

Governance Systems for Civic Wealth Creation through a New Accessibility to Cultural Heritage: the Case of “La Paranza”

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Purpose – The aim of this research paper is to analyse the role of governance models for the creation of civic wealth through recovered cultural heritage (CH).

Design/methodology/approach – We perform field-based research using the case study method. The case study method is particularly suitable to address our research objective because it allows for conducting an in-depth and exploratory analysis of Governance systems phenomena in relation to CH. We selected the case of the social cooperative “La Paranza”, founded in the Rione Sanità, a neighborhood of Naples, in 2006. We use semi-structured interviews, corporate reports and secondary sources

Findings – The analysis carried out shows how the initiative of a group of young people, rooted in an area that is not favourable for historical and social reasons, under the guidance of a local parish priest and with the initial help of a team of professionals and a funding entity, succeeded in enhancing an entire neighbourhood by focusing on the recovery of the Catacombs of St. Gennaro, as a catalyst for the recovery of the people living in the social space in which they insist.

Originality/value – The originality of our study consists in demonstrating that cultural assets, as a ‘new’ category of common goods, no longer become the goal of governance interventions in this sector, but rather a tool for the regeneration of places and, above all, of people, opening to a real civic wealth.

Keywords – Cultural heritage management; governance systems, civic wealth creation, urban regeneration.

1. *Introduction*

Inclusion and accessibility of cultural heritage (CH) are the cornerstones for cities sustainable development and for stimulating processes of civic wealth creation, in order to better pursue the objectives expressed by the 2030 Agenda and the New European Bauhaus: a better coexistence of citizens in “beautiful”, sustainable, accessible and inclusive places. The tourism paradigm, which has traditionally oriented the management of the CH assets, already severely stressed by the pandemic emergency, no longer appears to be the goal to which the system’s efforts should be directed; actually, there are other emerging values to focus on: such as, for example, the sustainability, the local stakeholders’ engagement, urban regeneration, civic wealth.

In this scenario, despite the increasing academic and managerial debate, there is the need for more studies on the drivers of successful CH management for sustainable urban development processes. Therefore, the aim of this research is to analyse the role of governance models for the creation of civic wealth through recovered CH. Although corporate governance is one of the main topics in business research, there are few studies focused on governance, institutional relations and management practices for the CH field. Currently, there is the need for in-depth studies on the governance systems, and the related management implications, to find models and best practices able to better connect the CH of a specific territory with its stakeholders.

In order to achieve the research aim, we perform field-based research using the case study method. The case study method is particularly suitable to address our research objective because it allows for conducting an in-depth and exploratory analysis of Governance systems phenomena in relation to CH. We selected an illustrative case, the case of the social cooperative “La Paranza”, founded in the Rione Sanità, a neighborhood of Naples, in 2006. We use semi-structured interviews, corporate reports and secondary sources. The results are based on a qualitative analysis of all the collected data.

Our findings highlight how the specific governance system, the mission and the related management practices allowed: on the one hand, the creation of cultural value through the recovery of several degraded CH assets, toward new forms of inclusive accessibility and expanded fruition (also for people with disabilities); on the other hand, the creation of economic and social value linked with the increase in employment of young people (at risk of poverty and delinquency), the active engagement of local citizens and other associations operating in the neighborhood, and the

private or public sponsors, in order to sustain the civil needs, develop new start-ups and trigger an important change in the society. Numerous theoretical, managerial and policy implications can be derived.

The remainder of the paper is organised as follows. First, section 2 outlines the relevant literature on CH management, urban regeneration (UR) initiatives and civic wealth creation. Section 3 explains the methodology and the analysed frameworks. Section 4 presents the case study, and Section 5 contains our discussion and implications of the study. Section 6 describes primary conclusions.

2. *Literature review*

CH management and UR have received increasing attention in the last few years, in line with ongoing growth of research on sustainability and sustainable development issues. The aim of our research is to analyze the role of governance systems in creating civic wealth through the regeneration and the reuse of CH. Therefore, in this section, we provide a review of the main literature about the two pillars of our research study: CH governance and UR; Civic wealth creation.

2.1. *Cultural Heritage governance and Urban regeneration*

CH is defined as the legacy of *artefacts, monuments, a group of buildings and sites, museums that have a diversity of values including symbolic, historic, artistic, aesthetic, ethnological or anthropological, scientific and social significance* (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, Framework for Cultural Statistics, 2009, p. 25). Cultural assets can be seen as a special kind of common goods, which belong to a group or society that inherits them from past generations, maintains them in the present, and serves them for the benefit of future generations. Cultural assets and common goods have some similarities, both belong to a community that has the right and duty to exploit the cultural value of the asset, regardless of who the legal ownership belongs (Dameri; Moggi, 2021) and both are vulnerable to the tragedy of the commons (Ostrom, 1990). Regarding the tragedy of the commons, concerning the possibility of destruction of goods due from users' misbehavior, cultural assets are suffering a harder kind of tragedy, ranging from the overutilization of crowded cultural sites to the underutilization of small museums, monuments and cultural sites. With the aim of avoiding tragedy, governance models are needed and they must be able to foster economic development through tourism flows as well as preserve and enhance the CH (Aas *et al.*, 2005; Shipley and Kovacs, 2008;

Aureli and Del Baldo, 2022).

CH has finally been considered as engine of socio-economic development and regeneration and, in this perspective, culture-driven UR is considered to be the engine of a new urban sustainable development (Miles and Paddison, 2005). UR is an urban development strategy that enables effective improvement of the urban physical environment, promotes economic growth, and protects CH through projects that involve land reutilization, reconstruction of old residential buildings, redevelopment of brownfield sites, renovation of commercial areas, and other social and cultural improvements (Xie *et al.*, 2021).

Therefore, despite some scholars focus their attention more specifically on CH, while other scholars on UR, the research on governance models for successful management of CH are strongly related to studies regarding UR projects. Indeed, from our knowledge, in the search of efficient and effective governance models some features and best practices have emerged in common. First, the main common features identified are (i) the need to actively involve the local community (Jung *et al.*, 2015; Dubb 2016; Lumpkin and Bacq, 2018, 2019; Dameri, Moggi, 2021; Li *et al.*, 2020), (ii) a wide variety of stakeholders (Aas *et al.*, 2005; Jung *et al.*, 2015; Aureli, Del Baldo, 2022) in CH and UR projects and (iii) the use of top-down and bottom-up approaches for governance models (Xie *et al.*, 2021).

Community participation (i) is a process that is vital to enhance long-term sustainable heritage management (Landorf, 2009). Furthermore, with the approval of the UNESCO Recommendation on the Historic Urban Landscape, community participation is recognized as a fundamental tool in heritage management and UR practices (Taylor, 2016; UNESCO, 2011; Veldpaus *et al.*, 2013).

For analyzing and measuring the impact and the grade of engagement of the local community, Li *et al.* (2020) defined a framework which considers four variables: the engaged communities, the participatory methods, the degrees of participation and the steps within CH and UR management. The variable of engaged communities regards several stakeholders involved in the cultural initiative, each with their own characteristics. The variable of participatory methods has the aim to explain how the local communities effectively participate in the management and governance process. Regarding the degrees of participation, the purpose is to explain in which way the local community is involved in the decision-making process, whether it is considered only as an information provider or also as a management partner (Li *et al.*, 2020). The last variable considered is the steps within CH and UR management that, usually, is divided in three phases. The first phase concerns identifying the scenario

to understand contexts, the second phase regards programming to develop strategies and the last phase is related to the implementation of the strategies.

In addition to the active engagement of the local community, the second common feature analyzed in governance models is the collaboration of a wide range of stakeholders (ii) who work together with a shared vision and common goals. The cooperation occurs when several groups want to provide a feasible solution to a common problem, so stakeholders collaborate to obtain various benefits, possibly avoiding the cost of resolving adversarial intra-stakeholders conflicts in the long term (Jung *et al.*, 2015). The stakeholders, depending on the different contexts, could offer their support in various ways: economic support, provided through funding and donation; in-kind support, provided through volunteer actions; capability support provided spreading knowledge, helping people to realize their own entrepreneurial activities (Lumpkin and Bacq, 2019).

Another common topic of research emerged from the literature review deals with the process of implementation and organization of CH and UR projects. Many Scholars discuss the approach of the governance models (iii) that can range from top-down to bottom-up and from unitary to multiple view. According to Xie *et al.* (2021), there are three models: government governance, entrepreneurial governance, and civic governance. In government governance, the governments need to make all the relevant decisions from the planning phase to the action phase and try to take everything under control. In this kind of model, the enterprises, citizens and other stakeholders *barely have opportunities to make some decisions and they can only deliver projects according to the instructions of government* (Xie *et al.*, 2021, p. 12). This model is oriented toward a top-down approach, where enterprise and citizens are often considered only as information providers, not as management partners (Li *et al.*, 2020). Whether, on the one hand, a government-sponsored cultural initiative ensures almost all the development cost, the respect of the rule and citizens right, on the other hand, this leads to problems concerning the lack of both financial resources and time for other cultural initiatives. Since the government cannot manage all cultural initiatives simultaneously, both for time and financial resources, entrepreneurial governance emerges. Entrepreneurial governance means that there is a collaboration between the public and the private sector, where the partners are the government and the private enterprise. This is a hybrid between a top-down and bottom-up approach, where the public and private sector work together to achieve common goals. The benefits from entrepreneurial governance are the engagement of the private sector in the decision-making process which can help to handle the fiscal crisis, promote

the local economy, improve output at lower cost and share the risks (Xie *et al.*, 2021). Although entrepreneurial governance can bring benefits, it also has cons: this model of governance pays more attention to the economic outcome compared to the civic wealth creation and the local citizens are still excluded during the decision-making process. Whereas a model which includes the local citizens in the decision-making process is the civic governance model. In a narrow sense, civic governance means that citizens can be involved in each decision-making process and enjoy equal rights (Li *et al.*, 2020) and could create and handle a cultural initiative. This is a bottom-up approach that, on the one hand, brings some pros such as a civic political participation, local economy growth, sense of belonging and civic identity, from the other hand engaging citizens in decision-making processes would lead to delays, conflicts, and division.

Considering these governance models and on the light of the case study in literature analyzed (Aas *et al.*, 2005; Jung *et al.*, 2015; Lidegaard, 2018; L.; Dameri, Moggi, 2021; L. Biondi *et al.*, 2020; S. Aureli and M. Del Baldo, 2022) the most appropriate models are those with active participation of stakeholders and the local community, since their presence has proven to be a critical success factor.

2.2. *Civic Wealth Creation*

The concept of sustainability and sustainable development has been one of the most discussed topics in recent years. The discussion about this topic dates to the early 1970s, when it became clear that development could not only be associated with economic growth, but that attention should also be directed to environmental and social issues (Nocca, 2017). The most common definition of sustainability is provided in 1987 by the World Commission on Environment and Development in the Brundtland Report. It defines sustainability as a process with the aim of achieving environmental, social and economic improvement both locally and globally, in order to meet the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (Brundtland Report, 1987).

CH is strongly linked to the concept of sustainability and sustainable development because cultural assets (tangible and intangible), just like natural resources and the environment, belong to humanity and must be preserved for future generations. Despite the importance it acquires in recent years, the value and potentialities of CH have not yet been fully understood. Indeed, even in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) set in the 2030 Agenda, the CH and the CH management plays a marginal role (Nocca, 2017) due to the heated discussion on the relationship between

sustainability, sustainable development and CH, because, on the one hand there are those who argue that culture belongs to the past and we have only a conservative role, and on the other hand there are those who argue that it has the power to promote truly sustainable development (Demartini *et al.*, 2021). Sustainable development of CH can be a key factor in improving community quality of life through economic, social and environmental development and growth (Demartini *et al.*, 2021). The simultaneous improvement of these three elements leads to the civic wealth creation. Indeed, Lumpkin e Bacq (2019) believed that civic wealth creation is achieved when three different types of wealth, the economic, social, and communal/environmental converge simultaneously.

CH management can create civic wealth not only indirectly, leading to economic, social and environmental development of the place where the asset has been recovered, but also directly by making cultural assets accessible that were not accessible before. Accessibility can be offered in different forms, one of these concerns the recovery and accessibility of cultural assets that are completely or partially inaccessible due to decay and degradation which risks the safety of visitors. Another form concerns the accessibility of CH to people with disabilities. The Convention on the rights of people with disabilities (UN, 2006) stated that it is a right of people with disabilities to participate in cultural life and have the possibility to have free access to all cultural assets. Therefore, making CH accessible to people with disabilities is an important form of civic wealth creation. Instead, an alternative form of accessibility has been influenced by the advent of digital technologies, which have significantly accelerated experimentation with new opportunities for organizing CH activities (Jung *et al.*, 2018; Lazzarotti and Sartori, 2016).

Although corporate governance is one of the main topics in business studies, there are few research studies focused on governance, institutional relations, and management practices for the CH field. From the lack of a specific literature, we made research in comparable sectors of research, and the main results we found in research streams of CH, civic wealth creation and UR.

Our research answers the need of studying the drivers for successful CH accessibility and management through specific governance systems able to allow UR and civic wealth.

In an attempt to fill this gap, we formulate the following research questions:

RQ₁ - What is the role of CH governance models for civic wealth creation?

RQ₂ - How can a specific governance model represent a driver for successful CH accessibility and management?

3. *Research framework and methodology*

3.1. *Research framework*

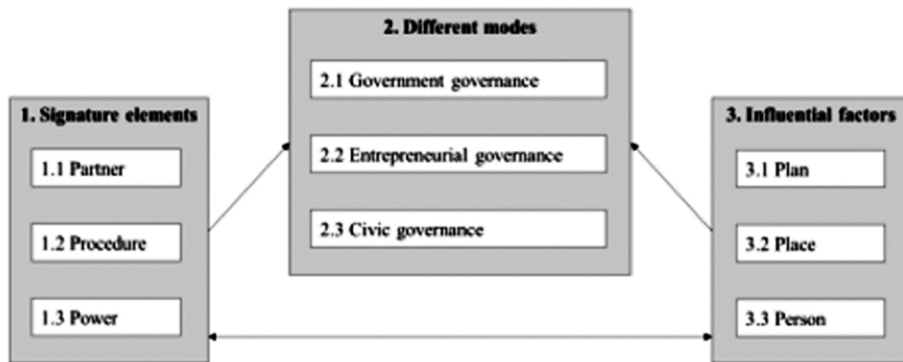
This section presents the Shipley and Kovacs (2008) and Xie *et al.* (2021) frameworks related specifically to CH and UR governance used to build our research design and to answer the research questions.

Shipley and Kovacs (2008), with the aim of defining principles of good governance which could be used in the management of CH, have compared the set of governance principles based on the United Nations Development Program's (UNDP, 1997) provided by the Institute on Governance in the 2003 with the content of UNESCO and International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) charters and conventions. The reference principles are legitimacy and voice, direction, performance, accountability and fairness.

Legitimacy and voice is a principle based on the existence of a supportive democratic and human right context, an appropriate collaboration in the decision-making process between all the categories of stakeholders and citizen participation at all levels. Direction is a principle based on strategic vision which includes human development and historical, cultural, and social complexities; moreover, it includes the existence of system-wide plans, quantified objectives for management, and established priorities for planning periods. Performance consists of cost effectiveness and efficiency in the achievement of objectives, responsiveness of institutions and coordination of stakeholders' efforts and the ability to learn and adjust management based on experience. Accountability refers to unequivocal assignment of responsibilities and authority and the capacity of public and institutional stakeholders, citizens, civil society and the media to access relevant information. Fairness is based on respect for the rights, uses and traditional knowledge of local people, management of conservation sites achieving a balance between costs, benefits, and equitable human resource management practices for staff. From this study emerged that these principles are robust and useful for heritage management and they form a strong basis for the development of governance principles intended for use with heritage sites and organizations dealing with CH conservation.

The second framework of Xie *et al.* (2021) identifies a governance model focused on UR able to help decision-makers to develop appropriate governance modes. The Authors identify three aspects that can be considered the general formula of urban regeneration governance (URG) (Fig. 1): (i) the signature elements, (ii) the categories of URG modes based on different arrangements of signature elements and (iii) the factors influencing the practice of URG.

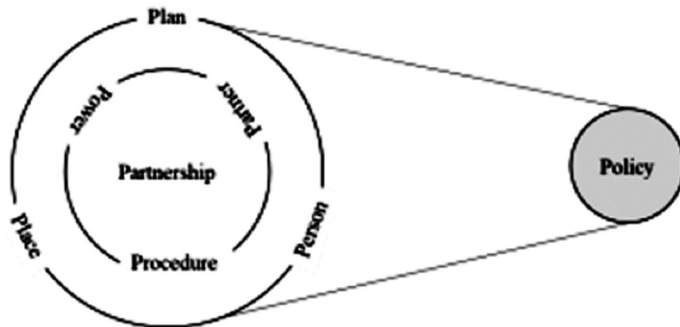
Fig. 1. – The general formula of URG



The distinctive elements (i) include the partners, the procedures and the power. The Partner can come from a public/private sector or from the society, such as central government, local government, private company, NGO's, university, and so on. With regards to the procedures, UR includes four of them: scoping, planning, financing and implementation. Concerning the power, the Authors define it as the capability *to influence the process of events, to change behaviors and attitudes, and get people to do something they would not otherwise do* (2021, 7). Generally, the distribution of the power among the URG partners is hard to balance because each partner has its own interests and goals to achieve. According to how partner, procedure and power are arranged, there are three categories of URG models (ii): government governance, entrepreneurial governance, and civic governance (3[SM1]). Moreover, the validity of URG models is influenced by some three influential factors (iii): plan, place and person. The plan concerns the activity of guiding and the definition of targets able to meet the actual demands of stakeholders in order to achieve high social value. About the place, it is needed not to ignore the influence of historical and geographical characteristics of a specific area, because each area is different and often a strategy or a plan used to an area is not valid for other areas. In the decision-making process it is important analyze the main features of the place and only after evaluating the best strategy to implement. The latest influential factor is person; the people can be key actors in the UR process because, with their capabilities and experience, can help in the decision-making process to adopt the solutions most in line with the needs of the local community.

Based on these aspects, the Authors devise the “8p model” (Plan, Place, Person, Partner, Power, Procedure and Policy) grouped into three circles (Fig. 2).

Fig. 2 – The URG 8p model of Xie *et al.*, 2021



3.2. Research methodology and data collection

Selecting a research methodology is a critical step in a research project (Yin, 2014). In answering RQ1 and RQ2, we perform field-based research using a single case study method. We use the Shipley and Kovacs (2008) and Xie *et al.* (2021) frameworks for analysing the illustrative case study of the social cooperative “La Paranza”, founded in the Rione Sanità, a neighborhood of Naples, in 2006. This method investigates how specific CH governance models can be used to create civic wealth, especially in a district at risk of poverty and delinquency. According to many Scholars (Yin, 2014; Birkel *et al.*, 2019), case studies are a particularly useful research methodology when a new, complex and evolving context is under investigation. Therefore, the case study method is particularly suitable to address our research aim because it allows for conducting an in-depth and exploratory analysis of Governance systems phenomena in relation to CH.

To support our analysis, a research protocol was implemented (Table 1) following the prescriptions stated in Yin (2014).

Table 1 – Research validation strategy

Test	Strategy	Phase
Construct validity	Multiple data sources Validation of the construction through the key components of the organisation	Data collection Design of the study
	Integration of two frameworks developed by the literature (Shiple and Kovacs, 2008; Xie <i>et al.</i> , 2021)	Construction of the findings
Internal validity	The Cooperative’s features and consistency with research aims	Selection of the case
	Willingness of the Cooperative to participate in the research	
	Preliminary analysis of multiple data sources and triangulation for case acceptance	
External validity	Validation with external references	Construction of the findings

Indeed, Yin (2014, p. l. 649) asserts that a case study should be conducted rigorously using multiple sources of data. As such, a semi-structured interview was conducted with the communication manager and cooperative member Vincenzo Porzio and with the president Giovanni Maraviglia. According to Qu and Dumay (2011, p. 246), “the semi-structured interview involves prepared questioning guided by identified themes in a consistent and systematic manner interposed with probes designed to elicit more elaborate responses”. The questions focus on critical success factors, actors engaged in the cooperative, governance model adopted, recovery of and accessibility to the CH managed, impact of the Cooperative activities on “Sanità” neighborhood and accountability to stakeholders.

Each data source was scrutinised, then codified and categorised using the chosen frameworks in Shipley and Kovacs (2008) and Xie *et al.* (2021). The data were principally gathered between March 2022 and May 2022. The sequence of data collection began with an initial analysis of the Cooperative La Paranza website and newspaper articles about the Cooperative. Then, we accessed the financial reports through the Italian company information and business intelligence database called AIDA (Analisi Informatizzata delle Aziende Italiane) database available at the time of the study (we found the yearly reports for the years from 2012 to 2021). Subsequently, we developed the questionnaire according to the framework and we performed the two interviews.

4. *Case study description: “La Paranza” Cooperative*

The project of the Cooperative “La Paranza” was founded in 2006 in the Rione Sanità, one of the districts of Naples with the clearest evidence of great socio-cultural inequality and huge resources existing side by side. The Cooperative started its activities with the management of the Catacomb of St. Gaudioso, in the Basilica of Santa Maria della Sanità. This journey led the Cooperative to being awarded with the artistic-historical tender by the CON IL SUD Foundation in 2008. This was the first step in the process that led to the recovery, management and opening of the Catacombs of St. Gennaro to the public.

Through the Cooperativa La Paranza’s project, Rione Sanità has gone from being an urban periphery in the middle of the historic center to being a virtuous model for the protection of CH and the revitalization of employment for an entire neighbourhood in just over 10 years.

The Cooperative devotes all its knowledge and efforts to supporting new businesses and inspiring hope among the youth. Indeed, “Casa del Monacone” and “Casa Tolentino” are the results of two projects for the reclamation and development of local resources. These two accommodation facilities, created from renovated convent buildings, allow tourists and pilgrims to spend a few days in the city of Naples, experience the warm welcome and share the values of the Cooperative. In fact, visitors to the Catacombs have increased from 5,000 in 2009 to 150,000 in 2019. A growth unmatched by any other site or cultural asset in the city of Naples. In the same years (2009-2019), the Cooperative’s employees grew from 5 to 34, demonstrating how UR and cultural enhancement projects that start and are managed through the bottom-up approach are able to create employment.

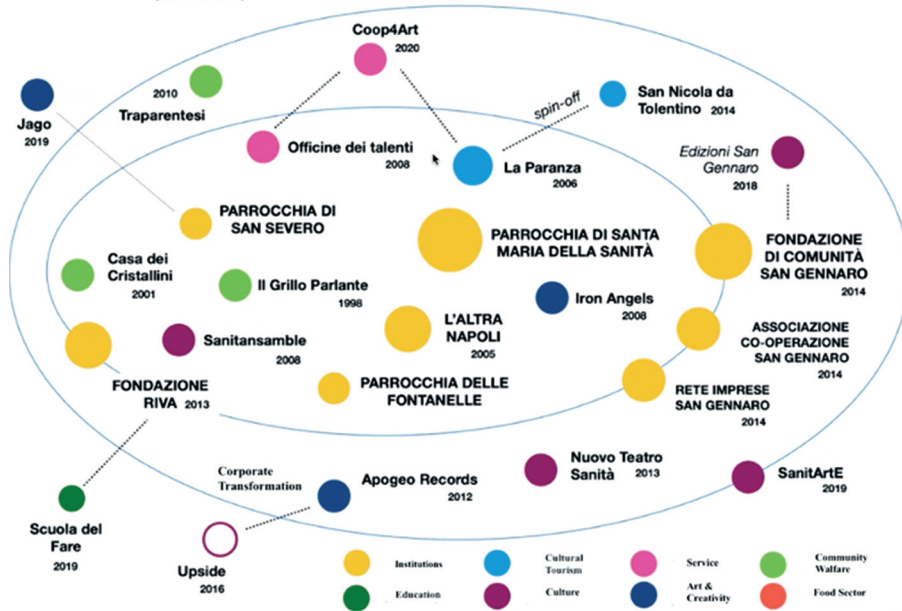
The critical success factors of the La Paranza Cooperative are manifold and most of them, although already identified in the literature (Xie *et al.*, 2021; Dameri and Moggi, 2021; Lumpkin and Bacq, 2019), present elements of originality and distinctiveness. First, the protagonists recognise the importance of the available assets: the Catacombs of St. Gennaro and St. Gaudioso. These are places with a great historical, cultural and archaeological tradition, but above all emblems and symbols of the Rione Sanità’s territorial community: physical spaces, to which all residents are linked, passing on the centuries-old tradition, as evidence of the noble origins of the entire city. At the same time, places that have been abandoned for decades, inaccessible, degraded like the entire neighbourhood, confirming the intimate bond between cultural assets and the territories in which they are born and live. As the head of communications stated:

“the prodigious recovery and enhancement work carried out by the Paranza (over 12,000 square metres of recovered heritage), had the ultimate goal of not only addressing the places themselves, but of convincing an entire neighbourhood that the rebirth of an asset is a new start for all those who, in various ways, have seen it, lived in it, preserved it, even neglected it”.

The theme of people at the centre of the project is also part of the second element of success. The authors refer to it as “leadership and vision”. In fact, over 15 years ago, the start of the adventure saw the enlightened guidance of the parish priest of the Church of St. Gennaro, Father Loffredo. Among his most significant intuitions was that of making young people of the Sanità district “see” the beauty that surrounded them, first through trips to European capitals (a path of ‘comparative’ education), then through the opportunity to combine this beauty with a job. From the very beginning, La Paranza was characterised as a non-profit cooperative, through a democratic structure with a board of directors, a members’ meeting, a functional organisation chart (6 areas: communication, maintenance, training, finance, human resources, entertainment), a monthly meeting with the staff (to date about 40 employees, 80% of whom are residents of the Rione) and continuous round tables and listening sessions with all stakeholders. At the corporate level, a dense network of relationships has been established with all players in the Sanità neighbourhood (Fig. 3), both formal and informal ones.

Fig. 3 – Network relationships of the Cooperative La Paranza

Network relationships of the “Rione Sanità”
(2006-2020)



Source 1 – File provided by the interviewees

La Paranza is part of the Co-operazione San Gennaro Association, which brings together all third sector operators working in the Rione Sanità. In turn, this association is part of the San Gennaro Onlus Community Foundation, which brings together other local parishes, private companies, families, and other foundations (12 partners in total). It is a true integrated chain of activities and skills ranging from hospitality to publishing, from culture to architecture, from commerce to solidarity, and so on.

As the interviewee stated, in this network, the Association “L’Altra Napoli Onlus” played a central role. Indeed, in the start-up phase of La Paranza, L’Altra Napoli Onlus offered its legal and economic expertise free of charge (a sort of incubator) to ensure the full autonomy of the Cooperative La Paranza to date, and, above all, contributed to the victory of the approximately € 500,000 funding call made available by the “Fondazione con il Sud”.

Then, another distinctive element is the relationship with the final customer, the visitor to the catacombs. In this respect, the Paranza has decided to make reservations compulsory for access to the sites and to

conduct only guided tours. While this has required staff continuous training and the care and enrichment of every detail of the visit, it has also created an exclusive relationship with tourists. This relationship is evidenced both by the exponential growth of tourists (from 5,000 in 2006 to more than 150,000 today) and by the winning of the Global Remarkable Venue Awards (in the best experience in the world section) in 2020, the international award that celebrates museums and attractions that have been able to offer their users “exceptional” discovery experiences.

Moreover, the Catacombs of St. Gennaro are the only site of their kind in the world that is fully accessible. In 2009 a decision was made, together with the Tutti a Scuola association, to remove all the architectural barriers and to create walkways and ramps, so that the site could be accessible to everyone. In association with SAAD (University Service for activities by students with disabilities) of the Suor Orsola Benincasa University and the Iron Angels social cooperative, the Napoli tra le Mani (“Naples in your Hands”) project was launched to create a route for blind and visually impaired visitors, through tactile exploration with metal plates that provide descriptive details of the place.

We can assert that the neighbourhoods’ historical, architectural, artistic and archaeological heritage of the Rione Sanità, with the prominent element of the Catacombs of St. Gennaro, has been transformed into a model of CH enhancement, celebrated as an exemplary case of community involvement in CH management. Our findings highlight how the specific governance system of the Cooperative allows the creation of cultural value through the recovery of several degraded CH assets, toward new forms of inclusive accessibility and expanded fruition (also for people with disabilities).

5. *Discussion and main implications*

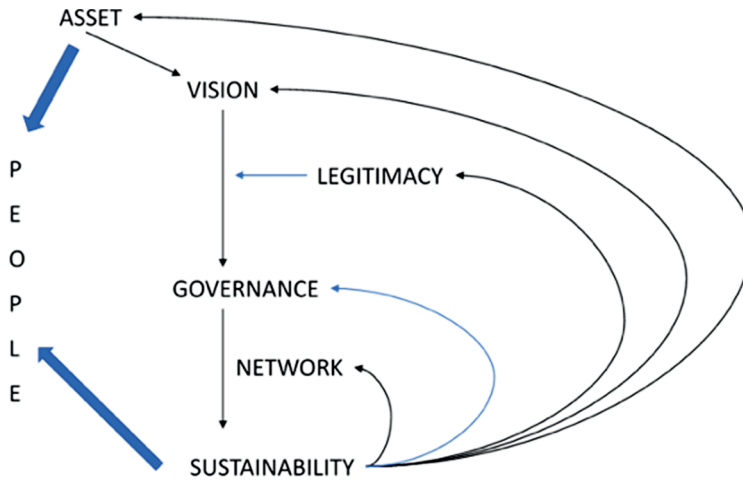
5.1. *Discussion of results*

The literature on governance models characteristics to foster UR and create civic value through CH, although recent, is convergent on some issues. Examples include stakeholder engagement (Li *et al.*, 2020; Aas *et al.*, 2005), the role of legitimacy and space (Biondi *et al.*, 2020; Lumpkin *et al.*, 2018; Shipley and Kovacs, 2008), the weight of networks (Xie *et al.*, 2021; Lumpkin and Bacq, 2019), and co-design practices (Aureli and Del Baldo, 2022).

These models may also fit well with the reality of the case study examined, La Paranza Cooperative, which, however, as can be deduced

from the results described above, presents elements of originality such as to allow a new and better “focus” on the models themselves. At least five peculiar critical success factors emerge from the interview, not to be understood in order of priority but in a dynamic and connected way (Fig. 4): assets; vision; legitimacy; governance and networking; sustainability.

Fig. 4 – The governance model of La Paranza Cooperative



By means of assets, we mean the set of resources, tangible and intangible, available to an institution (Lumpkin *et al.*, 2018). In the case of the Paranza we certainly refer in the first instance to the CH of Catacombs of St. Gennaro and St. Gaudioso, treasures of history and archaeology that for thousands of years have testified to the first burials of Neapolitan Christians.

Then, there are the financial assets, about which more will be said later. Certainly, the allocation of funds to the Paranza by Con il Sud Foundation, if on the one hand it guaranteed the start-up, on the other it created trust and stability in the organisation, favouring the consolidation, autonomy and sustainability of the project. It is hard to imagine what could have been achieved without the substantial injection of initial liquidity.

Finally, the main asset: the women and men of the Paranza. The vision of the Paranza is clear, simple and essential, as much as it is profound and meaningful: to put people at the centre. It may seem trivial, but in the context in which this philosophy was born and in the classical paradigm of CH, the logic appears to be completely reversed. In fact, the regeneration of a cultural asset becomes the tool for the enhancement of

people, not the end in itself or perhaps the means to attract tourists.

Since the beginning, all stakeholders have perceived some absolute novelties in this project (Aas *et al.*, 2005), as the President told us:

“profit was not the goal; the activities were open to all and not only to a few circles of experts; the initiative was based on the energy and courage of young people, who were not responsible for the degradation of the past; everyone would be involved and everyone would benefit from the results; the initiative was sustainable; the redemption of the district was to start from legality and the creation of opportunities, work and wealth”.

The method followed included education in beauty as a tool for emancipation. The recovery of places was to recover people, recreating a virtuous circuit in which the empowerment of people would become the main lever of sustainable development. As an anecdote, the HR manager told us that often in interviews to assess candidates, motivation prevailed over qualifications and preparation.

Legitimacy refers to the ability to interact and operate in the territory, being recognised as authoritative actors (Di Maggio and Powell, 1991). Authoritativeness is particularly decisive in contexts of informal governance, i.e. where traditional mechanisms, based on institutions (the state, local authorities, laws) or the market, are ineffective, produce unsuccessful results, not least because they are not recognised by the citizens themselves and are therefore deemed unreliable (Marchegiani *et al.*, 2014).

In our case, such legitimacy derives from *ex ante* and *ex post* elements. Firstly, La Paranza was perceived, at least initially, as an experience born within the Church. This institution has historically enjoyed great trust, precisely in the contexts mentioned above, which are also often characterised by traditional cultural legacies, poverty, low schooling, etc. The Church is therefore seen as a moral institution, neutral and superior between the state and the market.

The Paranza’s other element of authoritativeness derives from its knowledge of the territory and from identifying itself, through its founders, as a daughter of the district. In other words, no one else could have carried out such an initiative if not the young people born and integrated in the Rione Sanità.

According to theories of business efficiency, the most effective ownership system is the one that ensures the lowest costs for the company in its operations, both in the markets and through its governance mechanisms. The most suitable owners for a firm are those for whom the costs of market imperfections are most severe or most damaging to them

and who therefore tend to constantly reduce them (Hansmann, 1988). In the present case, we are of course talking about the Paranza boys and residents: the main users or beneficiaries of cultural assets should be their primary managers.

But legitimacy does not only derive from a starting condition; rather, it has become authoritativeness mainly due to the results achieved and the instruments used (Shiple and Kovacs, 2008). As can be seen from reading the financial statements, La Paranza now provides stable employment for around 40 young people, 80% of whom come from the Sanità district, and has sustainable management from an economic, financial and social perspective. The success factors are related to the legal form (the social cooperative) as a non-profit organisation (Landriani and D'Amore, 2009; Alvino and Petrillo, 1998), to the mode of operational governance (Ostrom *et al.*, 1999), and above all to the strategic governance that, through the networks outlined, includes and creates commitment with all local stakeholders (Hribar *et al.*, 2015; Sclager *et al.*, 1994). For these reasons, it is believed that only in this way can such an initiative be successful.

The enlarged and inclusive governance model of the Paranza, typical of the public governance framework (Kovac and Gajduschek, 2015), had the capacity to create different entities (the Fondazione di Comunità San Gennaro Onlus, the Associazione Co-Operazione San Gennaro, etc.) to attract different actors (sponsors, private individuals, families, parishes, professionals, etc.) as a strategic lever in defining the growth and success of the project.

Such a model can perhaps be defined as 'enlightened' governance and, in this sense, differs from those known in the doctrine (Biondi *et al.*, 2020; Lidegard *et al.*, 2017), overcoming certain limitations of public governance (Kovac and Gajduschek, 2015). Indeed, despite the prevalence of a bottom-up approach (Dameri and Moggi, 2019), which is often discussed in the literature, contrasting it with initiatives based on top-down drivers (Aureli and Del Baldo, 2022; Aas *et al.*, 2005), La Paranza is growing due to the joint effect of at least two elements that have characterised its governance model: the initial training offered by Father Loffredo and the professionals of the Altra Napoli Onlus and the financial stability achieved following the victory in the Fondazione Con il Sud call for projects.

One of the limitations, in fact, of public governance (Kovac and Gajduschek, 2015) but more generally of the common goods framework (Ostrom, 1990) is precisely the inability to make decisions and the absence of effective leadership. In the Paranza, on the other hand, Father Loffredo's leadership was flanked by the skills of the team of professionals from L'Altra Napoli Onlus, as well as those of other masters (e.g. the artist

Dalisi) who “incubated” the Cooperative, allowing it to mature to the point of determining the autonomy of the cooperative itself, also in financial terms.

5.2 *Main implications*

The implications arising from this study are numerous. The case of the Co-operative was discussed taking into consideration the literature analysed, in particular, with the theoretical frameworks of Shipley and Kovacs (2008) and of Xie *et al.* (2021) on UR governance. This framework was implemented with the specific case study by shifting the focus to CH management.

For instance, dealing with ecclesiastical cultural property (place), the role of the moral authority of the Church as the institution needed to start (power) the regeneration process is highlighted as it is endowed, together with the operators, with legitimacy (person). At the same time, the need to consider not only *ex ante* authority, but above all *ex post* authority emerges, which derives from sustainability (policy) and becomes an instrument of self-reinforcement of legitimacy (Shipley and Kovacs, 2008). Power (Xie *et al.*, 2021) thus derives not only from ownership, but also from legitimacy (Biondi *et al.*, 2020; Shipley and Kovacs, 2008). At the same time, place (Xie *et al.*, 2021) means not only the spatial context, but also the characteristic of the assets (Biondi *et al.*, 2020).

Also in terms of governance models, it emerges that purely bottom-up approaches such as self-organisation (Ostrom, 1999) may be insufficient or inconclusive in poor institutional contexts, where asset ownership and operational practices require enlightened leadership and territorial embeddedness (Lidegaard *et al.*, 2017; Li *et al.*, 2020). In this perspective, civic engagement or participatory governance, as well as those to partnerships (Aas *et al.*, 2005; Lumpkin *et al.*, 2018; Aureli and Del Baldo, 2022; Biondi *et al.*, 2020) risk being inadequate to the case under investigation, as they do not clarify the role and responsibilities of the individual stakeholder categories, which are completely assimilated. Therefore, compared to the all-encompassing model of civic wealth (Lumpkin and Bacq, 2019), the case of the Paranza puts people at the centre, among the stakeholders, redefining the weights and priorities of the different categories (community, business and ‘supporting’ institutions).

From a managerial point of view, the numerous best practices implemented by the Paranza were highlighted and, as stated by the interviewees, the management model of the Catacombs was designed to be repeated in other historical and artistic sites. On the operational level, the focus on training as a lever to make the visit experience memorable was combined

with the tool of planning activities to foster knowledge of the end customer. From a policy perspective, the study highlights the need for stable, adequate and lasting financial instruments to support the start-up of such initiatives, as well as the usefulness of tutors and/or incubators.

6. *Primary conclusions*

The paradigm of CH management has undergone several evolutions in recent years, especially in Italy, the country with the highest number of cultural assets. In many cases, there has been a shift from an excessive focus on protection to an over-exploitation. If the former had in fact resulted in closed and abandoned sites, the latter has led to the touristification of the great cities of art, excessive crowding of sites, exclusively hedonistic consumption and attention only to the most famous and well-known assets, which have not acted as a driving force for the “minor” ones. Moreover, the peculiarity of the heritage itself, which envisages the co-presence of numerous actors as owners of the assets (State, Regions, Local Authorities, private individuals, associations, the Church, and so on) has not favoured management models oriented towards effectiveness and efficiency, but rather excessive legislative proliferation and bureaucracy.

More recently, the perpetuation of problems such as the scarcity of human and financial resources, bureaucracy and the generalised state of neglect of the assets themselves, together with the overcoming of the ‘myth’ of tourism as a saving phenomenon of the territories, has allowed other frameworks to assert themselves, including UR governance, civic wealth, and sustainability. Moreover, cultural assets, as a ‘new’ category of common goods, no longer become the goal of governance interventions in this sector, but rather a tool for the regeneration of places and, above all, of people, as highlighted in the case study examined in this paper. Therefore, this paradigmatic shift requires a research effort in order to understand both the governance models most suited to the new challenges and the best management practices that can be replicated in different contexts.

From this perspective, our research study examined the case of La Paranza, a social cooperative founded in 2006 in the Rione Sanità in Naples. The analysis carried out showed how the initiative of a group of young people, rooted in an area that is not favourable for historical and social reasons, under the guidance of a local parish priest and with the initial help of a team of professionals and a funding entity, succeeded in enhancing an entire neighbourhood by focusing on the recovery of the Catacombs

of St. Gennaro, as a catalyst for the recovery of the people living in the social space in which they insist.

An innovative governance model, characterised by an inclusive network of all territorial actors and democratic decision-making processes, together with the moral leadership of the ecclesiastical institution and the vision of educating people to beauty, has determined the success of the initiative. A success that can be measured according to different sustainability parameters: economic, social and environmental. Indeed, the cooperative has stabilised about 40 young people, 80% of whom come from the neighbourhood itself, regenerated over 12,000 square metres of artistic heritage, created paths of inclusive accessibility to the CH, brought over 130,000 tourists to visit the catacombs every year and, above all, brought the neighbourhood to life through the rebirth of commerce, hospitality crafts and art.

Among the study’s main contributions is the focus on the role of human resources as a new output of UR processes and the creation of civic value. People thus become the goal, the centre of the new governance models.

Tourists themselves must compulsorily book and take only guided tours, thus fostering the quality of the experience and the customer’s knowledge, but above all forcing La Paranza to carefully train guides (only the most motivated ones are selected, not the most prepared), thus transferring not only the culture of hospitality, but also the culture of the territory. In this sense, one can read the governance model, which, although characterised by a predominantly bottom-up approach, required leadership, competence and operational legitimacy, all levers then strengthened with the performance achieved.

The present work has several limitations, including that it is a single case study. In addition, the sources used were limited as in future research the goal will be to interview other actors in the Rione Sanità and to carry out comparative analyses in time and space.

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