Challenging spaces and formats of culture in the city: highlights on the future of cultural heritage management

Francesca Sabatini
Tools for Culture, Italy
francesca@toolsforculture.org

Michele Trimarchi
Tools for Culture, Italy
michele@toolsforculture.org

ABSTRACT

This paper focuses upon the relationship between culture and society in the urban environment. The first section introduces the social and urban changes of our time from a critical theory perspective, integrating socioeconomic and urban studies: what emerges the fading of social boundaries and the emersion of new political claims arising from cultural instances; the second section focuses on the discrepancies between such changes and the cultural offer, still anchored to rigid heritage preservation, never meeting new forms of cultural expression. This stern dichotomy needs to be faced through a paradigm shift, which is dealt with in the third section: some best practices across Europe are selected, highlighting the need to focus on cross-sector partnerships, vertical integration, and a public support aimed at favouring the diffusion of culture on multiple social layers. The map of culture is eventually redesigned, and new creative encounters are made by challenging the use of space in the urban scenario.

Methodology of analysis

The first two sections of the present paper will reconstruct the map of the contemporary city, with its idiosyncrasies, and controversial interactions among the new creative vectors, cultural heritage management and the emerging social stances: from a methodological perspective, this is carried out through critical theory and urban studies, which allow for a multi-level, multi-disciplinary understanding, necessary in order to account for the complexity of contemporary scenarios. The lens of critical theory proves particularly precious in that it allows to observe phenomena in the light of the superstructures and societal changes.

A gap exists, in facts, in cultural policy studies and in the analysis of cultural phenomena in general: the notion of embeddedness. Only in recent times an ecological approach is being adopted in both policy and research (Gross & Wilson, 2018; Borin & Donato, 2015) which account for the entangled layers which constitute infrastructures and networks in the city. The paper positions itself within this understanding of complexity and aspires at framing.

First emphasised by Karl Polanyi with reference to the economy, and its being impacted by the social and historical Weltanschauung (Polanyi, 2002), embeddedness describes the need to consider phenomena in the light of the complex processes and intricate superstructures which contribute to shaping them. In this respect, therefore, critical theory helps to build the foundations for a more grounded and holistic understanding of such phenomena; for this reason, the theoretical framework for the research has been built on the accurate historical account on critical theory (Keucheyan, 2010) as well as the most relevant critical theorists on urban change and social transformation (Virno, 2001; Harvey, 2012).

After drafting a map of the contemporary interactions between culture and people in urban transformation from the perspective of critical theory, the analysis focuses on the contemporary cultural system by drawing from cultural policy studies (Bonini Baraldi, 2014; D'Ovidio, 2016) and from heritage studies (Bertacchini et al, 2012).

The third section is an outlook on best practices. Following Eglene (2003), some best practices and, consequently, some policy and strategic guidelines have been outlined. The practices analysed come from a wide range of contexts and yet it is not unsystematic:

both critical theory and policy studies have emphasised in the first section some crucial aspects, such as the orientation of public funding, the need to foster cross-sector partnerships and private-public alliances, while vertical integration of cultural goods and services enhances both cross-subsidisation (and, therefore, financial sustainability) and unaware exposure of cultural consumers to complex and stratified cultural experiences. After having identified these three vectors, both the authors' research network and the web were the starting point for a search of policy examples and managerial protocols that are able to highlight the best practices and, therefore, suggested guidelines for the future have been identified.

Ce siècle est fait pour tout confondre! On marche vers le chaos[1]

In Stendhal's *The Red and the Black* a young, ambitious countryman enters the complicated social eco-system of the city in the delicate, magmatic time of post-revolutionary Paris. While the novel's most obvious layer of interpretation is that of a *bildungsroman*, the story of Julien Sorel also underlies the loss of innocence of a century within the dramatic, violent paradigm shift generated by the French Revolution, and the sense of dismay affecting people who lived it.

A less violent, yet similarly radical, change is occurring in our time. The postmodern, globalised world tore down the conceptual categories which people used to identify society, politics, economics with. Playing with metaphors, we could say that culture in the 21st century pretty much resembles Julien Sorel, living with anguish the unsettlement of his time: "This century is turning everything upside down". Stendhal's young hero is totally unprepared to enter the new, revolving ecosystem; the cultural system is witnessing, not without some fearful reluctancy, the transformation of the urban fabric, of the people who inhabit it, and of the economic infrastructure in which they act. Culture, in other words, is *experiencing* the change of our century, rather than *taking* part to it: it lags behind, lacking interpretative intuition, creative inputs, meaningful visions.

A practical example could prove useful as a starting point. From 2002 to 2004, when the historical building of *Teatro alla* Scala was subject to restoration, the opera house displaced its activity in the Bicocca

---

[1] "This century is turning everything upside down! We're marching towards chaos" Stendhal (2000), *Le rouge et le noir,* Paris, Folio (1st ed 1830).

"INNUMERABLE ARE THE EXAMPLES OF CULTURAL ORGANISATIONS WHOSE APPROACH TO THE URBAN DYNAMICS REFLECTS THE SAME BACKWARD AND CONVENTIONAL PHILOSOPHY. AND YET, THE CHANGES OCCURRING WITHIN THE CITY AND IN THE SOCIAL FABRIC NEED TO BE ACCOUNTED FOR IN ORDER FOR CULTURAL MANAGEMENT TO BE SUSTAINABLE OVER TIME"

neighbourhood, and performances were held in the newly built Arcimboldi Theatre. Borrowing terms from textbook economics, the partnership with the Arcimboldi Theatre could have been a good opportunity for the theatre to expand the scale of its production, possibly attracting new consumers whose cultural itineraries were not necessarily anchored to the centralised cultural offer of Milan; and yet, the distance from the historical centre was perceived almost as an exile by the La Scala administration, and the temporary contact with a reality different from the conventional one was soon forgotten.

Innumerable are the examples of cultural organisations whose approach to the urban dynamics reflects the same backward and conventional philosophy. And yet, the changes occurring within the city and in the social fabric need to be accounted for in order for cultural management to be sustainable over time. The frequent appeal to past levels of public funding is a clear symptom of the reluctancy to acknowledge changes, and at the same time a biased interpretation of rights and duties, failures and opportunities in a complex society.

The fading of social classes is paving the way to a fertile multitude (Virno, 2001), whose characteristics are those of a diversified plurality. This multitude, which inhabits the city in disordered, creative and unpredictable ways, is neither defined by its belonging to obsolete social categories, nor by its economic status, as was the case with the previous class system, which identified class components according to categories of ownership, as the etymology of 'capitalist' and 'proletariat' suggests. Quite the opposite, such a magmatic, plural and yet diverse entity is defined by its identity which is described by cultural claims and instances.

The cultural rationale subtended to the notion of identity exerts immense impacts on social organisation and on the way we think of political structures: Firstly, because the global, diverse multitude "involves minorities who recognize themselves as such - that is, who do not have the mission of transforming themselves into a majority" (Keucheyan, 2010: 23). Secondly, and consequently, because the fragmentation of such a multitude is questioning the majority system underlying the democratic rule (Ventura, 2019).[2] Not only politics, but institutions and the whole cultural system need to rethink the whole infrastructure they act in, in order for them to account for this complexity.

The relevance of cultural instances underlying these movements is, in facts, mirrored by the rising of identity-based political movements such as identity politics (Calhoun, 1995) and politics of recognition (Taylor, 1992). This multitude, and the multitude of cultures which represent it, is the most recent development of a long historical process: encompassing geographical limits, combining and merging different cultures which challenge the spatial limits of Nations. In such a delicate framework culture as an intangible factor of social organisation proves crucial due to its critical and evolutionary nature: it is able to craft identities, provide us with a more flexible understanding of such mutable scenarios, and shape more valid definitions than those established by the economic and political rules of the past century. And yet, while culture at an informal and somehow imperceptible level carries out an epistemological and social revolution, the cultural system, and particularly the heritage layer, remains anchored to definitions and boundaries which belong to the previous century and its prevailing meta-ethical conception of culture itself.

Not all factors in such a complex paradigm, in facts, are aligned: two main variables are lagging behind. Primarily the city, the most representative eco-system of the 21st century, which still fails to grasp the fluidity of the multiple identities inhabiting its material

---

[2] The identity claims the paper refers to are those of the multi-cultural plurality that is the "multitude", and are not to be intended as the cultural instances underlying nationalist movements or radicalised fringes of politics, whose use of culture is rather oriented towards a distortive adoption of culture.

infrastructure: a fracture is being operated between time (the historical evolution of society and its identity) and space (the way spatial dynamics respond or react to such changes).

The way we picture (and, in most cases, structure) the city today, in facts, still responds to the manufacturing paradigm developed during the industrial revolution: the productive centre, refurbished with services, is opposed to a periphery[3] which once marginalised the working classes and relegated them to the outer, poorer fringes of the city, and which, today, ends up marginalising minorities of any kinds.

Secondarily culture itself, and in particular its organisational and institutional system, is identified today with structures and entities, be them private or public, rather than with projects, trails and itineraries (Balestra & Malaguti, 2000). Such a rigidity does not account for the emersion of new unlabelled forms of cultural expression and of cultural encounters in the urban grid, as well as highbrow-lowbrow tensions still reflect out-dated social paradigms (van Hek & Kraaykamp, 2013). A double standard emerges, then, for the institutional layer and for the creative and informal one, leaving the cultural system to lag behind, and the new forms of expression to find harsh barriers to entry within the institutional domain.

Vous n'avez pas compris votre siècle[4]

After having arrived in Paris our freshman social climber, Julien, meets the noble Count Altamira, who addresses him with a sibylline statement: *Vous n'avez pas compris votre siècle* (Stendhal, 2000). If we pictured Count Altamira as a metaphoric judge in the court of the Spirit of Time, culture in the 21st century would probably be reproached, just like Julien Sorel, not to have understood its time.

The characteristics of culture and its deployment in the social fabric are not met by a sound cultural policy and an apt reorganisation of the cultural offer. A hiatus exists in facts between the structures of cultural production and the informal processes of cultural creation and learning which occur in everyday life. Such issue can be articulated in several dichotomies

which illustrate the distance between culture, its time, and the society it is supposed to mirror and represent.

Centre vs. periphery: culture at the crossroads of urban planning and economic infrastructures

A centre-periphery dichotomy affects the structure of contemporary cities in spite of the new social pressures: the friction between building and dwelling, as identified by Richard Sennett (2018), expresses the modalities in which the city is crafted and organised as opposed to an unprecedented social mobility and to the rise of urban movements which claim their *right to the city* (Lefebvre, 1968; Harvey, 2012 [5] Kruger, 2012).

This dichotomy is likewise mirrored in the spatial organisation of the cultural offer: this is true, primarily, for cultural institutions such as museums and theatres, whose position is an isolated one, located within a musealised historic centre, inspiring awe and reverence rather than eliciting curiosity and creativity; the urban map of culture is, in facts, a manufacturing one, and the enjoyment of cultural heritage and cultural manufacts is anchored to the 19th century paradigm. This has contributed to a neat separation between the everyday urban itineraries of people, on the one hand, and culture, relegated in an ivory tower, on the other (Trimarchi, 2014). The semantics of cultural spaces reflect the new drift of cultural goods: that of club goods, rather than public ones.

This fraction was by no means alleviated whenever culture was used as a means of regeneration in disadvantaged areas. David Throsby (2001) was the first to analyse culture-oriented regeneration strategies as the drivers of economic development in cities; and yet, he was also the first to point out how "in a society where government pursuits an economic agenda, the balance in the policy mix will tend to favour individualistic at the expense of collective goals" (Throsby, 2001: 138). This was precisely the case with many culture-led projects which have contributed to the area's gentrification, as was the case with Raval in Barcelona, NDSM wharf in Amsterdam or Dumbo in Brooklyn.

In such a case poorly designed strategies

---

[4] *"You haven't understood your times"*, Stendhal, *op. cit.*

[5] David Harvey has extensively described this tension; he borrowed the conception of "right to the city" by Henri Lefebvre and expanded it by identifying in the urban population, rather than in a specific class, the primary revolutionary subject of our times. For an exhaustive account, see Harvey, D. (2012), *Rebel cities: from the right to the city to the urban revolution,* New York: Verso. In addition, in a compelling reading of the Paris' commune Harvey pointed out the strong interrelation between the struggle for political and civil rights and the struggle for public space. See Harvey, D. (2005), *Paris, capital of modernity*, London: Routledge.
Loren Kruger associates cultural practices, and particularly theatrical ones, to the struggle for the right to the city. See Kruger, L. (2012) *What time is this place? Continuity, conflict and the right to the city)*, in Fischer-Lichte, E., and Wishutz, B. (eds.) (2012), *Performance and the politics of space: theatre and topology*, London: Routledge.

without a long term vision constellate peripheries with cultural venues doomed to become 'cathedrals in the desert', lacking considerations over infrastructural connections and accessibility; it is the case of Paris in the 1970s, when theatres were placed in disadvantaged neighbourhoods in the hope of articulating a new cultural life for the area, but which eventually failed to establish the needed connections with the neighbourhood's life; or, recently, of Centrale Montemartini in Rome, a dismissed hydroelectric plant which was turned into an archaeological museum in 2001 in the developing neighbourhood of Garbatella; saluted as the "Italian Musée d'Orsay", it did not update the popular French museum's format (conceived for a 19th century audience) and missed the opportunity to establish a semantic dialogue between early 20th century's machines (used as a mere background) and Ancient Rome's archaeology, and is now dramatically underdeveloped (Favale, 2018).

At the other end of the culture-led intervention spectrum we record that interactions between urban planning and cultural infrastructures have enforced the creative city paradigm, as described by Richard Florida (2002). A city in which the neoliberal economic paradigm has turned culture into a commodity (Scott, 2007; Harvey, 2012) and has generated a new class of exploited workers, the *cognitariat* (Moulier-Boutang, 2007). These mechanisms reflect those of the creative industries, whose production mechanisms are linked to the generation of intellectual property and to the exploitation of cultural capital. By overlapping to and substituting those of manufacturing capitalism, they have not reduced inequalities as was optimistically foreseen by some, since cultural capital, differently from the physical one, is non-excludable (Hardt & Negri, 2009).[6]

The supposedly uncontroversial generation of economic benefits from knowledge exploitation and cultural capital is, in facts, deeply embedded in a political and economic eco-system in which the

creative city develops, often shaped by the neoliberal paradigm regaining popularity from the 1980s. Such an uneven generation of wealth, regulated by unwise policy design, has exasperated the concentric divisions of the city and the difference between the structures of culture and its informal production processes, as exhaustively observed by D'Ovidio,

> Creative and cultural operators often do not recognize themselves in the policies proposed in their name, alternative and avant-garde culture are still emarginated, the production and promotion of culture is no more open than before and a large segment of creative labour is suffering a precarious and insecure situation. (2016: 141)

Similarly, Corsani and Lazzarato have pointed out how

> [...] neoliberal practices and the creative industries produce both the marginalisation of creative workers and the marginalisation of cultural productions that do not respond to market logics. (2008: 16)

Class is culture: hierarchies of taste and centripetal distribution patterns in times of social transformation

This leads directly to a second dichotomy, still related to a hierarchic articulation of the city, which, in its turn, has generated a hierarchic articulation of culture: the supposed highbrow and lowbrow forms of culture are still mostly produced and practiced in separate spaces. From both the production and consumption sides this has crucial corollaries: the offer is rigidly and oddly segmented, replicating modes and genres which are still anchored to tastes and cultural instances of long-disappeared classes, and do not account for the many hybridisations which are (as have always been) propaedeutic to artistic and cultural innovation (van Hek & Kraaykamp, 2013); such changes, occurring in both the semiotic codes and the material base of creative production (Jones, Lorenzen & Sapsed, 2015),

"THE SUPPOSEDLY UNCONTROVERSIAL GENERATION OF ECONOMIC BENEFITS FROM KNOWLEDGE EXPLOITATION AND CULTURAL CAPITAL IS, IN FACTS, DEEPLY EMBEDDED IN A POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC ECO-SYSTEM IN WHICH THE CREATIVE CITY DEVELOPS"

---

[6] For a more complete account on the critical theories on cultural-cognitive capitalism see Keucheyan, R. (2010), *Emisphère Gauche. Une cartographie des nouvelles pensées critiques*, Paris : La Découverte.

are hindered by the prescriptive separation between the 'high' and 'low' layers. The challenges to such a rigid paradigm are often unsystematic and bottom-up, and fail to reach the policy discourse on culture – as a consequence, they often do not engender an actual process of innovation.

On the consumption side, such a segmentation lies on the commonplace that cultural taste coincides with demographic indicators such as age, income, job, often abused in uncritical and mechanical audience studies. Not only the aforementioned liquidity of social boundaries denies the effectiveness of such indicators in describing the complex motivations behind cultural consumption; these textbook-kind audience studies assume that cultural consumers are monomaniac entities driven by a social status whose symptoms are age, income and education. These analyses totally ignore the high proportion of old, affluent and formally educated people who simply refuse culture in both its roles of social assessment and shared enjoyment source: socio-demographic variables are not at all motivations for cultural consumption.

When opening a YouTube video of, say, Beethoven's 9th Symphony, II movement, many of the comments below the video are of the following sort: "Clockwork Orange brought me here"[7]; education and, more specifically, exposure to any form of arts and culture depends in most cases by unpredictable motivations and unsought inspiration. The patterns of learning are far from being a hieratic ascension to Mount Parnassus: quite the reverse, they pretty much resemble the map of a medieval city, unstructured, fluid, mixed, and as such, inspirational.

The parallel paths of development: creativity and heritage

The distinction between highbrow and lowbrow is mirrored by a further dichotomous classification in the cultural and creative domain: a dynamic, fluid form of cultural production, from cinema to pop music, runs parallel to the rigid diktats of heritage management, whose firmness is not so much responsive to a concern for heritage's physical preservation as it is a symptom of a missing strategy in the short as well as in the long period. In other words, creativity and heritage seldom meet on the urban arena of the contemporary city.

The notion of heritage, asserted with the UNESCO World Heritage Convention of 1972[8], was of crucial importance for the acknowledgment of the immortal cultural value of many artifacts and buildings to mankind, while providing solid ground for the identity claims of many populations worldwide (which, as we observed above, is a pivotal factor in contemporary politics); this notion, however, produced the effect of crystallising a sort of dualism between cultural production and the mere preservation of heritage, both tangible and intangible; this is particularly evident, for instance, not just in policies concerning tangible heritage, such as ancient buildings, but also in the case of intangible heritage preservation, such as opera or classical music where still the orientation to preserve and protect prevails upon any temptations of understanding that value can be generated by some processing, and that the institutional mummification of culture drains its dialogue with society and the audience, and at the same time keeps it isolated from the urban fabric and its community.

Tangible heritage, in facts, is subject to an extremely stern regulation concerning its uses; ancient theatres, temples and other buildings of this sort see their physical capital preserved almost with obsessive jealousy (and not without a sort of apocalyptic obsession), and very few are the occasions in which the scope of these sites' activities goes beyond the mere contemplation on behalf of astonished (or, more precisely, confused) tourists. Considerations over the carrying capacity and the physical maintenance of historical buildings, though fundamental in setting the boundaries of a sustainable adaptive reuse, often adopt a zero tolerance approach towards the vertical integration of built heritage as an input for the production of cultural goods such as live performances (Trimarchi, 2004); from a cultural perspective, the risk of this risk-averse strategy is to reduce the accumulation of joint cultural stock on behalf of consumers.

From the economic perspective, the opportunity cost of giving up a possible cross-subsidisation of heritage with other cultural activities is relevantly high; moreover, "limited enjoyment of built heritage could reduce visitors' willingness-to-pay and make the need for public or private financial support stronger" (Trimarchi, 2004: 10).

Especially in civil law countries (Bonini Baraldi, 2014), the adoption of NPM practices in the public sector and, consequently, cultural heritage management, were supposed to bridge the efficiency of the business system and public management by fostering efficiency,

---

[7] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p5favl2Qtx0
[8] For the evolution and development of UNESCO definitions on culture and cultural heritage, see Pereira Roders, A., and van Oers, R. (2011), *Editorial: bridging cultural heritage and sustainable development*, Journal of Heritage Management and Sustainable Development, 1:1.

"THE MOST DRAMATIC ASPECT OF THE SEPARATION BETWEEN HERITAGE AND THE CREATIVE, DYNAMIC SPHERE OF CULTURAL PRODUCTION LIES IN A PROGRESSIVE DECREASE OF THE CULTURAL STOCK GENERATED BY HERITAGE, AND OF THE CULTURAL VALUE ATTACHED TO IT"

inducing effectiveness, reducing public spending and speeding up bureaucratic procedures; it only resulted in confused hybrid forms of still publicly managed institutions, with ineffective reforms succeeding one another in an endless chain of doubled bureaucratic efforts.

This is not only the case of heritage buildings, subject to the rigid rule of preservation, lacking whatsoever strategic view for their uses and proper management, often to the detriment of financial sustainability. It is also the case of intangible heritage, and especially of most performing arts: from multifunctional public spaces, central to the social life of the city, theatres turned into improbable temples of 'beauty', their intangible heritage being firmly, irreducibly reproduced without ever appealing to other expressive media or without interacting with the outer spatial reality of its urban environment.

It is not by chance that, in the Italian criteria for public funding, social-oriented goals and educational activities are not accounted for when evaluating the eligibility of theatres for the assignment of funds; in their place stands the qualitative peer-based evaluation of supposedly qualified experts, which ends up favouring a vicious circle of uncritical heritage replication – such heritage being less controversial to assess in conventionally qualitative terms (Sabatini & Trimarchi, 2019).

While tastes and itineraries have changed, the business model of most performing arts institutions has not; other media, from TV shows to Netflix series, have absorbed and adopted the semantics of theatre, elaborating a powerful response to the usual immortal cultural instances, but through innovative forms of production and delivery channels; theatres, blaming the uneducated youngest generation for habits which theatre administrators do not understand, quietly await for the pavlovian response of their ever-decreasing audience to a cultural offer which is unlikely to arouse any interest *per se*, if it is not matched with clever visions for the future, innovative hybridisations with other forms of creativity, smart partnerships, and a wider and more even diffusion in the urban fabric.

The most dramatic aspect of the separation between heritage and the creative, dynamic sphere of cultural production (which can be roughly identified with the creative industries) lies in a progressive decrease of the cultural stock generated by heritage, and of the cultural value attached to it: the proper maintenance of heritage's cultural capital, only partly embodied by its physical shape, is at stake; a fracture is generated between the physical preservation of the building, and the preservation of its original value, of its value for the present generation and for the future one – which is at risk.

While, then, most institutions are facing everyday issues of financial sustainability and are struggling against time in the battle for physical maintenance of heritage sites, unaware of the changes occurring in their direct proximity, a fundamental aspect of the sustainability framework is unaccounted for: the cognitive dimension.

From the Bruntland perspective sustainability is reached by meeting "the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (UN, 1987: 15). In the cultural realm this view can be perhaps adjusted in more dauntless, farsighted terms, as cultural sustainable development shall deliver a cultural heritage to future generations in *an improved state* (Marx, 2014). Culture is not simply a renewable resource: it is cumulative, and has an infinite carrying capacity. Its sustainability as a renewable resource is however threatened by the uncertainty of transmission caused by its possible misuse (Bertacchini et al, 2012). In any case the concept itself of misuse appears to have been excessively adopted: for many cultural professionals even the simple use of cultural venues is often considered harmful and inappropriate.

In cultural production the many dimensions of sustainability are tightly intertwined: intergenerational equity, intragenerational equity, but also issues of identity and recognition, the production of cultural value and the increase of cultural stock; neither of these matters is neutral, and the way culture is managed and organised in the city strongly affects its beneficial externalities and the effects it produces, their features,

scale, and the way they are distributed among society. Such a complexity needs to be tackled from a holistic and integrated perspective.

Today, the primary feature of culture still appears to be separation: a separation which culture operates between social classes, between spaces of inclusion and exclusion, popular and high culture, centre and periphery – and, worse, knowledge centres and cognitive peripheries. The complexity of our times calls for diversity instead of separation, hybridisation instead of segmentation, unpredictable creative trails instead of divine artistic initiation. The modern multitude's quest for recognition and sharing calls for a culture which mirrors and personalises, crafts questions rather than dispatching answers: a contemporary Janus whose inheritance from the past is not mere contemplation of an idealised antiquity, but a milestone for building a still unpredictable future and inspiring new creative responses to the solicitations of the changing world.

Rappelez-vous le grand principe de votre siècle[9]

Julien, our personified metaphor of culture, has come to the end of his journey. His unscrupulous social climbing is not perhaps the most suitable prescription for a policy which should aspire at conveying the cultural value of heritage by tearing down the urban and social barriers to entry which characterise the organisation of culture today. And yet, there is a lot to learn from Stendhal's hero about the delicate art of mediation and compromise - and the risks it implies. In the case of culture, a zero-tolerance approach towards the changes of a supposedly barbarised society is, at the best, reckless; at the worst, suicidal.

Before being crystallised into protocols of production and consumption culture was made for and by the instances and encounters of societies; a sustainable use of heritage and production of culture, intended as the transmission of its real cultural value, passes through a new mutual recognition between culture and society, a reconciliation with new modes of living the urban space and new ways of experiencing culture. Rethinking policies and strategies for the cultural system is a preliminary step towards such a sustainability.

Context and adhocracy, the two pillars of local administration, make it difficult to draw a taxonomy of policy actions and best practices which may serve the purposes of an infinite diversity of local specificities. It is neither impossible nor useless, however, to draw some guidelines which could provide cultural policy with a suitable ad consistent orientation in the complexity of the contemporary environment.

Both public action and institutional initiatives can lead to a more sustainable relationship between culture and society, operating at different, interconnected levels: cross-sector partnerships challenge cultural enclosure while providing creativity and culture with new inputs from different sectors, while vertical integration between cultural heritage and other forms of cultural production enriches its cultural value and strengthens autonomy on the financial side thanks to cross-subsidisation; the structure of public funding, in its turn, should aim at enabling such autonomy: today public funding ensures the survival of institutions unable to dialogue with partners as well as their main stakeholders, i.e. the citizens; reversely, it should provide incentives for the development of financially sound and socially sustainable cultural projects; a smarter use of the space, both of theatre within the city and within the theatre itself is necessary: all of these aspects are dealt with in detail below. Cognitive sustainability proves the crucial source of value, since the material transmission of objects with no interpretation and elaboration would drain the cultural value chain; the effective transmission of the cultural value of heritage can be reached through its diffused and consistent enjoyment, as well as flexible and non-prejudicial interactions rather than stern physical preservation.

The fact that culture is written in the singular form accounts for its universal value to mankind, but leaves out the infinite multiplicity of cultural forms and expressions. Mediation and mutual exchanges occur at a subterranean level between cultures, but very few cultural organisations develop an effective network within and outside their respective sphere; cross-sector partnerships are fairly common among the NGOs as a powerful tool to tackle complex issues (Selsky & Parker, 2005); in a time where research on knowledge and culture as a commons demonstrate the pervasiveness and collectiveness of value generation processes (Hess & Ostrom, 2007), it is curious to notice how cultural organisations are, on the contrary, often isolated or, at best, rigidly sectorial in their partnerships (Lonkaric, 2014). This network enclosure limits the reach of cultural activities within the city and hinders a potential cross-fertilisation between the different cultural sectors.

[9] *"Remember the main rule of your century"*, Stendhal, op. cit.

Opera di Roma, for instance, has recently begun to associate its name with fashion: its La Traviata, a massive blockbuster production featuring costumes by Valentino, has earned more than 1,2 million euros in ticket presales only in 2016 (Beghelli, 2016), and it's been brought onstage every year since then; the recent Philip Glass soirée has put onstage the costumes by Dior's superstar Maria Grazia Chiuri (Beghelli, 2019). The enhanced visibility of the theatre to the eyes of a diversified audience is generated by a new creative product which combines high-quality elements from different cultural domains.

The networking issue is strictly related to that of vertical integration between different cultural activities – namely that of built heritage in the production of live performances; the rigid control over the type of activities to be performed in a Greek theatre, rather than being an effective enabler of preservation, is sometimes a too stern a priori rejection of any forms of entertainment which still hasn't entered the conventional domain of legitimacy. This issue is well illustrated in Trimarchi:

> *A few years ago the Greek-Roman Theatre in Taormina, Sicily, was denied for an acoustic concert of some rock band but given for the presentation of a new Formula One car (which was placed very close to the ancient columns). In the same way, the American rock singer Bruce Springsteen was denied the opportunity to perform in an acoustic concert at the Arena di Verona, due to explicit prohibition on the part of the Heritage Superintendent in Veneto. (2004: 2)*

If properly managed and protected from possible misuses, the vertical integration of cultural heritage is, on the contrary, a powerful driver of growth for both the economic and the cultural value of heritage (Trimarchi, 2004); this is but one among the many missing opportunities concerning a proper, though supposedly unconventional, use of heritage: the exposure of a still unaware audience to cultural artifacts which they might have not otherwise experienced. The missing opportunity of exposure is worsened in the absence of the potential financial benefits coming from the proper use of heritage.

Vertical integration does not simply generate consumption of mixed cultural stock: it can sometimes challenge creativity and elicit new forms of artistic production. This is the case when the barriers between highbrow and lowbrow are discussed, and heritage institutions either embrace new forms of expression, or new creative modes are generated by a different use of the space on behalf of such institutions themselves, once displaced in venues not commonly associated with culture or with 'highbrow' culture.

Partnerships and vertical integrations are, in addition, a useful driver of cross-subsidisation of cultural activities, determinant in enabling the (at least partial) financial autonomy of cultural heritage institutions. The cultural value of such sites and activities is an eminently valid justification for public support and funding, and it has too often been a lifebelt against inefficiency and the inability to interact with their complex surrounding environment. Especially among established institutions, the dimensions of performance evaluation usually range between monetary and qualitative (i.e. subjectively perceptive) indicators, while the 'environmental sustainability' or societal dimension is hardly ever accounted for (Hadida, 2015).

Similarly, and especially in the Italian experience, public support places a nominal emphasis on such a dimension while often discarding matters such as education, social inclusion, cross-sectorial activities, quality of urban life; these are not based on immediate economic and financial results but rather on the long-term strategy of demand construction.

Such a strategy cannot waive from a policy shift concerning the use of the urban space as well as of the theatrical one: the wider diffusion of a diversified cultural offer is not simply a matter of equity within the present generation (as in Throsby's definition of cultural sustainable development (1995)), but also provides different forms of culture with opportunities to merge and to produce new cultural stock which bridges heritage and creativity, while operating a balancing act between economic and artistic indicators, between innovation and preservation, between shaping demand and following it (Lampel et al, 2000). The physical displacement of the cultural offer could be a powerful driver of change by exogenous demand, meeting new audiences and tastes, and of change in the semiotic code of a form of art through the merging with other expressive media (Jones, Lorenzen & Sapsed, 2015).

Reversely, the combination of venues commonly associated with the 'high' culture challenges culture's conventional use of the space, producing unpredictable short-circuits between places, people, culture. It is the case, for example, of *Opéra Underground*, the World music festival held at the Opéra de Lyon every year, holding popular and alternative music concerts in unconventional venues (Opéra Nationale de Lyon website).

Moreover, according to Bandura's social cognitive

"THE PREVAILING WEIGHT OF A VIEW ACCORDING TO WHICH CULTURE IS OBJECTIVE, SOMEHOW SCULPTED ON BRONZE, AND THE AUDIENCE HAS A SORT OF DUTY TO ACCEPT AND ABSORB ITS 'MESSAGE', ENDED UP DRAINING MANY OF THE SEMANTIC AND DIALOGIC OPTIONS"

theory of sustainable behaviour (1986), the motivation and types of actions taken by individuals depend on their empathy towards sustainability. The idea of empathy is particularly relevant in the cultural domain: sustainable policy design begins with the awareness that people would rather partake to and support activities to which they feel an emotional proximity. In Bologna, a crowdfunding campaign contributed to the restoration of the historical arches climbing the surrounding hills up to the Sanctuary of S. Luca; people were given the possibility to contribute to the restoration by 'adopting' a portion of the arches in exchange for a special mention by the local administration and constant information on the progression of the works (Un passo per San Luca website).

The crucial importance of public support is matched to a rising interest on the part of communities to contribute directly to the maintenance and sustainability of what they perceive as a common good. Innovation in management generates new forms of heritage expression, bridging creativity and tradition. This is an unprecedented shift: preservation is exchanged now with transmission, defining a new modality of preservation through innovation: a sustainable paradigm of collective responsibility towards a shared culture. This could have, in the future, significant implications not only in heritage management, but in cultural economics as a whole: a line is drawn for good between willingness-to-pay and willingness-to-*contribute*.

Concluding remarks

Our investigation and exploration in the delicate area of cultural sustainability has revealed the likely endemic weakness of the cultural system in its still prevailing shape and structure. Although the long, and still lively, debate on culture identifies both the lack of funds and the ignorance of society as the ultimate responsible for the progressive decay and the eventual extinction of culture, facts clearly show the opposite: culture as a varied, multiple, plural and unpredictable approach

and content is being shared and diffused by wider layers of a sophisticated and complex society, while its conventional containers and rites prove growingly obsolete and certainly unrelated to the ferments and visions of contemporary society. Nobody can anymore assess that the fault is somebody else's.

The prevailing weight of a view according to which culture is objective, somehow sculpted on bronze, and the audience has a sort of duty to accept and absorb its 'message', ended up draining many of the semantic and dialogic options. In the most recent years a growing slice of society is enjoying culture on the web, in non-conventional spaces, at home. This is not a deterrent against the direct consumption. It is certainly true that the personal presence in theatres and museums is a necessary condition for the cultural value chain to be activated; but it appears to be less and less sufficient, since a wide set of knowledge, critical interpretation, cognitive connections and further desires arises from the integrated combination and fertilisation among the myriad of information related to each artwork, be it tangible or intangible.

In such a respect, the rituality of conventional formats (affecting both supply and demand) is slowly but firmly fading away: not only it misses the needed integration of information and knowledge that responds to the perceptive expectations and critical desires of contemporary society, but it also ends up emphasising the static and crystallised features of an old-fashioned protocol whereby only a club of initiated individuals was admitted and accepted in cultural sanctuaries. Following such a rigid and exclusive approach the cultural heritage conveyed to future generations (also to ourselves in the future) would have consisted of stones, objects, manufacts certainly noble but almost dumb, due to the limited elaboration of knowledge and the prevailing taxonomic and conventional interpretation which is still diffused in guided tours, catalogues, programs, and all the information that should provoke rather than instruct the audience.

The strength of culture consists in its ability to witness the spirit of time when it was created and crafted, and at the same time to anticipate the spirit

of time of its present audience. On the contrary, the strategy (rather, the tactics) presently pursued by the majority of cultural organisations is being developed and carried out along a contradictory blade: the container remains exclusive and gives the clear message that who trespasses the threshold should 'deserve' it; the artifacts (both tangible and intangible) are displayed in a ritual way, like on altars and ritual boxes; the audience is expected to be already informed and to follow a pre-cooked physical and cognitive trail. Since this approach has proved clearly unable to raise the needed funds, some special effects are being added, from blockbuster exhibitions to merchandises, from unusual experiences generated by the superficial adoption of digital tricks to fashionable attractions.

Reactionary in its protocols, cheap in its decorations, cultural supply can face contemporary society and its cognitive expectations only if it discusses, and possibly overcomes, the rigidity of its framework, acknowledging that a versatile and multiple value can be much stronger than a rigid and mummified box. The changing urban fabric, less and less subject to functional and hierarchic dynamics, expects cultural spaces to be accessible, welcoming and inclusive. In such a way culture can be extensively spread and intensively shared, and its sustainability can be credibly pursued and improved.

REFERENCES

BALESTRA, C.; MALAGUTI, A. (2000) *Organizzare Musica: Legislazione, produzione, distribuzione, gestione nel sistema italiano*, Milano: Franco Angeli.

BANDURA, A., (1986) *Social foundations of thought and action: A social cognitive theory*, Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

BERTACCHINI, E.; BRAVO, G.; MARRELLI, M.; SANTAGATA, W. (2012) *Cultural Commons: A New Perspective on the Production and Evolution of Cultures*, Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar Publishing.

BONINI BARALDI, S. (2014), *Evaluating Results of Public Sector Reforms in Rechtsstaat Countries: The Role of Context and Processes in the Reform of the Italian and French Cultural Heritage System,* International Public Management Journal, 17:3, 411-432.

BORIN, E.; Donato, F. (2015) Unlocking the potential of IC in Italian Cultural Ecosystems, *Journal of intellectual capital*, 16:2, 285-304.

CALHOUN, C. (1995) The politics of identity and recognition, in Calhoun, C., *Critical Social Theory*, Oxford: Blackwell.

CORSANI, E., LAZZARATO, M. (2009), *Intermittents et précaires,* Paris: Amsterdam.

D'OVIDIO, M. (2016) *The creative city does not exist. Critical essays on the creative and cultural economy of cities*, Milano: Ledizioni.

EGLENE, O. (2003) Conducting Best and Current Practices Research: A Starter Kit, Center for Technology in Government, Albany.

FLORIDA, R. (2002). *The rise of the creative class. And how it's transforming work, leisure, community and everyday life.* New York: Basic Books.

GROSS, J.; WILSON, N. (2018) Cultural democracy: an ecological and capabilities approach, *International journal of cultural policy*, 26:3, 328-343.

HADIDA, A. L. (2015), Performance in the creative industries, in T*he Oxford Handbook of Creative Industries*, Jones C., Lorenzen M., Sapsed J. (ed.) Oxford: Oxford UniversityPress.

HARDT, M.; NEGRI, A. (2009) *Commonwealth*, Cambridge (MA): Harvard University Press.

HARVEY, D. (2012) *Rebel cities: from the right to the city to the urban revolution,* New York: Verso.

HARVEY, D. (2005) *Paris, capital of modernity,* London: Routledge.

HESS, C., & OSTROM, E. (eds.) (2007), *Understanding knowledge as a commons. From theory to practice*, Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press.

JONES, C.; LORENZEN, M.; SAPSED, J. (2015) Creative Industries: a typology of change, in Jones, C., Lorenzen, M, and Sapsed, J. (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Creative Industries*, Oxford: The Oxford University Press.

KEUCHEYAN, R. (2010) *Emisphère Gauche. Une cartographie des nouvelles pensées critiques,* Paris : La Découverte.

KRUGER, L. (2012) *What time is this place? Continuity, conflict and the right to the city),* in Fischer-Lichte, E., and Wishutz, B. (eds.) (2012), *Performance and the politics of space: theatre and topology,* London: Routledge.

LAMPEL, J., LANT, T., & SHAMSIE, J. (2000) Balancing act: Learning from organizing practices in cultural industries. *Organization science,* 11.3: 263-269.

LEFEBVRE, H. (2009), *Le droit à la ville,* Paris: Economica (1st ed. 1968).

MARX, K., in WALL, D. (2014), *The Commons in History: Culture, Conflict and Ecology,* Boston: The MIT Press.

MOULIER-BOUTANG, Y. (2007), *Le capitalisme cognitif. La nouvelle grande transformation,* Paris : Amsterdam.

PEREIRA RODERS, A.; VAN OERS, R. (2011) Editorial: bridging cultural heritage and sustainable development, *Journal of Heritage Management and Sustainable Development,* 1:1.

POLANYI, K. (2002) *The great transformation: on the political and economic origins of our time,* Boston: Beacon Press (1st ed. 1944).

SABATINI, F.; TRIMARCHI, M. (2019) Regulating the stage: storms, wrecks and lifebelts in the Italian experience, *Athens Journal of Mediterranean Studies,* 5(2), pp. 105-120.

SCOTT, A. J., (2007), *Capitalism and Urbanization in a New Key? The Cognitive-Cultural Dimension,* Social Forces, 85:4, pp.1465-1482.

SELSKY, J. W.; PARKER, B. (2005) Cross-sector partnerships to address social issues: challenges to theory and practice, *Journal of Management,* 31(6), pp. 849-873.

SENNETT, R. (2018) *Building and dwelling: ethics for the city,* Farrar Straus & Giroux.

STENDHAL, *Le rouge et le noir,* Paris: Folio Classique, 2000 (1st ed. 1830).

TAYLOR, C. (1992) *Multiculturalism and the "Politics of Recognition",* Princeton: Princeton University Press.

THROSBY, D. (2001) *Economics and culture,* Cambridge University Press.

THROSBY, D. (1995) *Culture, economics and sustainability,* Journal of Cultural Economics, 19:3, pp. 199-206.

TRIMARCHI, M. (2004) Regulation, Integration and Sustainability in the Cultural Sector, *International Journal of Heritage Studies,* 10(5), pp. 401-15.

VAN HEK, M., & KRAYYKAMP, G. (2013), Cultural consumption across countries: A multi-level analysis of social inequality in highbrow culture in Europe, *Poetics,* 41:4, pp. 323-341.

United Nations (1987). Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development. Our Common Future. Available at: https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/5987our-common-future.pdf

VENTURA, R. A. (2019) *La guerra di tutti. Populismo, terrore e crisi della società liberale,* Roma: Minimum Fax.

VIRNO, P. (2001) *Grammatica della moltitudine: per una analisi delle forme di vita contemporanee,* Roma: DeriveApprodi.

SITOGRAPHY

BEGHELLI, C. (2016) Valentino firma La Traviata a Roma. Per il Teatro dell'Opera il più grande incasso di sempre, ancor prima del debutto, *Il sole 24 ore,* 16 May 2016, https://st.ilsole24ore.com/art/moda/2016-05-20/valentino-firma-traviata-roma-il-teatro-dell-opera-piu-grande-incasso-sempre-ancor-prima-debutto-164451.shtml?uuid=ADYwSIM

BEGHELLI, C. (2019) Un balletto con costumi Dior per il Teatro dell'Opera di Roma racconta il legame fra la maison e la danza, *Il sole 24 ore,* 12 March

2019, https://www.ilsole24ore.com/art/un-balletto-costumi-dior-il-teatro-dell-opera-roma-racconta-legame-la-maison-e-danza-ABNl9GdB, accessed March 4th, 2020.

FAVALE, M. (2018) Il crollo dei Musei civici a Roma, "100 mila visitatori in meno", la repubblica Roma, 13 September 2018, https://roma.repubblica.it/cronaca/2018/09/13/news/il_crollo_dei_musei_civici_a_roma_100_mila_visitatori_in_meno_-206307146/, accessed December 17th, 2020

LONKARIC, B. (2014) Cross-sector partnerships and creative collaboration, *Arts Management Network,* 10 January 2018, https://www.artsmanagement.net/Articles/Research-Cross-sector-partnership-and-creative collaboration,3651, accessed September 3rd, 2019.

Opéra Undergroud, Opéra Nationale de Lyon, https://www.opera-lyon.com/en/programmation/opera-underground, Accessed September 17th, 2019.

TRIMARCHI, M. (2014) **From Ivory Towers to the Urban Texture**, Innovate Heritage, June 8, 2014: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JcfrDFIjXjw, accessed October, 1st, 2019.

Un passo per San Luca, http://www.unpassopersanluca.it/, accessed March, 4th, 2020.

To cite this article:

SABATINI, F & TRIMARCHI, M. (2020). Challenging spaces and formats of culture in the city: highlights on the future of cultural heritage management. *European Journal of Cultural Management and Policy*, 10 (1), pp. 19-31.