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The management of cultural heritage and landscape in inner areas

edited by Mara Cerquetti, Leonardo J.
Sánchez-Mesa Martínez, Carmen Vitale

Guardo le canoe che fendono l'acqua, le barche che sfiorano il campanile, i bagnanti che si stendono a prendere il sole. Li osservo e mi sforzo di comprendere. Nessuno può capire cosa c'è sotto le cose. Non c'è tempo per fermarsi a dolersi di quello che è stato quando non c'eravamo. Andare avanti, come diceva Ma', è l'unica direzione concessa. Altrimenti Dio ci avrebbe messo gli occhi di lato. Come i pesci¹.

Quando cammino nei prati attorno al Santuario, quasi sempre solo, ripenso a nonno Venanzio che, da giovane biscino, pascolava il gregge negli stessi terreni. Mi affascina il fatto che in questo luogo la cui cifra, agli occhi di chi guarda adesso la mia scelta di vita, è la solitudine, nei secoli addietro abitassero oltre duecento persone. Ancora negli anni Cinquanta, ricorda mio nonno, erano quasi un centinaio gli abitanti di Casette di Macereto tra contadini, mezzadri, mogli, pastori e un nugolo di bambini che costringeva il maestro a salire ogni giorno da Visso per fare lezione a domicilio.

Era una comunità compatta, coordinata come lo può essere quella delle società operose degli insetti: api, formiche, termiti, ma cosa più sorprendente che mai, una comunità niente affatto statica o chiusa².

¹ Balzano M. (2018), *Resto qui*, Torino: Einaudi, p. 175.

² Scolastici M. (2018), *Una yurta sull'Appennino*, Torino: Einaudi, p. 50.

Fondazione Museo Storico del Trentino: a networked, multimedia, participative, adaptive model for curating cultural heritage in mountain areas

Elena Montanari*

Abstract

The geographic conditions of mountain areas have shaped fascinating forms of tangible and intangible heritage, but also remarkable contextual problems, ranging from complicated infrastructural situations – resulting in low levels of employment, abandonment, aging population, as well as relevant difficulties in running local assets – to particularly complex cultural systems – characterized by a delicate balance between the communities’ distinctive identities, physically and culturally protected by natural borders, and the acknowledgement of a shared history. These special contexts solicit peculiar practices for the preservation, management and enhancement of cultural heritage, and are therefore a potentially fertile territory for the experimentation with innovative strategies and tools.

The paper aims at offering an insight into the experience and the best practices designed and developed by the Fondazione Museo Storico del Trentino, in the tenth anniversary of this institution.

Le aree montuose sono associate a importanti forme di patrimonio, tangibile e intangibile, ma anche a significativi problemi contestuali, legati a limitati sistemi infrastrutturali – a cui

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conseguono bassi livelli di occupazione, spopolamento, invecchiamento della popolazione e consistenti difficoltà nella gestione del patrimonio locale – e delicati sistemi culturali, connotati da un fragile equilibrio tra le identità delle singole comunità, modellate e protette da confini naturali, e il senso di appartenenza a una storia e un territorio che li accomunano. La complessità di un simile contesto richiede la progettazione di pratiche innovative per la valorizzazione e promozione del patrimonio, e al contempo rende tale contesto terreno fertile per la sperimentazione di nuovi strumenti e strategie.

Superato il decimo anno dalla nascita della Fondazione Museo Storico del Trentino, l'articolo intende esplorarne l'esperienza e analizzare gli aspetti che rendono tale istituzione un esempio virtuoso.

Mountain areas are usually evaluated as particularly fascinating places, connoted by peculiar forms of tangible and intangible heritage, although they also stand out for a range of contextual problems resulting in the complex management of their patrimony. Although the acknowledgement and accessibility of local heritages have widely grown in the last decades¹, the difficulties ensuing from the nature and the history of these environments still affect the running of most situations and solicit the experimentation with new strategies and tools.

The special conditions of mountain areas are shaped by their physical and geographical features, which are generally associated with harsh climatic conditions, scattered distribution of cultural clusters, limited land use and complicated infrastructure facilities. The scarce number of communication routes have often generated a reduced distribution of essential services (related to health, education, culture and commerce) and limited access to the markets. Furthermore, throughout the 20th century, the upgrading of economic systems as well as lifestyles and needs have led to decreasing levels of employment, abandonment and aging population.

¹ The contemporary cultural scenario is characterized by an “epidemic” interest for heritage (Anico, Peralta 2009, p. 2), related to the acknowledgement of its potentialities as a form of objectifying identity – an effective material and symbolic support for unifying narratives of belonging, a resource for the representation of identities, and a place for its performance. This phenomenon was nurtured by various factors, including: the gradual widening of the notion of heritage, through the progressive liberation from aesthetic qualities and the integration of social values (Nora 2011, X), as highlighted by the evolution of the definitions provided in the UNESCO conventions (from 1972 onwards); the growing emphasis on the places that are recognized as *lieux de mémoire* (Nora 1989) and the expansion of travel routes in places that were previously hard to reach (Davis 2011); the overall increased mobility provided by new means of transport and upgraded economic conditions; and finally the development of political tactics related to new touristic policies (e.g. those related to the UNESCO World Heritage listing, that broadened travel maps). These conditions led to the production of new interest and flows towards local heritage (Montanari 2013).

Trentino is a quite typical exemplification of such a context. This autonomous province² is located along the northern border of Italy. Its territory is entirely characterized by an alpine environment, and it has always been one of the less densely populated Italian regions. This condition was accentuated in the first decades of the 20th century, as a consequence of the major emigration phenomena triggered by the crisis of the agricultural system. Ever since the situation has remained quite stagnant, although the development of tourism and the implant of some industrial activities have partially counterbalanced the loss of attractiveness of the area. The performance of natural decrease of population has been inverted in 2015 – but it is noteworthy to highlight that this trend was generated by the increasing number of immigrants³ (in line with an overall national tendency), and it is not due to a new balance between births and deaths (which remains negative, as the emigration of younger generations).

In the last fifty years, the rise of touristic flows has facilitated the implementation of new activities and investments dedicated to the management and promotion of local heritage, which includes natural assets, architectural sites of interest pertaining to the local vernacular identity, historical places related to WWI and WWII, as well as an intangible patrimony of stories, rituals, traditions and know-how linked to peasant cultural manifestations. The renovation and musealization of some sites and traditional buildings has been started,

² Trentino is the territory pertaining to the Autonomous Province of Trento; together with the Autonomous Province of Bolzano, it forms the Autonomous Region Trentino Alto Adige, which is one of the five Italian Regions characterized by a special statute (Regioni a Statuto Speciale), adopted by constitutional law, granting these areas special forms and conditions of autonomy in the management of legislative and administrative competences. As to the particular situation of Trentino Alto Adige, the First Statute of Autonomy ensued from an agreement between Italy and Austria, signed in Paris on 5 September 1946 by the Italian Prime Minister and Foreign Minister (Alcide De Gasperi) and the Austrian Minister of Foreign Affairs (Karl Gruber), and entered into force after being approved by the Italian Constituent Assembly (Constitutional Law No. 5, 26 February 1948). After few decades of petitions and negotiations, in 1972 a Second Statute of Autonomy was signed, granting a broader autonomy through the transfer of several competencies from the Region to the Autonomous Provinces of Trento and Bolzano (the statutes' texts can be downloaded at: <http://www.autonomia.provincia.tn.it/storia_autonomia>, 22.05.2018), hence allowing the provincial governmental bodies to autonomously administer health, education, welfare and infrastructures. Although the autonomy of this Province was officially acknowledged 70 years ago, actually it has always been deeply rooted in the events, traditions and customs which the communities have developed over time and guarded throughout the course of many political and social upheavals. The independent attitude of this region does not correspond to isolation: the area is a frontier (located along the main route connecting Italy and Germany) and has always maintained a dialogue with the surrounding territories. Nevertheless, the border position is probably the trigger that enhanced the historical and cultural ties among local communities and the question of self-rule, as the mountain landscape and features have fostered the raise of various cultural minorities and specificities.

³ As reported by the demographic analyses concerning the Trentino Province (<<https://www.tuttitalia.it/trentino-alto-adige/provincia-autonoma-di-trento/statistiche>>, 21.05.2018), since 2015 the natural increase has been surpassing the natural decrease trend, and the overall raise in the number of inhabitants is related to the improvement of the immigration phenomena.

complemented by the staging of cultural events and the setting of permanent or temporary exhibitions; nevertheless, the random and informal nature of these initiatives prevented them from turning into compelling instruments of enhancement. The ineffectiveness of these ventures especially relies on the incapability to depict the complexity of Trentino as a cultural system. This area consists of a dynamic and thin border⁴, where the peculiar orographic situation produced a noticeable tension between the distinctive identities of the single communities (shaped by the physical borders which nurtured the development of cultural perimeters) and their coalescence through the acknowledgement of common roots and a shared political and social history⁵.

In recent years, the potentialities of cultural heritage in fostering the sense of belonging in the communities' members and in boosting social and economic development have been widely debated, and new policies and practices aimed at exploiting the positive impact of cultural resources have been implemented. In the framework of the growing theoretical thinking on the topic, the experience of the Fondazione Museo Storico del Trentino stands out as a particularly interesting case study, depicting an innovative approach based on the understanding of the challenges and the potentialities of a complex territory.

The Fondazione Museo Storico del Trentino represents the latest step in the evolution of an old institution, Museo Trentino del Risorgimento⁶. This municipal museum was founded in Trento after WWI – in 1923, when Trentino was annexed to Italy⁷. The institution was conceived as an instrument to preserve and display the memory of that particular moment in the history of the region⁸, and to foster a patriotic sense of belonging to the Nation through a politically oriented narration. The museum went through a preliminary revision after 1945, when new research and exhibition activities were integrated to testimony the contemporary history relating to WWII. In 1995, the same institution was transformed into the Museo Storico in Trento, in order to remove the emphasis on the history of Risorgimento, to extend its mission to wider themes and perspectives (thus encompassing the entire regional territory), and to implement the passage from a “monumental” to an “antiquarian” historical knowledge⁹.

⁴ Haselsberger 2014.

⁵ Ferrandi, Pallaver 2007; Di Luca, Ferrandi 2018.

⁶ De Manincor 1939; Ferrandi, Taiani 2003.

⁷ Formerly part of Austria, after the conclusion of WWI – set by the Treaty of Saint-Germain, signed on 10 September 1919 – the Trentino Province was annexed to Italy, and in particular to the Venezia Tridentina region.

⁸ At the turn of the 20th century, Trentino went through a particularly difficult time, resulting from the economic (and demographic) problems produced by the crisis of the agricultural sector (Ferrandi *et al.* 2009), its role as a strategical battlefield during the various conflicts of the period, and the cultural frictions ensuing from the diversity connoting this border area (which, at that moment, was experiencing significant tensions among the Austrian and the Italian identity).

⁹ This remodeling was oriented toward the transformation of the municipal museum into

This remodeling has paved the way to the project of the Fondazione del Museo Storico del Trentino, which was established in 2007 as a consequence of an important turn in the political, economic and cultural management of the Trentino Province.

When the Provincial Law 3/2006 entered into force¹⁰, further decentralization of the system was implemented and major decisional powers were transferred to the sixteen territorial strongholds, the “Comunità di Valle”, which gained partial independence not only from the State but also from the regional and provincial bodies. In cultural terms, this event enhanced the diversity and the specificities that have always connoted the cultural structure of Trentino and, at the same time, it strengthened the links among the diffused centres (and peripheries) that construct this complex region.

The mountain areas across the Alps have always been organized according to a network of communities scattered throughout the valleys, shaped by natural factors and consolidated through the constitution of the “Comunità Montane”¹¹, a set of territorial bodies coordinated by the provincial administration but autonomously managing social, economic and cultural issues at local scales. This political and cultural structure is characterized by the coalescence of unity and diversity, homogeneity and distinctiveness. On the one hand, these centres are clustered and joint by shared geographical conditions, a common history (especially connected to the border position), socio-political links (which have been consolidated by the Second Statute of Autonomy of the Trentino Province in 1972), and the constitution of a strongly codified material and immaterial heritage, resulting from a unique relationship with local resources, topography and ecology. On the other hand, these local communities share a deeply-rooted diversity: the physical boundaries separating the valleys

a modern and more democratic institution of memory, based on an inclusive approach to the production and promotion of local history; the revision of the mainstream offered to the visitors drew on the development of a “critical” historiography (avoiding a conservative approach and considering attentively the flaws and failures of the past) and the implementation of an interdisciplinary, multi-perspective and multi-vocal process (exploiting a “biographical narration”, illustrating the historical events and sites not only through the description of the “heroes’ deeds,” but also through the testimonies of ordinary people, such as soldiers and peasants). By using two terms borrowed from Friedrich Nietzsche’s essay *On the Advantage and Disadvantage of History for Life* (*Vom Nutzen und Nachtheil der Historie für das Leben*, originally published in Leipzig in 1874), these innovations depict a passage from a “monumental” historical knowledge, celebrating the greatest achievements of humanity, to an “antiquarian” one, revering the past in order to encourage appreciation of contemporary lives and culture.

¹⁰ The implementation of the Provincial Law No. 3, 16 June 2006, aimed at starting an institutional renovation of the autonomy of Trentino, enhancing its independence from the national government, reorganizing the territory (previously divided into 11 Comprensori/Bezirksgemeinschaften, which were substituted by 16 valley communities), fostering principles of subsidiarity and differentiation, and promoting the citizens’ participation to the civic life of the area (Parolari, Valdesalici 2011).

¹¹ “Comunità Montane” were eighteen territorial strongholds set up by Law No. 1102/1971 – the background of present-day “Comunità di Valle”.

facilitated the construction of “cultural perimeters” and the development of a multi-layered regional identity¹², enhanced by the border position of the area and the consequent passage of various economic, social and cultural flows¹³. In the contemporary scenario, the intrinsic complexity of this delicate cultural system is even growing, as a consequence of the impacts of globalization, the acceleration of economic and touristic fluxes, and the increased permeability of the border. These phenomena are fostering both the strengthening of a sharp sense of belonging to the territory¹⁴ and the development of more fluid local identities; in this framework, cultural diversity is now being acknowledged, promoted and exhibited as a peculiar value¹⁵.

In this context, the Fondazione Museo Storico del Trentino was conceived as an active cultural force, able to depict and promote the complexity of the region, enhancing the diverse and specific features of the single communities but

¹² As in all mountain areas, each valley is characterized by distinctive conjugations of the local rituals, culinary traditions, dialects and popular literature, which have fostered the construction of strong community bonds and a specific sense of belonging.

¹³ The Alps have always represented an important border area: situated along a pivotal axis linking the Mediterranean and Northern Europe, they have operated as a crossroad, separating and at the same time connecting different political, economic, social and cultural systems. These borders have often “moved” and remained permeable to exchanges; the area has been crossed by multifarious fluxes of people, objects and cultures – historically (as a consequence of military or economic acts) and in the present (because of the enhancement of global networks in trade and tourism) – and the consequent intertwining of the multiple cultural flows with the local resources has fostered the construction of a complex cultural system in itself, composed of territories with different demographic, social and economic trends and a rich cultural, linguistic and biological diversity, which goes along with a variety of governance systems and traditions.

¹⁴ In the 1970s, John Cole and Eric Wolf (1974) had already detected the ongoing raise in the exchanges and the permeability of the borders among the territories (e.g. in the growing number of marriages between people from different valleys), registering a more fluid construction of the distinctive cultural identities.

¹⁵ As registered by such documents as the Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity (adopted by UNESCO in 2001) and the UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions (2005), at the turn of the 21st century cultural diversity has emerged as a key concern, in response to the predicted effects of globalization, the liberalization of goods and services, and the acceleration of migrations. The new awareness about the value of cultural diversity has spread also in Trentino, where various policies and practices are being implemented to protect and promote local distinctiveness. The most significant case pertains to the indigenous linguistic minorities (and in particular to Ladin, Mócheno and Cimbrian), which are a manifestation of the great ethno-cultural diversity housed in the Alps – as highlighted also by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe in his *Italienische Reise* (1786-1788), in the pages dedicated to his journey in the area. Following the setting of the instruments to protect all the autochthonous linguistic minorities at a national level (through the Implementation Act No. 482, *Gazzetta Ufficiale* No. 297, 20 December 1999), in Trentino Alto Adige the autonomy statutes were upgraded to promote their protection and valorization. Some of these languages and dialects have survived only in small enclaves and are gradually dying out because the younger members of those communities no longer speak them; therefore, a number of projects have been launched to encourage the use of autochthonous idioms to save them from extinction (for example through the implementation of special radio programmes, newspapers, multilingual school curricula and street signs (Steinicke *et al.* 2011).

also valorizing their common roots, and thus fostering a multilayered sense of belonging. In the last 10 years the institution has experimented with innovative strategies and tools, launching new activities and designing a new collaborative structure involving all the different local cultural actors in the area, with the aim to chorally manage and exhibit the specific tangible and intangible heritages as well as the connections and the overarching narration that characterize them.

The experience of this catalyst institution draws on a *networked, multimedia, participative, adaptive* approach, whose sense and means are explored in the next paragraphs.

Networked. The conception of this institution draws on a diffused, polycentric and networked structure, constantly adapting its practices and instruments to contextual situations and occasions. Although it has an administrative core – the headquarters situated in Trento¹⁶, where the main events are coordinated, and the economic and technical resources are managed – the Fondazione cannot be identified with a specific venue, and rather it manifests itself in a growing and heterogeneous network of sites throughout the region. The presence of the institution relies on the *Portali della Storia e della Memoria* (Portals of History and Memory), which include existing cultural institutions that joined the network (e.g. municipal museums, demo-ethno-anthropologic museums, public libraries), new cultural centres that were founded by the Fondazione (e.g. Gallerie di Piedicastello¹⁷), and a number of memory places and heritage sites (e.g. castles, fortifications, bunkers) that are used by the Fondazione in special occasions. The network also includes some “virtual spaces” that allow for an online production and fruition of the local culture – i.e. Archivio Online del Novecento Trentino (an open-access online platform collecting and making historical documents available for the public at large) and History Lab (a TV channel dedicated to video, audio and photographic contributions exploring the history, memory and heritages of the province). All the Portals are established and managed in cooperation with the cultural and administrative bodies operating in the single Communities, and through the participation of

¹⁶ The offices where the main management activities of the Fondazione Museo Storico del Trentino take place are located in an administrative building in Trento (Via Tommaso Gar 29); the library, the archives and the offices pertaining to some research sections are housed in the nearby Castello del Buonconsiglio (via Torre d’Augusto 41, 38122 Trento).

¹⁷ “Gallerie di Piedicastello” are an evocative venue for temporary exhibitions and conferences, resulting from the renovation of two abandoned tunnels in the periphery of Trento; the ingredients for the successful development of this innovative institution include: “The straightforward (intelligent) reuse of a defunct urban structure (analogy: the High Line planted routeway in New York); the reinvention of a well-established typology (the ultra-traditional historical museum); the team work (Trento-Stanford-NYC-Bolzano); and close collaboration between local institutions (the Trento Province’s governing council and the Fondazione Museo Storico del Trentino) which decide the themes for this space but allow them to be interpreted freely” (Foppiano 2009, p. 97).

the population. Each Portal may also potentially become the core of a sub-network of cultural strongholds, encouraging the further spread of the system.

The institutions and the places included in the network operate both as independent sites, promoting specific activities, and as the poles of the network, benefitting from the support of the Fondazione which contributes to the funding of some activities as well as to their realization and promotion (e.g. through the circulation of cultural operators who share technical and scientific expertise, or the use of the communication tools set up and managed by the Fondazione).

Building on the large network of actors involved, the promoted cultural activities are diffused on a widespread area and take place in a variety of locations – inside local museums and libraries, in temporary exhibition spaces, in public open spaces, and especially in heritage sites.

One of the main outcomes of the Fondazione is indeed the reactivation of neglected buildings and places that have played a meaningful role in the ancient or recent history of the territory. In the last years, the Fondazione was able to promote the renovation of some sites – e.g. the Frabica delle scritte di montagna¹⁸ in Tonadico (Primiero); the Farmacia Maturi¹⁹ in Brentonico, and the Palazzina Edison in Santa Giustina²⁰ – by supporting their transformation to become museum venues, or designing the setting of temporary exhibitions and events. In some cases, the work of the Fondazione was not focused on the physical renovation of historical places²¹, but rather on the possibility to foster a new awareness about their role in the construction of the identity of

¹⁸ Through the cooperation with Ente Parco di Paneveggio, the Fondazione promoted the renovation of a *tabià* – a historical barn in Prà del Cimerlo, built in 1681 – which is now the venue of an in-progress archive and a permanent exhibition about the local cultural manifestations pertaining to writing traditions.

¹⁹ The Farmacia Maturi is an ancient pharmacy, founded at the end of the 19th century by Luigi Maturi (1889-2007); through the Fondazione, in 2009 all the furniture and objects were moved into an historical palace in Brentonico, Palazzo Eccheli-Baisi, where its reconstruction became the starting point for the setting of a permanent exhibition exploring the history of welfare and the pharmacologic traditions in Trentino.

²⁰ Val di Non houses a large dyke, built in the 1940s, which has played an important role in the organization of the territory as well as in the trigger of new economic dynamics; the Fondazione was able to reopen the Palazzina Edison (a technical building that had long remained abandoned) to set up a permanent exhibition dedicated to this pivotal infrastructure and the social and cultural assets resulting from its presence.

²¹ The occupations of the Fondazione do not necessarily entail the restoration of the historical buildings where the activities take place: especially in the case of temporary practices, sites are often used in the found conditions, and the setting of complementary furniture or exhibition devices is meant to be completely reversible. This strategy is significantly exemplified by *Sentinelle di pietra*, an initiative which takes place every year during summer time; this project temporarily occupies a network of emblematic sites related to WWI and WWII (shelters, lodges and memorials, diffused along renown and neglected mountain paths) to organize a dense programme of exhibitions, workshops, talks and concerts, hence activating these memory places and contaminating them with cultural debates and artistic practices.

the communities, and to shine the light on their potentialities in the present-day cultural system.

Historical sites are the main instruments which the Fondazione uses to recall, narrate and disseminate the local history and identity. As modern memory processes seem to rely on the «materiality of the trace, the immediacy of the recording [...] and the visibility of the image»²², these places of memory represent the best witnesses of the local tangible and intangible assets, operating as «the spaces of the narrative crystallization of collective memory [...] in which a group can recognize itself and its history»²³.

Nevertheless, the programme of the Fondazione does not merely result in the transformation of these sites as places of commemoration, where collective memory is publicly assumed: the constantly in-progress setting of exhibitions, storytelling projects, specially mediated visits and public events, is meant to intertwine the old testimonies displayed by these sites and new stories and narratives²⁴. The overlapping of and exchanges between the various layers and meanings that are displayed in these Portals of History and Memory not only activates the reenactment of the local tangible and intangible heritage, but also unfolds new interpretations that make it accessible and meaningful to contemporary communities.

Multimedia. The variety that connotes the venues where the activities take place can be detected also in the types of cultural actions and instruments exploited by the Fondazione, which include exhibitions, conferences, workshops, education activities, publications, online platforms, social media, TV shows, special guided visits, commemorations, celebrations and other public events.

Within the Fondazione's programme, temporary exhibitions play a pivotal role, as they can widen and differentiate the explored topics, the displayed messages and the related practices²⁵. Permanent exhibitions are few in number, but they play a strategical part as they are set up in special historical venues

²² Nora 1989, p. 13.

²³ Binder 2002, pp. 291-292.

²⁴ For example, the project *Sentinelle di pietra* usually draws on the interplay between the sites and the stories strictly related WWI and WWII and a set of new contents, which are introduced in and intertwined with those places through diffused installations of contemporary artworks, light shows, performances, concerts, workshops and talks. These practices aim to nurture the debate about present-day social and cultural themes, and at the same time to foster a more critical understanding of historical facts in the light of contemporary issues. The 2018 edition, for example, offered a programme of 30 events organized in the main forts of the area, in order to exploit the military history of these places to unfold new discourses about peace. This programme also stands out for the quantity and the variety of the activities included: although it risks blurring the mainstream of the project, this strategy widens the audience and makes it possible to engage with a heterogeneous public (ranging from a generic public and to families and schools).

²⁵ Temporary exhibitions are standing out as strategic instruments helping to widen, enrich and differentiate the cultural project of contemporary museums; beside their potential to encourage return visits, they also foster the building of enduring relationships with the public, and their

(e.g. Castello del Buonconsiglio in Trento, in the Frabica near the Pale di San Martino, in the Palazzina Edison at the Diga di Santa Giustina), turning ancient strongholds into active cultural presences, and improving their visibility and attractiveness for tourists and locals. Specially meditated visits or thematic events are an efficient means of communication for the Fondazione, as they shine the light on less known or abandoned places, unfold their natural or cultural values, and sometimes intertwine their stories with new narrations based on societal issues²⁶.

Several activities promoted by the Fondazione do not take place in a single venue, and rather they are organized in a network of sites distributed in smaller or larger areas. Sometimes the itinerary includes locations that are usually not included into major cultural paths – e.g. during such events as Sentinelle di Pietra, audiences are guided in a journey through less known vestiges or strategical sites that witnessed WWI and WWII events. On the one hand these occasions allow neglected sites to be purposely “activated” and to become “visible”; on the other, they provide the opportunity to highlight and narrate the usually forgotten historical connections among different places of memory, and thus to display the existence of an overarching cultural framework which shapes the identity of Trentino.

In the dissemination of these values, a remarkable role is played by telecommunication and online instruments – the Fondazione’s websites, the Archivio online del Novecento Trentino, and the History Lab Channel – which shrink all distances in time and space. Although the internet provides even wider opportunities, television still represents «a peak of the abolition of every possibility of remoteness»²⁷; this medium allows the Fondazione to expand the resonance and spread of its activities, to intersect the language and interests of a broad audience, and to experiment with innovative formats (since its schedule is mainly based on shows realized and produced by the institution itself).

The implementation of a heterogeneous set of practices and the interaction between different means – cohering entertainment and education, history and art, direct and virtual experiences – allows the Fondazione to meet the needs of different target groups, to enhance communication options and opportunities, to reach a larger audience, to increase its impact, but also to offer a broader

temporary dimension provides the possibility of a higher level of experimentation with curatorial practices but also with the explored topics, since they are «also expected to be more courageous when it comes to a provocative thesis or metaphor as they are points of departure for trends and wider processes of societal (self-)understanding» (Poehls 2011, p. 338).

²⁶ One of the tasks of the Fondazione is to upgrade and expand the discourses about local heritages and identities, for example through the exploration of new inter-disciplinary perspectives on specific topics, the critical comparison between ancient and recent historical phenomena, or the intertwining of individual experiences and memories into mainstream narrations.

²⁷ Heidegger 1971, p. 165.

quantity and variety of contents, as each activity and tool facilitates specific transmission and interaction modalities.

The *fil-rouge* which interweaves this wide set of cultural activities is the history of Trentino; this topic is investigated, narrated and displayed in several ways, offering different readings, focuses and interpretations. The variety of the perspectives provided to the visitors ensues from an inter-disciplinary approach and the diversification of the themes explored – which range from ancient to recent historical facts and figures, from politics to economic and societal issues, from agriculture to artistic phenomena, etc. The history of Trentino and its heritages is observed through the different lenses of sociology, anthropology, politics, economy, agronomy, arts, crafts and architecture; the use and integration of different disciplines is able to unfold the various specific aspects involved in the construction of this cultural system, as well as its overall complex identity.

Participative. The construction of a multifaceted insight on the cultural history and heritage of the territory is also enhanced by the attempt to design a multi-vocal and multi-perspective narration. This task is completed through the active involvement of local communities in the realization of the promoted activities.

The Portals of History and Memory are meant to operate as instruments fostering participation, in various forms and scales. The members of the Communities are invited to participate in the management of museums and in the organization of the scientific programme: on a voluntary basis, they can collaborate with local cultural operators and the staff of the Fondazione, contribute to the running and maintenance of the spaces, take part in meetings, and participate in the design and realization of some projects.

Many of the promoted activities have a participative character, based on efficient co-production models. Local individuals or groups may contribute to the selection of the themes and especially to the collection or production of the materials. These collaborations allow for the development of projects that are able to tackle the topics at the core of the community's life, to stir dialogue and interest, and especially to construct multi-vocal narrations²⁸. This approach is particularly important in the setting of permanent and temporary exhibitions which aim to propose a complex insight on the history of the territory: the participation of the community members facilitates the display of various perspectives, the presentation of local heritages from unexplored points of view, and the intertwining of different voices (for example merging mainstream discourses and the personal stories of the witnesses)²⁹.

²⁸ McSweeney, Kavanagh 2016.

²⁹ This approach has been distinctively implemented by the Fondazione since the beginning,

Some of the promoted activities are also co-curated, as the members of the Communities have the possibility to propose and design specific projects; for example, the central area of the White Tunnel in the Gallerie di Piedicastello is usually dedicated to temporary exhibitions or events (conferences, presentations or concerts) promoted by local associations, schools or single citizens who have stories, narrations or artworks to share.

The experience of the Fondazione truly fulfills the goal set by George Henri Rivière to move the community members «from the role of consumer to that of actor, and even author of the museum»³⁰. Not only participation nurtures local pride, self-awareness and sense of belonging: in such a dispersed and diverse territory as Trentino, this strategy establishes the conditions for the enhancement of the role of cultural heritage as an arena.

In inner areas, usually characterized by limited availability of resources (in economic but also in demographic terms), the participation of the citizens in the management of civic life is a recurrent practice. Nevertheless, the experience of the Fondazione differs from those developed by other institutions in similar areas: its participatory practices are designed within a more complex framework, based on the well-structured mission and the networked character of the institution. Its cooperative approach operates in a multi-layered way, as it requires different collaborations and exchanges between the central administrative body, its professionals and consultants, local entities and their staff, and the community members. This structure multiplies the opportunities and the impact of participation, allows for an efficient management of both criticalities and potentialities, and increases the possibilities for participative practices to become as much inclusive as possible – for example by facilitating the involvement of all the social and cultural categories, including those that are often excluded or not interested, such as youngsters, elderly, and especially immigrants, who are becoming an increasingly significant presence in the demographic composition of the province due to the growing immigration trend.

As to the “new members of the communities”, the initiatives carried out by the Fondazione are among the few efforts that are being realized in the area to

and has supported the development of multi-vocal and innovative readings of local history. For example the first exhibition organized in the Diga di Santa Giustina (“Santa Giustina. La più alta d’Europa”), was meant to offer a renovated exploration of the history of the dam, based on the intertwining of a technical and a socio-cultural interpretation of this heritage site; this task was completed through a double-fold narration, combining the “memories from above” (those disseminated by history books, and documented through official reports, drawings, pictures, data and figures) and the “memories from below” (illustrated by the personal stories of the people who experienced the impact of this monumental presence). Although the exhibition remained on display for a short time (from 27 July to 30 October 2007), and despite the remoteness of the venue, it was visited by more than 25,000 people, and significantly contributed to raise awareness on a monumental architecture, reversing the oblivion process it was going through and shedding a new light on its cultural value.

³⁰ Rivière 1989, pp. 164-165.

facilitate integration processes. On the one hand, the public events promoted through the Portals of History and Memory are providing opportunities for meetings, exchanges, collaborations and acquaintances; on the other, specific exhibitions and didactic activities are meant to enhance mutual understanding, and thus to support social cohesion. This task is conducted through the projects focused on the transmission of local history, heritages and traditions to the new inhabitants³¹, on programmes intended to promote the understanding of different cultures³², and on initiatives conceived to highlight the possible bonds, similarities and exchanges³³.

The initiatives aimed at stimulating the participation of all the members of the community engender a dynamic and multi-faceted institution, which has the potential to facilitate the inclusion of different cultures and perspectives in the production and dissemination of knowledge, to address to a diverse, plural and active public, and to shift the traditional museum paradigm toward a more flexible model, in response to the ever-changing and fluid contemporary scenario.

Adaptive. Through the multiplicity and heterogeneity of its tasks and means, the always in-progress development of its networked structure, and by placing community participation and self-actualization at the core of its mission, the Fondazione is an “organic” institution, flexibly responding to the multi-scale issues ensuing from the complexity of this territory, and constantly adapting to the progressive evolution of its society and heritages.

³¹ These programmes range from special mediated visits to the exhibitions presenting local history and heritages, specifically designed to address the “new members of the community”, to the promotion of courses aimed at supporting their understanding and uses of the culture (e.g. language courses, or artisanal workshops intended to transmit the traditional know-how).

³² Although the programmes of the Fondazione are distinctively focused on the Trentino history and identity, some initiatives are intended to throw light on different cultures with the aim to unfold multi-cultural narrations and thus facilitate mutual understanding. In particular this task is completed through temporary exhibitions; for example, such displays as “Wooden Miracles” (set up in the White Tunnel at the Gallerie di Piedicastello in 2011, to illustrate the outstanding religious architecture realized in wood by the Synths) and “Pianta-la! Storie di piante medicinali in Vietnam” (organized at SAT in Trento in 2016, to explore the Vietnamese traditions concerning medicinal plants) were conceived to explore specific cultural manifestations related to faraway places and cultures; at the same time they were able to disclose cross-cultural references and connections, through a strategically built narration focused around thematic issues (i.e. wood and medicinal plants) which represent pivotal elements in the culture and identity of Trentino.

³³ As highlighted by the project MAPforID, *Museums as Places for Intercultural Dialogue*, developed between 2007-09 (Bodo *et al.* 2009), at the moment the Fondazione was founded, local cultural institutions in Italy were starting to experiment with intercultural practices – e.g. by unfolding cross-cultural connections through “social” objects or experiences (Simon 2010, p. 127), or highlighting the beneficial consequences that migrations have produced in the development of local civilizations. The Fondazione has embraced this trend, although the experiences it carried out remain a very little part of its scientific programme.

Although the overall mission of the Fondazione is clear, its structure eludes codified definitions. The Fondazione is not an ecomuseum, but it has its roots in its networked model and it fosters an “ecomuseological approach”³⁴ – one that operates through a networked structure, recognizes the holistic interplay between nature and culture as a dynamic process and balances transformation and conservation. The Fondazione descends from an history museum, whose imprint remains visible in the overarching focus on the history of Trentino; nevertheless, it evolved to encompass some features of city museums (organizing its structure through a forward-looking vision and a centralized coordination), merged to those of demo-ethno-anthropological museums (enhancing the sense of place through a strategic narration of the natural and cultural heritage traces and manifestations, aimed at enhancing the perceptions of the cultural landscape).

Through the hybridization of different strategies, tools and disciplines, the Fondazione offers a unique type of management and promotion of local culture, building on a specific curatorial approach which does not only consider the single heritages but rather addresses the network as a heritage itself – hence combining the exploration of the plural tangible and intangible assets and the shaping of an overview about the overall cultural system which includes and nurtures them. The open and progressive nature of the Fondazione allows it to operate as an effective cultural agent, reshaping the social uses of heritage, valorizing the diversities and the overall identity of the complex territory, altering the traditional relationships with the community, and critically reforming and revitalizing techniques of conservation, fruition, exhibition and communication.

Networked, multimedia, participative and adaptive: these are the keywords that address the best practices promoted by the Fondazione Museo Storico del Trentino, and validate it as a new type of cultural actor.

In the contemporary scenario, within the framework of a massive revision of the mission, strategies and tools that cultural institutions are implementing to face the ongoing economic, social and cultural transformations³⁵, the Fondazione represents a valuable example – providing valid clues not only for the institutions that operate in mountain areas, but for all those which aim to develop a more significant role for their communities.

On the one hand, the projects it promotes contribute to the activation of new social and cultural opportunities as well as occupations, and thus participate in improving the attractiveness of these remote areas, and in fighting emigration and abandonment.

On the other hand, its experimental projects are participating in the preservation and enhancement of local heritages, but also foster its integration

³⁴ Davis, Corsane 2014.

³⁵ Ashworth *et al.* 2007; Knell *et al.* 2007; Lanz, Montanari 2015, pp. 10-22.

into the citizens' lives. Its role in preserving and disseminating collective memories is indeed not only focused on the conservation of history and its traces, and rather it is carried out to turn the Fondazione into a progressive instrument of knowledge and auto-analysis for the population. By unfolding new perspectives on historical and contemporary themes, it triggers critical debates and offers an explanation of the multi-faceted local identity. The institution hence participates in the ongoing revision of the understanding of the Alps: although they have long been perceived as divisional due to territory-related features (e.g. altitude, isolated settlements, local communities and distinct traditions), they are being reconsidered as hinge areas where interactions between locals and foreigners can form elements of positive transformation and local development.

The Fondazione is a progressive and unique example of a modern institution, which exemplifies the definitive disassociation of the museum from the idea of a static cabinet and the potentialities of an integrated approach, widening the narrow focus of traditional procedures and methods, promoting a diffused, multi-scale and holistic concept of heritage, advocating the strengthening of the engagement with source communities, and paradigmatically addressing the complexity of a mountain cultural system by combining the construction of a structured framework with a strategic adaptability.

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