# The role of culture in development

From tangible and monetary measures towards social ones

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#### Abstract

Along with the debate on the role of culture in development and the consequent establishment of culture-based local strategies, a significant number of impact evaluation studies have been produced to demonstrate culture's instrumental function. This article explains that the rationale behind this impact research has been biased towards economic appraisals, and it advocates bringing social and intangible dimensions, beyond the tangible and monetary ones, into the debate. This change can highlight the mechanisms through which culture and the arts can enrich societies and individuals. In doing this, and on the basis of a literature review, the article presents the current practices in social impact assessments of cultural activities, by describing the type of documents identified, the project beneficiaries and providers, the contexts in which assessments take place, the cultural inputs and artistic forms that drive the potential effects, the main impact areas covered by the studies, the time frame for the impact analyses and the methodological approaches. Moreover, it stresses the complexity and constraints of conducting social impact appraisals, arguing that these challenges might also keep researchers away.

#### Keywords

cultural economy, development, cultural policy, evaluation

# 1. The emergence of culture-based development strategies and associated impact appraisals

The sectorial approach that is currently used to interpret culture defines the cultural sector as the artistic activities that allow for the interpretation, representation and dissemination of new values, while the anthropological approach sees in culture the gathering of values, references, and behaviors that define the relationships between individuals and communities (GREFFE 2010). In recent decades an important debate on the role of this sector in development has emerged, along with the economic recognition of this activity. Indeed, with the collapsed industrial and manufacturing models culture has come to be recognized as a basis for local growth and development, mainly through tourism (GREFFE/ PFLIEGER 2005).

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As the economy has moved from agriculture to industry and then towards services and experiences, the cultural sector has transformed itself. In the pre-industrial period, the production of cultural products was manual and direct to the final consumer, and was static and strongly related to the past. The State was the major supporter of cultural activities, considered as heritage, performing, and visual arts; these activities were consumed by elite audiences. In the industrial period, the sector was characterized by massive production and consumption (with the introduction of new products like cinema, radio and television), and economic recognition began to be seen in complementary sectors such as tourism. Finally, in the post-industrial period consumption in the cultural sector has been transformed, audiences are now consumers and producers at the same time through technology and product innovation (new intangible and mobile products with higher risk levels), and new disciplines (like design) have arisen that have become economically relevant and attached to areas of 'creativity'.

Consequently, this evolution has encouraged the expansion of the sector's conceptual boundaries – beginning with the 'model of concentric circles' (THROSBY 2001) and other paradigms of development, such as the 'modern cultural economy' or the 'creative economy' – where cultural assets are transversally connected to different sectors of the economy by being used as the resources for specific products, services and experiences, with particular combinations of symbolic and utilitarian value. In this respect, cultural activities have received significant attention from the political and institutional forces at the local level, as potential alternatives for the declining industrial model (STERN/SEIFERT 2010; UNESCO and UNDP 2013).

Since the late 1990s, numerous culture-based local dynamics have emerged as supportive tools of economic and social development, urban regeneration (COOKE/LAZZERETTI 2007; GREFFE/PFLIEGER 2005; TIBBOT 2002) and quality of life (GALLOWAY 2007; TEPPER 2014; URZÚA et al. 2012).

However, the 'novelty' of this phenomenon is that these local development strategies recognize that the cultural assets represent specific components of a given territory and population (MARTINELL 2003) and are opportunities for producing and exporting high value products, services and experiences that incorporate territorial symbols and knowledge (GREFFE/PFLIEGER 2005). Consequently, this reformulation explores and positions intangible and tangible cultural capital as a force capable not only of attracting tourists but also of generating exports in a sector that is no longer static, unproductive and in demand exclusively at its point of final consumption but is designated as essential for intermediate consumption and, consequently, for economic and social development.

This appropriation of culture as a leading player in the urban area has been recognized through culture's capacity to produce a broad array of extrinsic (instrumental) effects that are related not only to economic outcomes but also to social dimensions such as health, personal and cognitive development, social cohesion and social capital.

According to McCarthy et al., these effects are instrumental when "the arts are viewed as a means of achieving broad social and economic goals that have nothing to do with art per se" (McCARTHY et al. 2004: xi). Nevertheless, what is counted as an instrumental function of culture is not the same in all types of cultural policies, programs, and activities. For example, instrumentalism is, for some institutions like museums, not an orientation for action but a constitutionality established in its reason for being (GIBSON 2008).

Evidence of these extrinsic effects and the key contributions of culture's participatory role in development is provided in numerous studies and mapping documents<sup>1</sup>.

However, a significant number of these assessments track and measure the big financial flows generated by activities in the cultural sector in terms of economic wealth; in other words, they are inclined to produce economic impact analyses and valuations. As Herrero et al. (2006:44) explained, "The economic impact studies, also known as 'effect methods' try to estimate the economic importance of the arts and to analyze the activities and earning flows related to the existence of a concrete cultural activity". Therefore, these studies highlight culture as a dynamic economic force that, through its spillover effects, "generates employment, revenues and incomes, and thus directly boosting economic growth", and leave aside the complexity of intangible and non-financial valuations (UNESCO 2011: 5).

Centre for Local and Regional Economic Analysis 2000; EY 2015; EY France 2013; KEA, European Affairs 2006; Myerscough 1988; UNCTAD 2008.

# 2. Moving from measuring tangible and monetary dimensions towards addressing social claims

The economic assessment of culture has long received attention in the research and policy communities. The main 'auditing debate' over culture's role in development has been economic, not only in the sectorial interpretation that comprises the measurement of the cultural sector's weight in the economy, but also in the broader anthropological approach that interprets culture as a determinant element (among other features) of economic behavior and life (to which Max Weber's theoretical insights made a significant contribution). The concentration of impact assessments on economic value is the result of multiple factors: the traditional evaluation fundamentals, which provide evidence based on standard monetary and financial figures; the financial dependency of culture and arts activities, which creates the need to communicate the positive impacts of the sector through more objective monetary and comparative measures that are connected with the language of policy-makers and practitioners and are capable of providing the quick answers that are ideal for short-term political and operational arguments; and the straightforward nature of economic evaluation which, by not depending on intangible elements like individual self-reports of feelings, reactions, or perceptions, is easier to conceptualize, measure, and disseminate.

Thus, the decision not to evaluate the complexity of the intangible social dimensions of cultural activities results from the political and financial imperatives of evidence-based policies – where the research agenda has been converging to the short-term demands of the advocacy agenda – and from the resilience to engage in a deeper debate on understanding the long-term mechanisms through which these other effects can be acknowledged and strengthened. As Belfiore and Bennett argued:

Economics can show that the arts may have "positive externalities" and that, if they do, this can be a justification of public subsidy. But what economics cannot do is tell us how the externalities attached to the arts actually do enrich individuals and societies (BELFIORE/BENNETT 2007: 137).

Therefore, despite the excessive cult for tangible measurement, there is a general concern, stressed by different authors, about bringing other social dimensions into the debate on the role of culture in development and consequently into the measurement appraisals, revealing an emerging debate between those who believe that economics can tell the whole story of cultural value, or that economic arguments are the only means of persuading governments of the worth of the arts and culture

and "those who believe that some aspects of cultural value can only be explained using a multidisciplinary approach" (HOLDEN/BALTÀ 2012: 7).

Indeed, in Williams' study, How the arts measure up, and in Matarasso's pioneering work asking 'what the arts can do for society,' the authors stressed the need to enlarge the boundaries of culture-based policies and debates on value beyond the economic aspects, which they considered as generating a 'distorted picture' of the value of cultural activities to society (MATARASSO 1997; WILLIAMS 1996). In this respect, Reeves stated that 'this partial view' of the debate on the value of cuture cannot take into account areas such as health, education, or social inclusion (REEVES 2002). Throsby argued that this limitation of the economic impact assessment - what McCarthy et al. called the 'outputoriented quantitative approach' (MCCARTHY et al. 2004) - arises from the origins and dimensions of value in the cultural sphere that require specific models to represent value, models that are different from the ones used in economics (THROSBY 2001). This point was also raised by Brown when he stated that there was a need for a 'value audit' along with the traditional 'financial audit' (BROWN 2006: 22). Plaza demonstrated that financial transactions cannot calculate "the non-market value of museums (meaning, for instance, their artistic, cultural, educational, architectural and prestige value to society)" (PLAZA 2010: 156). In turn, Greffe listed these omitted nonmonetary components, such as

the consolidation of knowledge among visitors who may thus enhance their skills, increasing know-how within the cultural professions, quality of life improvements in a given territory, heightened attractiveness of this territory, reinforcement of identity or community values, etc. (Greffe 2011: 123).

Bakhshi and Throsby observed that traditional impact studies emphasized the "'measurable' economic benefits at the expense of what are usually seen as 'unmeasurable' cultural values" (BAKHSHI/THROSBY 2010: 6).

In short, the current analyses of the role of culture in development focus on monetary evaluation and disregard the social dimensions, giving only a partial understanding of how the arts can enrich societies and individuals and limiting the formulation of culture-based development policies. These contributions demonstrate the need to introduce a broader debate and rigorous impact evaluation methods in order to acknowledge the range of effects of arts and cultural organizations and to support decision-makers, institutions and other stakeholders in their culture-based interventions (Bakhshi and Throsby 2010; Belfiore and Bennett 2007).

For this reason, and in order to have an unbiased debate on the role of culture in development and to describe its value to society, it is fundamental, first, to examine the efforts that have been made to account for other intangible and social dimensions by analyzing the practice of social impact assessment within the cultural sector (section 3 of this paper) and, second, to learn what limits this analysis by exploring the complexity and challenges of evaluating the intangible social dimensions of cultural activities (section 4).

## Current practice in assessing the social impact of cultural activities

To account for the dimensions of culture's transformative power on the development of society other than the economic spillover, a thorough bibliographic review was conducted on social impact assessment studies inside the cultural sector to identify what has already been produced and its methodological cost. This covered studies conducted from the beginning of the 1990s until the present (2016), which were collected through a search for the terms 'cultural impact,' 'art impact,' and 'the social impact of arts/culture.' Within these coordinates of time and concepts a selection of 46 references was found for the analysis. These studies refer mainly to activities taking place in Anglophone countries, like the United Kingdom, the United States, Canada, and Australia. A critical review of each reference was made to produce an outline of the work done so far, under key headings: the type of document in which the impact appraisal appeared (3.1), the beneficiaries and providers of the appraised project (3.2), the context in which the impact appraisal took place (3.3), the cultural inputs and artistic forms whose potential effects were appraised (3.4), the main impact areas covered by the appraisal (3.5), the time frame of the appraisal (3.6) and the methodological approach of the appraisal (3.7). The conclusions for each topic are presented in the following subchapters.

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### 3.1 Type of document in which the impact appraisal appeared

From among the analyzed references, two main types of documents emerged: reports and academic articles. The majority of the references are of report documents, and the remaining ones are academic articles. The fact that reports are in the majority can be attributed, on the one hand, to threats to funding schemes that required agents in the cultural sector to produce evidence on the impacts of their actions, and, on the other hand, to the methodological challenges (described later in this paper) that can discourage academic attention.

The reports are generally documents commissioned by the public sector – the funders of the activities, or the cultural institutions themselves (the developers of the projects). These entities have specific rationales that are often difficult to combine: the political rationale of the public sector, the financial rationale of the funders and the artistic rationale, mainly of the cultural institutions. This is particularly noticeable, for example, in cases where reports are mandatory appraisals by the funders who are notorious for a slight over-estimation of the financial effects to the disadvantage of artistic considerations. Another aspect involves the team that conducts the reports; the team can be internal or external. The references show that most of the reports are external (commissioned) evaluations, so that more impartial and critical analyses can be anticipated.

So far as the academic articles are concerned, the range of journals and publications show that studies are being produced in various scientific fields, illustrating the interest that the subject raises in areas such as aesthetics, health, psychology, education, sociology and economics.

Another possible categorization of the type of documents reviewed is related to the main interest of each piece of research. In relation to this, the social impacts of cultural activities can be divided into five main groups, presented here in descending order of the number of documents found and analyzed:

- 'arts on education' studies that assess the effects of engagement in rts on cognitive abilities and skills;
- (السو) on health' research that focuses on the association between participation in cultural activities and perceived health;
- 'community-based arts projects' studies that evaluate the impacts of specific programs that connect artists with local residents and pro-

duce artistic activities that can address the interests and needs of the

- ural activities and programs' research that aims to demonstrate the links between cultural events (like festivals or artistic workshops) or major cultural programs (like the European Capitals of Culture) and social outcomes; and
- 'arts on wellbeing' studies that try to assess the effects of cultural activities on life satisfaction, general wellbeing and quality of life.

Further study of this five-group categorization made it possible to see that most 'arts on health' documents were produced within academic research parameters, that 'arts on education' is nearly balanced between articles and report documents, and that 'community-based arts projects,' 'cultural activities and programs' and 'arts on wellbeing' studies are areas where academic research is lacking.

# 3.2 The beneficiaries and providers of the appraised project

The list of analyzed studies reported the findings in relation to particular project beneficiaries and providers. When analyzing these in the light of the five-group categorization it was possible to infer that: the 'arts on education' studies assessed the effects of engagement in the arts by looking mainly at specific younger audiences, reported as 'youth,' 'children,' and 'adolescents', and mostly at providers like schools offering arts programs within the school day through teachers and arts professionals; the 'arts on health' studies focused mainly on 'elderly people' and 'adults,' and described a mixture of providers for these cultural activities, like professionals in health care units (SOMAN/ENGLISH 2010) or congregated housing units (BYGREN et al. 2013); the 'community-based arts projects' studies do not report the effects on specific audiences, in contrast to the other studies, but in fact analyze the effect of cultural interventions from a variety of providers on a broad audience – the local community; the 'cultural activities or programs' studies were developed by multiple providers for a range of audiences; for example, Sistema Scotland was a public local program intended to promote social change through classical musical training of young people (ALLAN 2010); the 'arts on wellbeing' assessment studies also reported the effects on broader general audiences, and the providers of these cultural activities were not specified in most of the studies.

In short, there is a variety of project beneficiaries over a range of community groups for whom each specific cultural activity is planned and delivered, and there are multiple providers, not just traditional cultural institutions that follow particular agendas and objectives.

### 3.3 The context in which the impact appraisal took place

As previously mentioned, most of the studies found and selected for this review are of activities taking place in Anglophone countries.

In these countries, different trends of research were found: in the United Kingdom and the United States there is a particular interest regarding 'arts on education' effects, and the 'community-based arts projects' studies have been mainly produced in the United Kingdom and Australia. Beyond the Anglophone countries, studies conducted in Sweden, Switzerland, Germany, and Portugal were included in this review. Here Sweden emerges as a country where relevant work regarding 'arts on health' issues, which seeks evidence of the relationship between arts engagement and health, has been performed over recent decades (GOR-DON-NESBITT 2015).

Regarding the multiple contexts in which the assessments take place two other aspects can be considered. First, the studies that gauge the impact of engagement in the arts and cultural activities in specific contexts - like schools, hospitals, criminal justice establishments, old people's homes, art galleries, or museums - point out that traditional cultural institutions are not the only home for cultural interventions, but that the social impacts of cultural activities tend to be exploited and measured outside these conventional sites. Returning to the previous discussion on the instrumentalism of culture, for those who argue that museums are constitutionally instrumental, hospital and prison settings are concrete examples of the instrumentalization of cultural activities (GIBSON 2008). Second, studies that use large sample data sets, representative of national or regional areas, to infer relationships between cultural participation and social outcomes rarely acknowledge the particularities of the context. These studies analyze large territories as whole homogenous areas without accounting for socio-economic and cultural differences, especially when centering their assessment on national data sets, which mask territorial diversities.

### 3.4 The cultural inputs and artistic forms whose potential effects were appraised

The list of analyzed references certainly shows that attending cultural events and taking part in arts activities can produce benefits in different social areas. However, these effects depend not only on the intensity of involvement but maybe also on the nature of the cultural inputs and forms of engagement – attending a classical music concert or playing the piano do not provide the same type of experience and so do not have the same results for individuals. According to the references reviewed, an interaction with culture or an arts activity can occur and consequently be assessed in the form of passive engagement – attending a cultural event (a music concert, a theatre performance, or a ballet), observing visual arts, going to a museum – or in the form of active engagement – playing a musical instrument, dancing, or drawing. These different forms of interacting with culture and specific art forms give rise to different effects. More than half of the reviewed studies assessed the social outcomes of cultural activities with active, but not passive, forms of engagement.

From the studies covering active involvement in the arts, the review identifies a greater interest in educational outcomes, particularly in arts programs developed in school environments. For example, there was a study measuring the effects that regular involvement in drama lessons had on the development of children's literacy (GOODMAN 1990). In the studies assessing the social impacts of cultural activities in passive or receptive forms of engagement, there was an emphasis on observing the link between these forms of arts engagement and effects on health. The Wikstrom paper, for example, explores ways of integrating visual art works into nursing care environments to improve health conditions (WIKSTROM 2011). Additionally, a few studies assessed and compared the effects produced by active and passive forms of engagement. For example, Tepper, argue that not all forms of arts engagement are connected with life satisfaction: engaging in fine arts and crafts is, but attending the theatre is not (TEPPER 2014).

### 3.5 The main impact areas covered by the appraisal

Regarding the main impact areas covered by the studies, the work produced on social impact assessments allowed quite a range of effects and outcome areas attributed to the arts and cultural activities to be documented – values that go beyond the aesthetic meaning of the experience and are able to induce individual and social development. These effects were arranged for each appraisal in two segments of an impact scale: the individual and the collective level. An important conclusion of this literature review of social impact assessments is that the individual level effects have been subject to more research than the impacts at the collective level.

For the individual impacts of cultural activities, those affecting people through engagement, the main topics identified for impacts were, according to the review, 'cognitive development' and 'attitudinal changes'.

The potential outcomes of 'cognitive development' cover academic achievement, learning new skills such as communication, reading, mathematical, visual-spatial, creative, entrepreneurial, and technical arts skills, and the development of literacy and aesthetic judgment. Different studies have reported connections on the nexus between the arts and cognitive development, particularly playing musical instruments and the development of cognitive skills such as mathematics (SOUTHGATE/ ROSCIGNO 2009). The 'attitudinal' capacities include self-confidence, self-esteem, self-control, self-expression, a sense of pride, capacity for autonomy, the enhancement of attendance levels and behavior at school, and the development of empathy for others. For example, Charlton et al. also defended the potential of community-based arts projects to increase understanding among people and provide opportunities for sharing experiences (CHARLTON et al. 2013). These cognitive and attitudinal areas of individual impact were tracked mainly for young people in school and out-of-school activities; for example, Catterall et al. (1999) explored the effects on self-esteem, reading and language skills of students' involvement in theatre activities.

Another outcome area for the individual impact assessed by the studies was 'health.' The studies that identified successful results from incorporating art activities into the health care environment investigated aspects of improving mental and physical health by reducing stress, anxiety, symptoms of depression, the need for care services, and medication, and by increasing the odds of survival. Also, as previously described, most health studies looked specifically at the effects of arts engagement on elderly and adult populations. For example, in 2011, the Cuypers et al. (2011) study concluded that the frequency of cultural participation was positively associated with good health, satisfaction with life, lower anxiety, and a lower depression score for an adult population.

Another type of individual impact identified by these studies was 'perceptions and motivation.' This segment covers people's perception of the arts - whether people had more positive feelings about them and whether they had an influence on personal motivation, mood, self-image, and self-assessment. For example, the Office for Standards in Education report explained that one of the pupils' perceptions about dance was its ability to make them feel more comfortable and better about themselves and their personal image (Office for Standards in Education 2003). This perception impact segment also covers people's willingness to search for opportunities in arts-based education, as reported by Miles and Clarke's (2006) research on the impact of arts interventions in criminal justice settings. These authors showed that offenders participating in arts activities in prisons felt motivated to seek out new arts-based educational opportunities.

The final individual outcome area identified and explored by the studies was 'well-being.' As far as well-being outcomes are concerned, happiness, pleasure, enjoyment, life satisfaction and feelings of peace were considered potential effects. For example, Fujiwara (2013) found that visiting museums has a positive impact on happiness even after controlling for other determinants.

As regards the collective impacts, as mentioned above, only a few reports have looked at the connections between cultural activities and socio-indicators at the collective level. Nevertheless, three segments of impacts at a collective level were highlighted in the review: those concerned with the development of 'community social values,' those oriented towards 'territorial improvements,' and a few studies that contained references to 'economic outcomes.'

'Community social values' is the area of collective impact of cultural activities that concerns the promotion of social contact, interaction, and social inclusion, the enhancement of a sense of community identity, development of the ability to cooperate on a social issue, civic engagement, and the building of social capital. Cultural activities provide opportunities for people to enjoy public areas, to interact and to meet new people. The Secker et al. (2007) study on participatory arts projects developed in England for people with mental health needs demonstrated that arts initiatives are opportunities for social contact that allow the stigmas of isolation to be addressed, and for the building of bonds that contribute to social inclusion. Communities that engage in arts activities with occasions for interacting build a sense of belonging to a place, a group, and an identity where there is recognition of common ground. The Sistema Scotland initiative serves as a good example of using classical music to address social exclusion problems in deprived contexts (Allan 2010).

Another example is described by Charlton et al. (2013: 13); these researchers went to 'risky' neighborhoods in Toronto to explore the ability of cultural activities to create a sense of place by "reinforcing the importance of place-based art that speaks from and resonates with community members". In turn, a few reports found that social interaction and contact stimulated through engagement in the arts help to develop trust with others and to establish formal and informal partnerships, building social capital (GOODLAD/HAMILTON/TAYLOR 2002; WILLIAMS 1996). Regarding civic engagement, a few papers also advocated the capacity of arts engagement to inspire action by raising public awareness on a social issue (Heath, Soep, and Roach 1998). Most of the examples of building 'community social values' were studies that evaluated 'community-based arts programs.'

'Territorial improvements' cover both physical and non-material urban regualification. Physical improvements may be new infrastructure or new forms of the appropriation of public space, and non-material improvements denote changes in the perception of the image of the territory. The European Capital of Culture project is a good example of a culture-based program oriented towards the regeneration of both the physical and the non-material image of the host city. The report on the impacts of Guimarães 2012 European Capital of Culture stated that the program was developed by intensively involving the local community, promoting the use of public spaces and generating specific projects for the regualification of the city's urban area (UNIVERSIDADE DO MIN-HO 2013). Liverpool's title of European Capital of Culture 2008 helped to transform people's awareness and perceptions of the city: 77% of the visitors felt the city to be safer than they had expected, and 68% of UK businesses considered that the European program had had a positive impact on the city's image (GARCIA/COX/MELVILLE 2010). Likewise, Community Matters, an initiative brought to life based on the idea of neighbors helping neighbors, recognized the importance of working with local artists and creative assets "through mosaics and murals, a sculpture garden, community walks, and activities such as knit bombing trees, painting Bell boxes, and planting gardens" to bring people together and to sustain the revitalization of spaces (CHARLTON et al. 2013: 27).

Lastly, a few studies report some impressions regarding 'economic outcomes,' which reflect the capacity of cultural activities to increase employment opportunities, to develop tourism and local commerce and to create new sources of income. Taking the Liverpool 2008 example again, the initiative was reported to be responsible for attracting 9.7 million additional visits to the city (comprising 35 % of all visits to the city in 2008), which generated an economic impact of  $\pounds$ 753.8 million (GAR-CIA/COX/MELVILLE 2010).

These discussions of the 'economic' and 'territorial' dimensions in studies focusing on the social impacts of cultural activities occur in a few cases where a whole spectrum of dimensions was embraced in the analysis of the effects.

To close the review of the areas of impact, reference must be made to the small number of studies that pointed to negative impacts of cultural activities, as opposed to the large list of positive outcomes. One of these is the modest insight of Bygren et al. on how "people lose their sense of reality and identify with asocial models of behavior and are themselves encouraged towards asocial behavior" with arts engagement (Bygren/ Konlaan/Johansson 1996: 1578).

#### 3.6 The time frame of the appraisal

The work produced on the social impact of cultural activities demonstrates that any new program is likely to have some sort of impact. However, the sustainability of this impact is related to the duration of the project, the frequency of engagement, and the nature of the cultural input. Thus, a short-term analysis of a short-lived cultural project evidences effects that are transitory and tend not to last much beyond the period of intervention or engagement. Short-term frames of impact analysis were defined as evaluations produced for periods equal to or less than one year.

The review shows that the majority of the analyzed studies produced assessments in a short-term time frame. The restricted time frame of these analyses constitutes a barrier to a real assessment of the sustainability of the effects, and the analyses describe "outputs rather than longer term outcomes or impact" (AEGIS 2005: 10). The mass production of impact studies inside the cultural sector shows that the terms 'outputs', 'outcomes', and 'impacts' tend to be confused, and that the studies, instead of evaluating impacts, merely conduct quantifications of outputs and outcomes. Indeed, the 'outputs' or immediate results of a specific project are reported using, for example, performance and audience numbers, and these are very often treated as if they were the 'impacts' of the projects. However, as there is a very fine line between 'impacts' and 'outcomes,' it is more common to confound 'impacts' with 'outcomes' and thus to demonstrate the short-term results and changes derived from a project – for example, increasing the awareness of a play.

There are three factors that can explain this bias towards a shortterm analysis: the first is the fact that the analyzed projects are themselves mainly occasional and short-term; the second is that the majority of the reviews are general reports commissioned by entities in the public sector or funders, which encourages brief analyses that are ideal for short-term political and operational rationales; and the third is that long-term assessments are more costly and present greater methodological challenges (discussed below).

### 3.7 The methodological approach of the appraisal

The review references highlight six main methodological approaches: qualitative, correlational, longitudinal, multidisciplinary, literature review, and experimental studies.

The 'qualitative approach' is the most frequently used methodology, which is predictable for a sector that deals with the subjectivity of cultural experiences and the intangible and 'hard-to-measure' dimensions (HOLDEN/BALTÀ 2012) of human and social development. As Secker et al. argued, qualitative methods are required to acknowledge the context of change: "quantitative methods are only useful in assessing the extent of any change associated with arts participation. To understand how and in what context change occurs, qualitative methods are required" (SECKER et al. 2007:12). The main data collection methods adopted in the qualitative approach were interviews, open-ended questionnaires, observations, discussion groups, visits to the places of intervention, analyses of prior relevant documents, workshops, video and audio recordings, processes involving diaries and written statements, photos, and artistic expression techniques. This last method, artistic expression, involves creative instruments for collecting and reporting information. In Allan's work on 'art and inclusive imagination', the arts were used as a method to gather information: for instance, young children were asked to make a piece of art that captured their sense of the day and their perception of the impacts of the activity they had undertaken (AL-LAN 2010). This method was also employed in 'arts on health' research, where children in hospitals were asked to use art materials to express and share emotions (SOMAN/ENGLISH 2010). After establishing a combination of some of these data collection tools, the information was treated through statistical exploration and other specific frameworks, such as the logical framework approach or the context/mechanism/outcome approach. Nevertheless, the qualitative approach alone is limited

because the method is unable to infer causality, as Fujiwara (2013: 19) states:

Qualitative survey techniques can be useful for understanding the different aspects of a positive (or negative) experience and they can guide us in showing some of the outcomes that may be of import, but their use in understanding and attributing causality are severely limited.

Studies using the qualitative approach are followed by the 'correlation studies,' which are based on questionnaires or surveys that describe the short-term relations between engagement with an art form and the outcomes of interest. These studies use multiple regression analyses to infer positive (but only transitory) outcomes of art enrichment (CUYPERS et al. 2011; HILL 2013; WILKINSON et al. 2007). Some of these documents acknowledge the limitations of their analysis in establishing causality links; for example, Corrigall and Trainor stated that "because these results are correlational, the direction of causation cannot be determined" (CORRIGALL/TRAINOR 2011: 153). Hill (2013: 2) explained that

it is very difficult to provide evidence of a cause and effect relationship between the variables in a statistical model in the absence of an experiment to directly measure the impacts of culture on personal well-being.

Yang, when attempting to identify the causal effect of music practice on education, tried to address the endogeneity caused by innate abilities, but recognized that "future research with more comprehensive data could shed more light on the causal effect of music practice on education" (YANG 2015: 394). Other documents advocated the importance of building a longitudinal analysis (CUYPERS et al. 2011).

The 'longitudinal approach' emerges as a method that tracks the effects of cultural engagement over a period of time on a specific dimension of health or education. The longitudinal studies are based on long-term surveys (usually secondary national data sets) and, just like the correlational approach, employ multiple regressions analyses and probability models, but without restricting the temporal analysis. However, once again these studies are purely correlational, in that they establish a link between engagement in the cultural activity and the effects of this engagement, but not a causation effect. Therefore, all the longitudinal studies acknowledge, on the one hand, that their findings are not able to infer causality – "only a randomized design experimental study can capture causality" (SOUTHGATE/ROSCIGNO 2009:18) – and, on the other hand, that experimental analyses are very difficult to carry out in these fields of research (CATTERALL/WALDORF 1999).

The 'multidisciplinary approach' combines quantitative and qualitative data to consider a whole spectrum of dimensions, including the social sphere, and economic, cultural and environmental effects, among others. This is a common approach followed by major cultural programs such as the European Capital of Culture interventions (GARCIA/COX/ MELVILLE 2010; UNIVERSIDADE DO MINHO 2013). Additionally, it is used by studies that tailor other specific combinations of qualitative and quantitative information to track the effects of arts and culture. One example is a pioneering study on museum contexts that makes use of data from two sources: guestionnaires, which allowed aesthetic information to be gathered, and electronic data gloves used by the participants, which recorded their physical positions and physiological parameters through wireless systems (TSCHACHER et al. 2012). Another example is the wellbeing valuation approach, which gives monetary values to the effects on wellbeing of engagement with the arts and culture (CASE 2010; FUJIWARA 2013). In general, these multidisciplinary approaches produce short-term evaluations, and therefore tend to analyze outputs and outcomes rather than the sustainability of the effects.

Three studies, all dating from 2000 and researching the educational outcomes of arts instruction, used meta-analysis methods to conduct 'literature reviews.' Butzlaff's meta-analysis on the effects of music instruction on children's reading skills was performed on thirty-one studies (BUTZLAFF 2000). The author found that although the correlational studies demonstrated a strong and reliable association, the same causal link between music and reading was not found for experimental studies (BUTZLAFF 2000). Keinänen et al. performed a meta-analysis to identify and assess studies researching the outcomes of dance instruction, and concluded that the seven experimental studies they found were limited in their ability to draw strong conclusions about the power of dance as an effective means of improving reading (KEINÄNEN/HETLAND/ WINNER 2000). Burger and Winner's (2000) meta-analysis focused on ten references that researched the role of the visual arts in enhancing reading skills, and the authors argued that generalizations cannot be drawn from those studies.

Lastly, two studies undertook short-term visual arts 'experiments' to explore the role of painting and photography as a possible modality for improving health status in an elderly population. First, in 1993, Wikstrom et al. (1993) developed a case-control intervention study with elderly women living alone. Second, Bygren et al. (2013) produced a visual arts experiment in congregated housing units of elderly people in Stockholm to assess whether exposure to the arts could affect residents' health when compared with playing in-house boule. Both experiments presented limitations in regard to the sample size (40 participants in the first and 23 in the second). Additionally, both worked on a restricted time of intervention and analysis, thus preventing the production and accountability of sustainable effects.

In general, the low numbers of experimental studies found in this literature review and also in the three meta-studies just described are testimony to the difficulties attached to the production of true experimental research in the social sciences.

# 4. The complexity and challenges of the social impact evaluation

As discussed, social impact assessments have to develop methodologies capable of capturing the invisible and intangible elements of human and social development derived from cultural dynamics. As the literature review has shown, most studies try to deal with this subjective nature by adopting qualitative measures, but qualitative appraisals also give rise to limitations on evaluation and may have complex methodological faults (CHARLTON et al. 2013; FUJIWARA 2013; HILL 2014). By using unstructured or semi-structured techniques and promoting a subjective evaluation based on frameworks specifically developed for a particular context (BROWN 2006), the qualitative methods of data collection reduce the ability to compare outcomes, further decrease the use of measurement frames, and increase bias in the empirical work. This shows how difficult it is to generalize about the role and impact of arts and culture. Therefore, the massive production of impact assessments is not synonymous with the production of good methodological research: "there is a considerable body of research literature available - but there are also many gaps" (ACE 2014:4).

In 2002, DiMaggio (2002) identified three major fallacies embedded in the cultural policy discourse that exemplify the complexity of the processes of measuring the effects of arts and culture on community development.

The first challenge concerns 'homogeneity of treatment,' or, in other words, the assumption that the different types of exposure to culture (types of participation and cultural programs) represent a single 'treatment' and so produce similar effects on persons or communities (DIMAGGIO 2002). The second fallacy is 'homogeneity of effects', which assumes that an arts 'treatment' (even if well specified) will have the same effects on all people and communities, when in fact the effects can be heterogeneous because of baseline socio-economic differences between the participants, diversity of the contexts of departure (when analyzing territories), interactions with other factors, or some path dependency trend. For example, an arts education program will not have the same effect on every youngster's learning process, as the effect will depend on the youngster's initial level of education, among other issues. This issue is also raised in Belfiore and Bennett's analysis: "the value or impact of a work of art will vary enormously according to all the factors that make up a person's identity, including age, class, health, wealth and so on" (BELFIORE/BENNETT 2007: 137). The third fallacy is that of 'linearity of effects,' which assumes that the effects of increasing arts inputs are constant to scale, and so produce linear outcomes at community level. This assumption may not be valid in all circumstances - for example, adding a new theatre in a community with no cultural venues will produce a different effect from building a new venue in a community that already has a strong cultural dynamic. Besides the three fallacies DiMaggio raises, three other challenges were identified from the bibliographic review.

The first is the 'isolation of effects,' which concerns the ability to assess the influence of minor marginal factors (a music project or new cinema venue) on major and complex outcomes (such as social capital, community identity, or economic environment). There are other factors influencing the environment simultaneously and it is important to understand to what extent the social impact can be attributed to the cultural intervention. This issue was raised long ago by Bygren et al. (1996: 1578) – "perhaps cultural behavior is so intermingled with life as a whole that it is impossible to discern its influence". It was also explored by McCarthy et al. when they analyzed the dimensions of the social capital effect:

The time that elapses between the initial arts activity (e.g., attendance) and the desired social outcome of social capital is often so great, and the number of other factors so large, that researchers can at best measure intermediate outputs from the activity (e.g., interactions among strangers or becoming a subscriber) (McCARTHY et al. 2004: 16).

The second challenge, termed 'sustainability of effects,' refers to the ability of arts and culture to produce impacts that persist in the long term. It is generally argued that any new program will produce positive effects, but the issue is whether these effects are sustainable over time. Therefore, when analyzing and measuring the social impacts of cultural activities the evaluators should acknowledge that the temporal dimension needs to be taken into account for most of the extrinsic effects, which need time to emerge and occur (ACE 2014). The third challenge revealed in the literature review is the 'causality of effects,' which refers to the fact that, although there is a large list of studies presenting the individual and collective social effects of cultural activity, most of these studies fail to prove causality: "most of the studies reviewed cannot establish causality between arts and culture and the wider societal impacts" (ACE 2014: 8). In fact, many authors have argued that it is difficult to provide evidence of a cause and effect relationship without an experiment to measure these impacts directly (CORRIGALL/TRAINOR 2011; HILL 2013; YANG 2015). Therefore, based on the review and observing the type of evidence being produced, most of the studies could be criticized as being weak - they are merely describing correlational links between culture and other outcomes, and generally do not deal with one of two issues (omitted variable bias or reverse causality) but instead produce estimates that cannot isolate the causal impact of the explanatory variables on the dependent variable, so that the results are endogenous and cannot establish causality. In fact, as Corrigall and Trainor 2011 note regarding musical training and reading comprehension, there may be a situation of reverse causality: it is "possible, indeed quite likely that children who are better readers, who are more intelligent, and who tend to work hard and persist on tasks [...] are more likely to take music lessons" and to stick with lessons for a longer period of time (CORRIGALL/ TRAINOR 2011: 153).

All of these methodological challenges make the assessment process difficult and tend to discourage measurement attempts; this explains why there is a resistance towards measuring the social impacts of cultural activities. As the authors, Zappalà and Lyons state, the initial social impact evaluation movement was followed by a decline in measurement programs, due to the difficulty associated with the evaluation of these particular dimensions (ZAPPALÀ/LYONS 2009).

#### Conclusion

This paper has explained that there are differences in prosperity and development that can be explained by cultural characteristics. Once these characteristics are exploited, they are crucial assets for modern economic growth. The paper concludes that the analysis of this phenomenon – like the general conceptualisation of development – is still attached to economic accounts that leave behind an important, if not fundamental, part of the rationale for culture in social life. This paper provokes an interest in enlarging this debate by exploring the social impacts of cultural activities through observing current practices in social impact evaluation and the main challenges faced by these studies.

In this sense, the paper reveals that although there is a great deal of evidence concerning the potential effects of cultural activities on individual and collective social development, this evidence is presented with some methodological limitations. Most of the studies focus on the individual transitory outcomes of cultural activities and not on sustainable collective effects, and tend merely to report correlations between the variables and not causal links. Moreover, it is argued that these methodological challenges, along with other factors such as the traditional and straightforward nature of economic frameworks and the need to communicate and advocate, objectively and monetarily, the positive impacts of the sector, can explain the bias towards economic assessments.

In this regard, this review makes it clear that, despite the different research interests expressed in different territories, the current practices of social impact evaluation still relate more to accountability than to learning goals. In fact, this tight relationship between impact assessment practice and funding rationale, where evidence is produced to feed the evidence-based policies inside the cultural sector, has major consequences on the impartiality, quality, and range of impact measurement. First, impartial and independent assessments of the impacts of culture programs might be compromised when pursuing these blind measures in order to meet funding (BELFIORE/BENNETT 2009). Second, the quantity of evaluation is considered to be more important than the quality of appraisals when impact measurement is understood as the only way of validating cultural experiences (GORDON-NESBITT 2015). Third, the advocacy guidelines focus the evaluation debate on positive, short-term impacts, and suppress an exploration of the negative outcomes of the sector (HOLDEN 2006).

Nevertheless, evaluation has two purposes: one is to ensure accountability with respect to public money, and the other is to provide processes for learning from cultural and art experiences (EVERITT/HAMILTON 2003). Indeed, understanding how the arts can enrich societies and individuals is fundamental for an unbiased debate on the role of culture in development. Therefore, contrary to current evaluations – where studies debating the mechanisms through which culture and the arts produce social effects are infrequent – this work claims that impact assessment should also be about learning and understanding the process of engagement and change, in this case social change (KILROY et al. 2007).

As the bibliographic review has highlighted, an important part of the collective impact of cultural activities is the promotion of 'community social values.' This social effect of cultural activities stresses that one of the roles of culture – 'culture as sustainable development' – is to be an on-going process of social learning, communication, and behaviour, providing people with values to interpret the world and to interact and act socially, by embodying a system of meanings and symbols (DESSEIN et al. 2015). Therefore this function of mediating social transformation by imparting community-oriented values, through particular processes of experiential learning, the stimulation of creativity, and opportunities for expression and social interaction, demonstrates that the symbolic value of culture should be attached not only to its capacity to produce economic externalities (high value products, which incorporate territorial idiosyncrasies) but also to its ability to produce social and intangible externalities (social capital, social cohesion, and civic engagement), thus providing alternative grounds for culture-based development strategies and broadening the debate on the role of culture role in development.

#### Contributor

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