

CONCILIARE - CONfidently Changing coLonial heRitagE

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Funded by the EU Horizon Programme (2021-2027), CONCILIARE centers on the ongoing changes in Colonial Cultural Heritage (CCH) with a threefold aim: 1) identifying and analyzing changes in CCH across four pivotal domains: textbooks, public spaces, museums and cultural consumption of products and traditions; 2) advancing knowledge on reactions to and representations of changes in CCH in the four domains held by diverse sociodemographics groups (ethnic, gender, generation, and cultural contexts); 3) propose four different methods - one per domain - to promote confidence in changes in CCH.



PROJECT'S IMPACT

The project focuses on the many changes in the representations of overseas colonialism, in particular of colonial cultural heritage (CCH) that are going on in the European society, and that are related to intergroup conflicts. The main goal of the project is to study these changes and the reactions and representations of European citizens. The second goal is to build different tools that would help to build confidence and more harmonious intergroup relations instead of intergroup conflicts that are related to the representations of the colonial past. This objective is focused on four main domains: the changes that are happening in textbooks; in public spaces like the names of streets, statues ect.; in museums; and in cultural products related to the colonial past.

TARGET GROUPS

The target groups of CONCILIARE are, of course, the academic and research community, but also the local communities, local authorities, national authorities, as well as NGOs. We also focus on educational stakeholders: educational associations and teachers of different domains, and also local, national and European authorities in education. Of course, also museums are one of our targets. That is to say: policy and decision makers at different levels as well as the citizens.

INNOVATIVE ASPECTS

CONCILIARE proposes an interdisciplinary (social sciences and humanities studies) and multi-methodological (small scale applied qualitative and quantitative) approach. Four small scale pilot trials will be carried out – one per domain – in different European countries to test the proposed tools effectiveness in fostering confidence in CCH changes across the diversity of Europe.

When studying representations and reactions of European citizens, we will look at different groups related to ethnic background, gender, different generations and different cultural contexts.

With regard to the different cultural contexts we are not only focused on countries that were former coloniser countries, as one of our basic ideas is that the colonial past is related to European identity as a whole, no matter if it is a society or country that was a previous coloniser country or not. It is related to an idea of the Europeans as kind of, so to say, „bringers of the civilization“, „bringers of the development“, „superiority of Europeans“.

BUILDING ON A PREVIOUS PROPOSAL: A STRENGTH & A CHALLENGE

A Working Group of a COST Action (IS1205) had brought the project consortium together a number of years ago. Two not funded proposals lead by people from the group had been submitted previously, including a Horizon Europe Cluster 2 proposal for a previous call. This was both a strength and a challenge in the new proposal preparation. The challenge was that initially, the consortium had assumed that the proposal would remain almost the same, they would only have to change a little bit here and there.

Only when they went deeper into the call topic text, did they realise that the topic was much more complicated than initially assumed. They needed to rebuild the proposal – but they were still thinking in terms of the previous idea. It was not easy to change their understanding of their project in order for it to fit the new call topic.

Specifically, the consortium had a strong wish to include a large-scale longitudinal survey across European countries into the project. However, the longitudinal study did not fit with the call topic or aims. The university science manager recommended not to have the study as part of the proposed project. The consortium resisted this recommendation for some time. 'We resisted almost to the end because we really loved the idea of the survey. But at the end of the day, we realized that if we stuck to the survey, we wouldn't have had the project.

We understood that if we had the project approved, even if we did not do the survey, we could do other things that were close to what we wanted to do. This is why it is very important to have good advisors.'

Conversely, finishing a winning proposal within a few months would not have been possible without the previous application and the existing strong ties within the network.

'It was very important that we already knew what we wanted to do, and trusted our colleagues to do it. It was a strong advantage to have the previous work we had done. We knew each other, we trusted each other - that made a huge difference. We knew what were the different profiles, how we could manage in order to take advantage of the complementary abilities, the complementary interests of each one.'

NCPs ASSISTANCE

According to the university adviser and the NCP, the proposal coordinator was very open and welcoming towards comments and critique.

'Some people come to you for help, but if you don't tell them what they want to hear, they don't hear it. Joaquim would always welcome the comments.' A shared online document was used where the consortium participants, the university adviser and the NCP were allowed to edit and comment. 'This is a good illustration how this was a collective work. It often happens that a consortium works on a proposal, and then they send really large chunks of information to review. But if you get a 45-page thing to review, you really need to take three days off to just dedicate yourself to that and then if there are things wrong, if the survey was still there from the beginning, then it would have been too late and the feedback would not have been useful. But here it was kind of an ongoing review process.'

All three interviewees agreed that the shared document worked for this consortium because they had a strong trust relationship. They trusted each other, and they had a very strong collective sense of the field and of the conceptual part.

TIPS for proposal preparation

➤ **Trust your idea and be open and flexible**

"I think that there are many different ways to win an application - what I can say is what I learnt. I think one important thing is that if you trust in your ideas, then you are able to be flexible, then you don't need to be dogmatic - if you really trust in what you want to do, you can make changes. Your ideas can be translated to the language and to the format of the topic and the application. Believe in the ideas and be flexible in order to keep the central points of your ideas."

➤ **Trust your consortium and your advisers**

When you are doing the application, of course having good partners whom you trust is really necessary. Have good advisers. This is fundamental, I'm not saying this to be a nice colleague, it is true.

➤ **Be resistant**

And you need to be persistent because it is a long journey. It is psychologically and physically demanding. You need to be aware that you need to deal with frustration and strong stress and long hours of work, and the issue is that we keep with the same tasks at the university.

➤ **Don't give up**

And maybe the last point is "don't give up". We had a defeat with the previous proposal, but we didn't give up, we continued, and finally, we have the CONCILIARE. If you don't win, don't say I will not do it anymore. Of course, maybe you can say I did not do it anymore, and maybe it's better for your life. But the point is that the benefit could be that you will learn a little bit more about how to win the next application.