THE PARTICIPATION OF LOCAL COMMUNITIES IN THE CO-CREATION PROCESS OF CULTURAL INITIATIVES. THE CASE OF MATERA 2019

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Abstract: The European Capitals of Culture (ECOC) initiative has already demonstrated how traditions, culture and the involvement of local communities can boost innovation and value creation. Based on the analysis of in-depth interviews with managers from the Foundation Matera Basilicata 2019 and Project Leaders from the local associations who took part in the creation of the program for Matera ECOC 2019, the authors found evidence of the co-creation process behind the organization of the cultural initiative. Starting from a set of eight value drivers, mentioned in the Dossier of Matera 2019, the present paper highlights how these values can become pivotal elements throughout all stages of the program development and execution (e.g. capacity building, crash test, go and see, etc.) of an international cultural event such as Matera 2019, as well as in the empowerment of the local entrepreneurship operating in the creative field, thanks to the development of a dense network of relationships and collaborations under a "local brand" strongly perceived outside the community.

Keywords: Co-creation; Local Communities; Local Entrepreneurship; European Capitals of Culture; Social Inclusion; Creative Economy; Capacity building; Audience Engagement.

1.   Introduction

In the last years, the role of cultural issues has become increasingly apparent in the context of territorial and urban development. Support and development of cultural politics is one of key issues in the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, SDG 11 [1]. The New Urban Agenda [2] recognizes a culture-based approach to urban development as crucially important. Recent studies have explored that culture is becoming a leverage for urban competitiveness [3-5].

Co-creation becomes an inevitable part of cultural projects in urban environment. The city authorities proclaim involvement of citizens in urban projects as a new norm [6]. The involvement of stakeholders plays an important role in decision-making process in urban development [7]. Application of co-creation mechanisms in cultural urban projects not only allows achieving sustainable and meaningful results in the development of urban environment but also provides benefits for all the stakeholders, such as the growth of local cultural or creative entrepreneurship.

Municipal authorities may benefit from the possibility to increase the social significance of urban development projects and the role of cultural initiatives on local and international level. Business entities have the possibility to invest properly in a territorial development, to get a better contact with citizens and city authorities, increase brand value, attract high-qualified human capital. Citizens' involvement allows them to influence the efficiency of governmental decisions, to implement its own ideas and initiatives, make a real impact on changes in the urban environment. Citizens participation on co-creation processes also leads to strengthening of ties between them, to the formation of new urban communities that lead to creation of new social values: ownership, trust, mutual understanding also by means of creation of local communities.

One of the cultural initiatives that contributes to co-creation processes on the urban level is the European Capitals of Culture initiative (ECOC) supported by the European Commission. The ECOC initiative is aimed to reveal the high diversity of European cultures, to strengthen cultural ties between them, develop cultural cities on international level. The cities nominated as cultural capitals attract locals and international tourists by conducting a great number of festivals, exhibitions, concerts, fairs that are organized there throughout the year. In addition to cultural events and increasing popularity among tourists cities-nominees usually get urban infrastructure improvement as a benefit and a consequence of being chosen as a European Capital of Culture. It is also a good chance for municipal authorities to improve the quality of life of citizens [8].

In 2019 the city of Matera in Italian region of Basilicata held a title of European Capital of Culture. The cultural program for Matera was organized under the motto "Open Future" with special attention paid to social and cultural integration and joint innovation was supported by 27 projects developed with the participation of local creative communities and partners from Europe. The success of Matera 2019 results from a unified approach developed for its candidacy. In the four years prior to 2019, it was encouraged an intake of proposals, suggestions and requests for collaboration both locally and internationally. The cultural program was conceived as a platform open to new collaborations and capable of adapting to the evolution of needs and ideas, also allowing citizens to participate in the program [9]. With this strategy, the city tackled the challenge with widespread participation from its inhabitants, the involvement of national and international artists, the promotion of multidisciplinary activities and a cultural agenda composed mostly of original projects. The Foundation Matera-Basilicata 2019 organized 1,228 events, including 410 across the region, involving 482 artists, 17,000 students, 1,500 volunteers, and 18,000 residents who actively contributed to 37 community projects. Overall, the initiative has provided a substantial boost to the local economy: Matera has registered the highest growth in tourism as a European Capital of Culture in the history of the initiative, with an increase of 30% in foreign tourists for the city itself, and a 34% for the region of Basilicata[1]. Based on this background, the present study through an exploratory research design aims to answer the following research questions:

RQ1: What are the values underneath the co-creation process in cultural projects?

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[1] https://corporate.enel.it/en/stories/a/2019/12/matera-2019-the-year-continues

RQ2: To what extent the co-creation process in cultural initiatives affects the local entrepreneurial growth path in the creative field?

Therefore, the purpose of this study is to understand and analyze to what extent the value drivers, also described in the Dossier of Matera 2019 - can actually drive the empowerment of the associations that participated in the cultural program for Matera ECOC from the point of view of the skills acquisition, network creation, project development, and community engagement. The reminder of this paper is structured as follows: section 2 presents a literature review on the topic of interest. Next, section 3 provides the research design and methodology. Section 4 describes in detail the main results, discussion, and managerial implications of the study. In section 5 conclusion and future research paths are outlined.

2. Literature Review

The main aspects of local communities' engagement in cultural projects and their empowerment are well studied in the literature. Since this research is aimed at the case of Matera 2019 ECOC the authors found it interesting to examine case studies of local communities' engagement in cultural projects all over the world. Borona and Ndiema [10] have studied the case of community engagement in cooperation between National Museums of Kenya and the Trust of African Rock Art (TARA) and came to the conclusion that community engagement is crucially important for conservation and promotion of cultural sites. Bruku [11] has examined the case of the Elmina Castle project in Ghana that showed that the process of local communities' involvement develops over time and reveals the new issues of preservation of cultural sites that would not have brought up without their participation. The case of Kilwa Kisiwani World Heritage Site in Tanzania [12] has showed that there is a positive relationship between community engagement and conservation of cultural heritage sites. After examining a range of cases in Africa Chirikure et al. [13] have revealed that sometimes community participation is hard to implement due to its low homogeneity. Conforti et al. [14] analysed the case of the Atapuerca (Burgos, Spain) UNESCO World Heritage Site by conducting a survey of more than 200 agents, revealing that local residents strive for democratizing the decision-making process and wider involvement of the local community in the frameworks of cultural heritage management. Dormaels [15] gets similar after the examination of the case of Old Québec in Canada. Fan [16] has examined the case study of the city of Yangzhou in China in order to study the level of community involvement in heritage management and came to the conclusion that there are number of obstacles in integration of local communities that are to overcome. Another Chinese example [17] claims increasing attention on the role played by local communities in culture heritage preservation. Human [18] described the process of local community involvement to the management process at Neolithic Site of Çatalhöyük in Turkey and claimed that the participation of local communities in the management process is of high importance. The case of Barbados [19] shows that workshops play an important role in strengthening of local cultural identity and willingness to participate in cultural heritage development, Kyriakidis and Anagnostopoulos [20] are roughly on the same page. Landorf [21] after the examination of six industrial UK World Heritage Site management plans claimed the high importance of community engagement in cultural heritage incentives;

Oevermann et al. [22] based their research of Oberschöneweide's industrial heritage (Germany) on these findings. Lekakis [23] with the case study from the Island of Naxos outlined the importance of public meeting of locals with experts and politics in order to promote public participation in cultural heritage incentives and two cases from Sweden [24] support this idea. The case of Mogogelo community in the North West province in South Africa [25] illustrates a shift of the significance of local community participation in cultural heritage projects. Stephens and Tiwari [26] in a case of rural village in Uttar Pradesh, India showed that local communities by becoming the full-fledged stakeholders in cultural heritage conservation projects stimulate growth and build capacity for the community. Tipnis and Chandrashekhar [27] and Woodley et al. [28] argued that digitalization plays an important role in consolidation of local communities. Walker [29] and Wijesuriya et al. [30] highlighted the importance of engagement between local communities and heritage professionals in context of cultural heritage preservation. Wilson and Koester [31] in their case study of the Kamchatka Peninsula, in the Russian Far East found out the main issues of local communities engagement in international development projects - legacy, legitimacy, agency and communication. A systematic literature review on the topic was done by Li et al. [32].

There is a number of studies claiming local community participation as an inevitable part of ECOC incentives [33-37] and especially for Matera ECOC 2019 case [38-42].

This paper studies the process of co-creation and local communities' engagement through the lens of a set of eight value drivers, mentioned in the Dossier of Matera 2019, these values have become pivotal elements throughout all stages of the program development and execution of the event. Despite the wealth of literature currently available on co-creation and local communities' engagement in cultural initiatives, there are only few studies on the role of social values and value creation process at cultural events [43-46].

Starting from this knowledge, the present paper seeks to understand if the Matera 2019 ECOC model introduced some degree of novelty in this scenario.

3. Research Method

To achieve the paper purposes and answer the main research questions for contributing to literature with new insights, we conducted a case study research involving subjects directly involved in all the phases of Matera 2019.

For the implementation of this study we first collected and examined secondary data, including Matera 2019 related newspaper articles, institutional documents and the official Dossier. Second, in-depth interviews were conducted with two samples of respondents in order to gain a deeper understanding of the dynamics behind the cultural projects engagement, by obtaining a direct testimony from those subjects who worked daily in this environment and collect the right information: on the one hand we interviewed three senior managers from the Foundation Matera-Basilicata 2019 responsible for different aspects and phases of the Matera 2019 project realization (e.g. dossier, build up, testing, co-creation, etc.); on the other one, we interviewed three project leaders (PL) from the local creative scene among the 27 who worked at the final initiative, responsible for the realization of the cultural and artistic exhibitions. Therefore, a data triangulation was implemented combining both primary and secondary data to guarantee greater validity to the investigation. Third, the

primary data collected through the in-depth interviews were analyzed utilizing sentence and paragraph analysis for open coding the text and selecting the most important evidence for our purposes. Coding process in qualitative research enables collected data to be assembled, categorized, and thematically sorted, providing an organized framework for the construction of meaning and the build-up of new theories [47].

Empirical case study design resulted the most suitable approach for the exploratory nature of this study. The need for case studies is generated by the desire to understand complex social phenomena [48]. Find strong evidence for building theories from case studies is a research strategy that involves using one or more cases to build theoretical constructs, propositions or midrange theories from case-based, empirical evidence [49]. Case-studies are rich, empirical descriptions of particular instances of a phenomenon typically based on a variety of data sources used as the basis from which a theory can be developed inductively [50].

In-depth interviews, which lasted 1,5 hours each, were based on a semi-structured protocol with open-ended questions to solicit interviewees to talk freely, describing values, objectives and strategies in great detail and explanations. Separate questionnaires for the interviews were prepared for two groups: one for the managers from the Matera Foundation (see protocol 1) and one for the PLs (see protocol 2). Common questions include those regarding the degree of experience in the field (expertise), degree of participation in the project and the identification of the four building blocks of the SWOT analysis (i.e. strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats) related to the initiative of Matera 2019 and its legacy.

Particularly, the two interview guidelines were structured on the following topics represented in Table 1, that will be further reflected in the key results presented in the next section of this paper.

Protocol 1	Protocol 2
Degree of experience in the field	Degree of experience in the field
Peculiar characteristics of Matera 2019 (comparison with past ECOC initiatives)	Degree of participation
Main positive effects of Matera 2019 on the territory	Role in the design phase of the activities
Expectations and motivations in the design of the build-up phase	
Role of the build-up (capacity building) phase	Role of the build-up (capacity building) phase
Training strategy and results of the build-up	
Strengths of local organizations in the interpretation of the territory (in comparison to foreign ones)	Strengths of local organizations in the interpretation of the territory (in comparison to foreign ones)
Impact of the active involvement and training of local organizations	Development of new capabilities and skills
Personal/professional experience (positive and negative)	Participation experience (positive and negative)
	Characteristics and usefulness of the pre-test phase

Involvement of Project Leaders	Collaborations and network building
Social involvement: relationship with citizens and local communities	Relationship with citizens and local communities
Relationship with Public Administration and local institutions	Relationship with Public Administration and the Matera Foundation
Reputation of the Foundation before and after Matera 2019	Personal/entrepreneurial growth and legacy for the future
Role of the Digital Transformation on audience engagement and cultural community empowerment	Role of the Digital Transformation on audience engagement and cultural community empowerment
Definition and role of Co-creation	Definition and role of Co-creation
SWOT Analysis	SWOT Analysis

Table 1. The two interview protocols.

By using these two questionnaires layouts the authors were able, in the subsequent phase, to make a comparison between the two different viewpoints on the topics of interest, understanding common traits and peculiarities related to the initiative under investigation.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Key Values

The application Dossier Matera 2019 is the systematic document for the candidacy (and win) of Matera for the qualification of European Capital of Culture for 2019. It represents a detailed work plan for the initiative, the city of Matera and the entire macro-area of the South of Italy, concerning the basic principles and values which inspired the entire project and the inclusion of the various players and stakeholders. The cultural program adopts a strategy of cultural enhancement aimed at developing the potential of what already exists in the city of Matera and its surroundings, minimizing the impact in terms of new, large infrastructure projects, while leaving behind great assets (e.g. the I-DEA, the Open Design School and the Arca theater of Prometheus). The foundations for a process of growth were based on people and built on the principles of culture, knowledge and innovation. More in detail, The dialogue and continuous exchange with partner organizations and groups and, in particular with the citizenship of Matera, made it possible to identify eight key values for the selection of projects to be implemented and for the structuring of the program. Those values are as follows:

- Frugality
- Collaboration
- Accessibility
- Courage
- Generosity
- Passion
- Marginality
- Magic

These values represented a sort of compass for the entire program, leveraging the basic principle of openness. Although not fully represented in every single project, all the values are reflected in the whole program, for an effective contribution of Matera to the debate on the future of culture in Europe [9].

Based on these assumptions present in the Dossier, the authors decided to structure the coding scheme on the analysis of the relationships among the aforementioned values found in the text of the transcribed interviews.

4.2   Coding Process

The coding process allowed the authors to analyze the raw data obtained through the in-depth interviews [51], to integrate, abstract, and categorize the concepts. Coding represents a key structural operation in qualitative research, enabling data analysis and following steps to serve the purpose of the study. Open coding methods include analysis between the lines, paragraph analysis, and entire document analysis methods [52]. This approach provides opportunities for sub-coding data. Determining what data to capture and how to display is a critical aspect connected to the research design. In addition, the data presentation in open coding can be managed in numerous ways [47]. In the present study, the authors employed the sentence/paragraph analysis to create appropriate nodes for the sentences or paragraphs. The created nodes were then classified into groups of similar ideas that were linked, where applicable, to the main values presented above. Through this process it was possible to derive concepts, and similar concepts were abstracted into upper categories corresponding to values [53]. To ensure high reliability and validity of this process, the same coding procedure was conducted by all the authors, and the final nodes resulted from the agreement among them. The same rigor was ensured for the subsequent comparison and interpretation of the data. Furthermore, the data categorized through the coding process were combined to interpret the meaning of the relationships among the nodes found in the text.

4.3   Evidence from the Foundation

Among the values shared by the Foundation the most prominent were passion and collaboration. The value of *passion* came from both from the official representatives (organizers) of Matera 2019 and from citizens of Matera. Passion from the part of organizers can be identified by the desire of some Foundation Matera-Basilicata 2019 representatives to see how public policies make changes in loco, to take direct participation in this process and not just see in from the ECOC office in Bruxelles. Nomination of Matera as a European Capital of Culture was born from a set of experimental projects in the cultural field, such as *Urban Vision* – an ambitious project that was born and conducted due to the passion of participants involved in it. One should say that such aspiring project as Urban Vision also takes courage to be accomplished. From the very beginning of the process of preparation of nomination Matera as a European capital of culture 2019 it should have become a place of attraction for people under 30 from the south of Italy who had "inner fire". Due to this idea the project "On the way to Matera 2019" was born, that united citizens from all over Basilicata in order to win the nomination of Matera. There was also a strong role of volunteers during the project- it was a novelty for the city, they had no volunteering in the cultural sector before. The process of building a community also needed passion – because in order to build the community you have to give it a strong goal, uniting people around and the foundation has started from gathering passionate local creative community together.

Another strong value was *collaboration*. From the very first steps of building cultural communities in Matera the Urban Vision project was based on the collaboration of people who worked in the cultural sector launching the mapping for the policy on creativity. Later on, there was also a huge contribution from part of the citizens – the very idea of nominating Matera as European capital of culture was proposed by the Association and citizens and about 70% of cultural production was made by involving citizens (both for design and implementation); as a result, Matera Citizens' Manifesto was born. The already mentioned project On the way to Matera 2019 and wide volunteering initiatives could not happen without the value of Collaboration. Citizens' participation was a symbol of Matera 2019 and the reason of success of the candidacy; it has never reached these levels in other European capitals of culture. Also Mackay and Johnston [54] studying the case of Heritage Management Plan for the historic 'Rocks' precinct in Sydney, Australia concluded that the local community should be involved in these initiatives by being informed, consulted and provided with opportunities to participate. This will also help to maintain social significance of the site.

It is also important to mention that the program for Matera 2019 was made as a mix of local and non-local organizations; this was the strength of Matera 2019. But at the same time the Foundation considered it crucial to give the local organizations an opportunity to grow professionally, to do an "upgrade of software". Moreover, another important characteristic of collaboration was the process of Build-up that united 26 project leaders as a way to make a high-quality cultural program for Matera 2019. At the beginning of their collaboration the Foundation explained to Project Leaders what were the values of the European Capital of Culture, so that they all could work together on this path, the experts from all over Italy and Europe came to Matera to share their experience, answer questions. The summer camp has become one more significant step for collaboration, when representatives of Foundation and project leaders were locked in the hotel for 4 days, sharing not only the time, but also the knowledge, skills, philosophies, meetings with interesting people. It is also difficult to overestimate the collaboration with the several media that were made in order to widely promote the project.

The *accessibility* value was determined by the "passport" program (it allows people to participate in all the events of the Matera 2019 program during the year), which helped to diversify and expand access to culture for the visitors and the capacity of organizers of the project Matera 2019 to bring culture to the most remote places in Basilicata. It became an important value for the community of Matera; for instance, the citizens of Matera have been placed in quite a unique situation, when participating in cultural program, having the possibility to literally "work" in the cultural artistic field. An e-platform created by the Foundation helped the community to understand that the promotion of the candidacy of Matera is not exclusively a matter for public offices, but also for citizens, since it was an initiative created in a bottom-up manner. It is confirmed by the co-creation process originated in Matera that has made people feeling that culture is not elitist, that is not decided by someone else, but together with citizens, it is a process that pushes people to see, work and reason together. There is also a physical side of accessibility value, which was also respected

despite the evident obstacles. Matera, like all the Basilicata region, is quite difficult to be reached and despite this, number of tourists have skyrocketed in 2019 to join the event.

At the intersection of the last two categories, the digitalization played a fundamental role especially during the construction of Matera's candidacy, involving the community and citizens. A web team of ten people was created and trained, which initially had the task of promoting the candidacy of Matera 2019 on all social channels online. Then, it was developed a digital platform for the community which became the virtual place where anyone could register to participate in the promotion of Matera's candidacy by sharing information along with their ideas and experiences, creating a direct communication network. Through this initiative, very valuable and successful projects were born. Thanks to the enabling role of these digital channels, citizen participation was very broad and intense.

The value of *courage* was supported by one of the main positive outcomes of the Matera 2019 event: even in a forgotten, underdeveloped and difficult to reach land it was learned that "nothing is impossible", that dreams come true. The value of trust felt by the capital of Matera and its citizens has increased a lot. And everything now seems possible and achievable.

The fact that families of Matera hosted the examining commission in their homes was an act of *generosity*. Matera 2019 was also generous to the Foundation - after the accomplishment of the event project managers have "brought home" a baggage of infinite skills that they can take advantage of in other job opportunities.

The value of *frugality* was expressed during the phase of crash-test when Project Leaders studied issues related to reporting and management of public funds in order to know how to spend it in the best possible and profitable way.

Finally the *magic* value can be found in the genius loci of Matera (together with all the Basilicata region, chosen as perfect set of Hollywood movies such as "The Passion of the Christ" by Mel Gibson, "Ben-Hur" and the last Bond movie "No time to die") that was an inner precious source of the project.

Figure 1 presents the visual analysis done based on the coding process results, showing the interconnections among the eight values. Some statements from the interviews were found to be consistent with the domain of more than one value (underlined with the same color in the figure).
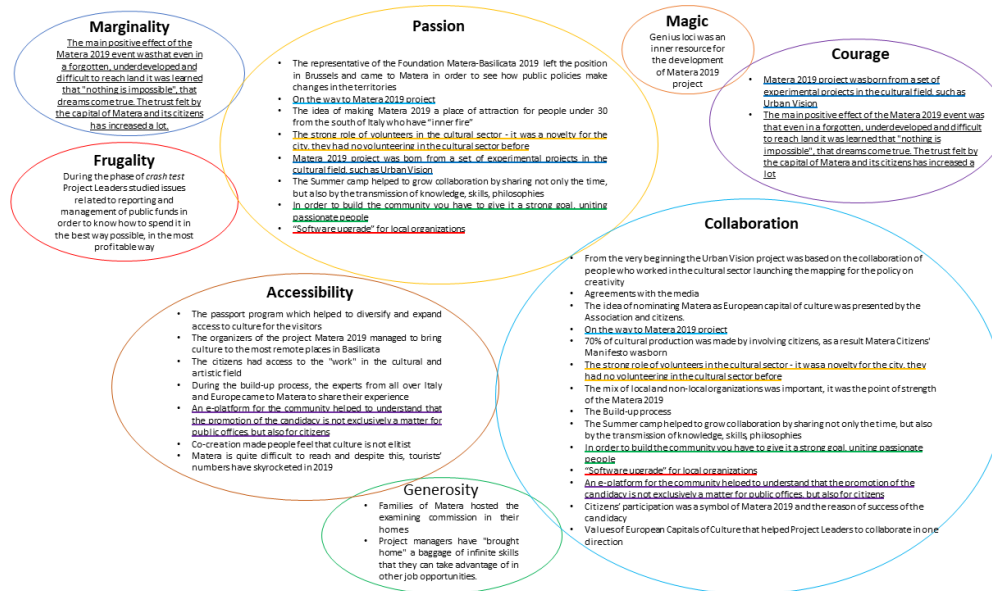
Marginality
The main positive effect of the Matera 2019 event was that even in a forgotten, underdeveloped and difficult to reach land it was learned that "nothing is impossible", that dreams come true. The trust felt by the capital of Matera and its citizens has increased a lot.

Passion
- The representative of the Foundation Matera-Basilicata 2019 left the position in Brussels and came to Matera in order to see how public policies make changes in the territories
- On the way to Matera 2019 project
- The idea of making Matera 2019 a place of attraction for people under 30 from the south of Italy who have "inner fire"
- The strong role of volunteers in the cultural sector - it was a novelty for the city, they had no volunteering in the cultural sector before
- Matera 2019 project was born from a set of experimental projects in the cultural field, such as Urban Vision
- The Summer camp helped to grow collaboration by sharing not only the time, but also the transmission of knowledge, skills, philosophies
- In order to build the community you have to give it a strong goal, uniting passionate people
- "Software upgrade" for local organizations

Magic
Genius loci was an inner resource for the development of Matera 2019 project

Courage
- Matera 2019 project was born from a set of experimental projects in the cultural field, such as Urban Vision
- The main positive effect of the Matera 2019 event was that even in a forgotten, underdeveloped and difficult to reach land it was learned that "nothing is impossible", that dreams come true. The trust felt by the capital of Matera and its citizens has increased a lot

Frugality
During the phase of *crash test* Project Leaders studied issues related to reporting and management of public funds in order to know how to spend it in the best way possible, in the most profitable way

Collaboration
- From the very beginning the Urban Vision project was based on the collaboration of people who worked in the cultural sector launching the mapping for the policy on creativity
- Agreements with the media
- The idea of nominating Matera as European capital of culture was presented by the Association and citizens.
- On the way to Matera 2019 project
- 70% of cultural production was made by involving citizens, as a result Matera Citizens' Manifesto was born
- The strong role of volunteers in the cultural sector - it was a novelty for the city, they had no volunteering in the cultural sector before
- The mix of local and non-local organizations was important, it was the point of strength of the Matera 2019
- The Build-up process
- The Summer camp helped to grow collaboration by sharing not only the time, but also by the transmission of knowledge, skills, philosophies
- In order to build the community you have to give it a strong goal, uniting passionate people
- "Software upgrade" for local organizations
- An e-platform for the community helped to understand that the promotion of the candidacy is not exclusively a matter for public offices, but also for citizens
- Citizens' participation was a symbol of Matera 2019 and the reason of success of the candidacy
- Values of European Capitals of Culture that helped Project Leaders to collaborate in one direction

Accessibility
- The passport program which helped to diversify and expand access to culture for the visitors
- The organizers of the project Matera 2019 managed to bring culture to the most remote places in Basilicata
- The citizens had access to the "work" in the cultural and artistic field
- During the build-up process, the experts from all over Italy and Europe came to Matera to share their experience
- An e-platform for the community helped to understand that the promotion of the candidacy is not exclusively a matter for public offices, but also for citizens
- Co-creation made people feel that culture is not elitist
- Matera is quite difficult to reach and despite this, tourists' numbers have skyrocketed in 2019

Generosity
- Families of Matera hosted the examining commission in their homes
- Project managers have "brought home" a baggage of infinite skills that they can take advantage of in other job opportunities.

Figure 1. Visual analysis based on the coding process results

4.4 Evidence from the Local Project Leaders

Likewise to what has been done with the Foundation, the analysis of the interviews with the Project Leaders, allowed the authors to describe in details the interpretation and implementation in their creative productions of the value drivers by the PLs.

The value of *collaboration,* as interpreted by the PLs of the associations that were part of the final program of Matera 2019, can be connected to expressed concepts such as: participation, dialogue, involvement, sharing, connections, human capital, networking and interaction, which were perceived especially during the dossier writing phase and partially during the build-up phase. In the latter, it was highlighted that the collaboration desired in the dossier, understood as "overcoming the welfare logic", was not reflected in the "frontal training" process since the involvement was more marginal (contested the chosen managerial training method, of the type professor-student, defined too theoretical and formal) while it was deeper during the second phase called "meeting" (or summer camp), where the relationship on an equal footing and the close contact led to a growth that is not quantitative but qualitative. Linked to this value, the creation of a dense network of relationships and collaborations was highlighted as the real strength of the initiative. This adds up to the creation of a strong identity that has materialized in the "Matera" Brand, recognized and appreciated everywhere.

About *passion*, interpreted as a sense of revenge for an entire territory, appears clear especially in the post-Matera 2019 prospect scenario; attachment and territorial identity, sensitivity and artistic vocation are told by PLs as something that plays a fundamental role not for a time already passed but for one that is about to begin. It is therefore clear from the analysis of the interviews that passion, together with courage, interpreted as the possibility

of growth, research, intuition and trust, are elements that on the one hand differentiate the vision of local PLs from what could have emerged through the involvement of associations not belonging to the territory, and on the other one that these values are expected to be even stronger in the future scenario, post Matera 2019.

Moreover, an interesting connection is given by the values of *accessibility* and *marginality*, both interpreted as the participatory involvement mainly of citizens, in a unique experience that regardless of the level of education or knowledge in the artistic/cultural field has seen them as main actors in the same way as the PLs and the Foundation. This marginality understood as uniqueness, with its own limits and stories, is told as the real added value of Matera 2019, in line with that value interpretation given by the extreme (geographical and cultural) isolation represented within the dossier as a positive trait of diversity and distinctness.

Concerning the value of *magic*, the PLs have found unique the combination between local artists and productions and high-level international artists and personalities. In the same way, the alternation of traditional shows, sometimes embellished also by the use of gimmicks and ancient instruments (e.g. the thaumatrope in the metatheatre representations), to more modern performances based on the most innovative technologies, have been recognized as an element of uniqueness and magic of the place.

4.5 Managerial Contribution: growth path of the creative local entrepreneur

An important evidence from our analysis was the empowerment of the local entrepreneurship operating in the creative field, thanks to the collaborations with the Foundation and the development of a dense network of relationships inside and outside the local community. For both a town and region that have been always characterised by a very limited *accessibility* (for lack of infrastructure such as railways and airports) and a geographical *marginality* (also in terms of lack of notoriety in Italy and abroad), the creation of a globally recognised "local brand" of Matera represents a great incentive for growth.

Howkins [55] described the creative entrepreneur as those who operate dealing only with assets that are personal rather than external such as finance, equipment, etc. The author also indicates the five characteristics shared by these entrepreneurs: *vision,* the desire to bring the dream to life*; focus,* to excel in one or only a few things; *finance*, to be sustainable in the long period; *pride,* to think their idea or project is the best one or could become so; *urgency,* to develop their idea. What clearly emerged from our evidence, especially analyzing the statements of the PLs, is as follows:

- a clear *vision* shared among the various players who collaborated in the co-creation of the program, including the citizens
- a solid *focus* on the core competencies of the association, with the openness to integrate any missing professionalism and skills;
- a strong *pride* for their projects*,* connected to the culture expressed by their territory and community, expression of the territorial identity and marginality that makes Matera unique in its kind;

- the *urgency* to take advantage of the network of professional and human relationships, skills and extraordinary visibility that represent the real legacy of Matera 2019.

Concerning the *finance*, this emerged during the interviews only related to the "go-and-see" phase, where the PLs had a limited symbolic budget (i.e. €2019) to spend for the realization of their project on a small-scale. This gave the opportunity to focus the attention not so much on the quantity but on the quality of the action to be taken, as this form of reduced financing involved the drafting of a clear and well-defined action. This action, as structured by the Foundation, resulted from the PLs' interviews to be of importance not only for the specific purpose of the initiative but above all in terms of their organizational capabilities and future development.

5.   Conclusion

The model of Matera ECOC 2019, within the context of cultural initiatives, has demonstrated how culture, traditions and the involvement of local communities can boost innovation, creative entrepreneurship and value creation.

Despite the extraordinary and unexpected results in terms of active involvement of the local community, great affluence of external public and tourisms have been threatened by the advent of the Covid-19 pandemic and in some cases by the lack of foresight of local public institutions, the results of this study clearly demonstrated that the true legacy left by Matera 2019 is measured in terms of values, skills, a strong network of bonds and collaborations as well as the creation of a "brand" linked to the city and the territory with a worldwide echo. These are all intangible and evanescent assets which, if not cultivated and kept alive, risk being lost over time.

As a limitation, although a triangulation of sources and researchers has been ensured, this study represents an exploratory stage based on a case specific and a limited sample of interviewees, and thus the generalization of its results could be somehow constrained. This is a typical limit of qualitative studies and indicates that a quantitative approach, including a larger sample size, is necessary to draw more generalizable conclusions. Therefore, considering the strong evidence concerning key value drivers and the local entrepreneurship characteristics, future empirical studies related to residents' participation in the co-creation of shared goals within cultural contexts are needed.

This paper provides a good starting point for further research in several directions. Future studies could investigate the role of the stated set of values in other ECOC cities; it is also interesting to study how the strength of a "local brand" depends on the values shared by the local communities. Another interesting direction for the research is a longitudinal study of the continuing development of the values, implemented during the Matera ECOC 2019 project among the local communities.

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