

INTERVIEW

Dr. Alessia Usai was one of two winners of the 2015 ENCATC Research Award. Before her presentation in Brussels in 2016 of the second book to be published in the ENCATC Book Series on Cultural Management and Cultural Policy Education, ENCATC caught up with Alessia to learn about what she has been up to since winning the Award.



Dr. Alessia Usai from the University of Cagliari, Italy, receiving the ENCATC Research Award in 2015 from Catherine Magnant, Deputy Head of Unit, European Commission – Directorate General for Education and Culture, Cultural Diversity and Innovation Unit and member of the Award Steering Committee.

ENCATC: Since winning the 2nd ENCATC Research Award on Cultural Policy and Cultural Management what have you been doing?

Alessia Usai: In December 2015, after the Award, I have presented my research on creative and cultural networks at the 9th Study Day "Green and Blue Infrastructures" of the Italian National Institute of Urban Planning. In 2016, I have published a monography in Italian on the advanced cultural districts (original title: "Il distretto culturale evoluto. Beni culturali e pianificazione del territorio nella sfida futura").

From May 2016 up to now I have been working as a Research Fellow at the Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering and Architecture, University of Cagliari. My research is now focused on landscape planning and historic building heritage. In particular, the definition of a methodological framework and guidelines for the adaptation of

Recovery Plans for historical centres to the Regional Landscape Plan in Sardinia region. I was also selected by the 7th Annual ENCATC Research Session's Scientific Committee for a new paper presented at the Research Session on "How cultural and creative industries are redefining policies for the historic urban landscape" and specifically in the context of the Italian Capitals of Culture. This paper, written with my PhD Supervisor Professor Anna Maria Colavitti, was then published in 2016 in the ENCATC Book "Cultural Management Education in Risk Societies – Towards a Paradigm and Policy Shift?!".

ENCATC: What were the main conclusions of your winning PhD thesis?

My PhD thesis focuses on the relationships between the creative city theories and the planning approach introduced by the European Landscape Convention

in order to identify best practices for the development of innovative cultural policies and new urban regeneration tools.

The research is characterized by a cross-cutting approach to cultural heritage. It proposes a new model for the design of advanced cultural districts consisting of a benchmark methodology and a "toolbox" of spatial, economic and social indicators that can be used to build the necessary knowledge. Finally, having Sardinia Region (IT) as reference, the study offers a picture of programmes and plans to which the methodology and the toolbox can be applied outlining their potential impacts within cultural and spatial planning.

ENCATC: Where and how you do hope your research will have the greatest impact?

I hope my research will have the greatest impact on planning tools for the historical urban landscape and on the studies on creative and cultural networks in Sardinia (IT), the region where I work and live. I hope to use my knowledge and research to contribute to local and regional projects that can benefit from the findings of my PhD research.

In 2016, I was part of a research project "Landscape planning and historic building heritage: definition of a methodological framework and guidelines for the adaptation of Recovery Plans for historical centres to the Regional Landscape Plan in Sardinia". This project offers me the chance to investigate the impacts of cultural networks and clusters on the historical urban landscape for their management in urban policies.

I hope my research will have an even wider European and international impact as it is disseminated in the second volume publication in the ENCATC Book Series on Cultural Management and Cultural Policy Education. I think the Sardinia region can provide best practice and be an interesting case for others working on historical urban landscapes.

ENCATC: How does as Award like this one helped to support the career of a young/early career researcher who has recently completed their PhD thesis?

The ENCATC Research Award has given an international breath to my research allowing me to reach a wider audience. It is also a fantastic opportunity to have my work translated and published in English which will also make it accessible to a wider audience outside of Italy. Moreover, thanks to ENCATC network, I have known researchers and practitioners interested in my research for future collaborations. For example, I was invited to present on a panel at the 24th ENCATC Annual Conference in Valencia this past October and I will be in Brussels at the 3rd ENCATC Research Award Ceremony for the launch of my book "The Creative City".

The recognition of the ENCATC Research Award and the cultural policy and cultural management research community has been very beneficial. And ENCATC has continued to take interest in my career after having won the Award, not just with the honour to publish in its book series with Peter Lang and the 24th Annual Conference e-book, but also the speaking opportunities to raise my international profile.