

ART AS CULTURAL DIPLOMACY – CONFERENCE ICD – LONDON – OCTOBER 15TH – 17TH 2014. THE BUSINESS OF CONSERVATION? RISKS AND OPPORTUNITIES OF TOURISTIC MANAGEMENT OF CULTURAL ASSETS IN EUROPE

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Abstract english

Cultural Heritage and tourism appear historically as two very distant categories and concepts. Conservation of monuments, naturalistic sites, and the landscape, has always been in contrast with economic development and in particular with a spreading tourism. Nevertheless, since the 1950s-1960s, many governments have tried to build a deeper connection between economy and conservation, following a new idea of conservation and tutelage, useful also to an economic development. The paper will focus on the theoretical basis of this contrast, defining the different concepts of cultural heritage management and tourism, and the different ways of economic management of cultural heritage in Europe. It will examine specifically the case of Italy during the phase of beginning of an economic idea of cultural heritage management, concluding with a reflexion on the new possibilities and risks of cultural tourism in Europe.

The objective of this paper is to present a problematic reflection on the concept of 'cultural tourism', and about the risks and opportunities that an economic management of cultural assets can offer in the current global financial situation, especially since the advent of globalization and the explosion of the great recession in 2007-2008. These are problematic reflections, hence there is not an articulated analysis, which would not be possible in such a short presentation. The reflections begin with the historical background of the politics of management of cultural assets, following the evolution of these politics, and hypothesizing several possible future developments.

I will develop my analysis along three main objectives, which I briefly state below:

- The issue of terminology and methodology: What do we mean by "economy of cultural assets", 'cultural enterprise', and 'cultural tourism'?
- A presentation of the historical framework: How did the politics of management of cultural assets evolve, from an aesthetic acceptance of cultural heritage to an idea of a 'cultural economy'?
- Reflections on the current state of the politics of management and actions aimed at economic uses of cultural assets.

Our analysis will be comparative in nature, looking at several of the most important examples of cultural asset management inside and outside of Europe, but will focus especially on the case of Italy.

Let's begin with the issue of terminology and methodology: What does it mean to study the politics of management of cultural assets from an economic point of view; What do we mean by "economy of cultural assets", 'cultural enterprise', and 'cultural tourism'?

Regarding the methodology, both in the study and in the articulation of the politics of cultural assets,

we can speak of an evolution in three stages which stretches from the late 19th century through the entire 20th century:

1. The first stage, contextualized from the end of the 19th century through the first decades of the 20th, with the emergence of a sensibility and organized protectionary movement, in which the concern for cultural assets is characterized by two fundamental elements:
 2. a) an aesthetic definition of cultural assets, understood as objects to take care of in relation to beauty and historical value, that is, as symbolic elements of a country's national history;
 1. b) a profound contradiction between the recognition of cultural assets as a 'public' heritage which, however, is primarily under private ownership: a contradiction that sets off struggles, often quite serious, between the state and the owners. We can say that this stage lasts until the end of WWII and is common, albeit with several differences, to all the European countries.
2. A second stage, which begins at the end of WWII and lasts until the 1970s/80s, in which cultural asset stewardship is characterized by two fundamental elements:
 3. a) the recognition of cultural assets as public assets and of their enjoyment/use as a public right inserted in the European constitution: such as the example of the Weimar constitution of 1919-the first to use this recognition-this principle comes to be inserted in all the fundamental charters;
 4. b) A definition of cultural assets of a historical-anthropological-social nature, that is, as a 'testament of civilization', an element of the social development of each nation;
3. A third stage-which begins in the 1980s and continue today-in which cultural assets are qualified as 'economic goods of production', that is, as a good which may receive public investment and which- if used wisely- may produce revenue. This stage, which had its precursors in America's Great Society of the 1960s or in France in the Ministry of Culture created by De Gaulle, took off especially in the face of the economic situation of the 1980s/90s.

This third stage is justified by three fundamental elements:

- The uniqueness of cultural assets (historical, artistic, and natural);
- Their current use, often not linked to an economic use.
- Their future productivity, which may become a source of wealth for future generations.

This stage is however also marked by three criticalities or paradoxes:

- The capacity for preservation diminishes with the increase in the engagement of preservation:

the more cultural assets preserved, the less resources can be dedicated to each asset;

- Preservation – linked to maximizing the possibility of choices for future generations, diminishes the possibility of usage by current generations;
- Preservation requires choices: every marginal quantity of preservation investment destined for X will be taken away from the preservation of Y.

At this point there arises the issue of the economic usage of cultural assets, and thus the problem of understanding how cultural assets can be used for economic ends. So, what is meant by 'cultural enterprise'? The principal difference between cultural enterprise and other types of enterprise resides in the particular character of the focus:

1. a) The prevailing public interest in the cultural asset;
2. b) The unique and irreplaceable nature of the cultural asset.

Regarding the first element, we refer to O'Hagan's 1998 definition, according to which economic externalities present in the cultural assets are related to:

- The development of a shared common identity;
- The incrementation of desirability for tourists;
- The so-called "option demand for future generations";
- Urban renewal and improvement to civic life.

Regarding the second point, we indicate the characteristics which Pfeffer and Salancik underlined in 1978 as intrinsic to cultural assets:

- Valuable;
- Rare;
- Imperfectly imitable;
- Non-substitutable.

Thus, what are the mission and managerial characteristics of cultural enterprise? As regards the mission, we must consider that the cultural enterprise – in the long debate which, since Keynes, has been carried out over the possibility to earn wealth through a cultural asset- is characterized by four fundamental elements:

- Prevailing lack of for-profit motives;
- Preminent cultural ends
- The presence of a structured, permanent complex of resources to manage;
- Excludability, that is, the fact that access to the services provided-the enjoyment of the asset- is not simply open but instead is regulated.

As regards the mechanisms of management, it's necessary to consider several other elements:

1. a) the politics of financing, in which we observe a prevalence of public funding, but also the development, especially in recent decades, of public-private partnerships, especially regarding outsourcing of the management services from public to private;

b) The problem of expenses and consequently of pricing, which continues to generate ample debate about containing the cost of admission tickets, which cannot be simply determined by market logic given the social function of cultural heritage;

c) Consequently the issue of social sustainability of management of cultural assets, a management which must be considered in terms of the environment, the education, and the urban and civic renewal of a place.

Given these considerations, and to conclude these methodological reflections, what do we mean by 'cultural tourism'? In general we define cultural tourism as a tourism which has as its object the cultural contents, and in this sense distances itself from more traditional recreational tourism, having instead the goal of knowledge. At its base it has the content much more than the client and is spread among certain generational and social lines. We can use the definition proposed by the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO)

"Cultural tourism represents all the travels of people motivated by cultural aims such as study holidays, participation in live performances, festivals, cultural events, visits to archeological sites and monuments, pilgrimages. Cultural tourism is also about the pleasure of immersing oneself in the local lifestyle and everything that creates this identity and local character".

At this point, having clarified the fundamental elements of methods, the second issue to consider is the historical evolution of the politics of management of cultural assets. We seek a response to these questions: How have the politics of cultural management evolved over time? And, in particular, when did the interest in using cultural assets for economic gain emerge, leading towards cultural tourism? We'll look at this issue with particular reference to Italy but placing it in a comparative framework that considers the principle case of the politics of management at the European and international levels.

In Italy, the politics of management of cultural assets was characterized from the start by several elements which in part assimilated, but largely differentiated it from other countries. Here briefly are these elements:

- a) An aesthetical acceptance of heritage: Cultural assets are protected as elements of beauty and as symbolic references of national history: A typical case was the law regarding the pine forest of Ravenna, in 1905, protected not because it was a natural site but because it was cited by Dante. This poses a difference compared to the American model: In the United States, the militaristic projection

of national history brought protection especially to cemeteries and battlefield parks. But, next to these sites came protection of important natural sites: in 1872 the park of Yellowstone was put under protection;

1. b) A centralist framework of the administrative organization of protection hinging on a General Direction for Antiquities and Fine Arts and a network of Superintendents throughout the territory, following the French and Napoleonic model;

c) A contradictory relationship between protection of public assets and private property, only resolved by the Constitutional recognition of the principle of protection;

1. d) Private associations had only modest impact on protection: the spread of Italian heritage associations never reached the importance of England's National Trust, which instead was from its founding one of the principal actors in the British system of protection;

1. e) An antimodernist stance of protection: Cultural assets are protected against the risks that greater industrialization-and in this sense also mass tourism-bring.

So, when is there a change in these tracers? When does the idea of investment in cultural assets for cultural tourism emerge? In reality, we must say that Italy is historically characterized by a singular contradiction: While cultural assets are protected especially at the start with the idea to defend them from the risks of mass tourism, the tradition of 'educational travel', of the 'Grand Tour', is one of the most common dynamics in Italy, going back to the era of Goethe and 18th century neoclassicism. The growth of tourism travel, and educational travel, belongs in Italy to two great historical periods: The start of the 20th century, the era of Giolitti, when the first wave of industrialization began, favors the growth of vacations; then, the period of the 1950s-1960s, when the second economic boom, the so-called 'economic miracle', arrived, favored a further and even greater growth. In both stages, the cultural and political debates of the time saw tourism as a risk towards cultural heritage, in consideration of the excess usage that each individual monument underwent. Many intellectuals even viewed the 'economic miracle' as a true 'catastrophe' in relation to the urban growth that profoundly altered the urban landscape. Nevertheless, it was precisely in the 1960s- in particular during the works of the main commission of study about cultural heritage, chaired by the Christian Democratic Deputy Francesco Franceschini-that emerge several positions that noted the opportunity to utilize cultural assets as a vehicle of a new tourist attraction, especially for international visitors, and to introduce several laws to favor tourist access and to open management of cultural assets to the private sector.

Compared to other countries, how has the theme of management of cultural assets developed over time in Italy? In general, we can say that the development of an idea of protecting cultural assets as a vehicle for economic investment in the tourist sector came rather late in Italy, especially compared

to France, Britain, and even more, compared to the United States.

Only in recent years, and in particular after the explosion of the 'great recession' in 2007-2008, has there been in our country a systematic evaluation of the issue and action to overcome a situation of mostly spontaneous organization which had characterized the sector in previous years. To this end, let's consult some statistical data on tourism taken from the National Observatory for the years 2007-2011. According to estimates of the European Commission, cultural tourism represents a sizable 40% of the entire European tourist trade, and in 2009 a significant 375 million citizens took part in cultural vacations.

In conclusion, in recent years cultural tourism in Italy has grown, both for Italians themselves (roughly 7% of total consumption was directed to cultural tourism) and especially for foreign citizens and in particular Europeans. Cultural tourism has expanded and improved in its proposals to include participation in various kinds of events, shows, and performances. Thus, can it be an opportunity to relaunch the Italian economy, and the European economy in general? It is certainly not the only solution, since a country needs in any case to have several strategic areas of mass production. But, it's indisputable that awareness and promotion of cultural assets can represent for Italy-and for all of Europe- a great opportunity for spreading one's image and one's cultura, one's trademarks and one's production, and in the end an element of consolidation of a sense of belonging in Europe, on par with 'cultural diplomacy'. In this sense, Expo 2015 will represent an extremely important opportunity.

