


Chapter 8

Shaping Value Propositions in Cultural Heritage From a PSL Perspective: The Case of Grassroots Museums

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ABSTRACT

This chapter investigates grassroots museums as context for a bottom-up shaping of value propositions in the cultural heritage domain. Public Service Logic (PSL) informs the analysis to highlight the interplay among the users, public service organizations, and the community in furthering the value of cultural heritage in the societal realm. A multiple-case study analysis leads to considering such museums

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as contrasting the lack of participation at a communitarian level addressed by PSL scholars.

INTRODUCTION

Public value is meant to benefit society at large and can address “care of the environment, securing people's rights and justice, equal treatment, equal access to services, and the upholding of democratic principles” (Alford and Hughes, 2008). Consequently, public entities focus their mission and efforts on setting suitable conditions for public value creation in multiple domains (Baptista et al., 2020); cultural heritage is one such domain, with UNESCO calling for preserving and fostering the value in - and of - cultural heritage for humanity since 1972; UNESCO (2012) also addresses the value of citizens participation. Therefore, the focus of this study is on public value creation initiatives framed in the cultural heritage domain, as they promote such objectives at multiple levels and for multiple addressees in a society.

The focus on multiple levels in initiatives involving citizens also depends on the consideration that propositions to achieve public value are generated in the interaction among multiple actors (Eriksson et al., 2019), with the public service organization (PSO) orchestrating such a process and other actors - first and foremost citizens - with an even more active role, namely as co-producers of value propositions (Eriksson, 2019).

Similarly, the multiplicity of actors is recalled by UNESCO (2003), since the value of cultural heritage is shaped by a variety of actors and features; indeed, value propositions are co-produced in the interaction with users and in the interplay between power and participation (Ross, 2018), hence the shaping of value propositions lays on a variety of actors other than museum organizations (Davies, 2010).

Anyway, public service logic (PSL) scholars as Eriksson (2019) stressed that “recruiting non-participants to participate in co-production may be difficult”; similarly, in cultural heritage studies, involving users and communities in participatory processes is seen as a complicated task (Djabarouti, 2021). Anyway, recent studies in cultural heritage provided evidence of grassroots museums, namely contexts consisting of “people taking cultural production into their own hands” (Candlin et al., 2023: 16), thus shaping an opportunity to contrast such a problem. Additionally, participation in grassroots museums is stressed since these contexts “show how local communities adapt and use museums as sites of engagement, and sometimes resistance” (Thondhlana et al., 2022: 2012). Therefore, it can be observed whether grassroots museums are a case of 'representative co-production', namely an initiative in which “group representatives' knowledge and skills are used in evaluating, de-

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