

## European Capitals of Culture: structures and infrastructures

Culture and territory. A pair with an ancient but actual flair. A binomial that a growing number of public managers choose as the asset to economic development and to increase the quality of life, like in Qatar, where culture has peeped out with a certain delay on the desks of the European Union.

At first excluded from EU subjects and focuses, culture has been recognized only at the beginning of the 90s as a subsidiary competence, while on the contrary, it would have been the essence of the integration in the European project. As Jean Monnet, one of the fathers and founders of Europe stated, "If Europe has to be rebuilt, maybe we should start from culture".

The absence of a real and shared cultural project should have been inserted in the process of economic integration to reinforce the EU directives. From a different perspective, it is to say that the absence of an economic structure, deprived of its cultural infrastructure, is visible in the diffused phenomena of dissatisfaction towards the European institutions, in the many misunderstandings and in the race amongst member states.

Starting from this lack of infrastructures, the European institutions have settled a process to reinvent an intervention towards culture. A clear process that can be understood if we look at the evolution of European Capitals of Culture, one of the main focus in the articles of the present Tafter Journal number. As Alexander Tölle observed, European Capitals of Culture were born as cultural events to celebrate diversity and the European shared values, but then evolved at first as "urban regeneration engines", as the cases of Glasgow and of the Ruhr, and then, in more recent times, as tools of urban development for regional reintegration, as in the case of Lille in 2004.

If a compared confrontation between Germany, France and Poland is the other surplus value coming from Tölle's article, we also need to ask ourselves if Italy has really perceived the current change. The dense competition between the Italian cities running for the title of European Capital of Culture 2019, makes us think of a negative answer.

Yet, the article entitled *Towards a "Creative Ravenna". Capitalizing on the ECoC process to build a CCIs strategy* reflects about the experience of the city of Ravenna, where it emerges that the race in the selection to become a European Capital of Culture, although unsuccessfully ended, overtook the initial short period perspective to capitalize investments in human and economic resources and activated a process to renovate infrastructures focusing on culture and creative assets.

Short after the proclamation of Matera as European Capital of Culture 2019, what we wish is that this victory will be the occasion to start a long term grow, based on investments not just as "current capital" like cultural events and festivals, but rather as "capital expenditures" like investing in infrastructures. We hope that Matera will endorse, with a networking perspective, its richness in culture, territory and people, a process that was already adopted during the candidacy and that will now have a real chance to come true.



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