

Living the Culture through the *Commoning*

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Abstract. *Cultural heritage is the legacy of sites, things, traditions and practises a society regards as worthy of conservation. The purpose of this paper is to explore how we can take advantage of the Cultural Heritage materials through the processes of commoning. The importance of Cultural Heritage, together with the transfer of its values, must pass through a well-rounded cultural education, relying on lifelong and continuous learning that contributes to building a collective awareness of the topic. So, Cultural heritage can be considered an important development resource: the measures to take in order to enhance the role of Cultural Heritage include collective projects linked to the environment of the territory and the symbols connected to it. For this reason, the joint intervention of public and private entities, the cultural sector and the third sector is needed for an overall participatory enhancement and the creation of integrated cultural paths.*

Keywords. Commoning, education, growth, cultural, resources, territory

1 Introduction

Cultural heritage includes artefacts, monuments, a group of buildings and sites, museums that have a diversity of values including symbolic, historic, artistic, aesthetic, ethnological or anthropological, scientific and social significance. It includes tangible heritage (movable, immobile and underwater), intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) embedded into cultural, and natural heritage artefacts, sites or monuments. [12]

The purpose of this paper is not to investigate all these meanings. Rather, the purpose is related to the role of Cultural Heritage as an expression of the ways of living developed by a community and passed on from generation to generation, including customs, practices, places, objects, artistic expressions, and values. [2] Most social scientists emphasise the heritage functions for supporting ethnic, national, and elite interests and it is important to consider the heritage a common good. The "common goods" have a fundamental importance in the relationship between a territory and the culture to which they belong, as they are the object of a strong production of practices and meaning by different movements and social groups. [6] This poses a number of social and economic questions beyond the immediate question of how much are people willing to pay to consume (use, see, experience) different cultural goods. First of all: how is a collective identity built? What are the practices to be carried out? What role does communication play? Are there differences in preferences and utility for cultural goods with physical and social distance? The paper will show how these questions can inform Cultural Heritage management decisions.

2 Background

When we talk about "heritage" (both in the natural and cultural sense) we immediately think about contemplation, aesthetic enjoyment, the need to preserve it and pass it on to future generations as well. In truth, this is only a small fragment of what should be considered.

Material and intangible heritage are closely related. All intangible aspects such as knowledge systems, the principles of action or the values and beliefs of man, cannot be considered as heritage if they cannot be shared. Also, material or tangible heritage reaches its full significance when it refers to the knowledge and values that constitute its essence, and give meaning to its production. [3]

The identity of a community is inevitably linked to its geography, its buildings, its history and its leaders. [8]

The characteristics of each territory tend to be incorporated within symbolic meanings.

The geography itself fits into a metaphorical description of the territory, made up of symbols created and transformed by the culture to which they belong and which gives life to experiences of common growth.

Some examples are: *Mount Kailash*, in Tibet; It is sacred three times (Buddhists, Hindus and Jains) and it is considered *Azis Mundi* (center of the universe). *Glastonbury Tor*, in

England, *the Sedona Vortices* in Arizona or *Crater Lake* in Oregon, already dear to the Klamath Native American tradition.

The geographical analysis of the territorial context helps to grow the sentiment and spatial ideas of man in the overall experience. In order to take care of places, it is necessary to know how to interpret values, identity, ways to communicate and know how to value an asset.

From a social and critical perspective, it is therefore possible to underline the performative dimension of geography which, on the basis of physical space, produces places and territories, also through their use and their dialectical construction.

The constant production of space calls attention to the continuity of social events and, then, reinforces the need to overcome the museum dimension, which in the classical sense presupposes a hibernation of a place in a time, to focus attention on how the elements of Cultural Heritage and their use participate in the construction of contemporary societies.

This is why it appears necessary to highlight the importance of reflecting on the scalariness of the theme, from a geographical point of view and in line with the overall reflection of the article. Although there is a frequent tendency to define and spatially limit a social phenomenon, delimiting its relations and influences is almost impossible. This, although valid for the physical elements, is even more evident for the immaterial aspects which, physiologically, constitute a spatial *continuum*. From this also derives the complexity, conceptual and operational, in the determination of the actors assigned to the management of Cultural Heritage which, obviously, cannot be defined only on a spatial basis.

Good communication of Cultural Heritage develops community building strategies that bring together the world of culture, the socio-economic fabric, the world of research and citizenship as a whole, enhancing the tangible and intangible assets that characterise the territory that surrounds us. The Cultural Heritage, in fact, represents one of the most strategic communicative resources for building and strengthening the territorial identity through the involvement of all the different stakeholders who populate it. Communities are the main actors in the formation of the culture of their territory; In fact, the formation of culture is a process in continuous development and it never stops. Quoting the Chinese-American geographer Yi-Fu Tuan, «*It is the people who create the places*». [11]

Cultural Heritage certainly plays a key role in local development processes, because it is able to facilitate the building of relationships and can allow the development of integrated territorial transformation policies, and new virtuous economic sectors capable of producing income to be reinvested in services and improve the quality of life for local communities. These objectives are decidedly demanding to achieve and involve strong social cohesion and new actions of empowerment on the part of individuals towards the care and management of the "common good", of their "cultural landscape".

Considering the Cultural Heritage as an element in support of the local economy, it is necessary to question the process of social construction and therefore evaluate the set of existing values in the territory. This means taking advantage of living culture as the setting for cultural growth. The concept of *living culture* is at the centre of any process of cultural and global development. As taught by Roland Colin, a student of L.J. Lebreton in the sixties, «*it is only in full possession of their own culture that a people can be responsible for their*

own development. Development can be defined for a people only by the people themselves, in the language of their culture". [3] These words highlight the sense of community commitment to development, a sense that must be shared, understood, inherent in the culture of every place and belonging to every group.

3 Practices and horizon for the development of common spaces

In order to exploit a territory's energy as better as possible, we should ask ourselves "why" a good exists and "why" it allows you to satisfy a certain need and whose usefulness is reflected in the community (living, remembering, eating, practising a religion...) Secondly, we should ask "how" engage the crowd by lowering targeting barriers.

Each cultural good can serve many things together, depending on the state and local development: the contribution of the historian Hugues de Varine [3] in this regard helps us to better understand this discussion. From his lessons it clearly emerges that talking only about cultural consumption is not enough to guarantee (social and economic) development, because the consumption of this heritage will benefit a small number of people. In order to consider it as a real resource, it must be made available to all and to the entire development process (meaning that it should be destined not only to culture or tourism, but to society as a whole, therefore to the economy, education, identity, employment...)

Among the many forms of utility we certainly find research activity, especially university, thanks to the propensity that certain territories have to favour such study circumstances.¹ [5]

The forms of utility of each territory determine the action plan. But which elements of a territory should be considered wealth and which not? This question is fundamental because it introduces a careful selection process that is reflected in both tangible and intangible assets. This process must also consider the historical and social evolution of peoples, the continuous changes and cultural developments (both positive and negative).

The starting point is the analysis of places and the understanding of how culture is concentrated in different territorial contexts: in fact, the common good is built not so much as an object or as a social process, but as an unstable and malleable relationship between a specific (social) group and the aspects already existing or yet to be created of the physical environment or essential relationships. This relationship has a name: we really talk about *commoning*. [7] This term is perhaps one of the few that does not have a literal and precise translation, as it usually refers to real concrete practices that aim to enhance "everything we have in common" starting from sharing problems and approaches to the territory. [4]

The theory of common goods, in a nutshell, was developed in the 1960s starting from the studies of Garrett Hardin and subsequently deepened by the research conducted by Elinor

¹ In Brazil, the presence of a wide area of the Atlantic forest has made it possible to use considerable funding for local development by international organisations interested in the study of the biosphere. The Maestrazgo Natural Park, in Aragon, is testimony to how the living culture of the territory manages to be a key factor of development. [5]

Ostrom on common goods. These theories have materialized in different ways in practice, from direct action by citizens to dialogue with institutions. Movements of regeneration have begun from below, born not only with the idea of regaining possession of the spaces but with the intention of safeguarding them. [5]

Districts, universities, open source communities, living labs, co-working environments, are ideal places on which to base opportunities for exchange, a continuous give-and-take that makes the basket of practical knowledge spread patchy. This attitude leads to the maturation of a creative habitat with the following characteristics: human capital, continuous learning, proximity both in geographic and cognitive meanings. [1]

The theme of the governance of common goods meets the theme of competitiveness and innovation and is a favourable ground for promoting collaboration with the recipients of a service. The underlying fact is to create a society where institutions facilitate and support collective action and develop opportunities for interaction; the local community adopt cooperative behaviors in the configuration, for example, of common rules for the use of the property. In the inclusion of experiences for the community, the inclusion of sites, of symbolic places - such as those mentioned above, the strategic location of resources - must be carefully considered: creating a more intense network would also distribute the same benefits more homogeneously. [8] [10]

In conclusion, Cultural Heritage proves to be an interesting driver of development from different points of view: among measures to be taken to enhance the role of Cultural Heritage local strategies are very important which, exploiting the concept of proximity, they can activate forms of sustainable tourism in the area and projects related to the environment. [9]

For the success of these objectives, it's important to rely on the joint intervention of public organizations and the private sector, the cultural sector, education and the third sector; it is needed an overall participatory enhancement and the creation of integrated cultural paths, involving more important cultural realities than others with less power of attraction or with difficulties.

By ensuring operational support for the planning of "good practices" aimed at cultural and tourist development, it is possible to orientate oneself even better with a view to a shared enhancement of all the resources that make up the identity of a territory.

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