



Projects, institutional logics and institutional work practices: The case of the Lucca Comics & Games Festival

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Abstract

This paper investigates the relations between festivals and their institutional settings, and how these relations shape festival management. We analyze institutional logics and work practices in a complex project, Lucca Comics & Games, which is the biggest festival dedicated to fantasy culture in Italy. Our results, based on archival research, media coverage and interview data, reveal the recursive interplay between institutional logics and work practices for institutional maintenance. We argue that the study of festivals is essential to understanding key aspects of project-based organizing more generally. In this regard, the maintaining of institutions must be distinguished from stability or the absence of change and consideration of historical and contextual analysis, and multiple tensions that occur due to competing institutional logics can open up new ways of thinking for prospective research. We also demonstrate that future research can use institutional work practices for understanding institutional maintenance in recurring temporary organizations.

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1. Introduction

Institutions can be defined as products of purposive action (Jepperson, 1991) created by organized actors and they are transmitted by various types of carriers, including symbolic systems, relational systems, routines and artifacts (DiMaggio, 1988). Correspondingly, institutional approaches to organization studies “focus attention on the relationships among organizations and the fields in which they operate, highlighting in particular the role of rational formal structures in enabling and constraining organizational behaviour” (Lawrence and Suddaby, 2006, p. 215), with an emerging emphasis over the last decades on understanding the role of actors in effecting, transforming and maintaining institutions and fields.

Nevertheless, “to date, only limited scholarly attention has been devoted to the study of projects in their institutional context” (Dille and Söderlund, 2011, p.480) and festivals appear as an interesting type of temporary organizing to further investigate projects in their institutional embeddedness. Festivals are a multifaceted cultural phenomenon reflecting an active cultural process encountered in virtually all human cultures (Falassi, 1987) and, thus, have distinct characteristics in comparison to temporary organizing and project management in other fields, such as construction or manufacturing. Since classical antiquity, ritual acts constitute the building blocks of festive events, the meaning of which goes beyond their literal and explicit aspects. Consequently, even if festivals have been changing over time, they retain core characteristics that have important implications for the temporary organizing and project management research domains.

From an organizational perspective, festivals are conceptualized as a form of temporary organizing in which a temporary

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event (a festival) is organized at a specific place for a specific period of time and then replicated in subsequent editions over time. In this regard, each festival edition can be defined as a project (Turkulainen et al., 2015) that is not only embedded in organizations, industries, and regions but also in networks of interorganizational relationships (Schübler and Sydow, 2015). Competing institutional logics within this embeddedness might create tensions, which pose challenges for the maintenance of festivals and can be managed through institutional practices. Thus, there is a need to understand the institutionalization of festivals within their multi-layered embeddedness and how festivals' institutional practices manage competing logics and shape the festival's organizational setting for enabling project work and continuity.

The objective of this study is to investigate the ways in which festivals are managed as temporary organizations by analyzing how institutional entrepreneurs have manifested their institutional logics and some of the tensions between opposing logics in their choices of practices. To this end, we employ the institutional logic frameworks of Thornton and Ocasio (1999) and Lawrence and Suddaby's (2006) institutional practices framework for maintaining institutions as guiding schemes, and focus on enabling work, policing and deterrence practices that, over multiple editions of the festival, contribute to both institutional maintenance and adaptation to changing conditions in the festival's institutional field. These phenomena are explored through a case study; Lucca Comics & Games (LC&G), which is the biggest cultural and commercial event dedicated to fantasy culture and related forms of lifestyle narratives in Italy and among the biggest in the world, bringing around 500,000 attendees (Lucca Crea Srl, 2016) to the historic city of Lucca. In this regard, the festival embodies unique characteristics and challenges since it is a 100% public initiative with more than 50 years history and organized throughout various locations of an historic city as opposed to the majority of similar events that are mostly private initiatives held in convention centres. In our study, based on archival research, media coverage and interview data, we conduct historical and contextual analysis and empirically examine the forms of institutional logics of action and associated institutional work practices employed by the LC&G lead organization.

This paper contributes to the literature on the festival governance and institutional theory and reflects an intersection of festival organizing, project management, institutional logics and institutional work theoretical perspectives with empirical findings. We argue that institutional logics evolve and indeed sediment over time, so that successive editions of festivals may reveal new or deeper institutional logics which in turn guide the development and recursive use of specific institutional practices. We argue that the maintaining of institutions involves considerable effort, and often occurs in the form of change in the organization or its environment. That is, in order to maintain institutions, actors must cope with the entrance of new members into the organization or the field, the evolution of the field in new and unexpected directions, and changes in pan-institutional factors such as technology and demographics.

Understanding how institutions maintain themselves, thus, must focus on understanding how organizations are able to effect processes of persistence, stability and change in the context of upheaval, continuity and transformation.

In the following section, we provide an overview of the related literature and our theoretical framework. Then, we explain our research methodology in Section III. The results are presented and discussed in Section IV and conclusive remarks are in Section V.

2. Previous studies and theoretical framework

2.1. Festivals as temporary organizations

“Festival organizations are often characterized by fluctuating membership, temporary collaboration and high turnover. Dealing with high turnover, and sustaining the experience, knowledge and identity of festival collaborators is a fundamental issue” (Ruling, 2010, p. 321). Consequently, many festivals which started as a single project, result in the creation of their own permanent organizational/institutional settings, while diffusing distinct norms, standards and business practices. Within this framework, festivals appear as “phenomena organized, marketed, and managed by an operative festival organization. The activities performed, in order to realize the festival, can be regarded as project work (Muir, 1986), because a specific task is executed by a team within a limited time frame (Lundin and Söderholm, 1995)” (Larson and Wikström, 2001, p. 51). Nevertheless, “the instrumental view of a project as simply a means to an end” remains limited to reflect the reality of festivals and, thus, it is more appropriate to adopt the perspective of temporary organization, which “is seen as an aggregate of individuals involved in longitudinal processes of learning communication, interpretation and sense-making” (Løwendahl, 1995, p. 350).

Furthermore, no project is an island (Engwall, 2003; Lundin et al., 2015) and the festival organizer is dependent on a number of external actors (e.g. exhibitors, suppliers, sponsors) to create and support the festival program that has a history and is embedded within the complex ecology of culture and a range of institutional settings. Nevertheless, despite the potential of institutional theory to contribute to the temporary organizing and project management literatures, little attention has been paid to the relation between temporary organizing and their wide ranging institutional settings, considering the historical and contextual specificities as well as their interaction with environment and the changes they bring about.

2.2. Project studies and institutional theory

The study of projects has long recognized the value of institutional theory in informing our understanding various aspects of project organizing. Engwall (2003) has acknowledged that project studies need to take into account both the historical context and the institutional norms, values and routines that define the relevant environment in which projects and project organizing arise. Engwall cites institutional

theorists (i.e. Scott and Meyer, 1991) to conclude that the project team is affected by both the technical and institutional aspects of its environment.

In a study of 60 large complex projects within the television production industry, Miller and Hobbs (2005) report that in 63% of the projects, important institutional changes (including regulatory changes) were a critical part of the project development processes. Moreover, not only did the institutional environment impact the project but often the projects contributed to the creation or the modification of the institutional framework.

This empirical observation of the reciprocal influence of project agents and the institutional context lends support to the institutional theory recommendations of Lundin et al. (2015), who urge that neoinstitutional theory needs to be applied to temporary organizations, such as projects. They further suggest that project research should also consider the paradox of ‘embedded agency’: the embeddedness of agents in perceived institutional contexts that these agents must learn to change, organize and manage.

Morris and Geraldi (2011) have identified the institutional context as an emerging distinctive area of project research and they define the institutional context as the arena where “management here is concerned with ensuring the long-term project management health of the organization. Work will be in the ‘parent’ organization and/or in the environment that the project is operating” (p.23). They propose the conceptualization and study of this context by use of institutional theory, which explores how organizations gain and maintain their characteristics (Scott, 2008).

Dille and Söderlund (2011) also propose that project management conceptions should include an institutional project management perspective that they contrasted with their conception of the more operational (protean) project management perspective in terms of its view of the role of project management tools, the choice of project designs and project organization structures, the uses of resources, the purposes of control and evaluation practices, and the criteria for defining stages of the project cycle. They further suggested that such an institutional perspective could prove particularly relevant to the examination of inter-institutional projects, where actors representing different institutional environments must collaborate on a common project. Actors from these diverse environments are likely to be operating under diverse norms and rules of conduct.

Biesenthal et al. (2018) have focused their attention on how institutional theory may be productively applied to the study of megaprojects. Their detailed examination of research on megaprojects includes several insights relevant to the present study. They recommend that megaprojects be conceptualized as sites of conflicting institutional logics to understand the project processes undertaken and those foregone and the social and material conditions impacting these process choices and practices. They observe that projects in general and megaprojects in particular are engagements in which considerable institutional work is required for their accomplishment, often in ways that challenge some logics and predicates certain institutional work.

Van Marrewijk et al. (2016) illustrate the tensions of conflicting institutional logics in their case study of project organizational dilemmas surrounding the Panama Canal Expansion Program. In this project two organizations, a construction consultancy and a client organization, had contracted to work together in a collaborative project to expand the canal. The consultancy (CH) was a global construction consultancy whose institutional history had reinforced their institutional logic of being a global expert on construction management. As a result, CH typically acted autonomously in construction projects and initiated and executed major elements of large infrastructure projects with a relatively passive review and approval process by their clients. However, in this case the client organization (ACP) had an institutional origin during the period in which Panama grew increasingly independent from its former colonial and dependent status regarding the Panama canal. ACP had evolved from the onset a dominant logic as the protector of the interests of Panama from European and North American exploitation and its project practices were designed to accord priority of review and decision making to ACP. As a result of these conflicting logics and incompatible project work practices, the project failed despite the efforts of its project leaders to implement the project.

In their comprehensive review of research on megaprojects, Söderlund et al. (2017) review a variety of theory perspectives and include institutional theory as a relevant domain for megaproject research. In particular they cite the study by Gillett and Tennett (2017) of the shifting nature of stakeholders' motives in organizing the 1966 FIFA World Cup in England.

Finally, the role of institutional entrepreneurs in projects is widely acknowledged by prominent project theorists, including Lundin et al. (2015), who follow Scott (2014, p. 95) in defining institutional entrepreneurs as “actors who are able to mobilize resources to realize interests they value”. Institutional entrepreneurs change the game, introduce new games, or transform the rules of institutionalized games and can be individual or collective agents. Lundin et al. (2015) further describe how institutional entrepreneurship is increasingly based upon Giddens's (1984) idea of a duality of agency and structure and framed as “institutional work” (Lawrence and Suddaby, 2006). Such institutional entrepreneurship is a process in which individual or collective agents create, maintain, change, or disrupt their institutional environment to an extent that makes their organization appear legitimate. They conclude that institutional entrepreneurs or agents often use projects for influencing the institutional environment.

2.3. Institutional logics of action

Thornton and Ocasio (1999) define institutional logics as “the socially constructed, historical patterns of material practices, assumptions, values, beliefs, and rules by which individuals produce and reproduce their material subsistence, organize time and space, and provide meaning to their social reality” (p. 804). According to this definition institutional logics provide a link between individual agency and cognition and socially constructed institutional practices and rule

structures. Festivals are conceptualized in this paper as temporary organizations embedded in more permanent structures (e.g. festival lead organization) whose recurrent institutional work practices are guided by a set of institutional logics (cultural/artistic, commercial, public and project administration).

A core assumption of the institutional logics approach is that the interests, identities, values, and assumptions of individuals and organizations are embedded within prevailing institutional logics. Decisions and outcomes are a result of the interplay between individual agency and institutional structure (Thornton and Ocasio, 1999). Another assumption of the institutional logics approach is to view any context as potentially influenced by contending logics of different societal sectors. For example, the healthcare field is shaped by the institutional logics of the market, the logic of the democratic state, and the professional logic of medical care (Scott et al., 2000).

An understanding of how these logics of action are manifest in the practices of institutionalized events, such as festivals, must come to terms with the compatibility between the demands of each logic of action within their specific contexts. A prevalent view in institutional theory is that the conflict and compatibility of institutional logics (which are both material and cultural) influence human and organizational behavior (Thornton, 2002). Hence, the institutional entrepreneurs and their successors face choices of action that are simultaneously supported and constrained by the institutional logics prevailing at any historical period during which these actions arise. Based upon our review of the institutional history of fantasy culture festivals, we propose that four major logics of action are likely to predispose institutional actors toward practices consistent with these logics.

Our first logic is cultural/artistic logic and refers to a set of practices concerned with recognizing and rewarding distinctive advances or contributions to the underlying knowledge base or advancements in the expressions of festival's artistic and cultural communities. Typical expressions of cultural/artistic logic include the strategic planning and programming preferences of the festival agenda and award schemes.

Our second logic is commercial logic and refers to a set of practices concerned with recognizing the value of market-based success of artistic agents and their creations. Typical expressions of commercial logic are reflected in the allocation of festival space, time and attention to those exhibitors and sponsors.

The third institutional logic is public logic which prioritizes the public benefit along with the transparency and accountability of the festival lead organization. Such a logic is represented in the organizational identity of the lead organization and includes practices related to the promotion/valorization of the city and consideration of the inhabitants' potential benefits.

Our fourth and final institutional logic refers to project administration logic that underlies the organization and governance of the annual editions in the interest of managing the festival in a manner that is relatively efficient and replicable in subsequent editions and where lessons learned can be incorporated in future editions.

2.4. Tensions in institutional stability and maintenance of temporary organizing

DeFillippi and Sydow (2016) have identified tensions that exist between past, present and future project organization, project focus and project participation. These tensions arise as the shadow of the past (legacies of previous projects) and create tensions for continuity. However shadows of the future (anticipation of changed opportunities and threats from a changing environment) create the opposite tension for unburdening these legacy commitments and introducing changes for future projects, which also contributes to continuity.

In our empirical investigation, we consider change as constitutive of reality and the normal condition of organizational life (Tsoukas and Chia, 2002) and adapt a practice-oriented perspective in line with the nature of the festival, since the festival does not have a formal organizational history and the available data sources do not provide an accurate base to employ a processual approach.

LC&G operates in the intersection of different contexts and institutional settings, which include a wide range of actors involved. Thus, tensions appear within the LC&G domain as a result of these actors' different levels of involvement in the festival organization, their diverse institutional logics, motivations, interests and expectations. Accordingly, we expand the tensions explained by DeFillippi and Sydow (2016) and define three main tensions which have been present throughout the festival history and arise from convergent and divergent dynamics between: (i) cultural/artistic and commercial logics; (ii) public and private domains, including project administration and commercial logics; and (iii) festival traditions/core values coming from the past and improvements/changes to be adapted for the present and future of the festival.

2.5. Institutional work practices and practice perspective in project management

Blomquist et al. (2010) have observed the rise of a practice turn in project management: “where the focus is on the actors and their activities rather than on models and their application” (p 7). The sociology of practice (Bourdieu, 1977; de Certeau, 1984; Giddens, 1984) tradition understands practices as “embodied, materially mediated arrays of human activity centrally organized around shared practical understanding” (Schatzki et al., 2001, p. 2). Thus, studies of practice focus on the situated actions of individuals and groups as they cope with and attempt to respond to the demands of their everyday lives (de Certeau, 1984).

Lawrence and Suddaby's (2006) concept of institutional work follows in this practice tradition. They view institutional work as intelligent, situated institutional action. A practice perspective highlights the creative and knowledgeable work of actors which may or may not achieve its desired ends and which interacts with existing social and technological structures in unintended and unexpected ways.

Our paper argues that festivals are initiated by institutional entrepreneurs who contribute to the creation and/or implementation of logics of action relevant to their institutional context. These logics of action in turn give rise to specific forms of recurring practices that can be observed in the actions undertaken by festival organizers. Lawrence and Suddaby (2006) identify the following three administrative work practices as relevant to institutional maintenance.

“Enabling work refers to the creation of rules that facilitate, supplement and support institutions. This may include the creation of authorizing agents or new roles needed to carry on institutional routines or diverting resources required to ensure institutional survival” (Lawrence and Suddaby, 2006, p.230). Enabling work practices also maintain institutions by introducing certainty into institutional arrangements through the establishment of enabling routines for project organizational governance. The importance of project work enabling roles, relationships and routines is echoed in recent theorizing by DeFillippi and Sydow (2016).

Secondly, policing practices involve “ensuring compliance through enforcement, auditing and monitoring” (Lawrence and Suddaby, 2006, p.231). This form of institutional work can involve the use of both sanctions and inducements.

Finally, deterrence practices aim at “maintaining institutions by compliance with rules focuses on establishing coercive barriers to institutional change” (Lawrence and Suddaby, 2006, p.232) and involves the threat of coercion to inculcate the conscious obedience of institutional actors. Deterrence practices seem to reflect political actions by vested interests (guardians of the festival legacy at LC&G) to prevent unwanted changes in the institution's core values and directions.

In the present study, the three institutional work practices of enabling, policing and deterring will be employed to understand the transformation of the administrative logic of action underlying lead organization governance of the annual festival. Such an approach becomes particularly relevant in our case study since the festival's management has been developed by a core entrepreneurial team of individuals with a bottom-up evolution based on work practices rather than formally defined processes.

3. Research methodology

3.1. Research design

We designed an exploratory case study, aiming to answer “how” and “why” questions, and combined quantitative and qualitative analysis based on primary and secondary data collected from multiple sources.

In line with the research aim, we chose a big scale festival dedicated to fantasy culture, Lucca Comics & Games, which faces unique challenges since it is a public initiative that operates in a dynamic field with external partners/exhibitors at multiple levels. Thus, the festival is embedded in a wide net of temporal, social and institutional relations.

3.2. Data collection

In our methodological framework, we employed: (i) archival research; (ii) media coverage; (iii) semi-structured interviews with festival lead organization members; and (iv) in-depth interviews with the key decision makers within the LC&G team and the representatives of the local public institutions.

Archival research includes legislative documents and data about the ticket sales, exhibitors, festival program, organization structure and employment collected from the festival lead organization's archives and reports.

For media coverage, we did a systematic search on the web through keywords for articles published in local, national and international newspapers, and online journals, blogs and forums. These secondary data sources enabled us to reconstruct the history of the LC&G and to understand changes in the festival in light of contextual dynamics.

We conducted semi-structured interviews during November 2016 with 10 festival lead organization employees, who represent all the core units within the organization. Furthermore, we conducted in-depth interviews with the LC&G top management and the representatives of the local public institutions, including the Mayor of Lucca, the assessors within the Municipality and the President of the Lucca Holding, in July 2016. In these interviews, we asked questions such as what LC&G means for the city and how the festival collaborates with other organizations. These primary data sources were used to shed light on how the institutional setting around the festival has been shaped and to develop an in-depth understanding of the enabling, policing and deterring practices that have been effective in managing tensions between competing institutional logics.

3.3. Data analysis

In the analysis, we employed: (i) historical and contextual analysis of the archival data and media coverage for building a historical understanding of the changes in the institutional setting; (ii) descriptive statistics on archival data to have a quantitative base for building our arguments related to institutional work; and (iii) critical discourse analysis on interview data. We conducted the analysis of the interview data in two ways. First, we did systematic content coding of the interview transcriptions for inductive analysis to identify recurring themes, for instance, regarding enabling work practices. Moreover, direct quotes were used to reveal the institutional logics and priorities behind the practices from the main actors' perspective, as in the case of public bodies representatives' explanations for policing and deterrence practices.

4. Results

4.1. Transformation of the festival

Distinct from the general temporary organizing practice, where the organization and the institutional setting come first

and the projects follow, the LC&G festival was first organized as a single project without a parent organization and the lead organization(s) was built around this project as the festival's scale and thematic scope expanded. In this section, we analyze the festival's transformation, internal and contextual milestones throughout its history. Considering Engwall (2003) and the definition of institutional logics of Thornton and Ocasio (1999), we argue that these historical and contextual analyses are crucial to capture the reciprocal relation between the socially constructed, historical patterns of material practices, assumptions, values, beliefs and rules, and the way individual agencies perceive/shape/produce/reproduce their social and institutional reality.

4.1.1. History of LC&G

The origin of LC&G, *Salone Internazionale dei Comics*, was born from scholarly, cultural and artistic concerns, in other words cultural/artistic logics, with the lead of individual academicians and scholars, who can be defined as the LC&G's institutional entrepreneurs. One of these pioneers was Romano Calisi, who dedicated his research to the comics phenomenon in the Sapienza University of Rome and established a special section for mass communications with Luigi Volpicelli, where they built an international archive of comics. Other core institutional entrepreneurs were Claudio Bertieri, one of the first Italian critics on comics, Umberto Eco, who is not only a university professor but also a world-renowned novelist, literary critic, philosopher and semiotician, and Luis Gasca, an editor and scholar of comics and cinema.¹ Another key LC&G institutional entrepreneur was Rinaldo Traini, who got involved in the international archive of comics in 1960 and also took part in the festival organization since the very beginning. As an outcome of these scholarly attempts, the predecessor of LC&G, 1st *Salone*, was organized in Bordighera, Italy on 21–22 February 1965, “as an impressive symposium of university character on the theme of comics”,² which fully reflects the vision and background of the organizers.

The location of the first event was not a random choice. Bordighera had relations with the satire culture as the host of the International Festival of the Humor since 1947, which inspired *Salone* and was signaling higher feasibility for organizing a similar event. Correspondingly, the first *Salone* was in Bordighera with the financial support of the Municipality.

Nevertheless, after the first edition, the funds for the following year was refused by the Municipality of Bordighera and the organizers were challenged to find a new location that would support their idea also financially. In this quest, personal network of the organizers was decisive. Through a contact (Luigi Volpicelli) Lucca was signaled as a potential host and *Salone* moved to this new location after a meeting with the

Mayor of Lucca. Contrary to Bordighera, the new event location had no existing ties with the satire culture, which entailed an ambiguity for the future of the festival.

Within this re-location process, the reconciliation of differing institutional logics was the main determinant for the maintenance of the festival project. Despite the potential difficulties of the new location since there were no existing ties with the comics field, the festival organizers decided to move the event to Lucca for realizing their cultural/artistic and scholarly aims (cultural/artistic and project administration logics), while the Mayor was supporting the event in a visionary manner based on public logic to promote the city through attractive cultural events, although he did not know what to expect from an unknown field and the “outsiders”.

As a result, new institutional work practices had to be developed by these agents to resolve the issues related to the life of the project. This points to another critical aspect of festival governance, that is the significance of institutional entrepreneurs and the way project actions influence institutional arrangements. From the festival organizers' perspective, individuals' actions are the main driving force behind institutional maintenance in a context where there is no parent organization and the continuity of the project depends solely on individual agents. From the public perspective, the key decision makers are the ones who enable the public mechanisms to provide support for the festival and to develop solutions for overcoming central bureaucratic procedures and barriers. Thus, project actions taken by the organizers and the Mayor influenced the institutional arrangements in the re-location of the festival.

On the other hand, institutional arrangements also inevitably influence project actions for festival maintenance, particularly when the project is embedded in multiple institutional settings. As an example, even though the founders of *Salone* endorsed certain programming choices based on cultural/artistic logics within the festival program, there was a need to include also commercial aspects within the festival program in line with the needs of related cultural and creative industries since the very beginning. This has been done both by edition-specific interventions and institutional work practices that endure beyond single festival editions. For instance, the *mostramercato* (fair) format was inaugurated at the first edition in Lucca in 1966 and grew over the years with landmarks like the inflatable pavilion (*pallone*), which appeared in 1972. After 1980, *pallone* was replaced by bigger, more conventional pavilions for commercial purposes. Today, the festival covers a total area of around 50.000 m² with more than 30.000 m² dedicated to the consumer show,³ which is a showcase for the big industry players and can cover up to 50% of annual revenues for grass-roots operators.

¹ From the interview with Claudio Bertieri by Luca Raffaelli. Retrieved from: <https://fumettologicamente.wordpress.com/tag/romano-calisi/>

² Rinaldo Traini (2007). Tanto per ricordare il Salone. *afNews*. Retrieved from: <http://www.afnews.info/deposito/TrainiLucca/>

³ Throughout its history, LC&G has experienced many changes regarding the sequence of its editions (which took place, for instance, twice a year or once in two years in different periods), its location and its name. In this article, we focus on the main milestones as reflected on Fig. 1. For the detailed history of the event's spatial, sequential and name changes, see; Bono and Gaspa (2006).

A noteworthy characteristic of such changes in the programming is that the festival has always preserved its public nature and, accordingly, the aim of these changes was not to commercialize the event but to create a platform that represents all the segments of the field, including artists, grass-roots organizations and multinational companies. Currently, the complex festival program is based on an artistic-commercial synthesis and includes a big consumer show, exhibitions, multiple award schemes, seminars, workshops, live artists performances, tournaments and thematic gatherings.

Regarding the expansion of the festival's thematic scope, there has been a continuous transformation. For instance, Lucca Games was born in 1993 and as it grew over the years with many novelties, the name of the event evolved into Lucca Comics & Games, which appeared first on the posters of the event in 1997. Likewise, other thematic areas were consolidated such as Lucca Junior in 1996, the stage for the cosplay contest in 2000, Japan Town in 2007 and movie area in 2011. These thematic areas are current pillars of the festival that emerged from single edition practices and, through experimentation with edition specific project actions and integration within the festival program, became enduring beyond single projects.

When we consider the outcomes of these changes and look at the recent past of LC&G, we can observe that the festival experienced a rapid growth (see Table 1). In just 4 years, LC&G achieved a 25% increase in festival spatial area, 37% more exhibitors and around 50% more attendees in total. Furthermore, the festival generates a big economic impact: the total spending of the ticketed festival audience was estimated as 35.8 million euros for the 2015 edition (Tonga Uriarte et al., 2018). Such a drastic growth not only contributes to the recognition of the festival's value for all the related actors involved, but also brings about a higher project complexity and creates more tensions within the institutional framework.

4.1.2. Festival lead organization

LC&G can be defined as a project that was born out of the dreams of passionate entrepreneurs and became a mass-phenomenon, which was facilitated by the transformation of the organizational structure. The project administration logic of the festival team, which requires high flexibility and dynamism, has been mostly contested by the public logic and its central bureaucratic organizational structure throughout this history. Changes in the institutional setting that are caused by the success of the project and its shadows for the future were effective to resolve these tensions and establish a functioning

organizational structure that is able to perform project tasks in line with its public nature.

The initial editions of *Salone* were organized by a small group of scholars without a parent organization. With the success of the event, a formal organizational structure became a need and, in 1969, led to the creation of Immagine-Centro di Studi Iconografici, which is a special type of private cultural organization patronised by the Sapienza University of Rome. The festival was organized upon an agreement among the Municipality of Lucca and Immagine between 1969 and 1989.

In 1989, an independent organizational body, Ente autonomo Max Massimino Garnier – dedicated to the Italian director and screenwriter, became operative through an agreement between the Municipality of Lucca and Immagine-Centro di Studi Iconografici. The need for such a hybrid organizational structure “comes from the reality that *Salone* has been organized in all these years in collaboration between Immagine and the Municipality of Lucca and that now seems inevitable adapting the organizational structures to a new autonomous reality that has a precise legal and statutory configuration”.⁴ This was both an important change in the institutional arrangements since the Municipality was actively engaging in an unconventional type of activity, and an intervention in the festival organization by the higher institutional setting to develop a more legislatively bounded lead organization.

In Ente, headquartered in Lucca, the organizational structure was set up through involvement of both the Municipality and Immagine. For instance, there were three directors; one cultural (designated by Immagine), one organizational (designated by the Municipality), and one administrative (designated by the Municipality).

Nevertheless, this hybrid organizational structure was not sufficient to resolve the tensions between the festival team and the local authorities, such as the cancellation of the 1988 edition due to the big delays in funding from the Municipality for the expenses incurred on the festival organizer's personal budget. *Salone* moved to Rome after the 19th edition in 1992 and the city of Lucca with Ente autonomo Max Massimino Garnier created a descendant event, Lucca Comics, in 1993. Immagine and Ente autonomo Max Massimino Garnier also officially separated in 1994. In this case, even though *Salone* left with the majority of the leading team, the descendant event was built on the related experience and institutional inheritance. Thus, the historical legacy of *Salone* provided a precedence for a particular set of practices consistent with the institutionalized logics of action for the new event; the norms and core characteristics of the Lucca Comics identity were embedded within the institutional setting that was built throughout the *Salone's* domicile in Lucca since 1966.

In 2000, the Municipality undertook the responsibility for the festival organization, thus terminating its ties with the private institution Ente autonomo Max Massimino Garnier, and delegated administrative responsibility to one of the founders of

Table 1

Changes between the festival editions (2012–2015)

| Festival edition | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 |
|---|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| Festival area (sqm) | 37.500 | 40.000 | 43.000 | 47.000 |
| Number of exhibitors | 517 | 552 | 626 | 707 |
| Total number of attendees (ticketed and free) | 320.000 | 380.000 | 490.000 | 475.000 |
| Total number of ticketed attendees | 180.000 | 217.646 | 255.098 | 225.513 |

⁴ Rinaldo Traini (2007). Tanto per ricordare il Salone. *afNews*. Retrieved from: <http://www.afnews.info/deposito/TrainiLucca/>

Lucca Games, Renato Genovese, who was also a member of Immagine until 1988.

The 2000s were marked as the beginning of the festival's exponential growth. The existing municipal institutional setting was not sufficient for planning such an unconventional complex project. Thus, in 2004, the Municipality established a managerially autonomous but legislatively bounded private limited company (*società partecipata*), Lucca Comics & Games S.r.l., within the Lucca Holding Spa.⁵ Establishment of LC&G S.r.l. was a major step to govern the festival with a relatively flexible organizational structure that would ease the complex project planning tasks while keeping the public mission. Thus, separation of the festival lead organization from the Municipality can be interpreted as an outcome of complementary public and project administration logics.

This critical organizational change proved to be a fit solution for festival maintenance in order to keep the balance among competing institutional logics and brought along further influences in the wider institutional setting. After a decade and the success of LC&G S.r.l., the Municipality decided to transfer to LC&G S.r.l. another limited company under Lucca Holding, Lucca Fiere S.r.l., in July 2015. Lucca Fiere was in charge of managing a 7.000 m² convention centre and had a negative balance for multiple years before the transfer. Thus, the Municipality's aim was to initiate a success chain by this merger, after which LC&G S.r.l. significantly expanded its responsibilities.

The transfer of Lucca Fiere was the beginning of a wider change. In June 2016, the authorities decided to expand the scope of the lead organization, going beyond LC&G, and decided to transform LC&G Srl to Lucca Crea. This transformation, which was completed in February 2017, aimed to turn LC&G Srl from an organization based on thematic units into a company designed in line with the functional logic and characterized by a clear organizational structure with a wider mission. The aim was to integrate the festival management know-how from individual entrepreneurs into the organizational memory while maintaining the corporate culture of willingness to sacrifice, competence and passion (Lucca Crea Srl, 2016) as distinct characteristics of the festival lead organization.

Lucca Crea is expected to keep the core business and the brand focus as LC&G, while assuming the responsibility to also organize other types of cultural and creative events and to manage stable structures, such as the Lucca Fiere convention centre and the Comics Museum.

Considering the history and transformation of LC&G (see Fig. 1), we see that the efforts of an entrepreneurial team and their long-term commitment created a mass phenomenon which started from scratch in a historical setting that did not have any relation to fantasy culture. Throughout more than 50 years history, these entrepreneurs not only established the festival's identity, core values and traditions but also institutionalized the festival and sustained an increasing success with a bottom-up

approach that drastically influenced the institutional setting. In this regard, institutional work practices were the key in managing recurring tensions and developing a stable organizational structure that is essential for institutional maintenance.

4.2. Institutional work for maintaining and improving LC&G

4.2.1. Enabling work practices

The birth of a 100% public, stable and project-based lead organization is an important marker in the evolution of LC&G governance and a highly effective enabling work practice to cope with substantial morphological change and the complexity of the festival. The advantages of having a stable lead organization were also highlighted by the LC&G team members during the interviews. Our findings demonstrate that the highest recognition is given to the improvement in autonomy and professionalism as well as the growth of the organizational scale. In line with this, operational advancements, enabling roles, routines and relationships are outlined within two main categories. The first category corresponds to advancements in the organizational structure, as more unitary, stabilized and transversal organizational practices improved cross-functional coordination. Throughout the transformation to Lucca Crea, the lead organization initiated business process re-engineering (BPR) in collaboration with Bios Management, a consultancy company, in June 2016. This was “an important step for [the festival lead organization] and its human capital, because it not only finally recognized the complexity of its operations but also described these operations and trajectories for the benefit of those who will be included in the future operational framework” (LC&G Srl, 2016). For instance, a clear functional organizational structure did not exist in a systematic way previously.

Similar institutional work practices included not only structuring and clarifying existing roles and competencies that promote, for instance, stabilization of work-groups/departments and their growing autonomy, but also creating new roles, such as allocating more people for developing new collaborations and partnerships. A respondent explains; “from a few people who develop the program and plan to have many final interlocutors afterwards, we have slowly arrived (or are arriving) to a structure that divides responsibilities and intermediate tasks in order to process more initiatives with higher complexity” (Antonio Rama, Games Area Event Manager).

The technical projection/design unit is an example reflecting this change. This unit works through internal and external cross-functional interaction and executes a wide range of tasks such as detecting, designing and mounting individual locations for the festival. With the festival expansion, the outcomes expected from this unit reached a maximum complexity that made transversality an indispensable characteristic as an enabling work practice. As a result, this unit not only works with the General Directorship, all the responsible parties for the thematic areas, logistics, security and technical departments, but also collaborates with external actors, such as local authorities and external suppliers.

⁵ Created in 2003, Lucca Holding Spa is a public limited company entirely owned by the city which covers various public services.

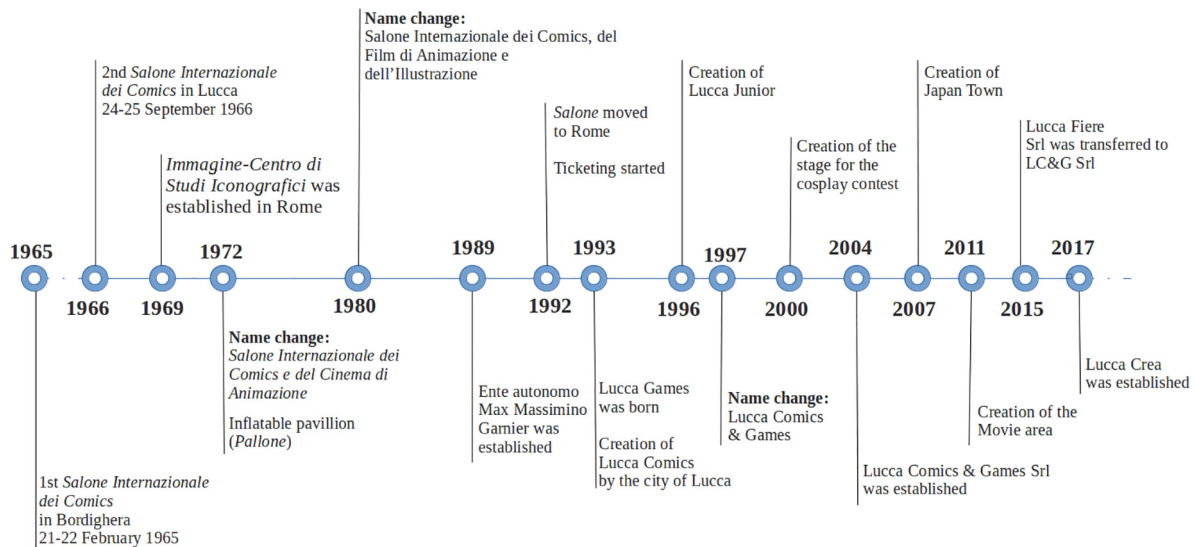


Fig. 1. Timeline with the milestones of the LC&G history

Another indicator of such a growth and related enabling work practices can be defined as changes in the human resources. In 2015, LC&G had 10 permanent employees up from 7 employees in 2013. The rest of the LC&G 2015 edition cycle workforce is based on different types of fixed-term contracts: (i) contracts which cover almost the whole edition cycle with long term collaborators; and (ii) contracts that cover only the last phase of the festival cycle. The former group totals 32, while the latter is composed of 652 people.

Overall, it is worth considering that LC&G lead organization has been experiencing “a transition from a structure made up of autonomous staff working on different areas to an approach that wants to be more transversal and unitary” (Giovanni Russo, Events Manager and Responsible for the projection of the Comics Museum).

The second category of enabling work practices is related to the management model being more inclusive and autonomous. Better clarification of roles and responsibilities enhances the distribution of decision-making mechanism to sub-units with, for instance, higher autonomy of event managers, sales managers and administrators. It was explained by the respondents that this process also improves problem-solving, which is a fundamental capability considering the complexity of the festival program. As a result, the institution succeeds in developing a more dynamic management model with higher professionalism from its previous more intuitive form with limited resources.

On the other hand, considering the external relations, we can observe that the success of the event brought about higher autonomy to the lead organization. Thanks to the recognition of the festival's positive impacts in social, cultural and economic terms, “relationship with the Municipality has constantly improved, as are those with all the other entities” (Andrea d'Urso, Responsible of the Education Section).

Other examples of enabling work practices that were not mentioned during the interviews include the development of procedures for the selection of exhibitors and

institutionalization of festival timing, duration and locations as key project management features that have become recurring and institutionalized over time beyond single festival editions.

These enabling work practices not only facilitate execution of complex project tasks in each edition, but also ensure the continuity of entrepreneurial achievements, as mentioned by the Mayor of Lucca:

“[LC&G lead team] is a very well identified group that we try not to change. If a group works well, it should be left to work, but at the same time it is necessary to create elements of continuity. Otherwise there is a very strong risk that, once the work of those who have imagined the initial effort has been completed, there is no continuity. ... We need to think that today's director may one day leave room for tomorrow's director.” (Alessandro Tambellini, Mayor of Lucca).

4.2.2. Policing practices

For LC&G, policing practices have served to address the tensions between public and commercial logics. Primarily, establishing the lead organization as a special kind of public limited company under Lucca Holding created an auditing mechanism that ensures compliance with the requirements of a public institution. Lucca Holding is a “key tool” through which the Municipality performs its control, connection and strategic planning regarding its public companies and shareholdings.

The Holding's role is built on monitoring, policing and mediation at two levels: (i) at the intersection of the public and private sectors, with the aim to optimize efficacy and efficiency of public services that have a dual nature; and (ii) at the connection between local and national levels of governance, to report to the Italian Audit Office (*Corte dei conti*) and ensure the compliance with public bodies principles, such as transparency and accountability. The complexity and tensions between the public and private organizations impacted by such policing practices is suggested by the below direct quotation:

“We have to check that the administrators [of the companies under the Holding] respect the laws and the statutes, because

there is a responsibility for using public money. In other words, they should produce socio-cultural value and be non-commercial. We help the Municipality to monitor an area where they are not experienced. Because the Municipality is in a public order where public law is applied, whereas the companies operate in a private sphere where there is a different set of legislation, civil code, accounting principles and so on. Between the two levels, public and private, we are the juncture” (Andrea Bortoli, Director of the Lucca Holding).

Thus, the policing practices regarding the LC&G lead organization are mostly conducted by the Lucca Holding through accounting and regulatory practices. The balance sheet of the lead organization is closely monitored and the purchases and employment processes are published publicly.

On the other hand, the complexity of the festival program and the high number of collaborators and exhibitors require internal monitoring and policing practices to guarantee the success of the organization and the quality of festival experience. The lead organization manages and monitors the involvement of exhibitors and develops strategies to strengthen these relations for ensuring future participation.

In this regard, considering the interviews with the lead organization employees, three main work practices are used to manage the relations with the exhibitors within the scope: (i) contracts and formal agreements, not only for renting booths in the festival area, but also for defining the terms of other collaborations, such as guest or talent agreements; (ii) direct collaborations with external partners, for instance, for tournaments, conferences and workshops; and (iii) providing resources for the activities of exhibitors, such as spaces for special activities and booth set-ups.

On the other hand, activities and collaborations are monitored through feedback from the brand managers of exhibitors, constant field monitoring during the festival and photographic reports prepared by the LC&G team, collaborators or suppliers. Also, social media screening is done and feedback is requested after the festival. Subsequently, it is essential to develop a good/continuous communication with collaborators to enhance the success achieved in the past. In this regard, LC&G team members also collect informal feedback and “try to involve each partner in targeted activities by building their “ad hoc” participation and by reducing “standard” proposals” (Silvia Ceccarelli, Junior Event Manager). They aim to “create empathy and channel relationships with communities and other public/private actors to create synergies and sympathies” (Nicola D’Olivo, Responsible of the Cosplay Area).

4.2.3. Deterrence practices

The primary deterrence practice regarding LC&G can be defined as the decision of the Municipality to establish the lead organization as a 100% public institution in 2004, which has been an essential mean to ensure the non-profit, public nature of the event. As a result, the institutional scope is defined through putting the public benefit as a priority and the festival lead organization should comply with the related legislation and be transparent and accountable for using the “public” money.

Andrea Bortoli, Director of the Lucca Holding, explains the public identity of LC&G and challenges as follows:

“Public identity is strong, but risks and dangers are also strong. ... LCG must be careful not to yield to the pressures to prevail the business aspect. Because business is a medium. The end is represented by culture and social relationships... We have paid booths, temporary shops, etc. But it's all a means.”

Such deterrence practices, mostly in the forms of legislation and regulations, also entail some obstacles for institutional procedures and enabling work practices – which is a big challenge for the organization to operate within highly dynamic cultural and creative industries. For instance, the LC&G lead organization is obliged to make a public call for each temporary position to recruit people for working during the festival, which brings a big bureaucratic burden with recruitment procedures for more than 500 positions.

Moreover, the obligation to comply with the public principles of transparency and accountability means tedious amount of reporting procedures for each single action. Nevertheless, despite the challenges of the public nature, the authorities keep up with the deliberate strategy to sustain the lead organization as a non-profit, public organization and reject the highly profitable alternative of selling the LC&G brand or setting up a private partnership:

“LC&G is a special organization. *Partecipate* usually deal with instrumental services for citizens (for example the supply of gas and water). In the process of rationalization of *partecipate* that took place recently, during which futile limited companies were shut down, the Municipality decided to keep LC&G. It is true that the brand could be sold, and perhaps the Municipality would have earned a lot of profit out of such an operation. But the political choice has been to keep LC&G in the public administration, because it is considered as the city's heritage. LC&G has managed to create professionalism and knowledge, which otherwise, in the private sphere, would not have remained in the territory.” (Giovanni Lemucchi, current Deputy Mayor, Councilor for the Municipality of Lucca with responsibility for Tourism, Economic Development, Productive Activities and Participated Companies at the time of the interview).

4.3. Discussion of the results

Our empirical evidence illustrate that LC&G is embedded in a wide net of inter-organizational relationships, where each thematic component operates within its peculiar ecology that is built on a long history and a recurring, cyclical temporality. Within this embeddedness, there is a reciprocal relation between project actions and institutional arrangements, and LC&G proactively participates in the transformation of the festival's institutional context. In this regard, institutional theory and adaptation of a multi-method approach allowed us to develop an in-depth understanding of LC&G as a large complex project, and its temporal, social and institutional embeddedness.

Overall, the LC&G case study reveals how dynamic changes in both macro and micro institutional factors have impacted the institutional work practices and choices made in organizing LC&G. At the macro institutional level, the fantasy sector of cartoons, comics and illustrations in the mid-1960s was primarily focused on the publishing industry in the form of paperback magazine and book (now categorized as graphic novel) offerings. However, over the succeeding decades, the fantasy heroes and mythic stories originally represented in paperback magazines and books became content platforms for an increasing diversity of media formats, including television, movies and video games. Moreover, the fantasy imagery of the original comics and illustrated magazines and book formats was supplemented by the integration of live actors and computer-generated imagery (CGI) in movie and television program offerings that expanded the audience for these offerings beyond the original comics magazine and book fans base. Our LC&G history documents how the expanding media base of fantasy culture is represented in the expanding scope of thematic offerings (see Fig. 1) and their substantial growth in offerings and audience attendance.

At the micro institutional level, tensions between the cultural/artistic and commercial logics are resolved through building transversality within the organizational structure that facilitates cross-functional collaboration, balancing artistic and commercial aspects within the event program. Furthermore, the relations built with external partners and exhibitors through collaborations, monitoring and policing practices facilitate programming the festival agenda in a way to manage such tensions.

Secondly, enabling work, policing and deterrence practices are effective in resolving the tensions occurring among public and private domains due to public, project administration and commercial logics. The institutional identity prioritizes the public logic since the festival lead organization, after experimenting with different organizational forms, was built as a 100% public institution. The managerial autonomy obtained through defining the lead organization as a limited company provides higher flexibility and dynamism to execute the project administration, while the link with the Lucca Holding involves ensuring compliance with public bodies principles, like generating results for the public benefit, transparency and accountability through enforcement, auditing and monitoring mechanisms.

Another core challenge is to balance the tensions among festival traditions/core values coming from the past and improvements/changes to be adapted for present and future of the festival, which is of crucial importance for institutional maintenance. To this end, strengthening unity through improved transversality within the lead organization along with the creation of new roles and responsibilities ensures the transfer of know-how from institutional entrepreneurs, who can be defined as the repositories of the festival memory, to the new members and cultivates common organizational culture, which is based on “the spirit of sacrifice, passion and competence” (Lucca Crea Srl, 2016).

Overall, our evidence testifies that institutional work devoted to maintaining the festival, namely enabling work,

policing and deterrence practices, helps to maintain a balance between these tensions and institutional logics, while bringing the project to the future through integrating change as constitutive of organizational reality. In many cases, the tensions between competing institutional logics occur as creative tensions that push for innovative solutions, which are experimented over the course of festival editions, which are the temporary projects managed by the more permanent but also evolving festival organization. As a result, this ‘temporary’ event changes the ‘stable’ institutional structure through project actions and institutional work practices, introduces dynamism to the public domain and even outlives several ‘permanent’ organizations that used to manage the festival.

5. Conclusions

The role of institutional practices and in particular enabling work, policing and deterrence practices, reflects this paper's engagement with a practice perspective toward project management, where the focus is on the actors and their activities (Blomquist et al., 2010). Gerdal and Söderlund (2018) have characterized this type of project studies as representative of an emancipatory paradigm that offers much promise for “transforming the status quo with a deep understanding of practices” (p. 601). Our case study has detailed the evolution of the governance of the annual festival and the elaboration of roles, relationships and routines that the lead organization adopted to contend with the dynamic tensions it has faced in tackling with the diverse institutional logics represented among the festival's organizational stakeholders. These concerns have also been echoed by Dille and Söderlund (2011), who have recommended the inclusion of institutional analysis to “better portray the realities of project management practice” (p. 482).

Our results illustrate the value of institutional theory as an emerging theoretic perspective in the project management literature (e.g. Morris and Gerdal, 2011; Dille and Söderlund, 2011), particularly for megaprojects (Söderlund et al., 2017; Biesenthal et al., 2018). Furthermore, our case history, principally the dependence of institutional maintenance on the actions of individual and collective agents, i.e. institutional entrepreneurs, highlights the distinctive institutional challenges of inter-organizational projects that are initiated without a parent organization, and the importance of conceptualizing them (i.e. Festivals) as temporary organizations rather than “a rationally designed tool for achieving a predefined goal with maximum efficiency” or “adopting the instrumental means-to-an-end view” (Løwendahl, 1995).

This study also addresses gaps in the project management literature regarding institutional maintenance, which has been an under-explored topic in temporary organizing with promising theoretical implications and point to a need to further investigate temporary organizations with a multi-perspective approach considering their temporal, social and institutional embeddedness, history, and distinct characteristics. In this regard, our study provides a fruitful base for prospective research “to identify and compare different types of inter-

institutional projects, their salient features, and how these projects evolve and change over time” (Dille and Söderlund, 2011, p. 489). For instance, the tensions inherent in managing site specific complex projects are well documented elsewhere in the field of project management, with the field of megaprojects perhaps most closely resembling the challenges facing the LC&G organizers. As previously reviewed, Biesenthal et al. (2018) has conceptualized megaprojects as sites of conflicting institutional logics and thus the conceptual framework employed in this study to examine how institutional entrepreneurs employ diverse institutional logics that are reflected in project work practices represents a similar challenge for diversely sponsored and enacted megaprojects.

Despite these contributions, this study has inevitable limitations. The main limitation is related to the single case study design, which can limit the generalizability of results. Furthermore, we conducted a practice-oriented research due to the nature of the case study and the availability of data, which can be enriched with a processual approach. As future work, we intend to expand our research covering multiple case studies and integrating also a process-oriented approach in our study.

Conflicts of interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article.

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