



2021

IL CAPITALE CULTURALE

Studies on the Value of Cultural Heritage

eum

Rivista fondata da Massimo Montella



Il capitale culturale

Studies on the Value of Cultural Heritage

n. 23, 2021

ISSN 2039-2362 (online)

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eum edizioni università di macerata, Corso
della Repubblica 51 – 62100 Macerata

tel (39) 733 258 6081

fax (39) 733 258 6086

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Museum, culture and digital innovations

Museum, culture and digital innovations. Introduction

Luciana Lazzeretti*, Mara Cerquetti**

Abstract

The section on “Museum, culture and digital innovations” gathers a selection of papers presented at the international workshop entitled *Rethinking Culture and Creativity in the Technological Era* (Florence, 20-21 February 2020). It contains four articles.

La sezione su “Museum, culture and digital innovations” raccoglie una selezione di contributi presentati in occasione del workshop internazionale *Rethinking Culture and Creativity in the Technological Era* (Firenze, 20-21 febbraio 2020). La sezione contiene quattro articoli.

* Luciana Lazzeretti, Full Professor in Management, University of Florence, Department of Economics and Management, via delle Pandette, 9, 50127 Florence, e-mail: luciana.lazzeretti@unifi.it.

** Mara Cerquetti, Associate Professor in Management, University of Macerata, Department of Education, Cultural Heritage and Tourism, p.le Bertelli, 1, 62100 Macerata, e-mail: mara.cerquetti@unimc.it.

1. *Introduction*

Over the last decades, a stream of the literature on the cultural and creative economy has been devoted to investigating its role for local development, economic growth and innovation. Culture and creativity have been studied as resources for the regeneration of products, sectors and places and elements to favour the transformation of the economic structure of cities and regions¹. However, the relationship between culture and economy is facing a new phase based on an increasing connection between culture, creativity and technological innovations. We are beginning a New Era where cultural organisations should afford different challenges that emerged in relation to the diffusion of digital technologies².

This rapid revolution leads cultural institutions to rethink their role in the contemporary economic context. Productive forms change and new intangible added values are generated based on symbolic value and identity where creativity, technology transfer and craftsmanship are crucial components. The combination of craftsmanship and new technologies stimulates a new ecosystem for innovation, capable of creating value and different typologies of entrepreneurship. The digital revolution requires responding to a new demand for cultural contents derived by the public of the digital communities and social networks.

Given these considerations, we ask: how may the digital revolution affect the cultural and creative sectors and cultural organisations? What are the new challenges for the management of cultural heritage in the technological era?

With this section, we are involved in this debate. We have selected four papers³ presented during the workshop *Rethinking Culture and Creativity in the Technological Era*, held at the University of Florence on 20-21 February 2020, focused on the issue of “Museum, culture and digital innovations”. We have also added as a “classic contribution” a short text by Giacomo Becattini published in 1986 on the art city (*Città d'arte*).

2. *Rethinking Culture and Creativity in the Technological Era as an opportunity for «Il capitale culturale»*

For «Il capitale culturale», cooperation with the workshop held in Florence in 2020 was a great scientific opportunity for at least two reasons: on the one hand, for disseminating the journal's activity to a wide international community,

¹ Florida 2002; Cooke, Lazzeretti 2008; Pratt 2008; Scott 2008; Potts 2016.

² Sacco *et al.* 2018; Lazzeretti 2020, 2021.

³ The four articles were selected after a double blind peer review.

on the other, for attracting best papers in the field of cultural economics and management.

As specified in the journal's mission, «Il capitale culturale» «brings together different disciplinary skills [...], with the common goal of implementing studies, research and planning activities for enhancing cultural heritage»⁴. However, achieving multidisciplinary is still a challenge for the journal. Since its foundation, the journal has had to contend with national and international evaluation systems and criteria that differ from one discipline or disciplinary area to another. In Italy, whereas Art History soon came to rank «Il capitale culturale» as an A journal, and would later be joined in this by “Antiquity, Philology and Literature, and Art History” Area, and by Geography, Management Studies have included no Italian journals in their list of A journals. Over time, in a «Legoland model of scholarship, in which façades matter more than substance»⁵, the different methods used for evaluating scientific journals and research has attracted articles from some fields rather than others⁶, leading to an increasing number of papers from the humanities.

Ten years after its birth, one of the risks that the journal should avoid is becoming a “journal solely of art history”, despite the original scope and idea promoted by its founder, Massimo Montella, who strongly believed in cross-fertilisation among disciplines and the effective contribution of management studies to cultural heritage conservation and enhancement. “Getting things done” was the motto that inspired Montella's approach⁷. Over the years, with the aim of countering any disciplinary drift, the journal has embarked on many initiatives to improve its visibility and positioning among scholars in different fields internationally. Its indexing in several well-known international scientific databases (Web of Science – Emerging Sources Citation Index by Thomson Reuters since 2015 and Scopus by Elsevier since 2018) was just the beginning. The cooperation with the international workshop entitled *Rethinking Culture and Creativity in the Technological Era* is another step that adds a valuable piece to this process, because it provides a fruitful field of discussion between scholars in cultural economics and management, maybe the first initiative of this kind in Italy.

When examining the papers presented during the workshop, it is interesting to note that those focused on cultural heritage management, especially museums, are written by Italian scholars. Undoubtedly, the fact that the

⁴ <<http://riviste.unimc.it/index.php/cap-cult/about/editorialPolicies>>, 23.03.2021.

⁵ Tourish 2019, p. 66.

⁶ The twisted logic of national evaluation systems was the object of a lively scientific debate promoted by the journal in issue no. 17 (2018), in which were published the proceedings from the conference entitled “La sostenibilità e la valutazione delle riviste scientifiche italiane in ambito SSH” [Sustainability and evaluation of Italian scientific journals in the field of SSHs], <<http://riviste.unimc.it/index.php/cap-cult/issue/view/88/showToc>>, 23.03.2021.

⁷ Montella 2010.

workshop was held in Florence may have attracted more scholars from Italy than other countries. However, it should not be neglected that museums are gaining interest among management scholars. Moreover, Italy is the country that Chastel called a “threefold natural museum”, where the collection, the historical building where it is preserved, and the town where it is located are mutually linked in an exemplary manner as three different aspects of the same museum⁸. The first two papers presented in this section deal with museums and highlight both the changes and challenges that Italian institutions are currently facing (Solima *et al.*) and their different approach to digital transformations depending on their typology and features (Leoni and Cristofaro). The other two papers published in the section provide «Il capitale culturale» with the opportunity to present cultural economics research, an area that is quite new for the journal. These papers explore the characteristics of young cultural consumers (Segre and Morelli) and the historical relationship between the cultural environment, entrepreneurship and innovation (Del Monte *et al.*).

3. *Structure of the section*

Looking closely at the presentation of this section, the first paper, by Ludovico Solima, Mario Tani and Pasquale Sasso – *Social innovation and accessibility in museums: some evidence from the SoStare al MANN project* –, focuses on ways of improving museum accessibility as a form of social innovation. The authors investigate the new extended mission of museums as institutions called on to reach out to a wider audience and contribute to cultural and social development. The paper aims to investigate how museums can address the specific requirements of people with special needs by effectively engaging local stakeholders and leveraging their competencies. In the second part of the paper, they discuss a project carried out by the National Archaeological Museum of Naples (*SoStare al MANN*) with some of its stakeholders. The case study shows how museums can introduce novel ways of approaching their collections and become more inclusive and welcoming for people with behavioural and/or cognitive disorders.

In their *Technology adoption in small Italian museums: an empirical investigation*, Luna Leoni and Matteo Cristofaro focus on the impact on museums of digital transformation. After analysing how museums have adopted technologies to meet visitors’ needs, the authors highlight that scientific literature has not identified the most widely adopted technologies in museums and whether different types of museum have different approaches to their application. In order to fill this gap, they discuss the results of a survey that

⁸ Chastel 1980.

addressed the directors/curators of 88 small museums (SMs) in Italy. The data were analysed in quantitative terms through the ANOVA and Chi-squared tests. The results show that natural science and technology SMs have a significantly greater level of technology adoption than other SM typologies. In particular, these two SM typologies implement, more than others, mobile websites, multilingual websites, online ticketing, social media, e-commerce, forums, newsletters, targeted newsletters, and mobile applications. The authors argue that, in general, the technology most widely adopted by SMs is the website, which is now viewed as the first condition for enhancing visitor awareness and offering pre- and post-visit services.

The third article, by Giovanna Segre and Andrea Morelli – *Culture and the youngest. Insights for the future of cultural consumption from an Italian sample* –, explores the cultural consumption of teenagers, seen as consumers who are not yet financially independent, but are already independent in terms of their choices and tastes. The authors discuss the results of a survey involving a sample of about 350 students living in the province of Cuneo, in the north-west of Italy. A cluster analysis is used in which young consumers are segmented into four homogeneous groups according to levels of consumption in five cultural sectors (music, cinema, museums, performing art, books) and degree of direct engagement in cultural practices. The research results show significant differences in cultural consumption, family and individual cultural capital, school results and sports engagement. Cultural expenditure is differentiated accordingly. The authors argue that the existence of different clusters among the young consumers highlights the need, both for policy-makers and cultural industries, to better understand the desires and weaknesses of the different groups within the teenage category, and to target policies and strategies accordingly. The research also suggests the importance of starting proper data collection at the national level.

The last article, *Cultural environment, entrepreneurship and innovation in Europe. The importance of history*, by Alfredo Del Monte, Sara Moccia and Luca Pennacchio, proposes a conceptual framework in which the cultural environment is shaped by historical factors and, in turn, affects entrepreneurship and innovation in the long term. To support this idea, the authors focus on the scientific revolution that took place in Europe at the end of the Renaissance period and continued until the late 18th century. They develop a descriptive analysis suggesting that the level of social and religious tolerance, the power of the church and the attitude of elite groups towards scientific discoveries gave rise to different cultural environments across European regions. These different environments affected attitudes towards science. Moreover, using historical data at NUTS-3 geographical level in Europe, the authors estimate an econometric model to explore the long-term impact of regional knowledge base and creativity, two important aspects of the cultural environment, on actual economic drivers. Their results suggest that the presence of universities in the

past, the proxy for a historical knowledge base, and the number of scientists and inventors in the past, the proxy for historical creativity, have a positive effect on current rates of regional entrepreneurship and innovation. The effects of creativity depend on the scientific field of the scientists and inventors.

The *Classic* that is included at the end of this issue could also be related to the section's topic. We decided to republish a short text by Giacomo Becattini, which introduced the third section of a workshop held in Florence in 1986 on the art city (*Città d'arte*). The author analyses the art city as an economic and social good, highlighting the delay and difficulties of economic studies in understanding something as complex and mysterious as the art city. Later, encountering even more difficulties, management studies have addressed culture and cultural heritage. Thirty-five years later, Becattini's reasoning reminds us of the need to go beyond research barriers and explore new research fields and understand the specific features and structure of the object of our study. His words on the concept of production have something to teach scholars, too. As stated by Becattini, «the concept of production developed by economists [...] is fruitful as it applies to processes in which the material element is fundamental, and the aspect of novelty, innovation and creativity is only an accessory. In fact, when it appears, it poses a problem for economists»⁹. When applied to “scientific production”, which is a mandate or even a mantra in the today's context, this is an invitation to scholars to look for real innovation.

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⁹ Becattini 1988, p. 88 (own translation).

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