



Higher Education Institutions for Societal Engagement

Country Report: Spain

Results from Semi-Structured Interviews with Main Stakeholders

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Introduction

This report summarizes the main results of eight semi-structured interviews with representatives of higher education institutions and organizations involved in arts and culture and social change. They were carried out mainly in the Spanish autonomous community of the Basque Country,¹ though some institutions operate at the national level or in other regions. They were carried out between May and November 2018. All were face-to-face interviews, with the exception of one done by telephone. This report identifies the sample and tries to systematize the different voices of institutions that are engaged with societal challenges from different points of views and with different capacities. We elaborate on the concept of “societal impact” and on which areas are more important for public/private institutions. We also highlight the relationship between culture and art-based methods and interventions and societal challenges. We complement the findings of the survey with some other sources of information.

We are grateful to the people that generously agreed to participate in the research. They gave us their precious time and shared their insights and experience. What follows is founded on their voices and views.

1. The sample

We included in our sample eight institutions representing higher education institutions, their main stakeholders, and organizations involved in arts and culture

¹ For a better understanding of the context of HEIs in the Basque Country, the OECD reviewed the general framework for Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in the Basque Country for the last time in 2013 (Puuka et al., 2013).

(see Table 1). We got three representatives of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and five from Artistic and Creative Institutions (ACIs).

The approach of Higher Education Institutions was considered in our closest geographical framework and we tried to reflect the voices and visions of both public and private institutions. We included the public agency that monitors and enhances the quality of the Basque University System, UNIBASQ, interviewing its executive director, Prof. Eva Ferreira. The public university of the Basque Country (UPV/EHU) participated through an interview with Prof. Juan Ignacio Pérez Iglesias, the former rector and current director of the Scientific Culture Chair of the UPV/EHU. The University of Deusto (UD), a private university of the Society of Jesus, participated with a joint interview involving three people: Prof. Victor Urcelay (Vicerrector of Entrepreneurship and Lifelong Learning), Mr. José Luis Larrea (Member of the Executive Board of the University and Honorary President of Orkestra – Basque Institute of Competitiveness), and Mrs. Cecilia Martínez Arellano (Director of Social Responsibility). We wanted to have a plurality of visions from professionals that focus on different areas. At no point did we want to perform any comparative analysis of how well different institutions are doing in different fields.

We selected a bundle of Artistic and Creative Institutions (ACIs) that are known as being socially engaged and oriented. The selection includes private and public institutions. Some of them work in creative project design and management, some others provide inclusive cultural services and experiences for socially disadvantaged individuals and collectives, others are funders of socially transformative artistic programmes, and some are public cultural institutions that in some way depart from the traditional model of museums or cultural centres. Far from being representative of the standard artistic and creative practices and reality in Spain, it should be noted that they in some way constitute best practice examples. We interviewed Ana Aguirre from TAZEBAEZ, a cooperative start-up with educational and development projects. Two public cultural institutions were considered (both identified the other as an example of best practices in the field of social innovation and societal impact). First we interviewed Charo Díaz Garaigorta, an artist who is in charge of mediation and public development at Artium, the Basque Centre-Museum of Contemporary Art, and Leire San Martín, the person in charge of cultural mediation at Tabakalera, the International Centre of Contemporary Culture of Donostia/San Sebastián. Isabel Le Gallo is director of programmes at Foundation Daniel and Nina Carasso in Spain. In

particular, she shared her perspective as a professional in charge of citizenship and arts projects in a grant-maker institution that develops action/research while accompanying the institutions that get transformative projects funded (an example of this is the evaluative framework that they have developed). Last, we interviewed Queralt Prats. She is the founder of ARTransforma, a private firm that works with volunteers in the co-creation of transformative and participatory art experiences with people from disadvantaged groups.

Table 1. Sample studied in Spain

Institution	Short description
UNIBASQ	Agency for the Quality of the Basque University System
University of the Basque Country, UPV/EHU	Public University of the Basque Country, one of the members of HEISE consortium
University of Deusto	Private university (Society of Jesus) with campuses in Bilbao, San Sebastián and Madrid
TAZEBAEZ	Start-up cooperative firm working on social innovation. Created by the first graduates of the Entrepreneurial Leadership and Innovation Degree at University of Mondragón (private corporate university)
ARTIUM	Basque Museum of Contemporary Art
TABAKALERA	Public Cultural Center
Daniel and Nina Carasso Foundation	Philanthropic private organization. Grant makers in Citizen Art
ARTransforma	Private firm working on socially inclusive and participatory art projects

1. Stakeholders' perceptions and understandings of the concept of societal impact

The translation of “societal impact” into Spanish is difficult.² One needs to bear in mind the artificial difference that is created in Spain between “social impact” and “impact in the society”. In most of the conversations, this had to be further explained after the interviewees answered the questions in the first block. There are marked differences between how HEIs and ACIs elaborate what societal impact is. However, both types of institutions relate societal impact with the accomplishment of their missions.

There are also different orientations and stages of evolution in the societal impact of HEIs. Sometimes, they coexist in the same organization in different areas or for different purposes. For instance, the most traditional orientation would consider that societal impact lies in the realm of societal transfer, mostly focused on the transfer of knowledge generated within that is then disseminated without. This would be the third mission of HEIs, the first and second being teaching and research, and it corresponds to a traditional vision that is reflected in structures that affect labour relations between HEIs and academics (what is written and expected in terms of teaching, research, administration and dissemination duties), legal statutes and the internal organization of departments (vice-rectors and offices). It is clear that this orientation takes societal impact as a by-product and gives prevalence to teaching-learning activities and research. Moreover, when talking about impact in society, there might be a tendency to give more weight to the transfer of scientific knowledge, and less attention to cultural and artistic output. Societal impact is related to change and transformation, and linked to the transfer to society of what is being achieved in research, of advances in knowledge, and aimed at the creation and enhancement of scientific culture. Moreover, there should be further benefits for society, such as in the cultural realm.

² The translation done by the research group of the “Managing Arts Projects With Societal Impact” Lifelong Learning Project was as follows: “social impact” was translated as “impacto social” and “societal impact” as “impacto en la sociedad”. See “Gestión de Proyectos Artísticos con Impacto en la Sociedad. Guía de Estudio” (2016): https://issuu.com/mapsiproject/docs/mapsigu_a_de_estudio For a comment on the pertinence of introducing neologisms into Spanish in order to address the difference, see the note of the translation services of the European Commission: <http://ec.europa.eu/translation/bulletins/puntoycoma/51/pyc513.htm>

Currently, this is the mainstream approach as it informs most of the institutional arrangements for HEIs in our area, though there are new structures such as the *Vice-rectorate of Entrepreneurship and Lifelong Learning* (University of Deusto) or of *Innovation, Social Commitment and Cultural Activities* (UPV/EHU).

Some of the actors who are leading the move to bring engagement to the centre of every activity that is done in HEIs by members of HEIs highlight the idea of civic engagement and of awareness of means to better understand and handle complex social interaction. They put the emphasis more on dealing with processes and less on producing outputs that are to be pushed along a pipeline to the final recipients. Still, there is a lot to do to close the divide between newly generated knowledge and society. In some cases, the whole idea of societal impact has recently been introduced into the reconsideration and updating of strategic plans, introducing some nuances into the reformulation of the mission of particular HEIs. For instance, one of the institutions identified the role of HEIs in accompanying the personal and professional development of a person through life-long processes, such that they can be permanent agents of change and transformation. In this discourse, concepts such as entrepreneurship, innovation and transformation appear. The development of the community/society is seen as an aim, but the realm of action both for scientific culture and for the humanistic approach is the person that can be transformed by HEIs. The common and narrow vision of HEIs as qualified labour-force providers is superseded. In some sense, that should be guaranteed and taken for granted. Some interviewees identified all this process with a general change in the social paradigm from one based on property (reflected in spatial fragmentation, knowledge silos) to a relational one.

Keywords that appeared in the conversations were change and transformation, transfer, civic, critical thinking, humanistic approach and life long learning. In this approach, personal transformation is a leverage of social change.

For arts organizations, it is clear that social change and impact is achieved through transformation at the individual level after exposure to some meaningful artistic, aesthetic experience. In many cases, this is related with mediation and activism, and subjects should be exposed to some unconventional and critical discourses, such as with gender. For most of them, societal impact is seen as process-driven. This is not about translating outcomes, but about getting people engaged and involved in processes of change. Some of the people interviewed showed a conception of

socially-involved cultural and artistic activities that is closer to the concept of mediation than to the concept of curation (which is still the mainstream approach for Spanish cultural institutions). Professionals working in social innovation relate societal impact to development, opportunities and empowerment of people. Professionals from mediation clearly identified that societal impact has to be a “bidirectional” process.

The key concepts involved include processes and innovation, relational, sustainability and transfer.

It is somewhat surprising that there were very few references to “partnership creation”, though there is an ambition to cooperate with agents and relevant stakeholders. Some statements indicate that stakeholders are to be attracted and engaged inside the institution, with few initiatives to create common ground for the co-creation of processes to face societal challenges.

Societal impact vs. social impact.

As mentioned in the introduction, there is not a meaningful translation in Spanish that reflects any difference between these terms. In some cases, respondents tended to say that “in society” was somehow more encompassing than “social”.

Output vs. outcome vs. impact.

Whereas the distinction between these terms is clear for the academics that participated in the interviews, the professionals of arts institutions prefer to focus on processes. To better interpret these results, please note that the interviewees have a strong quantitative background, being engineers, mathematicians, economists or biologists, and some of them have a deep understanding of causal inference, experimental design and impact determination.

Local vs. global impact.

Depending on the organization, differences were identified. The HEIs recognize their universal vocation and the fact that knowledge and scientific culture can be spread not only to the closest communities, but should also be universally relevant. The transformation of individuals should also impact the development and the economic and social progress of the community. Social innovators point out that their reality is very often multi-localized, so they strive to deliver global impact. ACIs in general focus on their closest communities, though there is an interest in being able to scale what works in different contexts.

Intended and unintended impacts.

This was difficult for many respondents. Actually, unintended impacts of an intervention can only be assessed a posteriori, and there is very little tradition of measuring or evaluating outcomes and impact at all.

Positive and negative impacts.

There was a consensus that both types of impacts should be evaluated. As before, we have the impression that the absence of regular evaluation practices does not help to establish a clear idea of how this should be done.

Material and non-material impacts.

The majority of interviewees agree that both material and non-material impacts should be taken into consideration in SI assessment. There were interesting approaches to non-material impacts that mentioned that there is major potential for transformative art-based projects to enhance positive attitudinal change, creating and spreading hope and eagerness.

Monetary and non-monetary impacts.

For academics and practitioners coming from managerial science, this question was meaningful. For those in the ACIs, which are still very much service-oriented and believe that monetary impacts imply a commercialization and commodification of arts and culture, it was less so.

Direct and indirect impacts.

This was related to intended and unintended impacts in most cases. Many respondents found the question very ambiguous. Some respondents identified indirect impacts with the impacts in the environment of the participant. Some others identified the “hidden” impacts of actions of a learning-service or challenge-based learning, which act as moderators to achieve intended long-term impacts.

Short-term and long-term impacts.

All the respondents agreed that long-term impacts are the relevant ones. For some HEIs, this is related to life-long learning processes and with strategic planning. ACIs tend to identify processes that need a long time to transform individuals and society. However, some voices recognize that the effectiveness of some initiatives can already be evaluated in the short-term.

Dimensions of impact

For the dimensions of impact, there were different areas identified, such as the change in labour relations, in the whole educational system, in the values of society (with regard to enhancing cooperative approaches), in the empowerment of citizens and in the hybridization of knowledge and practices.

Trends

There was also an identification of the rising importance of social awareness and of the role of volunteers and citizen participation in this type of impact-delivery activity. Some changes were identified as made to give more relevance to societal impact more as a social awareness, the perception that every initiative counts and the traceability of what is done, who benefits and how it contributes to the common good. Research-action practices might become more frequent and extended for HEIs in the future. This might help to overcome traditional divides. For instance, UD has identified the need for new professional profiles in the field of “facilitators” that have the skills to lead co-generational processes of basic and applied science, as well as entrepreneurial and interdisciplinary skills (for a description of the project, see Canto et al, 2018). ACIs have developed the job profile of cultural mediators and some of the former cultural action and education departments have changed their names to audience development and mediation.

Barriers and prejudices

Two identified barriers that challenge and limit the current understanding of societal impact are the instrumentalization of the artistic and cultural experience and some paternalistic approaches. These two barriers contradict the individual impact with regard to encouraging critical thought and the emergence/questioning and sharing of values.

2. Mapping of stakeholders’ current practices in evaluation of societal impact

There was a common identification of lack of guidelines and valid frameworks to assess SI at the individual or at the collective level. Some recurrent ideas were that SI should be co-created, prototyped, tested ... and that this would correspond to participatory approaches to the governance of both HEIs and ACIs.

For the time being, there are some attempts at the national level to develop forms of methodology by the Spanish Conference of Rectors (CRUE)³ and by the National Agency of Quality Evaluation and Accreditation (ANECA).⁴ In fact, during the period of this research, the Spanish Ministry of Science, Innovation and Universities promoted for the first time an individual pilot assessment call of transfer and social impact, similar to the traditional research assessment exercise. This has been controversial: The criteria were not clear for many fields of knowledge, and so many candidates participated that the Ministry decided to suspend the deadlines for resolution. The lack of clear criteria and indicators of evidence for a researcher/academic/department/whole university is a problem common to all HEIs. This is even more important in the case of the evaluation of how well HEIs are doing in the social sciences, humanities and arts. There is an identified lack of indicators, but commissions find it difficult to propose effective indicators and measurement frameworks.

Some bodies of HEIs have the capacity to measure their own performance. For instance, the Chair of Scientific Culture of the UPV/EHU does intensive dissemination work on social media and makes use of digital information and quantitative indicators of traffic, as well as of physical attendance to science festivals that they organize around Spain in cooperation with different institutions.

HEIs have incorporated sustainable development goals (SDGs) in their practices, but there are no common measures of how they are implemented and what progress is achieved. UD has around 20-25 indicators of Social Responsibility and a model for impact. Performance in those indicators is not only important for UD in terms of internal governance and management, but also for stakeholders.

ACIs have a more flexible approach to assessment and evaluation. Still, however, Sustainable Development Goals and Agenda 2030 are not fully incorporated, though areas such as gender and environmental sustainability are in their agendas. They

³“Transferencia del Conocimiento. Nuevo Modelo para su Prestigio e Impulso”(2018). CRUE Universidades Españolas y Santander Universidad. Report presented to the Conference of Rectors of the Spanish Universities. Available here: http://www.crue.org/Documentos%20compartidos/Publicaciones/Transferencia%20del%20Conocimiento/2018.11.28-Transferencia%20del%20Conocimiento%20DEFINITIVO_completo%20digital.pdf

⁴ “Resolution of 28 November 2018, of the State Secretariat of Universities, Research, Development and Innovation, that sets the procedure and deadlines to present the applications for evaluation of the research activity to the National Commission for the Evaluation of the Research Activity”. Available here: https://boe.es/diario_boe/txt.php?id=BOE-A-2018-16379

prefer to work through processes instead of following an outcome/impact evaluation framework. If evaluation is performed (which is not very often in a formal sense), it is individual projects that are evaluated. There is not a single valid measurement framework, though even knowing that some institutions have built their own can be seen as good news. Typical practices for ACIs are questionnaires, qualitative research with observational participation, interviews, recording of activities, and testimonials. In some cases, practitioners find it extremely useful to maintain records, such as in cases of participatory artistic interventions with people with disabilities. In this way, they say that they can better track the transformation that they are looking for. Sometimes this is included in the tasks of the public and audience departments.

One of the motivations of ACIs for assessing societal impact is its utility in terms of assessing work processes that rely on design thinking and lots of prototyping. This is also true for the social innovation start-up. Professionals recognize that it also empowers the mediators and educators that are in charge of those programmes and promotes continuous improvement, leaving space for reflection. Further, it is seen as a compromise facilitating a transparent and reciprocal engagement with participants. For public ACIs, the publication of results and impact is part of their public vocation.

Best practices: Mercedes Álvarez at Intermediae-Matadero and [CA2M](#) – co-development of measurements for artistic, educational and transformational practices. Fundación Daniel and Nina Carasso using workshops to develop methods to assess the impact of artistic residencies in education centers.

3. The role of information on societal impact in managerial decisions

Professionals recognize the usefulness of assessing societal impact to monitor the level of achievement of some goals and of the mission of the organization. We did not, however, find a single professional whose individual performance in this realm determined their salary or conditions for promotion. It is true that for the first time academics working for public HEIs under some conditions were eligible to enter into a pilot individual assessment exercise and that a positive valuation would have economic effects in terms of a monthly bonus of around 120 euros net (the same size as the bonus linked to positive assessment of research for a 6-year slot).

ACIs consider that assessing societal impact improves the reflection that they can do about their own tasks and that this helps to better manage projects and also to better define strategies to engage with more diverse audiences.

Conclusions

There are some trends that are affecting the role of HEIs. In the case of Spain, for public institutions, the deep crisis of the late 2000s imposed dramatic budgetary cuts and created a pressure to justify how public HEIs deliver public value. There is an increasing call for accountability and transparency, while globalization implies, among other things, that all of a sudden, HEIs' performance in different realms is assessed according to criteria and indicators that contribute to global and public rankings. These changes are not only affecting public agents, however. Private agents that have a social mission identify that the current public debate about the divide between public and private is too simplistic, as many times the fact that they are public or private bodies is perceived to be linked to public or private services.

Arts and cultural institutions do not criticize Higher Education Institutions on the grounds of lack of accountability, but on the grounds of lack of dialogue and bilateral responses to needs and achievements. Some common challenges for HEIs could be the four identified by Canto et al. (2018): to create knowledge that is socially relevant, to overcome the divide between HEIs that generate knowledge and societies that assimilate it, to increase the legitimization of created knowledge, and to change the internal culture of HEIs in order to learn how to co-generate. In the end, HEIs should overcome a traditional model of dissemination where society is a passive agent to follow a dialogical model that opens spaces for co-creation with challenge owners.

We would like to include a brief reflection about the limitations of our findings in order to characterize in a representative way what is going on in the Basque (not to mention the Spanish) system of HEIs in terms of societal impact. A recent report by Euskampus and the Agirre Lehendakaria Center (Madinabeitia et al., 2018) elaborates on the idea of three frameworks or discourses regarding the role of HEIs in the Basque context: one academic-institutional, one technical-economic and one critical. This highlights the idea of the transformation inside HEIs themselves and presents different values associated with each of the discourses. HEIs are complex organizations and even if there are common values and missions, the beliefs and attitudes of their professionals deeply determine how they will engage with society.

Last, as the HEISE project is interested in analysing what HEIs can contribute with art-based methods, we would like to conclude with the recurrent opinion of the interviewees from ACIs: the universities should move from their comfortable position and should be more receptive to the insights and critical thinking that are being generated in their environment. As they have themselves adapted to dialogical and reciprocal impact, they require traditional universities to incorporate this relational logic into their everyday interaction. It could be the case that if STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematic) approaches were better integrated into the formation of new generations those divides could be closed. Some academics from the arts and humanities disciplines criticize the turn towards a “dual university” (Casado da Rocha, 2019). In their view, this model of university is conditioned by (labour) market requirements and contradicts the vision of the university as an unconditional realm, as proposed by French philosopher Derrida. It may be the case that the way this development affects humanities and the arts would differ from the way it affects the fields of science and technology.

There are interesting reflections about the importance of incorporating artistic practices and design thinking into the teaching and research practices of HEIs (see Chen, 2018 and Mondelez and Ceulemans, 2018). Challenge-based learning is being incorporated into HEIs’ curricula. For instance, UPV/EHU started to handle ODS internal challenges and deal with them through the proposals of coordinated teams of academics, staff and students. The two authors of this report have taken part in Campus Bizia Lab for two editions since its pilot scheme. The format of the Lab is novel in the Spanish HEI system and also among ACIs. Actually, Tabakalera (one of the institutions surveyed for this report) is one of the pioneering cultural centres that use this approach in our community. Both UPV/EHU and UD have started to introduce this format in their research and teaching-learning initiatives.

As the whole innovation agenda at the European level is being re-structured, with a trend towards incorporating the idea of mission-oriented innovation (Mazzucato, 2017), HEIs will have to respond and reorient all their pillars of action, so probably the divide between pillars will have to be overcome and new spaces for dialogue will have to be created.

Chart 1. Diagram of the Campus Bizia Lab on cultural resources and habits of the UPV/EHU community to overcome societal challenges related to SDGs.



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