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Cultural policy and emotional clusters in the context of an organic crisis. Performing arts and emotions between top-down and bottom-up negotiations

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Navigating the complexities of nowadays cultural and political landscapes requires acknowledging the significant role emotions play in shaping cultural policy processes. This paper addresses this crucial issue by conducting a thorough examination of two distinct case studies: the EU Creative Europe programme, focusing on cultural participatory practices within the Audience Development (AD) priority, and the city context of Naples, during its “Season of the Commons” from 2012 to 2021. Through these case studies, this research delves into the intricate interplay between emotions, cultural policy, and political dynamics. Drawing from a multidisciplinary framework encompassing sociology, political science, and cultural studies, the analysis offers both theoretical insights and empirical evidence to define the concept of emotional clusters. These clusters represent a form of social adaptation in times of organic crisis, forming the foundation of novel and often unrecognized spaces of resistance that operate within the spectrum between hegemonic and counter-hegemonic realms. This work aims to critically reflect on the role of emotions in the tension between top-down cultural policymaking and bottom-up cultural practices by scrutinizing the connection between emotional clusters and the empirical evolution of cultural policy processes. In doing so, it aspires to provide empirical analysis of emotions as a means to comprehend contemporary decision-making procedures in cultural and policy/political dynamics, while suggesting coordinates for viewing cultural policies as a lively political matter.

KEYWORDS

cultural policy, cultural politics, political emotions, commons, performing arts

Introduction

In recent years, scholars in political theory and cultural studies have renewed their interest in the role that emotions play in their respective fields (Fisher, 2009; Ahmed, 2015; Castells, 2015; Nussbaum, 2015; Gielen and Lijster, 2017). Despite this interest, the empirical analysis of emotions in cultural policy and politics remains limited. Examining the global events of the past 15 years, along with the rise of illiberal neoliberalism (Fraser, 2013) reveals the significant role that emotions play in society today. They underpin left- and right-wing populism, new nationalisms, and radical movements (Laclau, 2005; Hardt and Negri, 2017), as well as various forms of cultural and civil engagement (Graeber, 2011; Della Porta, 2013; Lorey, 2013). Acting as binding agents, emotions have been crucial in protests advocating for pluralistic democracy and decentralised governance (Hardt and Negri, 2011; Mouffe, 2018). Therefore, understanding the role of emotions in decision-making processes within cultural policy and politics is urgently needed.

When I began my research, the central question was: “How do emotions function in the negotiation between top-down cultural policymaking and bottom-up cultural practices?” I focused on the period between 2012 and 2021 to understand the health of democracies in given contexts. From my analysis, this period seemed to be stuck in what the renowned political theorist Gramsci (2014) in his 1930s notebooks defined as an— a multifaceted crisis encompassing economic, cultural, political, social, and ideological dimensions. A crisis of hegemony that leads to the rejection of established political parties, economic policies, and value systems. However, it does not necessarily signal the collapse of the dominant order; rather, the old order seems to be moving towards an end while the new one cannot be born. In the midst of this turmoil, various contradictory symptoms emerge, reflecting both tangible political outcomes and intangible realms, such as emotions.

Building upon Gramsci’s notion of “organic crisis,” this article aims to examine the function of emotions in the tension between top-down cultural policymaking and the bottom-up cultural realm, thereby illustrating contemporary cultural and policy/political dynamics and decision-making procedures. By exploring two case studies, I will provide theoretical insights and outline methodological approaches, while examining the behaviours of cultural and policy actors engaged in promoting pluralistic cultural policies and politics. Ultimately, the goal is to offer a framework for an empirical analysis of emotions in this complex landscape and to understand the contextual changes stemming from the “organic crisis.”

Theoretical context: understanding emotions

There are various reasons to examine the role of emotions in contemporary society. For example, in his book “Capitalist

Realism” (2009), Mark Fisher showed that the shift from Fordism to post-Fordism was organisational as well as emotional. This shift marked a move from top-down control of production to a decentralised control system focused on targets, missions, objectives, and results. According to Fisher, in a post-Fordist society, workers are expected to display a form of affection and emotional commitment that over time has become a benchmark to assess their professional effectiveness and quality. In line with Fisher, various thinkers, including Mouffe (2005), Harvey (2007), and Gielen and De Bruyne, (2009), have shown how capitalism and neoliberalism have entered the personal sphere, shaping needs, mobilising desires, and influencing personal preferences. As a result, neoliberalism has emerged as the dominant paradigm for democratic development and the pursuit of personal happiness (Fisher *ibid.*), limiting our ability to envision alternative cultural, social or political paradigms. Since the 1970s, neoliberalism has evolved into a mindset centred on the efficacy of free-market capitalism, minimal government intervention, and the assertion of individual liberties and happiness (Harvey, 2007) where technical experts are entrusted with political matters, depoliticising the public realm and intensifying the profound rupture between civil and political society (Stavrakakis, 2012). This has largely created the grounds for the gradual affirmation of illiberal neoliberalism worldwide, which has combined neoliberal economic policies with illiberal practices, such as the erosion of democratic institutions and the concentration of power (Fraser, 2013; Harvey, 2016), again implying emotionally charged responses.

Accordingly, Bauman (2016) saw a transition from the declaration of a universal human right to the pursuit of individual happiness, which has underpinned the social fragmentation in advanced capitalist societies. Pursuing individual happiness necessitates confronting fear, which is exacerbated by right-wing populism that needs to identify public enemies as sources of societal unhappiness and therefore promotes varying intensities of “projective disgust” (Nussbaum, 2015). This concept hinges on perceiving the self as “quasi-human” by betraying our own human and animal nature and attributing unpleasant odours and dirtiness to any form of diversity. Such sentiments of disgust, over the years, as Nussbaum showed, rationalise segregation under the guise of an irrational aversion to any diversity.

Through these initial theoretical approaches, I would like to highlight that political theory frequently underestimates the pivotal role that negative and positive emotions play in our societies (Mouffe, 2018). Politics relies on passion, which in turn, mobilises desires and acts as a binding force. Positive emotions are essential for sustaining political struggles, such as the cultivation of enthusiasm arising from the proliferation of social, political, and cultural interactions within larger communities, and serve to maintain momentum even in the face of setbacks (Graeber, 2011). Accordingly, emotions

intervened in the civil and political realms because of their dimensions. First, emotions possess a relational dimension in cultural politics (Ahmed, 2015). They extend beyond the private sphere, linking and transforming individuals within social groups. By involving other feelings and effects, they are an integral part of any political project. Second, emotions have tangible consequences in daily life with far-reaching social and political implications. As Nussbaum and Bauman demonstrated, they influence critical issues such as segregation against migrants, black cultures, or the Palestinian community, while other emotions such as passion and compassion act as common societal catalysts. All these emotions often start operating in the personal sphere. Finally, to reinforce this latest concept, emotions transcend class distinctions and are enacted in everyday life. As David Harvey noted (2016), struggles over the quality of (daily) life converge on broader, cross-cutting issues rooted in everyday matters. These struggles prioritise common public interests, transcending class distinctions or professional roles. They often stem from personal experiences of inequality and displacement and carry significant implications in the social and political spheres.

The emotional clusters

Building on these critical primary insights, I will share an initial definition of the central concept of emotional clusters that I will elaborate on in this paper (Ciancio, 2022; Ciancio, 2023). Through my empirical research, these clusters have emerged as temporary, informal value-driven groupings in which personal issues converge with the aim of reacting critically to neoliberalism. They are inhabited by top-down and bottom-up actors who have expressed (openly or quietly) the urgency to engage in struggles over the quality of (daily) life, i.e., to put matters of common public interest at the centre of their actions. They have experimented with co-imagining/co-designing new policy/political deliberations in favour of a pluralistic democracy and they operate within the interplay between individual happiness and human rights.

Accordingly, culture emerges as a significant domain for understanding and experiencing the multidimensionality of emotions. After all, culture is a socially shared repertoire of signs (Laermans, 2002), in which the meaning of life arises from connections with others and their social interactions, rather than from individual pursuits (Boas, 1995; Gielen and Lijster, 2015). Drawing upon Gramsci's interpretation (1916; 2014), culture is the realm of "systemic crises" where "common sense" is built, where the values, signs, and symbols produced reflect the social and political achievements or defeats of a society. Consequently, we can discern its revolutionary potential, as Gramsci posited, where individuals are not merely bearers of identities and traditions but active agents of transformation. This is why emotional clusters have appeared throughout my journey as a

kind of social adaptation and meaningful spaces of cultural resistance and imagination in times of organic crisis.

Methodological approach

To grasp the emotional clusters at work in bottom-up/top-down negotiations, I gradually focused on the personal views of people in two main case studies during my fieldwork: the Creative Europe programme and its Audience Development (AD) priority and the Season of the Commons in Naples between 2012 and 2021. I examined daily life, personal dimensions, forms of emotional collectivisation, and individual and collective endeavours when entering and challenging the public sphere in favour of pluralistic democratic endeavours.

The abductive reasoning

I utilised an abductive approach (Tavory and Timmermans, 2014) that relies on qualitative data analysis, theme identification, and a flexible research structure (Dubois and Gadde, 2002), which is particularly relevant in situations where information is incomplete or uncertain as was the case in my field of inquiry. The abductive approach included, on the one hand, *inductive* reasoning (Bryman, 2016), i.e., progressing from the observation of a particular context, event, or case and placing this in a broader analytical context. On the other hand, *deductive* reasoning allowed me to recognise the existence of multiple plausible explanations for a set of observations. To be effective, this procedure included the following qualitative techniques:

Autoethnography

I began by situating myself within the context of the research. My personal and professional connections in the Naples context and my professional position as a curator and cultural manager in the Creative Europe context were vital from the beginning. Through the auto-ethnographic approach (Russell, 1994; Russell, 1999; Ellis and Bochner, 2000), I immersed myself in both contexts. I grappled with significant political and economic changes, and discovered the means to analyse the succession of events and the array of emotions shared with colleagues, partners, and friends. These emotions turned out to be not just personal experiences but part of a broader phenomenon (Custer, 2014), allowing me to explore the initial definition of emotional clusters.

Multi-sited approach

Reality, as Marcus (2016) highlighted, is constructed across diverse spaces that are distant from each other but interconnected through shared behaviours and methodologies. Adopting Marcus's approach, I considered the hyper-connected

nature of the global context, the mobility of stakeholders, and the diffusion of political and policy participatory practices across the two case studies. This revealed that the results of top-down and bottom-up interactions transcend their immediate contexts. They are part of a broader, mutually inspiring atmosphere. In summary, the multi-sited approach allowed me to overcome the comparative logic between the two cases by observing behaviours and emotions within broader contexts, starting from the inner dynamics of each case study.

The testing process

Throughout this empirical study, radical forms of participant observation, such as Convoking (Haiven and Khasnabish, 2014), allowed me to create contexts in which active participation in the research field was shared and discussed with the participants. This technique was implemented by taking advantage of my unique dual role in the field (as both a curator and researcher), laying the groundwork for testing the insights gained, examining the changes in the meanings of key concepts, and initiating a process of theory design.

Data collection and categorisation

The above procedures allowed me to collect and categorise the data into three main groups: contextual, processual, and emotional. The first group pertains to policy documents, studies, and papers in cultural policy between 2011 and 2015, organised in a general grid according to topics, time periods, and keywords. The second group refers to the results of testing the initial assumptions that emerged from conferences and meetings I organised or from new studies I participated in. Again, the keywords and the changes in their meanings were organised in a grid. The emotional data that were the most difficult to grasp, were the experiences that took place throughout the period, with greater intensity between 2018 and 2021, despite the pandemic. Personal exchanges, social networks, participation in specific activities, dinners, coffees, travels, festivals, and personal events were some of the places where I enriched my understanding of emotional approaches, feelings, displacements, and beliefs. All these aspects were collected and systematised through keywords and a description of feelings, contextualising the latter according to the geographical and cultural contexts and enriching the general grid design with the previous two categories.

The emotional biotope

The Emotional Biotope is a conceptual framework in which the literature review, the on-site analysis, and all the data gained systematically converge. This framework was created from the integration of two previous empirical models: the Civil Sequence (Gielen and Lijster, 2017), which provides an analytical lens to explore the formation of collective actions in a transnational civil

context; and the Creative Biotope, designed by the sociologist Gielen (2018), which is an ideal-typical abstraction of four domains: domestic, peers, market, and civil. I applied and challenged Gielen's Biotope over time and, at its centre, I anchored the three transitions of the Civil Sequence, such as 1) the transition from negative to positive emotions, 2) the communication of feelings, and 3) the process of socialisation, including the move from the private to the public sphere. In its final stage, the conceptual framework allowed me to bring together the micro, meso and macro levels in the two case studies, where the micro is one of the personal views, the meso refers to the cultural and political dynamics in a specific context, and the macro represents the transnational dimension of my field. The three levels were addressed in each of the Creative Biotope's four domains, allowing me to analyse the emotional status, the beliefs and their behaviours, and the choices embraced by the cultural, political and policy players in each context.

In its final form, within the Emotional Biotope, the *domestic domain* relates to the personal sphere where I have examined value-driven choices at the beginning of cultural adventures (2012–2014). The *peer domain* focuses on informal professional exchanges, providing insights into the fluid nature of interactions between top-down and bottom-up actors (2012–2015). The *market domain* is concerned with market regulations, including public norms and financial incentives. Here, I explored the overlap between policy paradigms, cultural trends, forms of cultural pluralism, and monolithism (2014–2019). Finally, the *civil domain* addresses the analysis of civil actions in the public sphere, where I analysed conscious efforts aimed at fostering enduring pluralistic change (2015–2021).

Case studies

I will highlight some of the results stemming from the empirical research of the EU's Creative Europe programme and the case studies of the city of Naples. While considering the ongoing mutation of forms of cultural participation and civil engagement in these contexts, I will share *where* I have seen interactions between top-down and bottom-up approaches giving rise to these emotional clusters, *why* these emotional clusters have evolved into transversal alliances among selected players, and *how* these alliances have impacted cultural policy procedures and often the co-design of new policy scenarios.

The creative Europe programme

The Creative Europe Programme was launched in 2014 and is the primary EU funding scheme supporting cultural cooperation across Europe. During its initial 7-year period (2014–2021), it represented 0.15% of the entire EU budget for

28 countries. It was organised into two independent sub-programmes (Media and Culture) and the Cross-sectorial strand. Composed of several actions and transversal priorities, it has influenced European cultural cooperation by co-financing, among others, EU networks, platforms, and cooperation projects across various fields, such as performing arts, visual arts, music, architecture, cultural heritage, literature, cinema, and interdisciplinary cultural policy experiments.

In this context, my investigation began within the cultural cooperation project *Be SpectACTive* (BS),¹ which I co-curated and coordinated from 2014 to 2022. By connecting 19 partners, and implementing cultural participatory actions in 15 EU countries, BS provided my initial privileged entry point into the EU context. Gradually, I expanded my focus to encompass a broader multi-layered ecosystem composed of cultural players involved in cooperation projects, EU networks, or EU platforms. I explored diverse participatory practices under the general umbrella of the Audience Development (AD) and Audience Engagement (AE) priorities, ranging from innovative experiments in horizontal decision-making to more conservative top-down approaches, including forms that merged the previous two in various ways.

While navigating these cultural participatory experiments, I often observed participants facing pressure from political and economic discontinuities, operating within a context of competing logic embodying diverse policy paradigms within the EU policy space. This dynamic involved the interplay between neoliberal mindsets and democratic participatory aspirations, as well as the overlap of “cultural democratisation” and “cultural democracy” policy paradigms within the EU programme. Over time, as [Bonet and Negrier \(2018\)](#) have suggested, these models have been both cumulative and sometimes contradictory within EU cultural policy. The top-down approach, emphasising quantitative evaluation of participation, frequently overlapped or conflicted with a policy model focused on cultural rights, which prioritised qualitative evaluation aimed at overcoming hierarchical perspectives, as in the case of cultural democracy. These tendencies not only coexisted within the EU policy design, but also within individual cultural institutions and cooperation projects, often clashing due to the differing needs, aspirations, and goals of cultural and policy actors.

In short, these differing approaches appeared to be an integral part of the EU decision-making process, particularly within the EU Commission. According to policy documents and existing literature ([Hartlapp et al., 2014](#); [Kandyla, 2015](#); [Bauman,](#)

[2019](#)), the EU Commission is perceived as both a neoliberal technocratic entity influenced by powerful Member States and as an accessible body in policy formulations and sectoral consultations. Following [Hartlapp et al.’s \(ibid.\)](#) indications, these two aspects are both true and confirmed when examining individual perspectives rather than institutional preferences within the EU Commission. For instance, internal actors, such as policy officers or higher-ranking officials, may hold contrasting positions on the shaping of the European agenda. These varying perspectives have had visible impacts depending on which positions prevailed, on the development of cultural programmes, values, and criteria for assessing the performance of beneficiaries in the EU context.

Opinion formation: the circles of exchange

By applying the analytical lens of the emotional biotope to examine the decision-making procedures within the EU programme, I have observed various levels of intersection between cultural and policy actors, which I have categorised into three main circles of exchange. The first circle operates at the local level, where collaborations are tested between spectators/citizens, artists, and local cultural institutions and organisations. They are co-financed by the EU programme, aligning with the overarching priorities of AD and AE. The second circle encompasses the trans-local space, where cooperation strategies are strengthened between cultural organisations, institutions, and cultural players across the EU. In this context, cultural cooperation projects, EU networks, and platforms take centre stage. The third circle involves exchanges between the trans-local space and the EU policy dimension, representing a potential arena of “creative proximity” between cultural and policy players, as revealed in some interviews.

Given the participants’ high mobility rate and the extensive network of interactions facilitated by the EU programme, I observed how the same individuals (artistic directors, cultural managers, researchers, and sometimes artists) engaged in collaborative efforts both at the local and trans-local levels. These actors were actively involved in cultural consortia at the trans-local level, while also sharing and conveying content and issues within the third level of exchange, bridging the trans-local and EU policy contexts. Similarly, EU policy officers exhibited comparable mobility across these three circles. They actively participated in events, brainstorming sessions, festivals, and conferences, aiming to enhance their understanding of participatory experiences while also promoting the core values of the EU programme.

Through my analysis in the peers domain, “coffee tactics” (as they were called during my conversations), informal exchanges, and personal encounters emerged as contexts for initial informal,

¹ *Be SpectACTive* is a large-scale action research and production-oriented cooperation project within the EU programme from 2014 to 2021, producing new cultural initiatives such as co-programming actions, co-creation processes based on an extensive EU residency programme, co-producing new shows, and co-commissioning of new artworks with the local communities.

professional interactions between cultural and policy players operating within these three circles. In these settings, emotional groupings emerged to facilitate potential changes within the EU programme and to address the shortcomings of policy efforts. The term “proximity” occurred frequently in my interviews and was used by both policy and cultural players to describe a gradual “getting closer” in informal relationships. According to one EU network representative, these informal relationships fostered “trust” and “respect” that “you cannot get via hierarchical formal venues.” From the perspective of an EU policy officer, “proximity” meant learning from the implementation of cultural actions as well as moving beyond a sense of policy/political solitude. The term “facilitator” often accompanied “proximity” in interviews within the EU policy realm, indicating a role in mediating communication between cultural players and the complex EU apparatus. Some interviewees saw themselves as “lobbyists for the cultural sector” within the EU institution, gaining the opportunity to raise issues to higher levels within the Commission.

To some extent, this process of proximity was the foundation for the opinion-forming process of cultural and policy players and was influenced by various factors, such as 1) personal understanding of the meaning of democracy, art, and civil cooperation, and implying an emotional and value-driven personal tension; 2) the necessity, in some cases, to overcome this (policy/political) solitude and to find allies to enhance the EU programme in a more pluralistic way; 3) the trust-building process conquered over time among the parties involved due to their credibility, reliability, and competence in the field; 4) the passion for democratic ideals acting as a driving force and binding agent in the process of proximity. Notable concrete outcomes of “getting closer” included changes in terminology. During this 7-year period, there was a transition from the term “audience” to “spectator,” and eventually to “citizen,” and “people,” indicating the evolving understanding of cultural participatory practices and the prevalence of the cultural democracy paradigm even in the definition of AD and AE in Creative Europe calls.

Another aspect worth mentioning is the “research time” within the EU programme, a term I coined and which I primarily encountered in the civil domain. For many cultural and policy players, this concept emerged as a practical response to the need for dedicated time and space for research, on-site evaluation, and reassessment of cultural actions. This research time was often considered “time stolen” through the creation of spaces within EU cooperation processes, EU networks, and collaborations between cultural and policy players and researchers. These spaces facilitated the intersection of theoretical research with the artistic sphere through forms of action research or participatory action research. The outcomes of these temporary research initiatives included studies, publications, and toolkits to identify emerging cultural and artistic models. They also examined both limitations and opportunities, highlighting the implications of cultural

participatory practices on democratic procedures, governance models, and their inherent contradictions.

Decision making process: interconnected lobbying strategies

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, these three circles served as the foundation for various lobbying strategies. Despite differences in scale and geopolitical dynamics, each circle developed strategies to establish agency within its realm. At the local level in the market domain, I analysed the intense relationships with communities and local networks that positioned certain local players as influencers in decision-making processes or as contributors to local policy regulations. In a trans-local dimension, cooperative projects or informal grassroots groupings focused on urgent matters representing a wider community. Similarly, EU networks, with their broader membership functioned as key stakeholders in the EU policy space, and they advocated for key issues at the policy level with the Commission.

A multi-level system of lobbying strategies emerged within the EU programme, which revealed more effective outcomes when it continued within the EU institution. I termed this process an “interconnected lobbying strategy,” which started at the local level, progressed through to the trans-local level, and finally reached the EU Commission to influence higher levels of EU decision-making. Within the Commission, these lobbying strategies empowered EU parliamentarians, EU policy officers, or higher policy roles to negotiate and implement change. This resulted in concrete achievements, such as studies, new actions, and funding schemes (e.g., the Engage Audience study or new policy journeys on sustainable mobility and then on mental health and wellbeing). This process of inter-legitimation between the policy context and the cultural field unfolds gradually, with individual motivations, passions, and evolving opinions playing essential roles. Here, the emotional clusters represented the merging of shared aims, creating temporary spaces of exchange and facilitating the formation of temporary alliances between top-down and bottom-up players. As Harvey argued, it was evident that transversal alliances surpass class distinctions and, in this case, professional roles that were vital to focus on cross-cutting issues such as cultural accessibility, cultural rights, and freedom of expression.

Between 2014 and 2020, a series of events underscored the need for a more pluralistic democracy. These events included global movements, the migration emergency, terrorist attacks, Brexit, the rise of global populism, and the progressive affirmation of forms of privatisation of the public sphere. Emotional and value-driven transversal alliances intervened in specific spaces, such as the Annual Work Programmes, which outline strategies and priorities for implementation within the Commission’s Multiannual Framework. While changes to the

legal basis of Creative Europe were not implemented, annual priorities and policy actions were launched in response to evolving social and political contexts. Since 2016, specific policy instruments, such as preparatory actions, new priorities, and calls for participation have been more frequently used to enrich the Creative Europe programme (KEA, 2018). These initiatives provided new definitions, exemplified by the shift from marketing approaches to the cultural democracy paradigm in AD and AE strategies. The experimental nature of the Cross-Sectorial Strand also addressed issues, such as the commons, bottom-up policy actions, refugee emergencies, and sustainable mobility (e.g., the Perform Europe programme). In 2016, a call for the integration of refugees highlighted the programme's adaptability. At a time when nationalism and *sovranism* were on the rise across the EU, with some member states (e.g., Italy, Hungary, Poland) limiting mobility, a call was launched to integrate refugees into cultural practices despite a very small budget. This experiment created the preconditions for subsequent annual calls with more structured attention to cultural practices aiming to address the migration emergency.

In summary, a decision-making process emerged that involved, on the one hand, negotiations between established co-legislator bodies (Commission, Parliament, and Council) and, on the other hand, an empirical space established by the collaboration of cultural and policy players from their respective territories, performing within the few spaces left open by the programme. This small space attributed a certain "porosity" to the cultural policy cycle, meaning that the top-down and bottom-up realms did not interrupt the emergence of new instances, but rather facilitated the transformation and adaptation of policy schemes in favour of pluralistic democratic development. This process involved specific "struggles" that may have taken years to yield results, leading to failures, unmet expectations, conflicting relationships, and unexpected surprises.

However, in other cases, players faced difficulties in deciding whether to favour policy progressions. Interviews within the Commission revealed that this closer connection "...puts a lot of pressure to deliver and to satisfy the sector (...)." The risk, it was argued, is "... a snowball effect, because you can create expectations, but you cannot support those, so you really need to be careful ..." This is due to several factors such as, political solitude, the difficulty in finding internal and external allies, and the consequent inability "to fully accomplish the sense of responsibility" as shared by some policy officers. Furthermore, the progression of lobby strategies found limitations when prioritising the fulfilment of first-hand policy regulations (local, national, and European), which offered immediate public and/or economic recognition to policy or cultural players and recognition of their careers. In other cases, players expressed fear of exclusion for taking a stand or found it easier to follow ready-made rules instead of promoting change. This perpetuated a set of signs and symbols that were part of Gramsci's hegemonic common sense without creating tensions

in its representation or among the expressions of organic crisis. Burnout, stress, and displacement were experienced by some players who failed to transform their initial feelings from negative to positive, socialise and share values, discomfort, and ideas, and imagine new cultural architectures. This can be summarised in a sentiment shared during an interview: "... you think that you can change the system from inside ... but in the end, it is the system that is going to change you." [SIC]

The season of the commons in Naples

With an entirely different set of coordinates, I will now delve into the Season of the Commons in Naples, examining the civil engagement efforts and decision-making mechanisms between top-down and bottom-up realms at the local level. Here, my analysis began by examining the innovations introduced by the occupation of a public space on behalf of the cultural community, particularly starting from the performing arts sector. My involvement in this context was unique and privileged, as I entered as both a researcher and someone familiar with the local setting. My first significant professional steps were taken in Naples, which is my city of origin.

In March 2012, a group of cultural activists occupied a remarkable three-storey, 16th-century building, known as the ex-Asilo Filangieri, of approximately 4,000 square metres, situated in the vibrant historical centre of Naples. This building, recently renovated to host the 2013 UNESCO Universal Forum of Culture, became the focus of a significant public debate over the alleged mismanagement of public funds and lack of transparency associated with the event. Various stakeholders came together to denounce the widespread illegality plaguing the cultural sector and other fields. Initially, the occupation served as a symbolic gesture supported by the "occupy" Italian movement, primarily in the cultural domain. The activists represented diverse individuals, including researchers, artists, cultural producers, and members of civil society, alongside seasoned activists, all drawn together by their enthusiasm for the discourse around the commons (hence confirming Harvey's earlier analysis of the transversality of the struggles, as in the case of Creative Europe). Over time, the ex-Asilo, renamed "l'Asilo" evolved into a genuine commons-based multicultural space dedicated to cultural creation and production within the city, operating on the principles of free use, horizontal decision-making and anti-fascist values.

In 2011, Luigi De Magistris was elected mayor of Naples, marking a pivotal moment. He represented a civil movement within local politics, in line with a broader trend where former judges and civil society representatives advocated for citizens' rights. De Magistris, unaffiliated with any major lobby or political party, garnered support from the extended middle class and social movements. According to political observers (Treccagnoli,

2016), he brought a certain left-wing populism to the city, which Mouffe theorised was a political strategy to subvert political hegemonies (Mouffe, 2018). Characterised since his election campaign as proud, stubborn, combative, charismatic, and individualistic, De Magistris raised the banner of anti-fascism and created a municipal “city-book” to recognise civil unions, a hot topic in the Italian political context at the time, as well as the LGBTQI+ community. Commons entered at the municipal level from the very beginning. During his first mandate, De Magistris nominated the first city councillor in Italy to oversee the commons, introduced amendments to the City Charter by introducing a legal category for commons following the Rodotà National Commission,² and, in 2013, established the Observatory of Common Goods.

At its inception the Season of the Commons appeared to be led by a tactical time, meaning that both city representatives and cultural activists, starting from value-driven choices, were unaware of where the efforts within the commons were bringing them. Following interviews with both groups, they portrayed this initial period as one in which the “horizon was kept open (...) because you don’t know where this could take you.” [SIC] [Interview with cultural activist, 2019] The debate around the commons gradually became the space for their interactions. For both groups, this meant that they had to achieve reciprocal recognition and validation behind the we/they relationship (understood as enemies), share value pillars, and find concrete empirical tools and protocols to regulate this interaction.

Looking at Naples through the lens of the emotional biotope’s market domain reveals an intricate overlap and interplay of influences (as is also evident in the case of Creative Europe). A rich history of grassroots activism has coexisted since the 1970s with a celebrated intellectual, cultural, and artistic scene (Dines, 2012) and with radical forms of *clientelism* whose impact we cannot underestimate at the local and national levels. The political scientist Allum and Allum (2008) defined clientelism as “a form of political participation in which politician-citizen linkages are based on a general exchange regarding non-specified, but personalized, services rendered in return for electoral support” (Allum and Allum, 2008: 341). He showed how clientelism evolved beyond this exchange, spreading its tendrils into various realms including culture. This enabled loyal individuals to secure positions of influence through informal networks, regardless of the ruling party’s political orientation. This phenomenon inevitably spilled over into the cultural sphere, where publicly funded institutions became attractive tools for political campaigns as they expanded and attracted larger audiences.

In Naples I identified a phenomenon I coined “emotional diaspora,” which arose because of political pressures stemming

from, regional political changes, among other changes, in 2012 (with the consolidation of a neoliberal political party) and national austerity measures following the 2008 global financial crisis. Interviews with various interlocutors revealed a scenario in which conflicts of interests and clientelism, coupled with limited economic resources, restricted opportunities for creative expression. This led to a *de facto* emotional and physical diaspora marked by feelings of disengagement, individualism, mistrust, heightened competition among peers, and widespread emotional struggles, including depression and burnout. One cultural activist argued, “what is the sense of doing theatre where you have the desert around you?” [SIC] to express the feeling of solitude and displacement in making art in a context where simple, sometimes rudimentary, yet effective consensus-building strategies were employed by the dominant political group in power at the regional and national levels during this period.

Between 2012 and 2014, the local cultural realm witnessed a form of “democratic freeze,” marked by the consolidation of the influence of the ruling group. The main manifestations of this included an extended spoils system within the main cultural institutions, the appointment of a “super-director” (Bandettini, 2010; Santopadre, 2015) in the city’s two most publicly funded cultural institutions (with evident conflicts of interest), and the influence of Berlusconi (former Italian prime Minister) delegates in cultural decision-making at the local level (Sannino, 2012). The symptoms of this democratic freeze included the dominance of a specific artistic “taste” (favouring commercial or conservative cultural representation), the arbitrary allocation of economic resources to loyal groups, limited spaces for cultural visibility, heightened competition among peers, and a lack of information-sharing within local public bodies, all of which hindered the cultural ecosystem’s growth and international connections. All of these were components of Gramsci’s common sense.

Opinion formation: from frozen democracy to civic use

The Season of the Commons entered these frozen democratic dynamics, rooted in the performing arts sector, where the struggles in favour of the commons started around cross-cutting issues (Harvey, 2016), such as struggles for public water, accessibility, and freedom of expression. With less economic and political power the Season of the Commons appeared to be a sound space for cultural and political experimentation. The commoners initially navigated the intricate space between the higher monolithic cultural expressions and the locally diverse cultural ecosystem, performing in a context deeply marked by a blend of socio-political trust and mistrust. This multifaceted scenario unfolded under the overlapping jurisdictions of State, EU, regional, and city policies, all operating within the local context. Within this complex framework, numerous cultural, policy, and political actors,

² Stefano Rodotà was a prominent figure at the national level and president of the Italian Commission for the Common Good.

between failures and successes and with all their contradictions, embraced unknown behaviours, tried to reshape the landscape and looked for new territories for their cultural survival. For cultural activists, this endeavour represented more than mere resistance. It affirmed their right “to exist and not merely resist.” [SIC] [Interview with cultural activist, 2018] The discourse on the commons provided a platform to transcend isolation and establish a firm footing in new territories. This sentiment resonates with a shared interpretation of the public domain, articulated by Councillor Piscopo in an interview, where he expressed that, “. . . if a good belongs to everybody, let’s make it public . . .” [SIC] [Interview with Councillor for the Commons Carmine Piscopo, 2019]

Returning to the Emotional Biotope, the peer domain was crucial here. The extensive interaction between the mayor, the Councillor for the Commons, cultural activists, jurists, and the occupied spaces in the city collaborated to challenge existing local narratives. By validating each other, even in long, informal negotiations, they questioned the local, cultural, and political imbalances and searched for possible new cultural, policy, and political trajectories and spaces. For them, this meant learning to perform in the given market setting and exerting effort towards its reconfiguration between hegemony and counter-hegemonic struggles. In short, this collaborative sphere was the space to transform negative emotions (burnout, stress, solitude, frustration) into positive ones (enthusiasm, passion, compassion), and react to the prevailing sense of political solitude and discomfort.

As some of my interlocutors mentioned, “it has been the first time since the 70s and the 90s (where historical social movements in the city took the stage), that several and diverse political groups met and collaborated around the same project” [Interview with cultural activist, 2018]. Here, compared with the dynamics of Creative Europe, it was more visible that the emotional clusters took shape and started to work. One symptom of these emotional groupings is a sort of “intimacy” between the parties. “Intimacy” is a noteworthy dimension that I encountered in their interactions in public arenas and debates between the mayor, the Councillor of the Commons, and cultural activists. This is rare when compared to similar dynamics in other urban settings (Vesco, 2021). This relates to a level of closeness or familiarity in power relations, that suggests that the parties share a deeper understanding, trust, and cooperation. More specifically, this intimacy reflects a kind of flexibility and fluidity in their interactions while navigating issues of authority, influence, and control.

I would argue that intimacy and informality are symptoms that have supported the opinion-forming process among the parties. This has strongly contributed to the application of the notion of “civic use,” which was an initial solution in a tactical-time, and, over the years, became an innovative policy/political legal tool at the local level. With its origins in the Middle Ages and in the Roman Empire and its subsequent applications at the

beginning of the last century (1927–1928), civic use refers to a juridical framework that regulates and recognises the collective use of public assets, such as public spaces, city properties, and public gardens, etc. Therefore, starting from here, the long process of debates, theoretical analyses, and political fights between 2012 and 2015 brought the following results: 1) to validate the informal community in the public documents of the city (and not associations or other juridical forms) for the management of a public urban property defined as a public good; 2) to establish the co-responsibility of the public good (the building of l’Asilo) between the informal community and the public administration; 3) to guarantee that for this form of “co-management” an empirical protocol of functions was designed and adopted by the “commoners”: the Declaration of Civic and Collective Use in 2015.

As highlighted by activists and researchers working on the elaboration of juridical norms, the adoption of civic use created a radical shift moving the responsibility from “who” makes decisions to “how” those decisions are made (Micciarelli, 2014; Capone, 2016). It is in this shift that we can understand the notion of “emerging commons” where commons are defined “not only by their nature and function, but also by their governing, shared between the public sector and the people” (Micciarelli, 2017, 15). In fact, the communal resolutions stemming from this journey referred to the city’s public assets (under the risk of privatisation) when they were managed, considering civic use as the spaces “perceived by the citizenry as the context of civic development” [SIC] (Comune di Napoli, 2015), where citizens take on the responsibility of being active actors in the management of essential services “in a non-exclusive way” (Comune di Napoli *ibid.*). In a sense, the juridical experiment was “a creative effort (. . .)” and “. . .the aim was not to seek the protection of the law, but to ‘hack’ legality, i.e., to use the disruptive energy of the process to carve the rules and change institutions.” [SIC] (De Tullio, 2018, activist and researcher at l’Asilo).

Decision making: the urban system of emerging commons

In this context, the emotional clusters were an expression of the political realism of the policy, cultural, and political actors in the city. The top-down and bottom-up actors were operating on an initial common ground determined by the conviction that both neoliberalism and new forms of authoritarianism were reducing the quality of life for many. However, even if they shared a value-framework, cultural activists and policy players had to respond to different political and tactical needs. For example, it is the public administration’s responsibility to maintain consensus in the city context, to guarantee access for all citizens to the city’s infrastructure and services, to regulate citizens’ lives through a set of policies, and to negotiate with

regional and national governments to manage city life. On the other hand, it is the nature of social movements to disrupt a narrative and bring different points of view into the public debate. Public protests, occupations, and various symbolic actions intervene to publicly denounce illegal aspects of the public sphere, to highlight opinions, to express values, or to experiment with political forms even in favour of the common interest of the community. In theory, both realms act in favour of the common public interest, and, in the case of Naples, they converge in terms of means, i.e., elaborating shared policy and legal tools.

The Season of the Commons not only responded to national and global pressures, but also provided fertile ground for policy, political, and cultural players to collectively envision responses in a complex political landscape shaped by diverse regional, national, and global influences. This was evident first in my conversations with cultural activists and policy stakeholders. They frequently emphasised their role in “playing into the contradictions” or striving to “make the contradictions visible,” echoing sentiments expressed by Councillor for Commons Piscopo and activist Andrea de Goyzueta. These statements underscored the coexistence of divergent political intentions within the same territory, ranging from clientelism to advocacy for the commons, from top-down pressures originating at the national or regional level, to expansive bottom-up movements within the fragmented local community.

In addition, they pointed to a new dynamism in the shaping of the city and the joint envisioning of new public and collective institutions. For example, Viola Carofalo, the former spokesperson for the Neapolitan grassroots political party *Potere al Popolo* (Power to the People), affirmed this approach and the collaborative efforts between the top-down and bottom-up actors stating, “imagine, in the past, I would never have voted. The social mechanisms have changed, but what remains is the irreverence, which is the hallmark of a revolutionary (...). It’s the adaptability of movements to their context (...). If we had employed today’s political tools in the 1970s, we would have been considered enemies of the movement.” [SIC] [Interview with Viola Carofalo, activist, 2019]

Also, the interviewees agreed that the proliferation of bottom-up political and policy experiments in the city could not have achieved such widespread acceptance and longevity without the collaborative efforts of the city’s public administration and the diverse groups that make up the grassroots movements. It is also important to note that public demonstrations, debates, and assemblies in city squares require authorisation and legal permission to conduct specific political activities in public spaces. According to many activists, the municipality did not obstruct these efforts, rather, Mayor De Magistris and his councillors often actively engaged as interlocutors, raising questions, expressing doubts, and demonstrating openness to dissent. Publicly confirming this stance, Mayor De Magistris stated, “While my colleagues in

Italy use batons to evacuate occupied places, we are creating communal resolutions to give juridical dimension and recognition to those who care for the public spaces of the city from a collective perspective.” (De Magistris: “*C’è gente che se puzza ‘e famme, la rivoluzione la facciamo per strada*”, 2017, author’s translation). It is noteworthy that *informal community, mutualism, process, civic use, commons, and conflict* were terms used frequently by both parties, carrying specific and similar meanings that reflect a shared mindset and value framework among allies engaged in common struggles, even across different arenas and amidst occasional conflict.

Accordingly, as in the case of Creative Europe, albeit with different political behaviours, the Neapolitan Season of the Commons saw both top-down and bottom-up actors performing in their respective territories. However, given the context in which they were performing, the forms of informality and intimacy mentioned above were more evident in these transversal alliances, attributing a kind of fluidity to the roles and behaviours of the actors. For example, the “revolutionary” mayor (a self-proclaimed title) built his political journey beyond his traditional institutional space. This coexisted with the cultural activists’ “institutional” approach, where they were deeply involved in legal norms and the co-designing of public policies. This dynamic unveiled an unknown interplay where the mayor’s “explosive” nature, rooted in left-wing populism, was “moderated” and “radicalised” by cultural and political activists working alongside the Councillor for the Commons, looking for norms to create the legacy of the efforts embraced. This situation reflected the crisis of representative democracy, which was local, European, and global, and required the need to reconsider the roles in the public realm and the function of the public administration. Thus, new spaces of negotiation and legal instruments were required to build a political journey in the local context, informed by global debates and challenges that were reshaping cultural and political scenarios.

Amidst failures, unfulfilled promises, successes, and political and juridical efforts, the collaboration between the parties led to the creation of procedures and more than 10 city resolutions that established an urban system of the commons within the city. This extended the norm of civic use to previous local political occupations following the first city resolution in 2015 (Comune di Napoli, 2015; Comune di Napoli 2021). Initially, this urban system, consisted of seven occupied spaces, which are referred to as “freed spaces,” all of which were managed with empirical protocols such as the Declaration of Civic and Collective Use. These protocols defined the duties and responsibilities of the parties involved, taking into account the asymmetries between the municipality and the activists. This process resulted in the development of a common vocabulary that was incorporated into the city’s municipal resolutions between 2014 and 2021. In these resolutions, the realm of the commons was defined as a “context of civic development” (Comune di Napoli, 2015).

Results

In both cases, emotional clusters emerged as a form of social adaptation in the midst of fragmentation and overlapping tendencies and policies in the frame of policy/political negotiations (Fisher, 2009; Gielen and De Bruyne, 2009; Haiven, 2017; Bonet and Negrier, 2018). Consciously or unconsciously, these emotional clusters have responded to the need for pluralistic democratic cultural architectures (Mouffe, 2018) and find spaces to introduce critical changes by placing matters of common interest at the centre of their actions, starting from cross-cutting issues, such as commons, cultural rights, and cultural accessibility. In doing so, these emotional clusters played a pivotal role in attributing an empirical progression to the cultural policy and political cycle by starting from struggles related to the quality of (daily) life. In the case of Creative Europe, the policy cycle unfolded through distinct phases: problem definition, policy implementation, development, and evaluation. My analysis focused primarily on the development phase, where emotional clusters acted as catalysts for cultural and policy experiments. They influenced the mobility of key stakeholders, strategic lobbying efforts, and iterative adjustments over time. These interactions embodied soft power strategies in a highly bureaucratised context, including building trust, fostering transversal collaboration, partnership-building, and community building, while also shaping preferences and influencing behaviour. Over time, the emotional clusters carved out temporary common territories transversally across EU decision-making, enhancing critical reflection on the political implications inherent in the policy process and, in some ways, transforming it.

On the other hand, the policy model that emerged from the Neapolitan case revealed a deeply ingrained empirical approach, marked by its bottom-up nature. It seemed to forego the evaluation phase (which was crucial in the EU case), instead favouring extensive peer exchanges between different groups, both top-down and bottom-up, at all stages of the policy cycle, which formed the foundation of the commons policy and political process. This democratic participatory approach took shape through an in-depth analysis conducted in public squares, assemblies, and informal exchanges. Accordingly, the policy/political cycle was tested in the public realm and assessed through attempts to find new equilibria in the shaping of the city through the city's norms. Unlike conventional policy cycles, the Neapolitan case prioritised social and political interactions. It experienced conflicts and disagreements within the transversal alliances, which were also the foundation for conducting policy/political battles with existing hegemonies.

These emotional clusters surfaced as an initial unconscious answer to the diffuse crisis of representative democracies (Mouffe, 2005; Della Porta, 2013; Bauman, 2019). Civil society, in its more transversal configuration (Harvey, 2016), felt the need to experiment with diverse democratic forms to tame the neoliberal impact on culture, social fabric, and nature (Fisher, 2009; Graeber,

2013; Gielen and Docx, 2018). Consequently, this imposed new emerging policy/political narratives, even with less power, within the market domain. Hence, emotional clusters served as initial spaces of resistance within the cultural policy cycle, where cultural, policy and political players needed each other to enable the change. They have often operated in a state of interdependence, meaning that they recognised the reciprocal need to enter and conquer spaces in the decision-making processes and to legitimise each other. This has required a certain fluidity in power relations, with significant changes in roles and responsibilities. In light of this, I suggest looking at the notions of “proximity” in the case of Creative Europe or “intimacy” in the case of Naples. According to the cultural and political coordinates of the two case studies, proximity and intimacy appeared to be expressions of very different cultural, policy and political contexts. However, they were both the result of the chemistry of personal beliefs, and the conscious decision to embrace value-driven action when pluralism in cultural policy/political processes was under attack. This is how key players have acted between the given coordinates of the market and the efforts embraced for its reconfiguration. Here, the emotional clusters have, at best, expressed their nature as relational and transformative political agents (Gramsci, 1916; Ahamed, 2015), allowing civil and political society to find a temporary balance, collaborating to facilitate transformative change, e.g., elaborating norms, sharing keywords and using them in policy/political negotiations, advocacy and lobbying strategies. This meant that civil society did not reproduce social and political hegemony. On the contrary, it addressed political issues, creating tension in the hegemonic representation.

Under the umbrella of attempts at pluralism, the emotional clusters have frequently passed through network constructions and value-driven constellations of practices that allowed players to move between different policy paradigms and cultural and economic realms (e.g., trans-local interactions or the urban system of the commons). Thus, when matters of common public interest were at stake, the transversality of alliances found the instruments to collectivise cultural and political approaches, multiply their effects, and impact social and political narratives. In short, it seems that, in times of organic crisis, the public sphere is a battleground, highly populated by a crowd of divergent agents, performing in a schizophrenic manner to respond to competing norms, policy and political regimes, and forms of cultural repression. This is often where conflict is addressed in a variety of ways, including soft power tactics, public protests or advocacy campaigns. For this reason, the emotional clusters appeared meaningful in my research as they represented the “why” and the “how” cultural, policy and political players acted by following Gramsci's (Gramsci, 2014) “war of positions” described in his 1930 notebooks (2014), i.e., by operating in different territories and adopting a hybrid political approach by merging activism, law, cultural processes, and culturally meaningful participatory logics in their actions.

Therefore, considering the two case studies and the function of emotions in their processes, I suggest that the two policy

approaches absolve a potential complementary function in a policy process when conceived as a political tool. The system of the commons has taught us that between its fragility and strength when it acts in network formation and implies “non-exclusive use” (as the norm of civic use has required), it is the context for understanding social mood and feeling, where a local community could grow, and where different societies inhabiting our cities could find ways to interact. When culture is the terrain, this private/public (=semi-public) arena is a place to experiment, learn and fail, and it is at the origin of cultural policy processes. Many projects and EU networks have expressed the need to multiply these (semi-public) spaces within their contexts to protect the artistic/cultural experience and to allow the artistic creation to be an aesthetic, political, and civil experience. I would argue that today more semi-public spaces (De Munck and Gielen 2022), which are grey areas comprised of public property, civil initiatives, and artistic interventions, are needed where we can learn about the health of Europe and its social, political, and cultural needs.

Looking at the Creative Europe policy process, I suggest that the empirical policy skeleton could inspire the planning of policy/political efforts to make the city. National cultural policy processes, cities, and EU programmes need a concrete, long-term context in which structurally top-down and bottom-up actors can project themselves into the future, and integrate (in a cooperative way) their different functions beyond populist announcements and upcoming elections that could overturn their efforts. They need a bottom-up empirical approach merged with a top-down policy/political process in a proper “shared policy” (Dragičević Šešić, 2006) between public, private, and civil society. From here, central problems and societal challenges can be examined and economic resources can be allocated to specific actions coming from negotiations and joint analysis. Merging empirical and established tools means finding policy and political instruments that can help to create the policy/political narratives that are the foundation of democratic societies today. To some extent, this means allowing processes in which history is not only written by the “winners,” who are often the ones creating the hegemonic narratives.

Conclusion

As we look back on a period of history that may seem distant yet remains strikingly relevant in the midst of our contemporary upheavals, it has become clear that history is not a monochromatic canvas, but rather a rich tapestry woven from an infinite array of experiences and narratives. My intention was never to impose rigid value systems that divide the world into simplistic binaries of good and evil. Instead, my aim was to share the dynamic evolution of spaces of resistance and imagination across cultural, social, and political landscapes. These spaces, fluid and interconnected, which emerged in 2011, serve as dynamic arenas where diverse stakeholders have converged,

even if they do not consider themselves activists. They have engaged in an ongoing process of negotiation to reimagine their futures in a pluralistic manner. Over the last 15 years, these negotiations have gradually moved from the realm of culture to the domain of cultural policy. Furthermore, they have given rise to innovative experiments deeply rooted in cultural politics, where cultural politics is understood as the interplay between culture and power in shaping societal norms and political ideologies.

My aim was to examine these unknown and impalpable spaces of resistance from our present position and to understand why they have emerged. It has become increasingly clear that the way in which this goal has been achieved can provide us with insights into the health of our democracies. Broadly speaking, the emergence of emotional clusters, as adaptive responses to navigate the Gramscian organic crisis, offers a nuanced lens through which to dissect the complexities of current democratic decision-making. It seems that the more the public sphere is occupied by multiple overlapping forces, including varying intensities of illiberal neoliberalism, the more impalpable aggregates will try to find their own way to exist and resist. Emotional clusters have emerged from my research as one of the theoretical proposals for navigating the organic crisis that has been examined in recent years, especially when matters of common public interest are the goal. However, further research is urgently needed to grasp today’s coordinates by entering into the intricate interplay of global dynamics, local policy developments, and personal feelings and affections, including the transformative role of positive and negative emotions.

It is my hope that this research will enrich our understanding of the cultural policy process, offering insights into the intricacy of power dynamics and emotions across different cultural landscapes. For this reason, I hope that the methodology chosen is reliable and provides a guide to accessing the multi-sited field of inquiry with a political exploration of the emotions connected to it. Finally, I advocate for a holistic understanding of the cultural policy process as a vibrant and political arena, especially in times of crisis, war, genocide, social burnout, and territorial invasion. It needs a multidimensional approach, including the political function of emotions. A realm that needs to be conceived according to its empirical development, where we shape the symbols and narratives that populate our collective imagination.

Data availability statement

The raw data supporting the conclusions of this article will be made available by the authors, without undue reservation.

Ethics statement

This study adheres to the highest standards of ethical research practices in the social sciences. The empirical analysis

conducted in this research is based on participatory research and autoethnographic methods, ensuring that no animals were involved at any stage of the study. Ethics approval or specific consent procedures were not required for this study. The study design and implementation were guided by principles of respect, beneficence, and justice, ensuring that the research was conducted in a manner that respects the dignity and rights of all participants. By adhering to these ethical guidelines, this research contributes to the field of management and cultural policy with a commitment to ethical rigor, integrity, and respect for human participants. Participatory research methodologies employed in this study emphasize collaboration and co-creation with participants. All participants were fully informed about the nature, purpose, and potential impacts of the research. The confidentiality of participants were strictly maintained, and data were handled with the utmost care to protect their privacy. The autoethnographic approach utilized in this study reflects the researcher's introspective examination of personal experiences within a cultural context. This method aligns with ethical standards by prioritizing transparency, reflexivity, and critical self-awareness. The researcher has strived to present an honest and nuanced account, recognizing the potential influence of personal bias and subjectivity. Ethical considerations have been meticulously addressed to ensure the integrity and authenticity of the autoethnographic narrative.

Author contributions

GC is the only author participating in the design, interpretation of the study, and analysis of the data. She conducted the primary research, including data collection and testing processes. GC also designed the theoretical frameworks, the conceptualization of the manuscript, literature review and revisions on the manuscript drafts. As single author GC reviewed and approved the final version for submission.

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Conflict of interest

The author declares that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

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