

CAREER TIPS

Considering a future in cultural research?

For this issue of PRAXIS, interviewed Elena Borin, winner of the 2016 ENCATC Research Award on Cultural Policy and Cultural Management. We wanted to learn about her research career and what she would share with students interested in following a similar path.

ENCATC: Why did you want to get your PhD?

Elena Borin: Before going back to university, I worked for several years as a professional. First I worked for the Cultural Office of the Italian Consulate General in Philadelphia (USA), then for Venice Biennale – International Art Exhibition, then for a scientific institute organising also a scientific exhibition. In the meantime I volunteered for experiences led me to reflect on the importance of cooperation between public sector and private partners in the cultural field and on the need to involve citizens and communities. So I decided to explore this topic at a higher level and started my PhD research on it.

ENCATC: You have been involved with ENCATC since the very beginning of your research path as a student at the University of Ferrara, a member of ENCATC. How has been being part of this network shaped your career?

Elena Borin: Being part of the ENCATC network has been crucial for my career from many points of views. First of all, in terms of networking and contacts. Indeed, my PhD research is based on a comparison of different models of public-private partnership and multi-stakeholder partnership in Europe and therefore I needed to find universities that could host me during the different research phases. At that time, I was working in Italy and ENCATC provided me contacts with many research institutions who are members of the network that later hosted me during these research periods abroad, in Belgium, France, Germany, and the UK. Second, ENCATC created



relevant moments of confrontation and debate that helped my growth as a researcher. Indeed, I presented the preliminary results of my PhD research during the research sessions of ENCATC annual conferences. ENCATC conferences attract leading researchers and academics from all around the world. I was able to get interesting advice and feedback from these renowned researchers who helped me better shape the research questions and the further phases of the investigation. This kind of opportunity is invaluable for any researcher, but especially for those in their early career stage. The discussion of my research with international researchers was also boosted by the publication of my article in the *ENCATC Journal of Cultural Management and Policy* (Volume 5, Issue 1, 2015). After this publication I was contacted by many

academics who expressed interest to keep on discussing the theme of trans-sectoral cooperation and gave me suggestions on how to improve my investigation.

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

Elena Borin: The main conclusion was that new models of cooperation are emerging in the cultural and creative sector that are based on the interpretation of cultural and creative organizations as part of the broader cultural ecosystem of the territory. Public-private partnerships and multi-stakeholder partnerships in this sector are an aspect of this paradigm shift. They reflect the attempt to find a governance system and a management model to coordinate the different subjects of this territorial ecosystems. Another relevant result is that these emerging types of partnerships should be tailor-made on the characteristics of the cultural sector. In other words, they should be flexible, inclusive and based on the cultural identity of the territory. Moreover, they should be based on a strong link with citizens and communities - essential components of the territorial milieu - that should be involved at different levels through bottom-up participatory mechanisms.

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

Elena Borin: I hope my research could trigger the debate on the need to rethink the current governance systems of the cultural and creative sector in order to make them integrated and based on cross-sectoral cooperation with local authorities, related industries and citizens and communities. These discussions could have an impact at the academic level, but most of all at the policy development level. I think that my research could also have an impact at the educational level. As highlighted by the research results, one of the key elements to implement successful multi-stakeholder partnerships at the territorial level is the collaborative mind-set of the people involved in the cooperation. This mindset is clearly developed by means of an education based on the enhancement of collaborative and networking attitudes.



ENCATC: Since winning the 3rd ENCATC Research Award on Cultural Policy and Cultural Management what have you been doing?

Elena Borin: After winning the 3rd ENCATC Research Award, I have kept on working for the Burgundy School of Business in Dijon (France), where I am an associate professor and the director of an MSc in Arts and Cultural Management. During the ceremony, I have had the chance to discuss my thesis "Public-Private partnerships in the cultural sector in Europe" with experienced researchers, who gave me interesting advice and points of views: that helped me develop further investigations on which I am currently working. Moreover, I had the chance to present the research in some academic conferences, for example at Chapman University in Los Angeles (USA) during a conference on Cultural and Creative Industries from 5 to 7 June 2017 organised by Professor Patrick Fuery, who participated in the ENCATC Annual conference in Valencia the previous year and was a contact of the Burgundy School of Business, again thanks to the ENCATC network.



Dr. Elena Borin (far left) was a keynote speaker at the "Building Transatlantic Networks" Conference at Chapman University in the United States.

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

Elena Borin: The Award is an important recognition that confirms that the research is of good quality. It has therefore the potential to boost the winner's career in academia.

However in my opinion the award has another important impact: it is a terrific opportunity for making your research known and establish collaborations at an international level with academics and professionals who are working on the same topic or on related themes. Indeed, young researchers sometimes lack the connection with the international academic and professional environment. Winning the ENCATC Award has given me the opportunity to overcome this limitation, discussing my research ideas with many academics worldwide and from this experience I have started new research collaborations.

This is the first book where I am the sole author, and having it published by a recognized academic publisher Peter Lang and by an important European network is a significant qualification and reinforces my academic CV. I am still at the beginning of my career, but I am already seeing the results of this award in terms of my academic career.

ENCATC: How did you finance your PhD? Grants, scholarship, salary, etc.?

Elena Borin: I was selected for Ministry grant delivered by the University of Ferrara (my home university) for three years, but unfortunately it was not enough to cover the costs to carry out research abroad. In my case, I needed to cover the costs for at least four field-researches carried out in Belgium, Germany, France, and the UK. So I applied and won several specific grants, both from my home university and from other initiatives to support young researchers.

ENCATC: What had you wished you had known before starting your PhD?

Elena Borin: I think I underestimated how fun and stimulating carrying out research can be! Although I was really motivated at the beginning I was worried about the potential problems. It was of course sometimes difficult and challenging, but doing research for my PhD was one of the best experiences of my life, allowing me to continuously learn, to exchange with different academics and professionals from all over the world, and to deeply reflect on topics that were relevant and important to me.



Elena Borin presenting her research at the 2016 ENCATC Research Award Ceremony in Brussels.

ENCATC: What advice would you give to young people looking for a future research career?

Elena Borin: I think the best advice I can give is to be passionate and motivated but also very flexible and resilient. I strongly encourage them to look for mentors and confront them as much as they can. Carrying out research requires a lot of preparation and continuous studying. Listening to comments from other academics and researchers is the key for improving your research and capturing new ideas and stimuli.

ENCATC: What keeps you motivated to keep going in academia and research?

Elena Borin: I really like to investigate a research topic and to try to understand its mechanisms, motivations and functions. And I like even more to discuss my findings with other researchers and with professionals and to transfer this knowledge to younger people. Working in academia gives me the possibility to do what I love. Moreover I am working for a Business School (the Burgundy School of Business in Dijon-France) that is investing a lot in Arts and Cultural Management. We have just created a

new Centre for Arts and Cultural Management (combining three main spheres: Education, Research, and entrepreneurship) and we are working to improve our research and educational programme in arts and cultural management. Working on these several projects and for an institution that believes in the importance of Arts and Cultural management really motivates me! I'm looking forward to continue developing further.

ENCATC: What are your plans for the future?

Elena Borin: The first step will be certainly to come to Brussels at the end of September, where I will launch the book during the Young and Emerging Researchers' Forum. I am looking forward to it; it will be certainly a good opportunity to discuss with young researchers, and to give them "career advice" or suggestions about the importance of promoting their research at an international level, for example participating in the ENCATC Award. After that, for sure I would like to continue working on the research topic of my thesis and investigate it further, also in relation to the problem of financing for cultural ecosystems. My research group at the Burgundy School of Business (Research group in cultural management MECIC) is specializing both in cultural entrepreneurship and the relation between culture and territorial development. Both themes are connected to my research topics, and I am sure we will work together to address it from different perspectives.

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