhood. Most of the participants argued that they would be willing to contribute towards the existence of theatres, without being able to relate their WTP to any specific changes in the supply.

Local theatres' contribution towards municipalities' attractiveness

While consumer externalities are the dominant argument for public subsidies to the performing arts, there is scarce knowledge about what exactly these externalities consist of as well as how they relate to the characteristics of the supply of cultural institutions. Theatres (and other cultural institutions) organize many different types of performances, and, hence, it is reasonable to expect that the size of both the use and non-use values would depend on the types of theatres and performances provided. While one would expect that some performances exclusively provide pure entertainment to users, other types of theatres almost certainly provide externalities in the form of benefits to non-users, such as, for example, by providing enhanced prestige, identity, or educational values to the community (Bille, 2024). The principal aim of Bille and Storm's (2024) study was to investigate both the perceived benefits of theatres serving the local community and whether the type of theatre matters.

The first part of our analysis concerned WTP for local theatres and indicates that the non-use value of theatres is important, as many other empirical studies have shown (Bille Hansen, 1997; Noonan, 2003; Snowball, 2008). The results also show that user status is of high significance in how local theatres are valued. Recent users exhibit a significantly higher WTP for local theatres in comparison to non-users.

In the second part, we explored the connection between attractiveness and types of theatres. The respondents were asked if they agreed or disagreed with the following statement: *The theatre/s in my municipality contribute(s) towards making the municipality attractive to live in*. Half of the respondents (51%) agreed that the theatre/s contribute(s) towards the attractiveness of their municipality. Attractiveness was used as an indicator of non-use value. The recent users of theatres responded most positively, with 61% agreeing with the statement.

In order to investigate the significance of the types of theatres located in a municipality in terms of the repertoire they provide, we conducted an ordered logit regression in which the variable indicating the degree to which local theatres contribute towards the attractiveness of the municipality was used as a dependent variable.

We used repertoires and classification of type of theatre as broad indicators of the types of benefits the theatres provide. Of course, these indicators serve only as rough indicators, but they were the only indicators available. In line with Wiśniewska and Czajkowski (2019), we assumed that entertainment performances amuse and relax people. Conversely, dramatic performances, mostly classical plays, serve cultural preservation and the promotion of national identity. Children's performances mostly play an educational role for the youngest audience members, and experimental performances provide intellectual stimulation and theatrical innovation. Based on these assumptions, we expected that only users would benefit from entertainment performances (no benefit to non-users), while drama, children's performances, and experimental performances would have broader societal impact in the form of identity value, educational value, innovation, and aesthetic values, from which not only users, but also non-users could benefit.

Repertoire is indicated by separate dummies, as there can be more than one type of theatre in the same municipality. In Table 19.1, we present the results of our separate analyses of users and non-users. The results indicate that the type of repertoire is important for both recent users (have been to a theatre within the last year) and past users (have been to a theatre more than a year ago). Users living in municipalities with theatres performing "experimental theatre", "drama", and "comedy" are significantly more positive in the way they see the theatres' contributions towards the attractiveness of their municipality. However, for non-users, the results show no significant correlation between the repertoire of theatres and its contribution towards the attractiveness of the municipality.

A similar analysis has been conducted for categories of theatres. Even though it is difficult to categorize the types of benefits the theatres provide based on their category, we would expect the theatre associations, and to some degree large theatres, to provide more benefits to the users by staging bigger and more entertaining performances, and, thereby, catering more for the users and producing a high degree of use value. On the other hand, the small theatres, and especially the local theatres, can be expected to provide a

Table 19.1 Attractiveness of municipalities and repertoire of theatres, by user status

	Recent users	*Past users*	*Non-users*
Repertoire: Drama	1.11*** (0.23)	0.89*** (0.28)	0.25 (0.34)
Repertoire: Children's	0.02 (0.26)	0.31* (0.19)	0.10 (0.36)
Repertoire: Dance	0.22 (0.36)	-0.62 (0.38)	0.53 (0.40)
Repertoire: Comedy	0.99*** (0.33)	0.79* (0.46)	-0.63 (0.41)
Repertoire: Experimental	0.65** (0.31)	1.33*** (0.29)	-0,63 (0.54)
Individual characteristic	✓	✓	✓
N	742	475	286
Pseudo R^2	0,07	0,08	0,02

Source: Bille and Storm, 2024.

Note. Dependent variable: Scale from 5=strongly agree to 1=strongly disagree with the statement *The theatre/s in my municipality contributes to making the municipality attractive to live in.* Ordered logit estimates. Huber-White robust SEs in parentheses allow for arbitrary correlation of residuals within each municipality. Level of significance indicated by asterisks: * $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$.

higher degree of innovation as well as a sense of identity and community, and thereby more benefits to the non-users. Large theatres are also expected to produce benefit to non-users in the form of prestige to the local community. In other words, we will expect theatre associations, and to some extent large theatres to provide more benefits to the users, while small theatres and local theatres to provide more externalities.

In Table 19.2 we have conducted separate analyses for users and non-users, and again we find that the results are explained by user status. There is no significant correlation between category of theatres in the community and how non-users view them as contributing to the attractiveness of the municipality. Theatre associations are positive significant for recent and past users, but the coefficient for large theatres is only significant at a 10% level among the recent users. Non-users do not seem to be affected by the types of theatres in the municipality.

The principal contribution of this study is that even though we can confirm that non-users are in favour of supporting theatres via taxation, the type of supply is ultimately of no consequence to non-users' valuations. Non-users exhibit no preferences for the types of theatre located in their municipality. Therefore, we can conclude that non-users have little understanding of the externalities provided. This is an interesting new finding, insofar as stated preference methods build on the assumption that respondents understand and have full information about the good to be assessed, including an understanding of the externalities provided, when making their evaluations. However, our study shows that this may not in fact be the case, on the grounds that neither the type of theatre nor the type of supply has a significant impact upon non-users' assessments. While users of theatres appear to be able to value

Table 19.2 Attractiveness of municipalities and category of theatres, by user status

	Recent users	*Past users*	*Non-users*
Category: Small theatres	0.18 (0.20)	0.16 (0.20)	0.28 (0.40)
Category: Large theatres	1,10*** (0.36)	0.78** (0.39)	-0,21 (0.52)
Category: Theatre associations	0.43* (0.23)	0.56** (0.25)	0.27 (0.30)
Category: Local theatres (egnsteater)	0.27 (0.24)	0.21 (0.22)	0.14 (0.36)
Individual characteristics	✓	✓	✓
N	742	475	286
Pseudo R^2	0.06	0.07	0.02

Source: Bille and Storm (2024).

Note. Dependent variable: Scale from 5=strongly agree to 1=strongly disagree with the following statement: *The theatre/s in my municipality contribute(s) towards making the municipality attractive to live in*. Ordered logit estimates. Huber-White robust SEs in parentheses allow for arbitrary correlation of residuals within each municipality. Level of significance indicated by asterisks: * $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$. Respondents living in Copenhagen, Frederiksberg, and Aarhus were excluded from the sample.

the benefits provided by the theatres within their municipalities, primarily based on use value, non-users are unable to assess the value of different types and categories of theatres in their municipalities even though they are vastly different. This result is surprising, and it contradicts the assumptions upon which the method is based.

However, a VBA interpretation of the results would approach things altogether differently. From this perspective, non-users appreciate the theatre in their municipality, and they are willing to contribute towards it. However, their assessment is not based on the utility and calculated benefits in terms of externalities towards which they have clear preferences. In this respect, they are not able to express their WTP on the basis of different types of supply or changes in supply. Rather, they are simply WTC to what is perceived as being a cultural common good: the theatre in their municipality.

Peer effects upon users of theatres

The purpose of the second study (Bille and Honoré, 2025) was to test for the existence of externalities within a causal relation, which had hitherto not been done. The study is based on the same dataset as Bille and Storm's (2024) study above.

The hypothesis in this study was that the more users of theatres that there are in a given municipality, the bigger the externalities are created. For cultural goods such as theatres, we would expect the size of the externalities to be dependent on the size of the consumption. We refer to these externalities as cultural capital externalities in accordance with Bille (2024). The average WTP in a municipality was used as an indicator of the size of the externalities.

The analysis was based on a theoretical model inspired by Cornes and Sandler (1996) in which private consumption is regarded as jointly producing both a private and public good. The public good is the cultural capital externalities, which can be understood as individuals being enlightened and empowered in various ways, including, among other things, having a better understanding of oneself and other people, changed perceptions, increased creativity, aesthetic understanding, and social critique. Furthermore, the expectation was that there are external returns to society at large in the form of increased awareness, democracy, diversity, innovation, and so on. The important point here is that these consumer externalities are transmitted through individuals' (users') consumption by means of changed behaviour, and social activities and interactions among human beings. Without the consumption by users, no public good benefits or externalities are produced. The existence of these cultural capital externalities is thus inherently a causal relation but has not previously been treated as such (Bille, 2024).

In this study we used variation across Danish municipalities in terms of the aggregate theatre demand within a given municipality and the average WTP to theatres via taxation as our main variables. In order to address endogeneity problems, we used the Danish ticket purchasing scheme as the basis for our instrument. Table 19.3 shows the main results allowing for variation across

Table 19.3 Estimates for the external return to theatres allowing for variation across regions

	OLS (1)	*2SLS (2)*	*2SLS (3)*
(a) Full sample	0.418	0.637	0.374
External return	(0.312)	(0.686)	(0.441)
F-statistics		6.326	840.3
Excluded instruments		9	36
(b) Users	0.992**	2.411***	1.388**
External return	(0.428)	(0.880)	(0.617)
F-statistics		7.922	293.1
Excluded instruments		9	36
(c) Non-users	-0.065	-1.191	-0.725
External return	(0.386)	(0.902)	(0.532)
F-statistics		4.650	184.3
Excluded instruments		9	36
Structural covariates	✓	✓	✓
Individual covariates	✓	✓	✓
Municipality covariates	✓	✓	✓

Source: Bille and Honoré (2025)

Note. Standard errors corrected for clustering in parentheses. * $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$.

regions. In our main specification, the IV estimate of the external return is 0.637 on average and insignificant. However, when using only the sample of theatre attenders, we find a large and significant external return of 2.411%, in comparison to an insignificant return of -1.191 for the sub-sample of non-users.

In summary, our study has shown that it is possible to test for the existence of externalities of cultural consumption in an empirically convincing causal set-up. To the best of our knowledge, our study is the first to attempt this approach. We found that there are significant cultural capital externalities for users, but no effects for non-users. Intuitively, these results appear plausible. The users are more familiar with the theatre good and, as such, they may be better equipped to evaluate the benefits. An alternative explanation is that we simply found network or peer effects (Sacerdote, 2011). The users benefit from having many other users in their community, as they will have more people to talk to about their theatre experience (one potential benefit of a higher level of cultural capital in society). In this way, theatre resembles Buchanan's (1965) aforementioned club goods.

From the perspective of a VBA, the interpretation of these results is very similar to a VBA interpretation of Bille and Storm's (2024) results. That is to say, non-users appreciate the theatre in their municipality, and on average, are willing to contribute towards it. However, their assessment is not based on the utility and calculated benefits in terms of the expected externalities towards which they have clear preferences. Rather, they are simply willing to contribute towards what they perceived to be the common good: the theatre in their municipality. On the other hand, the users do perceive some externalities in relation to the number of theatre users in their municipality. This can be interpreted as peer or network effects, which are very close to a club good or a shared good to which users want to contribute towards.

Discussion and conclusion

It is noteworthy that both studies (Bille and Honoré, 2025; Bille and Storm, 2024) achieved the same overall conclusion, but via the utilization of very different methods. The users are able to express a (use) value related to the characteristics of the supply (in terms of quantity and/or quality). However, non-users' expression of WTP has no relation to differences in the supply (as measured by indicators of quality or quantity). These results thus challenge any straightforward interpretation within the framework of rational marginal utility theory. This is because non-users' WTP to theatres via taxation cannot easily be interpreted as a rational decision based on the utility of the specific non-market benefits provided.

As aforementioned, the stated preference methods are based on the standard assumptions of neo-classical economics. This includes the assumption that consumers are rational and make decisions based on their own self-interest, which is based on the idea that consumers have perfect information about the products and services they are buying and are able to weigh up the costs and benefits of different options in order to maximize their own utility or satisfaction. Other important assumptions include that consumers have consistent preferences and make decisions based on those preferences over time, and that consumers make decisions based on either marginal utility they gain from consuming one more unit of a good or service.

The results lend themselves more readily to a VBA interpretative framework. The non-users appreciate the theatre in their municipality and are willing to contribute towards it. However, their assessment is not based on the utility and calculated benefits in terms of the externalities towards which they have clear preferences. On the contrary, they are not able to express their WTP on the basis of different types of supply or changes in supply. Rather, they are simply WTC towards what they perceive as a cultural common good: the theatre in their municipality.

From a policy standpoint, a VBA offers a pragmatic guide for practitioners, in the sense that it provides directors of theatres with a new vocabulary that perhaps does more justice to the qualities they are seeking than the standard economic approach does. However, this chapter only suggests a re-interpretation, and much more research is required in order to enhance both our understanding of the perceived values of cultural institutions by users and non-users and how these expressed values can be interpreted.

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20 Understanding Urban Commons in the Context of Urban Transformations

YounSun Won

Introduction

Let us begin this chapter with a story about an old, small house on a beautiful piece of land, located within a combination of private property and a national park, in Goyang, which is a suburban area of Seoul. The land, which amounts to around 1,000 square metres, is situated between a waterfront and a beautiful mountain called Bukhan. The house was built over a hundred years ago, and three generations have now lived in it. In fact, it is located so far within the mountain itself that it was left wholly unscathed by the Korean War. Recently, the local municipality developed the neighbourhood as part of its efforts to cultivate an improved urban landscape, by focusing upon a broad range of cultural amenities including the film studio that produced the Oscar winning film *Parasite*. Much like what has happened in other cities, the urban development and regeneration initiative within this particular neighbourhood boosted the real estate market. If we were to view the increased market value of property within this neighbourhood through recourse to a transaction-based approach, for example, then it would be a wholly rational choice for the house owners to either develop the house into a high-end property that they could rent out or turn it into a commercial complex in order to fully maximise its utility. However, something interesting and different occurred here.

Ms Kim, the youngest daughter of the house owner, opted to start a project called B. Play. She sought to view the value of the landscape from a different perspective than mere profit, and instead conceptualised the value in terms of a relation-based approach between the neighbourhood and her property, such as, for example, the local characteristics of the house, the stories, and all kinds of social practices that had occurred there, and the authentic beauty of the surrounding natural landscape. The primary challenge of this project was to design it in such a way so that these non-economic values would be realised, while, simultaneously, adhering to some of the standard criteria of the real estate market.

In order to make sense of this challenge this study relies on Klamer's (2017) value-based approach (VBA). By doing so, it expands the standard economic perspective and its attendant focus upon financial quantities by both shedding

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light upon the non-economic values that the developers and relevant stakeholders in this scenario utilised in order to realise different values and identifying the values that are important to each of these stakeholder groups. This approach prioritises the practices that take place within each of the spheres outlined in Klamer's (2017) value map, which extend beyond the amount of any given transaction within the market sphere. In order to conduct a more systematic analysis of these practices, this chapter characterises these qualities by means of a three-phase model (Won, 2020) and illustrates this through a specific case study.

Methodology

An alternative perspective through which to understand different values of the urban landscape

The expedience of the VBA to cultural economics (Klamer, 2017) is that it provides a framework for identifying important values that are ordinarily overlooked within spatial planning and serves to make these values feasible within cities. In doing so, it invites us to shift an otherwise particularly narrow perspective into a more receptive viewpoint, in order to take into account the multifaceted values that are generated by cities and neighbourhoods. This is predicated on the idea that values should be understood as qualities, and that people use resources not merely to yield economic value, but rather also to realise non-economic values that are related to the larger purpose that these people are striving towards. It is important to note that resources here can include both intangible resources, such as, for example, practices, and tangible resources like natural resources.

Urban development and regeneration projects are useful to study, insofar as these projects use resources in order to pursue the purpose of building a good neighbourhood that enhances people's well-being and community solidarity, while, simultaneously, ensuring the sustainable landscape. In other words, what people do as part of these types of projects extends far beyond simply making these spaces more saleable on the open market. Rather, these practices serve multifaceted values, and, hence, cities must find ways to structure these different values accordingly. An urban development plan by means of cultural amenities, for example, basically seeks to increase the economic value of the properties. The provision of a broad range of cultural amenities renders new opportunities for cultural practices, which, in turn, produce different qualities within the ensuing social interactions and networking (Frischmann, 2012). Against this backdrop, this chapter explores a way to analyse the different sets of qualities, that is, not only economic values but also non-economic values, that were realised within a specific example of an urban development project, through utilising a Governing Knowledge Commons (GKC) Framework.

Utilising a Governing Knowledge Commons (GKC) Framework in order to understand different practices and the commons

The notion of the commons has been discussed since the eighteenth century, with many scholars having since contributed towards developing our understanding of the commons within society from a range of different perspectives, including, among others, anthropology and economics (Hardin, 1968; Benkler, 2006; Rodgers, 2011; Wall, 2014). For example, Elinor Ostrom's (1990) economic perspective of the commons frames it in an altogether different manner than it was originally outlined within the classical perspective. Ostrom sees the commons as a common pool of resources (CPRs) that have no clear ownership and, as such, are instead available to any interested party. While the classical perspective on the commons argued for either privatising these resources or placing them under governmental control, Ostrom instead situates the commons within the social context (Won, 2020), which means that economists who are seeking to take into account its contribution would be best to do so from a socially-driven perspective in a more receptive way. Therefore, what people do to both create and subsequently govern the commons has been analysed not only from within the market and governance logics, but also in the social context (Table 20.1).

As indicated in Table 20.1, the commons within contemporary cities have more to do with the characteristics of social and cultural practices than solely market logic. Let us illustrate this point through the example of snow. On a snowy day, one will inevitably see children outside in the school playground working in groups to make snowmen, which involves collecting resources, such as snow, stones, and branches. One of the boys in Group B goes over to Group A and takes some snow from their snowman. One of the girls in Group A claims that the boy took Group B's snow, but the boy from Group A says that no one has legal ownership over the snow in the playground, and, hence, anyone can get snow from anywhere they want and use it for their own purposes. In response, the girl from Group B says that although he is right about the fact that there is no legal ownership over the snow, the snowman is nevertheless shared by Group B and they are engaged

Table 20.1 Main characteristics of the commons within contemporary society

Term	*Description*
The commons that are related to the market and governance spheres	• The commons have no formalised restriction over access • There is neither ownership nor rivalry involved, which distinguishes it from CPRs • The commons cannot be bought and sold; it has no monetary value
The commons that are related to the social sphere	• The commons is developed, improved, and maintained through social and cultural practices • The commons is not autonomously created • The commons is not controlled by the government

Source: elaborated by the author.

in an activity to make their snowman look nice and, in so doing, express their friendship with one another.

If one were to view this story from a classical perspective, then the boy from Group A is undoubtedly correct in his assertion; however, if we adopt an altogether broader conceptualisation of the commons, then we see both the differences and reason why cities should take into account the practices that people share as well as the social governance and shared sense of ownership that are engendered by means of active engagement (Dekker and Kuchar, 2021).

In accordance with the fact that the emerging economy is directed more towards the qualitative issue of spaces, such as, for example, knowledge, education, social empowerment and networks, this chapter stresses that the focus of the commons is upon what people actually do (Won, 2020). Although the commons within contemporary cities are more related to the social sphere rather than, say, the governance or market spheres, this does not mean that institutional structures are not needed. Rather, it underscores the importance of having a framework for governing the commons based upon the social context. To this end, the Knowledge Commons Framework (see Frischmann, Madison, and Strandburg, 2014) is expedient for articulating what people do in terms of supply, commitment, and monitoring. More specifically, this framework, which concerns how the governance structure generates value for society via the management of such activities like the commons, provides additional support for shaping the flow of practices that people share.

Drawing on the insights from the VBA, this chapter now turns to the question of how stakeholders within the urban development sector can understand different values concerning qualities of the commons within cities. Social and cultural practices, which social and cultural values are embedded within, characterise what people do. As Marleen Hofland-Mol (2025) asserts in her chapter of this volume, values and practices are intricately connected. Given that contemporary cities take landscapes as the background against which activities occur, rather than natural resources in and of themselves, the commons within urban development can be said to be intimately tied to cultural practices (Gudeman, 2001; Harvey, 2012). Hence, the specific characteristics of common practices shed light upon what the important qualities that people share are, which makes these common practices good reference points for understanding the Action Arena illustrated in Figure 20.1.

Common practices and the three-phase model

The term common practice (Klamer, 2017) refers to the activities that a certain group of people share. Common practices are different from public goods in the sense that they come about as a result of a willingness to contribute (Klamer, 2017). The creative industries sector is a case in point here. This sector brings into being a creative common practice by virtue of getting both creatives and the audience to contribute, which, ultimately, makes the practice a shared one. This is precisely the reason why galleries do not sell their masterpieces to anyone who has the means to buy them, but rather prefer buyers

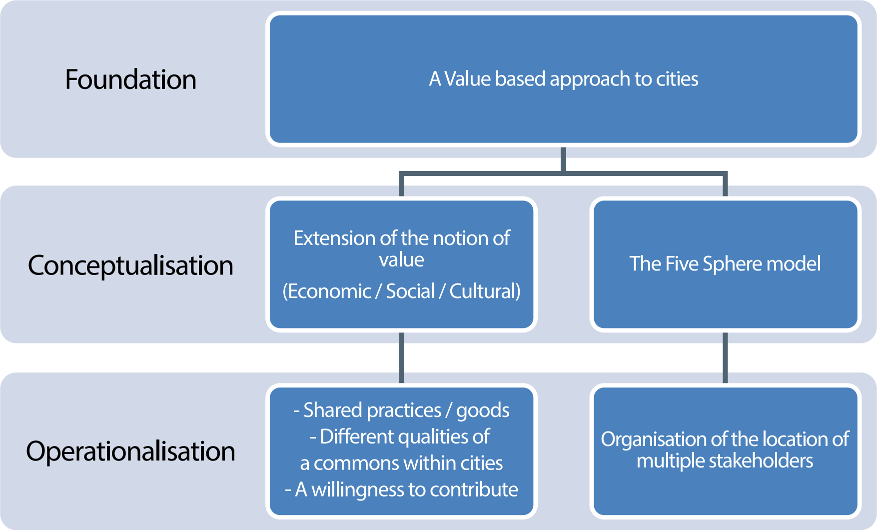

Figure 20.1 The three-phase model
Source: Won, 2020.

that truly appreciate the work and want to contribute towards furthering its value. Similarly, musicians prefer to work with people who are willing to participate somehow in their practice and, in so doing, make it work. In this respect, a common practice can be understood to be like a conversation in which various people are willing to contribute. Common practices can be differentiated from shared goods (Klamer, 2017), which differ from the commons by virtue of the fact that they require participation and contribution in order to be of any value. Conversely, the commons is a resource that people can freely access such as a forest or square. Consequently, the commons allows free riding whereas free riding in the case of common practices simply does not make sense insofar as the values of common practices only come into being through participation. Classical music can thus be said to be a common practice insofar as it is only of value to those who take part in it, perform it, or cultivate an understanding of it.

This is not specific to the creative industries, however, as it can also be observed within cities. Without due consideration of what practices are shared within neighbourhoods or cities, many cities instead focus upon building landscapes themselves. The consequence of this is that some cities have landmarks for citizens and visitors to enjoy, while others do not. In order to see beyond mere buildings, however, this study utilises a three-phase model (Won, 2020), and attempts to identify informative attributes from datasets, both of a qualitative and quantitative nature. By employing this procedure, this chapter attempts to compare the outcomes of different cases in order to demonstrate why the commons matters in the context of building landscapes.

Within the first phase, a case is closely observed from a value-oriented perspective, and questions are organised. Once the different values have been discerned, the second phase focuses upon these specific values, and identifies what values matter to the stakeholders the most by hosting focus group interviews (FGI). Within the third phase, the values of the given case are then articulated by several dataset(s) through quantitative analysis. In order to analyse economic value, this model applies Location Quotient (LQ) to make sense of the industrial features, while FGI, social media data, or survey data are used to analyse non-economic values. If the value of LQ is more than 1, then the value is considered to be meaningful, which means what kinds of industries are specifically agglomerated within certain neighbourhoods.

$$LQ = \frac{\frac{e_i}{e}}{\frac{E_i}{E}}$$

Where: ei=Local employment within industry i, e= total local employment, Ei=Reference area employment within industry i, E=Reference area of total employment.

As aforementioned, this chapter analyses a case study from South Korea, B. Play. Through conducting FGI with the key stakeholders within the first and second phases of the process, it turned out that the three values, that is, economic, social, and cultural values, are of critical importance to the key stakeholders among others. Based on the data set deriving from five FGI held between 2018 and 2020 from the beginning of the place design, a value map was organised (see Table 20.4). The third phase articulates the different characteristics of what people actually do based on an analysis of the survey data set, social media data, and industrial data. For the sake of identifying practices related to economic value, as is mentioned, this model uses the LQ by collecting industrial data and attempts to understand the specific characteristics of the labour dynamics. In order to make sense of social and cultural practices in a more systematic manner, this model utilises both survey data and social media data. As the survey data was designed to understand practices of the visitors of B. Play, so that the collection of the data set was thoroughly controlled under the geographic location information of the respondents (Tables 20.2 and 20.3).

Table 20.2 Survey design for B. Play

Social survey dataset	*Contents*
Survey period	March–May 2020 (three-month period)
Sample size	N=100
Geographic location of respondents, defined by latitude and longitude	Latitude: 37.2–37.6/ Location Longitude: 126.9–127.2*
Distribution	QR code

Source: elaborated by the author.

* The location of B. Play is Latitude: 36.9 and Longitude: 126.9

Table 20.3 Social media data analysis for B. Play

Big data analysis	*Contents*
Data collection period	March 2020–March 2022 (1,097 days in total)
Data format	Frequency of content analysis
Data set	1,097 sets organised in Excel
Variables	• Gender (Female and Male), • Age (13~60), • Device used (Mobile and PC)
Analysis	Calculating Relative Frequency within a certain period
Data source	NAVER Corporation

Source: elaborated by the author.

Empirical analysis

Case study and the results

Studies of the commons within landscapes shed light upon these landscapes, insofar as the commons implies connections or relationships, or social and cultural practices (Olwig, 2003). The objective of our empirical analysis is to discover the dynamics that are inherent to common practices in order to understand different qualities of the commons, such as networks and relationships, rather than examining spatial analyses per se. Parks, forests, and public spaces are quintessential examples in this respect, insofar as some parks play a pivotal role within urban life, while others do not, of course. Why is this the case? By working our way through the following case study, this chapter shall discover the answer to this important question.

B. Play

From a purely economic perspective, B. Play sounds like a relatively straightforward idea: it is a combination of public goods and private goods. With regards to the public goods that drive societal value, everyone can gain access to the mountain as it is a national park. Certain spaces, such as a house, a café and its garden are private goods, which is to say that they are the exclusive property of the landlords, with the café seeking to take advantage of the beautiful landscape in order to yield financial profit. However, once we view this initiative through a VBA lens, then the differences immediately become evident.

The first stage of the three-phase model identifies what the key values of the project, B. Play, are (Figure 20.2).

Based upon the first phase, the second stage makes the value proposition concrete by categorising the specific values that stakeholders are striving to realise through this project. The value proposition map has been derived from

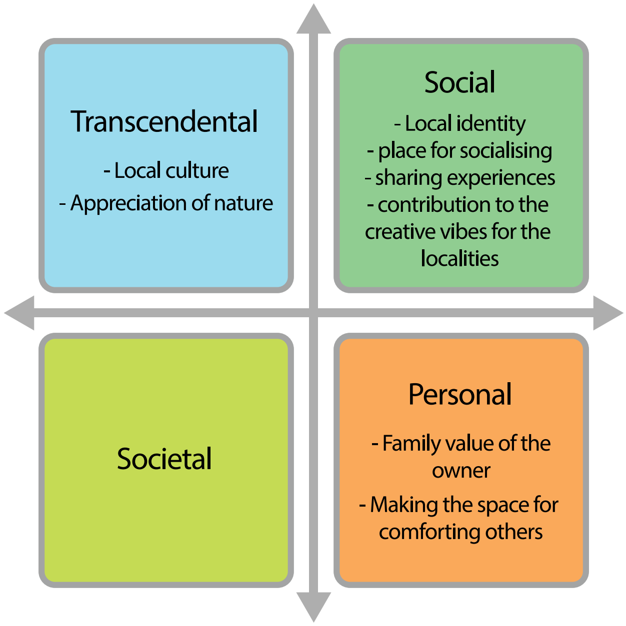

Figure 20.2 Value proposition of B. Play
Source: elaborated by the author from Klamer (2026).

the initial categorisation of four value domains (Klamer, 2017). It thus helps us understand what practices people (want to) engage in to realise the values that are important to them. In this respect, the results indicated that the stakeholders within this space placed greater emphasis upon social and cultural values than economic value, and they did not count societal value in this case; therefore, according to the FGI, selling goods itself was not the main purpose, therefore, making profits in this place was less important than developing social and cultural practices. The results indicate that if B. Play had applied a transaction-based perspective in order to pursue this project and, in so doing, prioritised economic value within this project, then the social and cultural values that were important to the stakeholders would have been compromised. Then, the question shifts to consider what practices would promote active engagement in order to generate social and cultural values.

The third stage answers specific questions pertaining to the operationalisation of the project: how does this project reflect the different values and facilitate interventions within the regeneration project? Moreover, how can stakeholders identify if the intervention is successful after the fact? In order to understand the different layers inherent to these questions, it is instructive to reiterate why this specific project was in need of a different perspective. At the outset, the house owner had a vivid imagination about how the project would turn out, namely that once there was a fancy space there, people, such as neighbours and visitors,

Table 20.4 The value map

Sphere	*Stakeholders*	*Common practices*	*Relevant values*
Social	The owner, Neighbours, Employees, Partnering companies	• Developing landscapes and the commons in B. Play for civic engagement • Informal gatherings • Workshops • Seminars	• Contributing towards local communities • Sharing spaces with visitors • Socialising by healing with people • Improving the quality of the locality • Developing the commons of the neighbourhood
Culture	Artists, Thinkers	• Cultural programs in collaboration with artists • Workshop with thinkers	• Healing • Sharing the beauty of nature
Market	Suppliers (food/goods) Neighbours	• Selling goods and services	• Compensating for the maintenance costs • Contributing towards the local economy • Creating (positive) spillovers

(Source: elaborated by the author)

Figure 20.3 Landscape of B. Play
Prior to the regeneration project
After the regeneration project
Source: elaborated by the author.

would be grateful for both her efforts and the space itself. However, the actual results left Ms Kim feeling disappointed. B. Play was crowded only for several months after it first opened, after which visitors decreased and neighbours began to complain more and more, saying that visitors were bothering their neighbourhood. This left Ms. Kim feeling deeply vulnerable with respect to both her social relationships with her neighbours and the financial commitment required to maintain the space. In other words, something was missing.

To discover what was missing, the third phase examines the characteristics of three different values by understanding common practices (Figure 20.4).

As aforementioned, if the value of LQ is greater than 1, then this means that there is a considerable agglomeration of relevant industries. With regards to the industrial concentration of this neighbourhood, the results of the LQ analysis show that the labour characteristics of the project site in 2020 were most likely shaped by three industries: manufacturing, electricity and financing, and wholesale and retail trade, hotels and restaurants. This suggests that the economic practices within this space were more related to the three industries rather than the other two. So, for example, if there was a workshop on manufacturing skills or cooking class, then this might garner less response within B. Play.

In order to understand what values people wanted to realise within this landscape, the author conducted FGI. The data analysis highlighted the importance of values related to healing, socialising, and well-being. Thus, B. Play would have been better placed to organise practices related to healing, rather than merely selling coffee and tea. This point will be elaborated upon further in the discussion section.

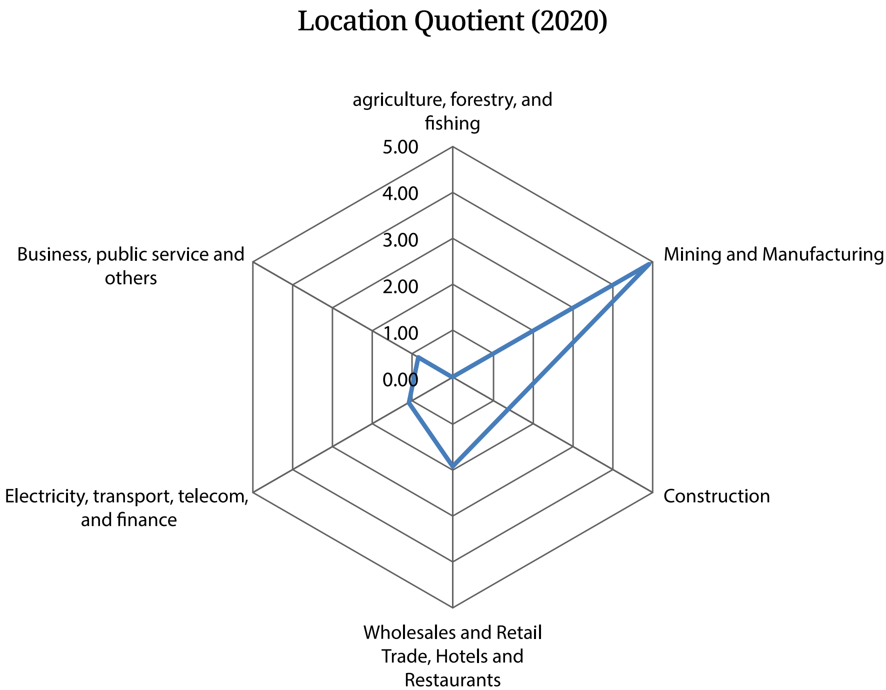

Figure 20.4 Labour concentration of the project site within the neighbourhood
Source: elaborated by the author.

Table 20.5 Different perspectives

Transaction-based approach	*Value-based approach*	*Relevant questions*
Financial transactions are at the centre of understanding situations	Relationships are central	What perspective do stakeholders draw upon to solve the problems?
Monetary transactions are taken into account to solve problematic situations	Multiple values are taken into account	What values do people take into account to find a solution within an economic context?
Identify demand and supply	Identify the dynamics between relevant practices and the important values that stakeholders are seeking to achieve	How do people understand a market?
Situate consumers within the final stage	This approach understands the practices of customers in the sense of co-production	In which context do people engage in production and consumption?

Source: elaborated by the author.

After conducting FGI with stakeholders from the supply side, two things immediately stood out. Firstly, stakeholders from the supply side thought that people from the demand side wanted to visit B. Play simply in order to have a cup of coffee/tea. Secondly, they thought that visitors would focus upon the new place the most, and would be relatively indifferent to the natural surroundings. What surprised us here was the fact that they completely overlooked the social values that they prioritised, when they themselves assessed the respective qualities of the space. Consequently, they sold beverages at comparatively expensive prices, on the grounds that they had to secure financial returns in order to compensate for the costs. In other words, based on a transaction-based perspective, B. Play considered what people would do there in terms of consumption activities based upon traditional market logic, rather than thinking in terms of the commons. Although B. Play attempted to make a transition in the urban planning project, both its perspective and approach remained firmly grounded within a standard way of carrying out an urban development project. The intervention of the VBA involved adjusting the project roadmap, together with its purpose, by changing the framework that the practitioners were using to guide their practice. The data analysis demonstrated that the key values that both the supply and demand side stakeholders of B. Play concentrated on were related to the social and personal values. The results show that 75.5% of the respondents emphasised socialising (the social value), including, among other things, sharing the beauty of nature in a cosy place with family and friends and participating in the cultural activities in B. Play. This was preceded by personal value: 24.5% of the respondents emphasised practices pertaining to visitors seeking healing. Therefore, the first point missed by the stakeholders from the supply side was misunderstanding the characteristics of the important values that the stakeholders on the demand side wanted to realise (Figures 20.5 and 20.6).

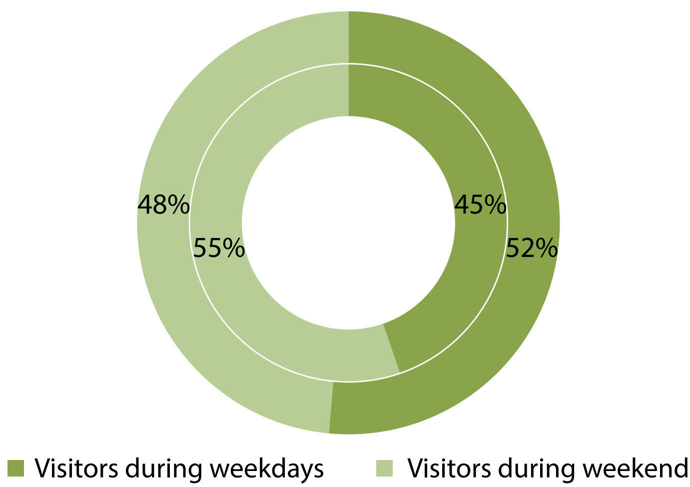

Figure 20.5 Important values of the stakeholders on the demand side
Source: elaborated by the author.

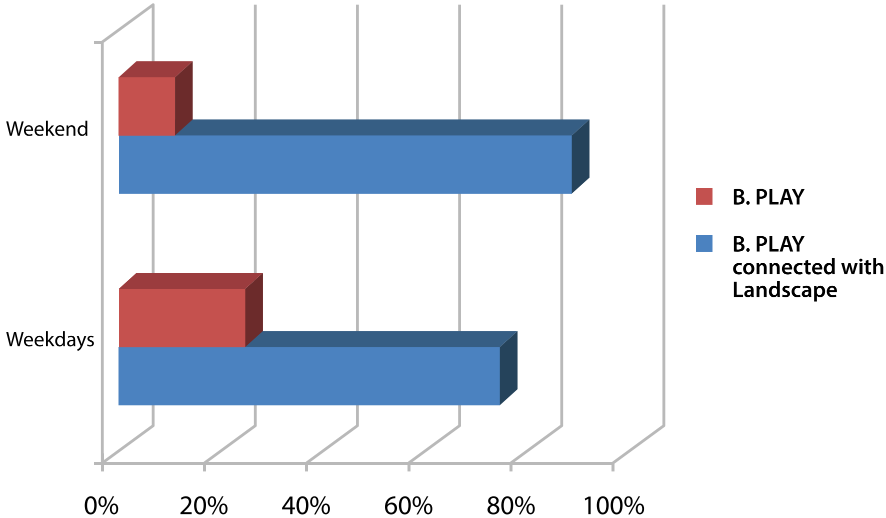

Figure 20.6 Differences in the willingness to participate
Source: elaborated by the author.

The data analysis demonstrated the second missing element, namely the expectation from the stakeholders on the supply side that visitors were most likely to visit the space because of the renovated landscape itself. However, the data actually told us that three-quarters of the visitors wanted to take part in practices in B. Play if these practices were connected to the mountain and the beauty of nature. Only one-quarter displayed a willingness to participate in activities in B. Play related merely to being the new space. In order to articulate the characteristics of the common practices that people wanted to participate in from the demand side, the survey data was collected at different times: weekdays and the weekend, as different age groups had different demands for certain activities (Table 20.6).

Our analysis (Figure 20.7) showed that the characteristics of the resources were more focused on cultural and social resources rather than economic ones. Attributes of the community can refer to visitors and neighbours. Given that the data analysis showed that local businesses within this neighbourhood mostly consisted of landscaping and gardening business, the neighbours and visitors might have also had an incentive to develop the commons. Common practices with visitors could be facilitated by the different age brackets and

Table 20.6 Age band of the respondents

Time/Age band	*21–30*	*31–40*	*41–55*
Weekdays	17	56	27
Weekend	25	75	-

Source: elaborated by the author.
* unit: %

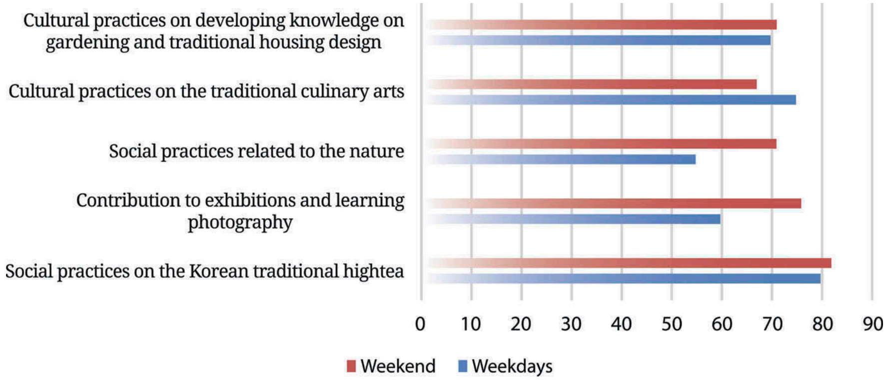

Figure 20.7 Practices that people wanted to engage in and improve on
Source: elaborated by the author.

demographics of the weekend visitors and weekdays visitors. Within Action Situations, stakeholders from both the supply and demand sides can act as actors, while Patterns of Interactions relate more to socialising in order to realise the value of healing and well-being. Hence, the three-phase model helps to make the application of the GKC model more concrete for governing the commons within contemporary urban projects. The Rules-in-Use would be determined by the governmental institutions, communities, and the owner of B. Play. The next important question is how to determine if the project was successful? In order to verify the change in the patterns, this study used the key word data analysis. Figure 20.8 presents the results.

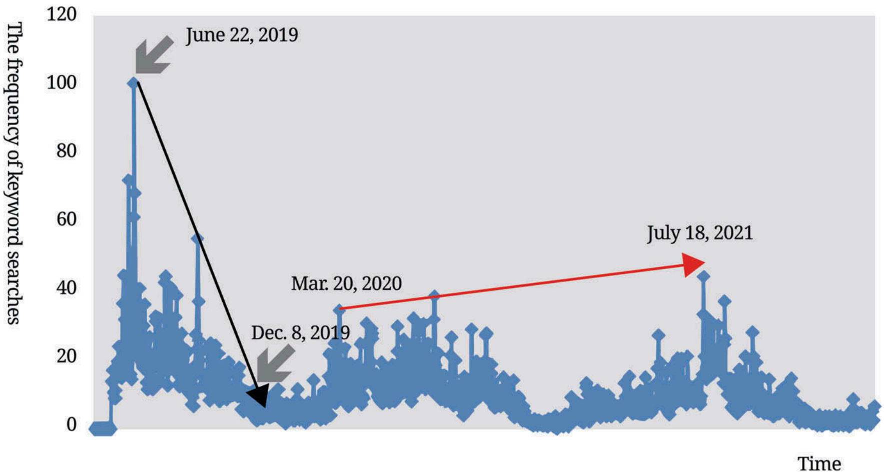

Figure 20.8 Big data analysis–Relative Frequency
Source: elaborated by the author from NAVER Corporation.

The graph shows the relative change in the frequency of keyword searches within the three-year period from 1 March, 2019, to 1 March, 2022. Within this dataset, the keyword was focused on B. Play in Bukhan Mountain in Korean. The results thus show that the intervention worked, insofar as B. Play shifted its operations away from a transaction-based approach towards a VBA, as this study was able to verify that people showed interest in the practices offered within the space. As this chapter has repeatedly stressed, the commons here is understood as being about the practices that people share in terms of supply, commitment, and monitoring. With respect to commitment, the concept of the value-based economy helps to make sense of the role of B. Play within the context of developing a landscape in a non-standard fashion. What the owner sought to achieve in B. Play was not merely to sell coffee or tea to visitors, but rather to keep her neighbourhood safe and improve it without compromising the local stories and communities that define it. Based upon this cognisance of the key motivation of this regeneration project, which derived from a willingness to contribute rather than a willingness to yield financial rewards, this analysis has attempted to rectify the fallacy regarding the role of values and the commons within the landscape.

Discussion

People in cities value some qualities more than others; their satisfaction depends upon the extent to which their values are realised within their practices. For example, people that care about nature benefit from common practices of urban farming, maintenance of city parks, and protection of birds. Both policy makers and private actors, such as, for example, commercial developers, must therefore take these values into account when striving to improve the quality of life within cities via spatial planning. They can do so by seeking to enhance the qualities of the common practices that are either lacking or currently falling short of what people value. For example, when people feel there is a lack of social cohesion, congeniality, and solidarity within their neighbourhood, then a commercial developer who is considering constructing a shop, like B. Play, may seek to include spaces for people to develop and maintain the commons of the landscape. Similarly, when it comes to the labour concentration of the neighbourhood, activities related to telecommunications, business and retail service could prove to be more attractive social and cultural practices than others. The survey results specify what business sectors could have synergy between the economic activities and practices within this project, such as education, landscaping, and gardening. The case study discussed in this chapter underscores a vitally important point which is that the spatial planning for constructing sustainable landscapes is determined by common practices that eventually create, develop, maintain, and improve the commons. The commons here are not simply tangible properties in the economic sense, but rather also includes social and cultural practices.

Conclusions

This chapter has put forward an argument for making sense of the commons and common practices within contemporary city life. Specifically, this study has shown that the commons are qualitatively different by assessing the qualities of common practices within a specific neighbourhood that was part of an urban development project in South Korea. The commons tend to be viewed as a resource that people can access and use. Within the post-industrial era, however, many scholars have observed that the scope of the commons must be extended, in order to account for the phenomenon that the important resources that people develop and share within contemporary cities involve practices that require the participation and contributions of many people. The GKC model guides cities to understand how to govern the commons within the contemporary city context, and provides a pragmatic governance framework for practices that create, develop, maintain, and improve the commons. The conceptualisation of the commons presented in this chapter has broad implications for research and policy making across multiple fields, ranging from the new forms of business that are related to the creative industries to urban development policy and spatial planning. The case study indicates why it is important to understand the different qualities of the commons as well as how these qualities can be identified within common practices by utilising a novel methodological approach.

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