

Cultural Heritage between administrative organization and non-for-profit initiative

Italian Cultural Heritage is worldwide acknowledged. Artworks, Archaeological Sites, Museums and even whole cities are by now part of the collective imaginary.

In spite of this, there are several criticalities characterizing Italian Cultural Heritage. Most of them are the results of an anachronistic interpretation of the role that Cultural Heritage could play in our daily lives.

Following this interpretation, Cultural Heritage should not be associated with (direct or indirect) private intervention because private intervention is only targeted to a “profit” and the “profit” is a great enemy for the public interest.

Regardless of how unreasonable it may sound, this has been, for long, the unexpressed belief of many Italian Cultural Operators and decision makers.

This interpretation led several consequences that could be summarized in an almost completely public management of Cultural Heritage, performed regardless to the results of the activity run by the public administration.

Fortunately, in recent years the “cultural establishment” acknowledged the need for a change that was widespread invoked by cultural practitioner and civil society.

Obviously, this “switch” is also the result of the substantial evolution that has characterized the Cultural Heritage Management globally as well as the transition from an industrial-led economy to a knowledge-led economy.

The main effects of this change are in everyone’s eyes: never in history as today, are museums in many countries, the living center of the society. Cultural Heritage and Activities are at the very heart of urban development and, most of all, it has been finally acknowledged that Cultural Heritage and Activities could be one of the key economic sectors for the development of entire regions or countries.

In order to improve its efficiency, today and to solve the criticalities that, for long, has characterized the management of Italian Cultural Heritage, the Government is trying to evolve the entire institutional framework of the Ministry.

Having said that, a common belief (that no lacks of empirical tests) states that the civil intervention (properly organized in the non-profit-sector) grows when there is a lack of public presence.

Indeed, also in cultural field, the growing rates of Cultural Associations demography and other kinds of non-profit-entities show that civil society tried in the last century in closing the loopholes of the public administration. In doing so, the non-for-profit sector designed projects, created valorization intervention, interpreted the cultural heritage in a different and innovative way.

Is this the best time to reiterate this assumption: as the paper written by Faranda widely described, frequent reforms have been designed in order to better define the Ministry Organizational Structure. In this overall rethinking of the Ministerial Offices and Responsibilities, a separation between the conservation principles and valorization activities remain.

Nevertheless, as demonstrated by Baione, there are, in Italy, organizations that in their daily routines include both conservation and valorization tasks. In other words, in the world of who work practically with (or for) the Cultural Heritage, it is quite impossible (and surely inefficient) to perform separate conservation and valorization actions.

These kinds of intervention are in a mutual dependency relationship.

The reading of the two articles allows us to understand such a relationship, and we hope that the public stakeholder could see it too.

Keeping these fields divided in the overall ministerial organization implies a disconnection between policymakers and cultural professionals.

This number of Tafter Journal talks about this: the opportunity for the Public Administration to follow, once again, the operational guideline that other sector (as, the non-for-profit sector) have already tested.



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