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The dark side of cultural policy: economic and political instrumentalisation, white elephants, and corruption in Valencian cultural institutions

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ABSTRACT

Cultural policy is usually assessed as a positive element for socio-economic development and therefore, its criticism is generally confined to poor implementation and discussion of its social effects. However, it is occasionally analysed as an instrument that produces unsustainable development, as a generator of white elephants, or as a means of waste, corruption, and clientelistic domination of the political sphere. This is what we might call the dark side of cultural policy. Our case study of the city of València (Spain), focusing on two of its major cultural institutions, the Valencian Institute of Modern Art and the Palace of Arts, exemplifies this cultural policy dimension. This article aims to analyse the systemic and contextual causes of this phenomenon of cronyistic behaviour and to elucidate in what sense it can be understood as a contingent drift specific to a particular territory or as a structural condition of cultural policy.

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Introduction

Does cultural policy have a dark side? Can such public policies represent a tool for generating the development of large unsustainable projects, i.e. cultural white elephants?¹ Might they be a source of waste, cronyism, and corruption? If we consider these questions as plausible hypotheses, then we should ask ourselves, is this dark side caused by the political and social circumstances of each society, or by the inherent characteristics of such cultural policies? Further, could certain developments, legitimised by these policies, enable or facilitate clientelistic practices? If this is the case, why has this concept received so little attention from researchers in this field?

Some authors have pointed to the constructed nature – thus far little demonstrated by empirical research – of the positive social impact of culture (Belfiore 2002, 2006). Indeed, some cultural studies criticise cultural policy as an exercise in service to the classes dominating power, using Gramscian and Foucauldian theoretical perspectives as justification (Gray 2010), while other articles discuss the neo-liberal nature, or otherwise, of recent cultural policies (Gattinger and St. Pierre 2010; Jeannotte 2010; Hesmondhalgh et al. 2015). On the other hand, since the nineties several pieces of work critical of the perverse effects of culture-based urban and economic models have emerged (Degen and García 2012; Rius-Ulldemolins and Sánchez 2015). However, if we focus on the debate about the negative effects of cultural policies in terms of cronyism and corruption, very little research has been undertaken in the area, as shown by searching in the relevant international bibliographic databases.² In particular, we

searched the research literature on clientelism, corruption, and cultural policies in databases including the ISI Web of Knowledge, Scopus, and international journals such as the *International Journal of Cultural Policy* or the *Journal of Arts Management Law and Society*. One of the only articles found that dealt with the topic of cronyism and corruption was about the candidacy of Maribor, Slovenia, as the European City of Culture (Žilič-Fišer and Erjavec 2015) and its political effects, although the theme itself was secondary to the other issues discussed. In contrast, when the search on clientelism and corruption was expanded to general social-policy, the results significantly increased.

More generally, since the beginning of modernity, the relationship between political power and cultural fields has been problematic, allowing the cultural sector to vindicate its distancing and increasing autonomy from the State (Dubois 1999; Bourdieu 2002). Nonetheless, it would be naïve to think that the cultural field is absolutely independent from any relationship with power. More specifically, the Bourdieusian idea in this field refers to an independent social space with its own rules but that maintains interdependent and influential relationships with other disciplines (Bourdieu 2002). Thus, the cultural domain can provide legitimacy to the political arena and, at the same time, the political field often tries to exercise control in the cultural field, rewarding its 'friends' and thus, altering the mechanisms of artistic consecration (Sapiro 1996; Bourdieu 2001).³

At the same time, cultural policy, like public policy, has some peculiarities that make it difficult to protect and evaluate. First, its original conception as a policy with objectives (one being the democratisation of culture), is far beyond the means at its disposal given the social obstacles it will encounter – especially when trying to propagate it among the popular classes (Bourdieu, Darbel, and Schnapper 2003). Likewise, this gap between objectives and cultural policy instruments did not simplify as cultural policy was deployed during the second half of the twentieth century; rather, cultural policies started to add new objectives to the original one – promoting cultural diversity, emerging creativity, cultural industries, etc. – which produced an ever-growing catalogue of policies that were inconsistent among themselves (Urfalino 1989, 1996). Second, the legitimacy of cultural policy is based largely on the artistic field and its innovative dynamics, a social sphere fundamentally opposed to the display of instrumental rationality and its control devices (Chiapello 1994, 1998). Furthermore, in the case of large cultural institutions this reticence to financial control results in resistance to political tutelage in the form of discourse about artistic freedom, thus offering the management staff a broad discretionary margin (Agid and Tarondeau 2007; Rius-Ulldemolins 2014a). This evolution has been legitimised by discussion about New Public Management and managerialism's discourse on the central position of cultural institution directors (DiMaggio 1987; Alonso and Fernández Rodríguez 2006) which emphasises their nodal position in local and international cultural institutional networks and consequently, further strengthens their position of power in relation to political leaders (Rius-Ulldemolins 2013, 2014a).

Corrupt practices can be found in diverse spheres of public policy, with large infrastructures and public health or education services being one of the areas most affected because of the volume of resources managed (Villoria and Jiménez 2012). Therefore, in view of the construction of new and costly cultural containers, 'white elephants' (Flor 2015b; Rius-Ulldemolins and Hernández 2015), and the practices of cultural control, cultural policies represent a public management sector in which these cronyism and corruption practices specifically proliferate. However, some cultural policy developments have characteristics that make them vulnerable to corrupt behaviour and mismanagement. Therefore, cultural policy is one of the public policy areas which shows greatest resilience to the rationalisation and reform driven by the neoliberal New Public Management system which rose in the nineties in Spain; attempts to implement it are still met with opposition from the cultural administration sector who reaffirm the 'incalculable' nature of artistic value (Menger 2009) or the necessarily multidimensional character of the impact of cultural policy (Barbieri, Partal, and Merino 2011). In addition, according to the welfare state model, mechanisms for contracting, monitoring, and evaluation have been very unevenly developed, and their effect has been very limited in Mediterranean countries subscribing to it (Rius-Ulldemolins and Arostegui 2013). In this sense, implementation of cultural policy in the Spanish State has remained almost unalterable within the parameters of traditional governance, except for some attempts to divide it among agencies in Catalonia (Rius-Ulldemolins and Martínez Illa 2016). In

contrast, in the Spanish case, large public facilities are rarely well received by governments or central, regional, or local cultural agencies. Rather, their definition largely depends on the manager they choose, who tends to develop artistic projects that respond, as far as the artistic sphere is concerned, to this director's personal projects and their desire to build a reputation in the field (Rius-Ulldemolins 2014a). Likewise, at the socio-political level, actions are developed that respond to an elitist ideology of culture and its effective instrumentalisation in order to develop urban operations (Rius-Ulldemolins, Hernández i Martí, and Torres 2016; Rius-Ulldemolins and Rubio Arostegui 2016).

On the other hand, recent cultural policy developments, such as the paradigm aimed at promoting creative cities, have emphasised the discretionary character of this public policy which is not based on objective parameters. Specifically, the goal of this paradigm is to alleviate the effects of deindustrialisation and to promote opportunities for urban development based on culture (Bianchini 1993; Landry and Bianchini 1995). In this case, local and regional governments adopt an entrepreneurial approach designed to seize opportunities that, by definition, are unique, timely, and contextually defined. Thereby, this change limits and dismantles attempts at Fordist planning by national governments based on policies aimed at providing a unified whole-territory service (Dubois 2010; Menger 2010). This opportunistic and entrepreneurial approach generates large-scale activities, such as large infrastructure or events with higher risks and lower benchmarks in terms of planning, and can lead to over-sized cultural activities, perhaps with questionable effects in the medium and long-term (Rius-Ulldemolins, Hernández i Martí, and Torres 2016). This orientation is also contradictory to the paradigms that reveal the potential of cultural participation in everyday life and of cultural planning and generation by local communities (Duxbury and Jeannotte 2010; Miles 2016; Miles and Gibson 2016).

Likewise, the unique way that these projects are executed (in the case of large infrastructure) and/or implemented under pressure to meet opening and/or celebration deadlines (especially in the case of events) decreases the effectiveness of managerial control and so there is a tendency towards waste and increased opportunities for illegal or corrupt behaviour (Majoor 2011). Finally, the rhetoric about the social and economic impacts of these projects is developed with a discursive tone, which Belfiore (2009), following Frankfurt, describes as 'bullshit'. In other words, a discourse that does not describe reality, but rather, within the 'creative city' paradigm, intends only to seduce and largely disables critical attitudes to the implementation and medium to long-term effects of these large-scale activities. This new entrepreneurial orientation, linked to the creative city paradigm, along with the previously mentioned weakness exposed when these cultural policies are evaluated as public policy, makes them vulnerable to political and clientelistic instrumentalisation and to corruption and mismanagement practices, as we can see in the case of Valencia (Spain).

This article, about the dark side of cultural policy is informed by research projects on cultural policies carried out by the authors. On the one hand, our analysis of the development of regional and local (autonomous community) cultural policy is based on research into the cultural policy system, a structure developed by twenty people selected from among the primary public, private, and third-sector cultural agents (anonymised citation). We also used the case study analyses of Spanish State cultural institution white elephants that we developed and published as a monograph (anonymised citation). On the other hand, to analyse the influence of political and social context in explaining corrupt practices in the cultural field we used research conducted by (anonymised citation) and published in (anonymised citation). However, we would like to emphasise the difficulty of investigating cases of cultural-policy development in a climate of political confrontation, clientelistic networks, and corruption scandals. The result of all this is the absence of public reports or reliable data and the systematic denial of interviews by those charged or under judicial investigation for wrongdoing while responsible for such institutions. This introduces more complexity into the source analysis, which must then be developed by triangulating sources based on interviews with various agents, contrasting internal and external sources (e.g. budgetary control agencies, statistics from other institutions, etc.) or even information derived from journalistic investigation. We are aware that these should be treated with caution because they are not direct sources, but they are often more reliable than official sources which have been falsified to conceal the aforementioned corrupt practices frequently present in these cultural institutions.

This article is divided into three parts: first, we analyse the political system and governance in *País Valencià* (Valencian Country) in order to give context to our analysis of the development of cultural policy in the city of Valencia. Second, we examine how to analyse management malpractices and corruption in cultural policy from the point of view of the social sciences and how this applies in the context of the *País Valencià*. Third, we discuss two case studies representative of the Valencian cultural policy, considering the two of its most important cultural institutions in terms of cultural centrality and budget size: the *Institut Valencià d'Art Modern* (IVAM; Valencian Institute of Modern Art) and the *Palau de les Arts* (Palace of Arts) in the *Ciutat de les Arts i les Ciències* (CAC; City of Arts and Sciences)⁴ – all subsequently referred to by their anglicised names – by looking at the characteristics of their management and, especially, their problems in managing and controlling public funds. Finally, we close the article with an assessment of the causes and consequences of these practices and ask to what extent they represent a phenomenon specific to a period in the *País Valencià* history or are a structural property of cultural policy that could, thus, occur in different contexts and countries.

The political system, governance, and corruption in *País Valencià*

The relationship between the political system, social structure, and corruption has been widely studied by the social sciences (Heath, Richards, and de Graaf 2016). For example, Banfield's concept of amoral familism (1958) analyses how societies centred on the family, as is the case for southern European countries, develop a self-interest that sacrifices public values for the benefit of nepotism and immediate family. Other authors have noted that regions with more social capital are more prone to this behaviour (Putnam 1993, 1995). In these cases, the negative effects of social capital are revealed as the exclusion of 'outsiders' and promotion of the group regarded as 'insiders', as well as a lower regard for compliance with social and legal standards (Portes 1998). This negative dimension of social capital is also amplified in southern European countries such as Spain where the welfare state model and cultural policy generally have a higher degree of porosity and there is interdependency between the state and private sectors (Esping-Andersen 1993; Rius-Ulldemolins 2016).

The Spanish State and Valencian Autonomous Community are especially rich in family ties and networks of friends – a dimension that explains the survival and vitality of traditions and rituals linked to friendship and conviviality (Ariño Villarroya 1992, 2010). This characteristic makes it an exemplary case of the Mediterranean model of the welfare state (Esping-Andersen 1993) in which the relationship between public authorities and civil society presents many cases of cronyism and clientelist relationships (Villoria and Jiménez 2012; Jiménez, García-Quesada, and Villoria 2014). In this sense it is not surprising that over the last ten years, in the context of an expansionary economic cycle based largely on a speculative property bubble, Spain in general, and Valencia in particular, have been affected by serious cases of corruption that have hit both the economy and the country's image (Boira Marques 2012; Castillo 2013) which have helped to aggravate a crisis in the accepted social, economic, and political models (Flor 2015a).

Secondly, corruption often goes hand in hand with obscured public affairs (Brooks 1970). A dictatorship tends to be more corrupt than a democracy because access, both to public information and to control mechanisms, is very limited in the former. However, in a democracy there are normally correction mechanisms, which are more or less effective according to the political system in question; these may be internal, such as having good administrative systems, a professional civil service, and an independent judiciary, or external and can include a free and independent press, civil society, or other bodies which prevent the spread of corruption (Quesada, Jiménez-Sánchez, and Villoria 2013). In spite of this, the Spanish democracy does not stand out for its judicial independence,⁵ its transparency and the quality of its controls is mediocre and some of its media outlets are too docile in their treatment of those in power (Villoria and Jiménez 2012).

Furthermore, political opacity has been very high, specifically in Valencia – some already suggest that the Valencian political system is a kleptocracy. This corruption is rooted in its installation within an unconsolidated democratic political culture in which the state lacked effective control mechanisms

and the political opposition were unable to effectively exercise their duties (Boira Marques 2012; Castillo 2013). For example, the Constitutional Court decided in favour of Monica Oltra, the then *Generalitat Valenciana* (hereon in referred to as the Valencian regional government) political representative, at least six times that the Bureau of the *Cortes Valencianas* (hereon in referred to as the Valencian Parliament) had violated her right to political participation on an equal basis (Beltran 2014). In this respect, the 2010 Spanish autonomous communities' transparency index (INCAU; *Índice de las Comunidades Autónomas*), prepared by Transparency International, noted that the Valencian regional government is the second-least transparent regional government in Spain (Transparency International España 2016).⁶

The development of Valencian cultural policy

Cultural policy in the city of Valencia, beyond modifications related to general trends in Spanish State cultural policy (Hernández i Martí and Albert Rodrigo 2012), arose through several stages, each reflecting the application of different models aiming to encourage its development into an increasingly international urban centre (Hernández and Torres Pérez 2013). The first step in this 'globalist' plan was regional and had a Mediterranean character (1979–1991); it coincided with the period that the Spanish Socialist Workers Party (PSOE; *Partido Socialista Obrero Español*) was in power in the Valencian regional government and saw the inauguration of various facilities, including the *Palau de la Música de València* (Music Palace of Valencia) and the IVAM, the latter being a Valencian regional government project. At that time a cultural policy was chosen that intended to make Valencia a Mediterranean cultural landmark (capturing the 'Mediterranean spirit') through mid-range events and projects, which were characterised by a desire for modernity and enhancement of both high culture and contemporary art, for example the *Mostra de Cinema del Mediterrani*, *Encontre d'Escriptors del Mediterrani*, or *la Trobada de Música del Mediterrani* (Mediterranean Film Showcase, Mediterranean Writer's Gathering, and Mediterranean Music Meeting, respectively). Pursuant to this approach, these projects were embedded in the city's historic centre and provided both a traditional flavour and monumental scenery (ibid.).

Later, there was a second short stage characterised by regional globalism with a European vocation (1991–1995), directed primarily by the conservative Popular Party (PP; *Partido Popular*) political power, then a newcomer to Valencian regional government in coalition with the Valencian Union (*Unió Valenciana*; a right-wing regionalist and anti-Catalanist party). Together they advocated a cultural policy aiming to reconcile pride in being Valencian – through the recovery and exaltation of cultural heritage – with an external projection tied to the ongoing project of European cultural construction (Hernández i Martí et al. 2014). However, the model designed to position *País Valencià* as a cultural centre in Europe, deployed from the ephemeral *Consell Valencia de Cultura* (Valencian Council of Culture), was soon discarded in favour of a more ambitious outward-looking project which aimed to put Valencia on the world map by adopting a model consistent with the creative city rhetoric, which was in fashion at the time. Hence, up until 1995, the regional PP coalition government, on behalf of the city of Valencia, chose to reformulate the city's image into a cosmopolitan 'global brand' (Hernández i Martí 2013).

The third developmental stage was implemented between 1995 and 2011. Initially, both the Valencian regional government and the *Ajuntament de València* (the Valencian City Council, which followed the former without itself implementing any specific cultural policies), emphasised major events in the art world, for example *Valencia Tercer Milenio*, (Valencia Third Millennium; 1996) and *Bienales de Valencia* (Valencia Biennials; 2001, 2003, 2005) and nominations as the European Capital of Culture or the Mediterranean Games host. However, when this approach did not quite materialise the anticipated results, there was a decision to pursue major global sporting events (e.g. the America's Cup, Formula 1, Longines Global Champions Tour, and ATP World Tour tennis), media-worthy world meetings (including World Youth Day, Pope Benedict XVI's visit, and MTV Winters), and new landmark buildings such as the *Palau de Congressos de València* (Valencia Congress Centre) designed by Norman Foster, the lavish reform of the *Feria Valencia* complex, and an expansion of the iconic CAC architecture (ongoing since 1999) and port area – the latter of which was transformed into the *Juan Carlos I Marina Real* (Royal Marina).

According to this new approach, which we have called a 'cosmopolitan bubble' (Hernández i Martí 2013), those in power reimagined the city as a modern and vibrant metropolis. Furthermore, this paradigm was legitimised by triumphalist accounts from the Valencia City Strategy and Development Centre (CEyD; *Centro de Estrategias y Desarrollo del Ayuntamiento de Valencia*), research published by the Valencian Institute of Economic Research (IVIE; *Instituto Valenciano de Investigaciones Económicas*) indicating the plan's positive economic impact, and with the collaboration of most of Valencia's media. All of these aforementioned cultural policy developments resulted from the implementation of an idealist program justified by arguments for a creative city. The imponents of this strategy gradually extended their original focus on classic regional self-celebration within the Spanish national framework to more ambitious transnational proposals in the context of globalisation and their role in internationally repositioning midsize cities (Sassen 2007). Therefore, the Valencian regional government created the Directorate General for Strategic Projects (*Dirección General de Proyectos Estratégico*) which manages the vast majority of the city's resources, some 219 million euros, destined for investment in and management of strategic cultural and sports projects (Generalitat Valenciana 2012), thus dismantling cultural policy aimed at promoting cultural diffusion, as well as cultural professions and industry (Hernández i Martí et al. 2014).

The decade of the 2000s constituted a stage of intense growth in the Spanish economy, in a model based largely on the construction industry and developments derived from public spending, materialising as large, over-sized, public investments such as high-speed train lines, which often represented a waste of public resources and presented opportunities for the development of corrupt schemes (Bel 2011; Villoria and Jiménez 2012). The elaboration of large public cultural infrastructures largely followed this incremental logic, without prior planning and based on the creative city paradigm, which has populated Spain with cultural white elephants, as in the case of the City of Culture (*Ciudad de la Cultura*) in Santiago de Compostela, the Forum of Cultures (*Fórum de las Culturas*) in Barcelona, or the large state-owned cultural infrastructure concentrated in Madrid (Rius-Ulldemolins and Hernández 2016; Rius-Ulldemolins, Hernández i Martí, and Torres 2016; Rius-Ulldemolins and Rubio Arostegui 2016). It is significant that expenditure on culture by every public administration (central, autonomous, and local) increased from 4.7 billion euros in 2003 to 7.1 billion in 2009 (Rius-Ulldemolins and Martínez Illa 2016), surpassing the average European spending per capita in 2009 (Rubio Arostegui, Rius-Ulldemollins, and Martínez 2014).⁷

The Valencian Autonomous Community and its capital, Valencia city, represent an extreme case of this economic development model, as well as that of a city at service to construction and real estate speculation, turning infrastructure and cultural events into an element that promoted and legitimised a direction now shown to be economically and socially unsustainable (Cucó i Giner 2013; Flor 2015a). In this context, cultural policy in Valencia was bolstered until it had the third biggest cultural expenditure per capita of any autonomous region – 150 euros per inhabitant in 2012 (Rius-Ulldemolins and Martínez Illa 2016). However, unlike Madrid (and to a lesser extent, Barcelona), in practice, the state's Central Administration Agency did not invest in, or guarantee, any large cultural institutions in Valencia; because it is the third largest city in Spain, full responsibility for the management and financing of these investments was left in the hands of the Valencian autonomous region. Hence, the Ministry of Culture was left without any control over these cultural activities or spending on them (Rius-Ulldemolins and Rubio Arostegui 2016).⁸ Likewise, the Valencian autonomous government did not develop any official body designed to evaluate and control such cultural institutions. In contrast, it made them into opaque organisations, outside of parliamentary and Accounting Oversight Board (*Sindicatura de Comptes*) control, populated by handpicked staff recruitments using favoured suppliers, thus generating inefficient and oversized organizations (Hernández i Martí et al. 2014; Rius-Ulldemolins and Hernández 2016). These cultural policies and their management create the conditions for the generation of cultural white elephants that, in 2014, in themselves absorbed 19.9 and 5.5 million euros, in the case of the *Palau de les Arts* and IVAM, respectively. That is, 35.4% of the total Valencian autonomous government's budget for culture (Generalitat Valenciana 2014a).

The final stage (after 2011) came after the full impact of the 2008 economic crisis became apparent. This was clearly evident in post-2011 public-policy cutbacks, especially in the region and city of Valencia, and can be traced back to the enormous waste of public resources and numerous cases of corruption (Cucó i Giner 2013). The cutbacks in cultural management were abysmal – 46% of the Valencian regional government spending – from 173 million euros in 2010 to 79 million euros in 2014. This shows the incoherence and weakness of the commitment to the autonomous government's cultural policy and the effects of the clientelistic cultural policy on the cultural sector, leaving it weakened and disorganised, and unable to successfully claim the continuity of the city's cultural projects. Thus, the dominant large-project model very quickly sank, leaving the city's cultural policy in a state of accelerated collapse (Hernández i Martí et al. 2014). The crisis in the project and city model developed during this latter period was also reflected in the PP's loss of the regional and local elections in 2015 – after twenty years in power – and the election of the left-wing *Coalició Compromís* (Commitment Coalition) coalition government that has distanced itself from the cultural policy of large infrastructure and events.

The dark side of Valencian cultural policy: the Palace of Arts and the Valencian Institute of Modern Art

In the following sections we discuss two case studies on major cultural institutions, the Palace of Arts in the CAC and the IVAM, allowing us to analyse the causes and consequences of adopting these urban development and cultural policy models.

The Palace of Arts in the City of Arts and Sciences: development of a white elephant

From the second half of the nineties the Valencian regional PP government launched into redefining the urban, cultural, and tourism profiles of the city of Valencia; the area containing the CAC played a central role in this project. After the PP's victory in 1995, the initial project developed by the PSOE was reformulated and expanded into its current form. Built between 1993 and 2008, in the green-space park created in the riverbed where the river Turia used to cross Valencia before its diversion in 1965, the CAC is 1800 m long and occupies 35 ha; it consists of the following elements: *L'Hemisfèric* (an IMAX cinema), *El Museu de les Ciències Príncep Felipe* science museum, *L'Umbracle* (a landscaped entranceway), *L'Oceanogràfic* oceanographic aquarium park, *L'Àgora* (a covered plaza without a defined use), and the *Palau de les Arts Reina Sofía* opera house. All these buildings were designed by Santiago Calatrava except for *L'Oceanogràfic* which is the work of Felix Candela. As previously mentioned, several very high-profile and large-scale media events have been hosted in this spectacular architectural complex.

Since its construction, the CAC has played a central role in Valencia's image in the government's strategy to 'put Valencia on the map' and in promoting the city's culture-based brand (Santamarina and Moncusí 2013); this required the largest cultural investment in Valencia's history, some 1282 million euros, and represented the centrepiece of PP governmental cultural policy (Rius-Ulldemolins, Hernández i Martí, and Torres 2016). Thus, the CAC was presented in institutional discourse as the city's greatest patrimonial asset with a huge capacity to generate wealth both directly and indirectly. This rhetoric was legitimised by academic institutions such as the IVIE which, from 1999 to 2011, produced thirteen studies with a total cost of approximately 250,000 euros. These studies set out the positive financial impact expected for the local and regional economy: a total economic impact of 8 billion euros, 5000 jobs, and an additional 0.20% gross value added to the region by 2007 (IVIE 2007). In addition, their figures assured that revenues covering 50% of expenditure would be generated (ibid.). However, despite these perspectives on the CAC's role, it did not meet these expectations and by 2014 already carried a debt of 579 million euros which continues to expand annually by the deficit of their accounts (Sindicatura de Comptes 2015).

Moreover, the Palace of Arts is undoubtedly the most emblematic building in the CAC and is the clearest representative of architecture conceived as urban branding through culture (Evans 2003) rather than design for its actual cultural use. Inaugurated in 2006, after more than ten years of work which

cost 478 million euros, the Palace of Arts is a 70-m high opera house occupying 37,000 m², and with a capacity for 1500 spectators. In theory, its programming combines all the performing arts, but it was initially conceived by the Valencian regional government with the objective of putting Valencia on the international cultural agenda, and so it has always emphasised classical high culture, especially opera, despite Valencia being a city without an operatic tradition. With regard to its administration, the Palace of Arts moved away from the direct-management formula, instead adopting the form of a foundation – common in large Spanish State institutions (Rubio and Rius 2012) – under the neoliberal rhetoric that a private management model is superior to public management. Nevertheless, despite emphasising the importance of private participation in management and governance, a system of independent trustees was not adopted (of twenty-five trustees only three are from the private sector) nor were management mechanisms oriented towards efficiency and outcomes, as exemplified by their failure to use fixed-program contracts (Rius-Ulldemolins 2014b). Therefore, the cultural institution almost exclusively remained in the hands of the Ministry of Culture's tutelage, a responsibility that it never exercised, limiting itself instead to the annual approval of the accounts and programming proposed by the management.

Likewise, in its conception as a cultural institution it adopted a model of international prestige: an opera house connected to international high culture networks and disconnected from the Valencian musical tradition of wind bands (Castelló et al. 2006). Consistent with this elitism, defined without cultural sector debate or discussion of the ideal management model, the Accounting Oversight Board public-sector watchdog detected that the director had some erratic objectives which were dependent on the whims of the artistic direction (Sindicatura de Comptes 2013). The personification of this drift is Helga Schmidt,⁹ the Palace of Arts' first general director: Hired by order of the President of the Government without holding any public competition for the job, she was given absolute *carte blanche* to operate the opera foundation according to her personal criteria in return for a high salary – about 145,000 euros annually (Generalitat Valenciana 2015b) – and allowances for lavish spending on luxury travel and hotels, both unusual privileges in the cultural sector. She was valued by certain cultural sectors for her ability to attract musical directors and performers with an international reputation and to program operas considered to be of excellence within the international circuit (Aimeur 2014). However, in terms of her management effectiveness and efficiency, the Palace of Arts' model was very far from the self-funding ratios of other European opera houses; it produced only 37% of its own income, thereby becoming highly reliant on public revenues by 2014 (Generalitat Valenciana 2015a). In addition, the decrease in audiences (which halved between 2008 and 2013 from 80,000 to 40,000 spectators) has raised the public cost per spectator to 400 euros, a figure several times higher than similar opera houses such as the *Teatro Real* in Madrid or the *Liceu* in Barcelona (Rius-Ulldemolins and Hernández 2016), placing the Palace of Arts in a serious managerial and public crisis.

Additionally, since 2015 several cases of corruption have been uncovered which have severely affected the institution. The most important is that involving Helga Scmidt, because she is accused of dissolving the Palace of Arts Foundation patronage department and in its stead creating the company *Patrocinio de las Artes S.A.* (anglicised as Patronage of the Arts Ltd.) to manage arts sponsorships and from which she allegedly received illegal management commissions estimated at 508,000 euros. This private company was supposed to increase funding from patronage, but in reality, the opposite happened: it decreased. For example, with the support of the company's partners (prominent members of the Valencian upper class) the general director contracted the retransmission of operas onto the outside plaza at a cost of 472,000 euros when, in reality, the outlay was only 143,000 euros and the difference went to the company (Ballester 2016). In other words, a plan to cover up the failures of liberal discourse about patronage of culture was developed and incorporated into the debate about the democratisation of culture, thus allowing the continued exploitation of public resources.

Even though the Valencian regional government partly knew the facts from 2013, it was not until the release of the so-called Diogenes report (an anonymous complaint from the organisation itself), that officials began to investigate this corrupt practice (Nieto 2015). The Ministry of Culture was aware of the practices resulting in the squander and diversion of funds for two years, but it did not exercise

any control, impose any audits, or dismiss Helga Schmidt until she was put under investigation for corruption by a judge. Lastly, the public scandal of the police entering the Palace of Arts in January 2015 to detain its director, along with the ERE (*Expediente Regulación Empleo* or 'employment profile adjustment') reduction-in-workforce layoff imposed on staff, the resignation of the orchestra conductor Zubin Mehta in 2014, and the building's main exterior covering crumbling away – from a very new building – accompanied by the image of scaffolding work for more than a year (2013–2015), has resulted in severe damage to the image and prestige of the opera house only ten years after its opening (Amón 2015). In short, the Valencian regional government developed and maintained a cultural policy model, aimed at favouring international promotion and urban development, until its collapse caused by pressure from cuts and judicial investigations.

The Valencian Institute of Modern Art: the plundering of an artistic institution

The IVAM was created in 1986 by the Valencian regional government, according to the decree issued when it was established: to 'encourage, promote, and disseminate modern art'. In 1989 its new headquarters (the Julio González Centre), a new facility designed for museum activity with nine exhibition halls totalling 48,000 m², was inaugurated in the historic Carne neighbourhood.

During the nineties, the IVAM reached considerable prestige, especially in artistic circles and the national and international press: 'The artistic and cultural level of the project is beyond all doubt because IVAM not only has a local and national impact, but it has also acquired a significant international dimension' (Raussell 1999). During the tenure of its first directors, Tomas Llorens and Carmen Alborch, the IVAM developed an official museum practice, and it combined purchases and exhibitions by both local and international artists. This strategy situated the gallery as one of the leading cultural institutions in Spain, competing with the Reina Sofia National Art Centre in Madrid and the Museum of Contemporary Art in Barcelona. The success of this work also stimulated the art market, and so, during the nineties Valencia became an important art market hub; Valencia accommodated 7% of all art galleries in Spain, placing it as the city with third-largest concentration of art (Laporte 1995). At that time, even the Accounting Oversight Board (a theoretically independent body) congratulated the IVAM for appropriately balancing their accounts. With a budget of 10 million euros in 1991, the institution's finances were both average and similar to other cultural facilities such as the Museum of Contemporary Art in Barcelona (Rius-Ulldemolins 2016).

However, turbulence and deterioration of the institution's image began in the year 2000 when a clash about the installation of a piece of work on the museum's stairs degenerated into a public confrontation between the museum's director, Juan Manuel Bonet, and the PP's regional Minister of Culture, Manuel Tarancón, supported by the director of the Consortium of Museums, Consuelo Ciscar, the subsequent director of the IVAM. Even though the director had the support of the local and international art sector, two months later he had to resign. This climate of manipulation and control of the museum by political leaders increased during the 2000s, with continuous political interference in the museum's management. For example, the president of the Valencian regional government ordered the purchase of a piece from the artist Antonio de Felipe based on his own personal preferences, bypassing all of IVAM's procedures and contrary to the opinion of the Valencian Association of Art Critics.

In addition, even though the IVAM was appropriately sized as a medium-scale city arts centre, it did not escape the trend of building white elephants during the economic-boom years. Thus, in 2003 the museum expansion project, envisaged by architects Kazuyo Sejima and Ryue Nishizawa, was presented; it consisted of covering the museum building and all of the surrounding block with a 30-m high metal skin. This project was abandoned because of its high investment cost – estimated at 45 million euros – meaning that the museum now only has some blueprints and models and an abandoned 2800-m building site next to the museum, for which 3.5 million euros were paid. With this project, the Valencian regional government, run by the PP, wanted to convert a cultural institution with a prestigious and well-defined trajectory into a new cultural white elephant aimed at competing with large

international-level cultural institutions, without defining a priori which artistic collection or artistic project would be exhibited with this new expansion.

However, the decline of the institution worsened from 2003 when Consuelo Ciscar began directing it; she was chosen because of her political contacts at the highest levels of the PP and the Valencian autonomous government.¹⁰ Like Helga Scmidt, Ciscar was also not a stranger in the world of cultural policy: having previously been a civil servant at the Valencian Museum of Fine Arts, Director of the Consortium of Museums, and General Director of Culture and Regional Secretary of Culture in the Valencian regional government where she had generated numerous projects of questionable public value, such as the now closed City of Theatre in Sagunto. Nevertheless, protected by her political network, she was chosen by the regional head of the PP to direct the IVAM, inaugurating a period in which the institution was locked into a management style defined by personalised patrimony (Aimeur 2015).

The list of management malpractices and corruption between 2009 and 2013, revealed by the Valencian regional government Controller's Office (*Intervención de la Generalitat*) and investigated by the public prosecutor's office, include spending on unauthorised trips (137,000 euros), the appointment of curators at the director's discretion without agreement from the Artistic Commission (809,000 euros), hiring of external experts without justification (3.4 million euros), and the award of service contracts, such as those for IVAM publications, at a cost of 2.4 million euros without prior public tendering (Generalitat Valenciana 2015c). Although, perhaps one of the greatest irregularities was in the acquisition of art works: during her tenure the director bought work that fell outside the cultural institution's Advisory Committee criteria (standards which were later controlled and corrupted by Ciscar) and against the regional Minister of Culture's advice. Furthermore, research has shown that the work acquired between 2009 and 2013 was priced 110% higher than its value, meaning that the IVAM squandered approximately one million euros (Generalitat Valenciana 2015c).

However, the most grotesque case of the IVAM director's nepotism is that of her sculptor son, Rafael Blasco Ciscar: the public prosecutor's office is investigating why the IVAM hired companies which produce sculptural pieces he designed. They are also studying the IVAM's funding of art centre exhibitions such as that at the Cascais Cultural Centre where her son went on to hold major exhibitions. Although the government and artistic circles knew about these practices, only the art critic José Luis Pérez Pont, representing the Valencian Association of Art Critics, gallery owners, and artists complained about them in a press conference in 2011 (Associació Valenciana de Crítics d'Art 2011). Despite these serious allegations about Ciscar's management, no action was taken by the Valencian local government's Council of Culture nor were any accusations investigated by the public prosecutor's office until 2016, and so she remained unpunished until she was put under investigation and moved away from the position of director.

Finally, the lack of control and bad faith in the management at IVAM was reflected not only in the corrupt and clientelistic practices, but was also expressed in the visitor data. According to data provided in 2012, the IVAM had 1,147,637 visitors (1,156,280 in 2013) and would have achieved a podium position at the state and global level as the third most-visited art gallery in Spain (just behind the Prado and Reina Sofia) and making it one of the most popular in the world. Some journalists who were critical of the political power at the time expressed their surprise at these figures, wryly pointing out that the queues of visitors, 3750 visitors each day, were similar to the public figures reported: 'invisible' (Viñas 2014). New data has confirmed the absence of control and lack of scruples in the institution's direction, and equally as serious, the regional and state cultural authorities' lack of control in accepting these data at face value and publishing them without any attempt to confirm or compare them. Finally, in this case, the Valencian regional government's policy of dictating which visual arts the IVAM should develop degenerated into a cultural policy designed to serve as a platform for promoting select cultural managers with close links with the regional government's circles of power and with clientelistic relationships with the local artistic sector.

Conclusions

Without a doubt, as analysed here, cultural policies can also have a dark side. Some contextual and historical characteristics of this period of *País Valencià* explain the proliferation of corrupt and clientelistic practices oriented towards the enrichment of an elite, socio-political domination, and cultural-sector control. These practices are characteristic of a Mediterranean welfare state model society with a high level of negative social capital and where an economy linked to construction and tourism flourishes. This turns cultural policy into an opportunity to generate large white elephants and funding sources for a network of clientelist interests, in this case, linked to the conservative right PP political power, although these practices are not absolutely exclusive to this party. Thereby, large Valencian cultural institutions were understood by many in power as an easy public-sector target in which to 'set up' their relatives, friends, and loyalists (and to punish and marginalise their opponents), as well as a way to generate cultural white elephants to secure social hegemony at the local level and to promote their city (and regional) brand internationally. Indeed, this goal was partially achieved, as shown by the PP's prolonged dominance in Valencian politics (Flor 2015a). This dominion led to the emergence of several corruption cases that, evidently, are not limited only to cultural policy, but also include numerous public administrations and agencies, and which largely responds to the chosen economic development model (Naredo and Montiel 2011). Nevertheless, in our opinion, it is not a coincidence that the two most important regional cultural institutions were clearly affected by cases of mismanagement, cronyism, and corruption, as analysed in this manuscript. Rather, these problems correspond to the regional and local Valencian government's cultural political model which was aimed at international promotion and generating internal consensus under the slogan of 'putting Valencia on the map' which was fostered and developed for nearly two decades.

Thus, corruption and cronyism cannot be attributed to only two people, the directors Helga Schmidt and Consuelo Ciscar, but rather, their actions of plunder and squander are explained by a network of complicities within and between their organizations, the cultural sector, the political sphere, and even regional and state supervisory authorities. It goes without saying, that two decades of this corrupt regime had a negative effect on the cultural sector by altering the mechanisms of assessing artistic merit, inhibiting incentives for good cultural management and artistic innovation, and ultimately, erosion of autonomy of the cultural field by political powers. Furthermore, these two cases demonstrate how social capital (Putnam 2002) has been used negatively by those responsible for these cultural institutions to create an elitist network of silent complicity that has weakened the sector's capacity for criticism and has impeded the emergence of more democratising and participative dynamics.

Nevertheless, all of the elements of this dark side are contextual and are historically delimited to the *País Valencià*, and certain characteristics of cultural policy undeniably favoured this phenomenon: The coexistence of different cultural policy paradigms and objectives, along with the appearance of new goals linked to the economic and urban instrumentalisation of cultural policy, which favours the absence of clear objectives, control by public auditing agencies, and government supervision. Moreover, adopting policies aimed at promoting a creative city brand as well as the entrepreneurial exploitation of opportunities has accentuated the trend towards management-oriented major events or large-scale infrastructure, generating uncontrolled white elephants which consume extensive resources and contribute little public value. Meanwhile, the emergence of legitimising liberal-management culture narratives (such as those from private foundations), without adopting appropriate controls, has favoured the appearance of corruption, a pattern also noted in other areas of public administration (Miller 2015). Taken together, all of this leads us to think that these phenomena of corruption and cronyism in political and cultural institutions may also occur in other contexts and thus, more research into this dark side of cultural policy would be highly desirable.

Notes

1. The expression 'white elephant', which is common in Spanish and English, refers to infrastructure or buildings (for cultural, sports, health, residential, or administrative use) whose maintenance cost is higher than the benefits provided to the owner. White elephants may become modern ruins (Augé 2003) shortly after being inaugurated,

especially in the case of an economic crisis such as the one experienced in 2008 leaving authorities without the resources required to maintain these buildings which were thus, exposed to progressive deterioration.

2. The authors searched the research literature on clientelism, corruption, and cultural policies in databases including the ISI Web of Knowledge, Scopus, and international journals such as *International Journal of Cultural Policy* or the *Journal of Arts Management Law and Society*. One of the only articles found that dealt with the topic of cronyism and corruption was about the candidacy of Maribor, Slovenia, as the European City of Culture (Žilič-Fišer and Erjavec 2015) and its political effects, although the theme itself was secondary to the other issues discussed. In contrast, when the search on clientelism and corruption was expanded to general social-policy, the results significantly increased.
3. We can find many examples of the relationship between cultural and political fields. One example is the Spanish State's process of transition to democracy: the new democratic regime that emerged was based on the cultural sector, and especially, on the musical scene which was used to legitimise and dramatise the socio-political change. The so-called 'Madrid scene' allowed the image of Madrid as a modern and tolerant state capital to be built, as opposed to the grey city of Francoism (Archilés 2012). This required increasing amounts of state intervention in cultural fields, in a process where 'allied artists' were awarded and authors already aligned with Anti-Francoism and who were critical of the transition and new regime were 'punished' or forgotten (Martínez 2012).
4. In 2014 the Valencian Institute of Modern Art had a budget of 5.5 million euros, a relatively modest budget for a large institution, however, in 2007 it had been managing a budget of 14.5 million euros, thus representing a 62% reduction in 7 years (Generalitat Valenciana 2014b). For comparison, the budget for the Queen Sofia Palace of Arts was 19.7 million euros in 2007, and was 19.3 million euros in 2014 (Generalitat Valenciana 2015a).
5. According to The Global Competitiveness Index from the 2014–2015 World Economic Forum, Spain was in the 97th position on the global index of judicial independence, below most European states (http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GlobalCompetitivenessReport_2014-15.pdf, 343).
6. In 2010 the score was 56.3 (on a scale of 0–100) and in 2012 it was 63.8, much lower than the Spanish average (79.9) (Transparency International España 2016). In addition, the transparency of the Valencian Parliament was also significantly lower than the Spanish average. In 2013 the average overall parliamentary transparency index (IPAR; *índice de transparencia de los parlamentos*; also developed by Transparency International) for Spanish state, regional, and autonomous parliaments was 64.1, whereas the Valencian Parliament scored 52.6, only ahead of Madrid, the Balearic Islands, the Canary Islands, and Murcia.
7. According to *Compendium* data, in 2009, public administrations in Spain spent some 153 euros per capita, while the European Union average was 98.7 euros per head (Rubio Arostegui, Rius-Ulldemollins, and Martínez 2014).
8. The only substantial financial contribution made by the Spanish Ministry of Education and Culture (MEC) to large cultural institutions was the provision of 1.4 million euros to the *Palau de la Arts* in 2013, representing 2.9% of all the MEC's audited transfers. A contribution that, in 2013, was reduced to 423 thousand euros (representing only 2.1% of its budget, while its 5 million inhabitants represent 4.6% of the total population (Rius-Ulldemolins and Rubio Arostegui 2016).
9. Helga Schmidt, was born in Vienna in 1941 to a family with a musical and operatic tradition, and developed the whole of her professional career in the world of the great operatic institutions: she was the deputy director of the Vienna State Opera between 1973 and 1981 and was also the director of the prestigious Royal Opera House in London. In 2000 she joined the *Palau de les Artes Reina Sofia* project fulltime where she was its general director for fifteen years.
10. Consuelo Ciscar is the wife of a former Valencian regional government minister, Rafael Blasco (from 1985 to 2011 he occupied diverse roles, including the Presidency of Public Works and of Health), who was convicted and is currently imprisoned for diverting and siphoning international cooperation funds.

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