

CULTURAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN CREATIVE ATMOSPHERES

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Abstract

As in many other post-industrial countries, in the last decades creativity and culture have become keywords in the Italian economy. However, the global tendency of relating creativity and culture to economic development has had a peculiar translation in the Italian context. The very notions of “industry” and “culture” or “industrial culture” can be understood in the light of the original model of economic development that in Italy took the shape of networks of small and medium enterprise that characterize the economic and social fabric of some of the most competitive Italian regions. Due to relevance of this highly territorialized, deeply rooted form of economic action, also cultural and creative development have been understood as phenomena that occur in specific contexts, sustained by original combinations of both material aspects and immaterial dimensions. In this paper we offer both an empirical investigation of some of these contexts, interpret them as forms of cultural entrepreneurship and make sense of their success as embedded in creative atmospheres.

Keywords: cultural entrepreneurship, creativity-led development, creative atmospheres.

1. Introduction

In the last three decades the relationship between culture, territory, development and the effects at the level of local economy has been the object of increasing scholarly attention among geography, urban studies, cultural studies and the like. In parallel, the claim that culture and creativity can be the leverage for territorial growth and regeneration was increasingly put at the centre stage of many examples of territorial governance around the globe (Montanari, 2011, Musterd et al., 2007).

While the notion of the creative city has been dominating this debate, especially in Anglo-American countries (Scott, 1997, 2001, 2006; Landry, 2000; Hall, 2000; Miles, 2005), the parallel notion of cultural or creative clusters emerged and gained momentum, especially in continental Europe (Santagata, 2001, 2012; Maskell & Lorenzen, 2004; Musterd et al., 2007; Lazzaretti, Boix, Capone, 2008; Van Heur, 2009; Le Blanc, 2010), becoming a prominent element of many national, regional and urban development strategies.

Interestingly enough, both in general and in the particular case of Veneto, the discourse of culture-led development got developed at the policy (macro) level, virtually disregarding the dynamics of cultural processes at a micro level of analysis. Moreover, the debate tended to focus on “the what” – the role of culture and creativity for territorial competitiveness and local development – and much less on “the how”, i.e. how local actors behave and perform in practice in areas of spatial concentration of cultural production. Finally, different ideas seem to be associated to the multifaceted notions of culture, creativity, and development in different contexts and by different actors, attributing semantic ambiguity to these keywords.

In this paper we intend to contribute to this body of research by moving on from the policy level that dominates the discourse on culture led development, and purposely addressing how the actors involved in cultural/creative activities in an area of dense concentration of cultural and industrial production actually start, run, and develop their business. Studying the experience of a couple of cultural initiatives in Northern Italy as conceptual and physical spaces where the design and the practice of a cultural project acted as a driver of change for a large territory, we analyse how culture and development take place through the emergence of processes of cultural entrepreneurship. The resulting idea of creative atmospheres accelerating the processes of cultural entrepreneurship then emerges as the most meaningful and concrete metaphor of how culture is taking place in the territory.

2. Background on culture-led development

It is in the 1980s that the relation between the cultural and the economic development of a territory started to be acknowledged in the scholarly and the policy-making debate. The awareness of the role of culture as a determinant of sustainable economic activities further exploded in the 1990s and heightened in recent years. Beforehand, most local economic programmes had been almost exclusively influenced by theories of firm growth or of industrial agglomeration, disregarding the cultural field (Scott, 2004).

The rationale of such cultural turn can be found in the macro societal change towards post-modernism, where society increasingly moves from manufacturing production models to post-fordist forms of production, and both products and production processes are mainly immaterial, knowledge-based and information-based. In the context of such knowledge economy, symbolic and cultural contents start to play a key role (Chatterton, 2000). The symbolic value is as much inscribed in products as – vice versa – the economic value is inscribed in symbolic contents (Scott, 2001). In parallel, community needs to shift from seeking sufficient resources for a decent life to the search for entertainment and cultural

growth activities (Hall, 2000). Put differently, the symbolic dimension has nowadays acquired a central weight in both everyday consumption experiences and in the determination of products' value added. As a consequence, firms are all the time more induced to integrate symbolic meanings into their value chains, while cities and regions are as much induced to enhance their cultural offer (Rullani, 2004; Sacco & Tavano Blessi, 2005; Montanari, 2011). A key role in the growth of the debate on culture-led development is also played by the influential work of Florida (2012), who introduces the notion of the "creative class". Building on the assumption that creativity is a source of competitive advantage, Florida posits that the social and urban context influences both the expression of local residents' creativity potential and the possibility to attract new creative professionals on site. Accordingly, the social and urban context becomes a variable that can be managed by policy actions in order to favour the rise of the creative class and hence determine a territorial competitive advantage.

The 2000s debate has been punctuated by a number of empirical studies that mainly aimed at applying the conceptual model of culture/creativity-led development to specific case studies (e.g. Moon, 2001; Bayliss, 2007; Lazzaretti et al., 2008), at specifying it (e.g. McGranahan & Vojan, 2007; Mizzau & Montanari, 2008; Cohendet & Simon, 2010; Vaarst Andersen et al, 2010), or at more explicitly criticize it. Political critiques indicated the discourse of culture and creativity as an "opportunistic toolkit" (Chatterton, 2000), a "rhetorical device" for politicians and urban planning consultants' recipes (Peck, 2005), or an "aesthetic gloss for commercial schemes [...] where marketization is clothed in a new rhetoric of social development in which the arts are utilized as representing non commercial (aesthetic) value" (Miles, 2005). Social critiques pointed out the fact that social inequalities are ignored at best or emphasized at worst by policies of culture-led development, in that they cause processes of gentrification and of "elite-led social exclusion" in many urban areas (Peck, 2005; Miles, 2005), they overlook working conditions of these creative professionals, and they tend to exclude marginal forms of arts, neglecting difference, variety, and alterity in fact (Amin & Thift, 2007). Finally, under a methodological point of view, the main arguments are only barely grounded on empirical evidence of concrete, sustainable benefits (Miles, 2005), while causal nexuses are not demonstrated (one might talk about co-evolution of economic and cultural development, for example) (Peck, 2005; Scott, 2006; Pratt, 2008).

Several elements emerge from this literature review.

First, there is a considerable semantic ambiguity around many of the concepts mobilized by this literature. More specifically, most contributions harness the concepts of "culture" and

“creativity” as powerful buzzwords (Chatterton, 2000); yet these buzzwords are associated to a multiplicity of meanings, often varying inconsistently among authors and contexts. The idea of culture considered as a driver of local development spans from the arts, to a way of life, or a symbolic economy in a sort of a conceptual fusion (Miles, 2005). Indeed, most conceptual arguments are grounded on a more ‘anthropological’ notion of culture including a bundle of norms, beliefs, values, traditions, and knowhow linked to a specific territory; while most of their empirical policy applications actually involve a more strictly ‘aesthetical’ one meant as acting in the sphere of museums, theatre, publishing, cinema, etc. It should be noted that such semantic ambiguity is not neutral, as it can generate perverse effects. As an example, the use of conceptual arguments based on one broad notion of culture could justify investments in specific fields of culture, whereas it is not demonstrated if, how, and how much this is likely to generate local development returns.

At the same time the concept of creativity suffers the same problem of ambiguity and superficiality then it is meant as a positive process of creation, regardless of any possibility to identify and to measure its real effects in terms of improvement of the context where it takes place in practice.

Second, the debate has been oscillating between two extremes. On one side, there is the position of exclusive attention towards the government of macro phenomena of culture-led development and the search for the right policy to plan and to manage them. The discourse of culture-led development, and the related body of research got developed at the policy (macro) level, virtually disregarding the dynamics of cultural entrepreneurship at a micro level of analysis and the analysis of the processes deployed by each actor. On the other side, there is the micro-analysis of those creative processes taking place in the context of new inventors animating the world of makers depicted by Henderson (2012). In an apparent opposition the two sides of the debate produce both a rhetoric, that of the top-down perspective of politicians invoking the worlds of culture & arts as the new ingredient of the economic regeneration of our economies, and that of the bottom-up process of involvement and participation grounded in the idea that everybody can be creative, taking part of a new movement of individualistic producers.

3. Empirical research: method

Given the limits of the debate on the process of creativity led development, the empirical research has been designed in order to enter more deeply in the processes through which this development has been supposed to take place.

The research is based on a qualitative case study based on a set of stories of cultural entrepreneurship rooted in the territory of the Veneto region – a wealthy and industrialised area located in North-Eastern Italy, having a rich historical, natural, artistic, cultural, and intangible heritage.

The case selection strategy was driven by two main rationales.

1. First, geographical commonality: in order to increase cross-case comparability, the research focused on cases located in the “pedemontana” area – a sub-region of Veneto, corresponding to the piedmont belt between the mountains and the plain, characterized by the richness of both cultural and industrial activities, and by being composed of a plurality of smaller towns, without large urban centres.
2. Second, we were in part “led by the phenomenon itself”, identifying additional cases through a “snowball” logic as well.

Following these criteria, we analysed a number of stories and, at the end, we focused on two major case studies representing meaningful examples of how cultural policy can be interpreted differently by public and private actors, producing a visible effect in the context. The first case study is that of OperaEstate Festival, a cultural event designed by the municipality of Bassano del Grappa together with other municipalities of the “pedemontana area” and characterised by a long history of success an artistic. The festival is characterised by a rich program of events, performances, and workshops, and emerges as the concrete manifestation of the cultural policy of the municipalities involved but also as the result of the strenuous and entrepreneurial activity of its director Rosa Scapin.

The second case study is that of Antiruggine, a physical and conceptual space of cultural production invented and managed by the international musician Mario Brunello with a number of other private actors. In this case we have a completely private and independent project, designed, financed, and managed by an artist-entrepreneur together with his wife and a small group of closed friends. A position of independence from public institutions and private companies, but also a proposal of cultural policy for the territory of Castelfranco Veneto where Antiruggine takes place.

In the analysis of both the case studies, three dimensions have been used: a micro level of analysis to study the entrepreneurial processes emerging in the context, the organizational level of analysis to identify the rich network of relations stemming out from the concrete

experiences analysed, and the managerial perspective to identify and interpret the patterns emerging from the practices implemented by the actors observed in the concrete management of these cultural and artistic experiences.

3. Stories of cultural entrepreneurship

3. 1 OperaEstate Festival: an incubator festival

OperaestateFestival is a festival of performing arts and cinema, that combines both traditional and contemporary productions of a higher, professional level, performing all summer long in open and public spaces: villas, town squares, castles, parks, etc. in the “pedemontana” area. It is organized by a special division of the Culture Sector of the municipality of Bassano del Grappa in collaboration with more than thirty other municipalities of the “pedemontana” area. In this framework Bassano del Grappa is in charge of the artistic and administrative direction of the whole festival, while each partner municipality is in charge of the artistic programme and technical organization on site. Operaestate Festival main activities are: the organization of the festival; off festival own productions (especially opera); young performers’ professional training; the running of the “Contemporary Scene Centre” (organization of workshops, residences, courses, ad hoc festival, etc. for contemporary dance and drama professionals).

Operaestate has a quite long history. It all started in 1981 as an activity of opera productions organized by a group of local professionals all characterised by the aim to combine a cultural project with the purpose to valorise the cultural heritage of that area. In order to apply for state funding and get the access to the opera production, it almost immediately got embedded within the municipality of Rossano Veneto. Only later, in 1985, it extended its core activity to the hospitality of other forms of performing arts, thus becoming a summer festival and entering in a new stage. A second turning point is marked by 1991, when the organization of the festival moved to the larger municipality of Bassano del Grappa: it was then that it acquired its typical territorial dimension of a “diffused festival”, establishing a network of inter-municipality collaborations in the territory. A third turning point occurred in the early 2000s, when OperaEstate enlarged its activity to encompass the contemporary work and research on dance and drama. Since then, the organisation of the Festival focused all its sources to get access to international networks, working hard to build a central position in the field of contemporary dance in Italy. In 2000 the Veneto Region also decided to increase its support to the project, and OperaEstate Festival assumed the name of OperaEstate Festival

Veneto to emphasise its wide territorial dimension and the idea of a regional network in substitution to that of a single specific place. The more recent history of OEF is characterised in both its form and its content. Under the point of view of its form, the Festival assumes a stronger territorial dimension being connected with the Veneto Region and used as an example of how the theoretical idea of cultural driven development can work in the territory. Under the point of view of its content, the festival, still hosting opera productions, moves forward on the road of innovation and experimentation. The milestones of this process are BMotion and CSC. The first one is the session of the Festival devoted to put on stage innovative performances and new artistic languages. The second one is the Centre for Contemporary Scene, the centre of production where innovative languages in both the theatre and dance are hosted in form of stages, workshops, meetings and projects. Both the BMotion and the CSC have a dimension, which is strongly international and occupy an increasing amount of resources in the balance of the Festival.

From these first data, OEF appears to be a case of cultural entrepreneurship, immediately institutionalized within local public administration dynamics, yet preserving and even increasing its original orientation towards innovation, experimentation, continuous renewal, etc. Key to this has for sure been the continuity of the direction overtime, since the very beginning, coupled with the ability to combine such continuity with change, always exploring new frontiers. A combination, which has been always rooted in a deep attention towards the market. At the beginning of its story, OEF has to satisfy a traditional demand for operas, but the investment in the language of contemporary art, combined with a constant attention for mainstream artists, supports its innovative strategy, building a market for the contemporary scene composed where audience increases both internally and externally, giving the Festival a pivotal role in the cultural scene. The growth of the festival and its recent turn towards the contemporary scene prove that.

One of the more innovative experiences born as a spin-off of OEF is Anagoor. Anagoor is a drama society, based in Castelfranco Veneto, bringing together the experience of several performers, dramaturges, visual and musical artists. Its activities encompass contemporary theatre production and research, training (courses, workshops, activities in school), and the organization of a contemporary theatre small festival.

The company germinated after one of Operaestate's workshops in the late 1990s. In this occasion a first small group of young actors gathered together and started to work, founding "Anagoor" (2000), with the aim to produce contemporary plays and visual theatre. Since 2003

the company enlarged its core activity by organizing a small festival of contemporary theatre, to bring national professional actors in the local area. Since 2005 Anagoor's small festival is hosted by the much larger Operaestate one, thus receiving further support to its consolidation.

One of the most crucial issues was for Anagoor the availability of a space for its activity. Hardly finding support in this sense from the local municipality, Anagoor finally rented from a private landlord a former large rabbit hutch that became the symbol of Anagoor – a vast open space where they set up stage and stalls for rehearsal, performances, workshops, etc., plus office space and a residence to host artists. The acquisition of a physical place considerably enhanced their activity and visibility, giving Anagoor a role of node in hosting artists coming from other territories.

This is then a story of cultural entrepreneurship of a young group of professionals who struggle to let their professional proposal emerge, only barely supported by public institutions and working had to stay independent. In their story a key role is played by OEF, for its initial triggering role and for the subsequent continuous support in terms of partnership and co-production.

Another innovative experience directly deriving as a spin-off of OEF is Zebra Cultural Zoo, a cultural association founded by Sivia Gribaudo, Chiara Frigo and Giuliana Urcioli, three Italian choreographers residing in the Veneto region. Characterised by different artistic identities and professional routes, they shared the aim to work together in order to pursue their artistic projects at a local, national and international level of development. The common ground, which the three artists are rooted in, is the participation to OEF. Silvia Gribaudo is the winner of the audience award and of the jury award at the GD'A Veneto 2009 - shortlisted for Aerowaves-Dance Across 2010 - with "A Corpo Libero". Chiara Frigo is awarded for her "solo" Takeya with the first prize at GD'A Veneto Anticorpi XL and is selected in Aerowaves 2009, a European network for emergent artists. Giuliana Urcioli, with EX, is finalist at the GD'A Veneto - Anticorpi XL 2009, Rete Anticorpi 2010. In their experience as dancers and choreographers, they find in OEF the place for cross-fertilisation and encounter, which gives room to their personal and professional development supporting them in joining to international networks and giving them the chance to produce their projects. For all the three of them, the prize at GD'A Veneto represented a support in terms of visibility and international experience. The prize opened the access to a network of workshops, laboratories and professional experiences which constituted a premise to start an entrepreneurial process which ended with the decision to join their experiences in a common box: Zebra. The

foundation of Zebra can then be seen as part of a process of cultural entrepreneurship where the professionalism of the choreographer is combined with the aim to work both on cultural and social projects and, tentative, also to enter in touch with private companies oriented to try experimental approaches for managing their creative processes. The hybridisation of artistic languages, the will to work not only in the so-called cultural sector but also entering in social projects, and the aim to be independent experiencing processes of cultural entrepreneurship are common keywords for the artists of Zebra as in the case of Anagoor. Differently from them, the three choreographers do not find a physical space to work in together, both in reason of the high costs involved and because of their being based in different cities. Their work is then moving with them and with the needs of their project.

3.2. Antiruggine: a story of “private” cultural policy

Antiruggine (literally: “anti-rust”) is a project by Mario Brunello, an internationally renowned cellist from Castelfranco Veneto, who after many years of international career and acclaimed touring decided to bring back to his homeland his heritage of knowledge, expertise, sensitivity, initially originated and trained there and then developed elsewhere. In 2007 Mario Brunello rented a former iron factory and transformed it into a space for performances (music, readings, drama, video projections, etc.), a space “*to pour out thoughts and ideas*”, “*not to let our mind rust*” (www.brunelloantiruggine.blogspot.com).

The origins of Mario Brunello’s project lie explicitly in a combination of his willingness to publicly share his backstage artistic activity - made of rehearsals, research, and works in progress – together with an explicit intent to exploit artistically the industrial warehouses covering the territory of Veneto. Furthermore, the project has been conceived with the willingness to work in complete autonomy, out of any constraints coming from public administration logics.

Antiruggine is thus a project based on voluntary work, relying completely on the work of Mario Brunello and his wife, and on the participation of a small number of close friends of the couple, who contribute to the conceptual and practical organization of the activities.

The sapient exploitation of the artistic heritage of Mario Brunello in terms of network of contacts with other artists, both at a national and an international level, is the base, which Antiruggine is rooted in. The guests of Antiruggine are invited to present their work, out of the constraints of theatres and other traditional cultural spaces. The rough open space is occupied with talks, discussions, short pieces of performances followed by the questions of

the audience, and a time left for having a free conversation while eating a piece of a handmade cake at the end. The performance is proposed as a sort of a dialogue with Mario Brunello who hosts the event and connects it with other cultural products, often offering a mix and match of different artists in what emerges as a unique performance. The atmosphere is relaxed and casual, and the event is something in between a view of the backstage and a new concept of product. The audience is invited to take part to the encounter with the artist actively, through questions, using the time after the performance to enter in a face-to-face relationship with the guest but also with all the others. The entrance is free, and payments are offered using the model of “responsible offer”, a free offer of maximum 10 euros per person, consistently with the appreciation of the performance by the audience.

The drivers of what happens at Antiruggine can be identified in two motivations, which emerge in the conversation with the musician. At first there is an issue of restitution, i.e. of willingness to feed back one’s homeland, after having received much from it in the past and having then grown elsewhere. In the words of Mario Brunello:

There is a sort of a moral obligation, which is also ethic, historic, economical, and social (we could include everything): I grew up here, I was fed by this territory. This region gave me so much, and I reached this level (at the top) and my region is still there (low). This is why I feel obliged to do something for the growth and the development of my region. Isn’t it?”

Then, a personal motivation idea of culture emerges explicitly:

“culture is a curiosity which can be never satisfied. In the absence of this curiosity, culture loses its meaning (...) what is missing more (in cultural discourse) is the passion, the emotional part of culture. When I listen to some entrepreneurs, I feel that we still not have this emotional and deep part of the concept of culture”.

In his words we also find a *j’accuse* against that entrepreneurial worlds, which is unable to grasp the real dimension of culture as a driver of value for the territory. We can then understand that in a way, Antiruggine is a case of explicitly planned cultural entrepreneurship born not *for* and *within* but *against* a certain idea of the territory based on conservative public administration logics, and a narrow-minded business-oriented scene.

But cultural development is also expressed in terms of increased cultural demand and increased opportunities to develop new activities: “ *it is a sort of a lever which activates many*

activities. The existence urges others, in theatre, cinema,to do the same, to start and action". The entrepreneurial attitude then emerges as a common attitude, but can (and must) be supported by the availability of spaces that create opportunities (former industrial warehouses or rural buildings that are reconverted, etc.).

What matters more is not the coordination of all these spaces and activities but a loose networking expressed with the metaphor of candle lights: single candle lights which need to maintain their independency, and do not need any kind of governance from the top.

4. Cultural entrepreneurship in creative atmospheres

The stories of OEF and Antiruggine led us to rethinking, at least partially, the ways in which the link between the cultural-creative dimensions and the business-economic one has been conceptualized so far. Mainstream literature on the topic placed at the core of its analysis concepts like that cultural district or creative and smart city, while the individualistic idea of makers is now emerging as a new powerful concept to identify the bottom up movement of new entrepreneurs. The debate is then divided between two opposite positions, between the micro-vision of the creative industries on one side and the micro vision of the single entrepreneur on the other side, eventually located in a territorial context as a district or a city. Small has been done to analyse the concrete processes, through which all this happens in terms of new products, new processes of communication, new dimensions of entrepreneurship. This work is a first attempt to move on in this direction. The stories of OEF and Antiruggine, the strategies and the practices implemented by Rosa Scapin and Mario Brunello produced what we named a creative atmosphere, i.e. the sum of social and relational circumstances leading to the development of such entrepreneurialism. We thus focused on a few elements that in our view make up the "creative atmosphere" that somehow spurs and sustains the entrepreneurial spirit in the domain of cultural production. The notion of atmosphere can be find in the work of Alfred Marshall's where the creativity of a district is a result of the proximity of ideas that in the air could spread in the district and enrich it. It is this "industrial atmosphere" in which firms are immersed that stimulates creativity and vitality (Marshall, 1919). Good ideas are promptly adopted, because they are in the "air" of the locality, embedded into the social local networks. This yields great advantages that are not easily to be had elsewhere as "atmosphere cannot be moved" (Marshall, 1919). The notion of atmosphere was later somehow lost in industrial economics and tended to be replaced by the

one of “milieu” (Beccattini, 1971). It nevertheless remained central in management studies and organization theories, and especially in the theorization of creativity and entrepreneurship both within and outside the firm. One seminal article using the concept of “creative atmosphere” is for instance the one of Thompson (1965) that searching for what leads organizations to innovate suggested that firms should strive to produce a certain level of problem insecurity and challenge, but a high level of personal security. In Thompson’s view the creative atmosphere should be free from external pressure, indulgent in time and resources, and relaxed in organizational evaluations activities. In these conditions individuals will find freedom to innovate. The idea was later picked up by several authors in the management field and applied to domains ranging from innovation to knowledge management (Cummings et al, 1975; Damanpour and Evan, 1984; Damanpour, 1991, Ekvall, 1996; Andriopoulos, 2001). More recently, the term emerged again in cultural economics with the work of Santagata and Bertacchini (2012) who proposed a framework associating the notion of creative atmosphere with the three other dimensions of local systems of cultural production, culture factories and services for cultural production.

Our perspective follows the line of inquiry of management research and tries to specifically look at “creative atmospheres” as sources of entrepreneurial innovation in the field of cultural production. We thus suggest that the creative atmosphere is worth studying in its own right as an alternative to highly structured views of territorialized production, especially when such production is creative and immaterial. It is in this line of reasoning that we try and make sense of the themes that emerge from our research.

5. Concluding remarks

At the end of this research, several elements of discussion emerge.

The first one, and possibly the most important, deals with the definition of the phenomenon that we have been studying. We call it “cultural entrepreneurship within creative atmospheres” and by doing so we want to focus on the managerial aspects of the cultural-creative led development that has become so fashionable in the last decade.

In our research, very different paths, and very different stories emerge. However, two main common elements can be identified: a risk taking attitude, and the availability of physical spaces that provide opportunities. The risk attitude is a common ground for both Rosa Scapin, the director of OperaEstate and for Mario Brunello. Both of them invest all their time in an entrepreneurial activity taking the risk of it. The same is true for the use of space, which plays

a crucial role. For Operaestate (with the garage Nardini) it is an emerging attitude, while for Antiruggine it is the result of a conscious search. In any case, though, these spaces created opportunity and stabilized or enhanced the artistic activity.

What changes considerably across these experiences of cultural entrepreneurship is the relationship with the public administration and political domain. Such relationship is present for both of them, but at a differing degree of consciousness or with a different connotation of desirability. The story of Operaestate is then a case of public entity going entrepreneurial, while Antiruggine is the manifesto of a quest for autonomy and total independence from any kind of constraint. Nevertheless, the network is fundamental for both of them, even though with different connotations and through different experiences. For OperaEstate, as an example, the aim of networking is the object of the project but it is also seen as a means to achieve goals, while for Antiruggine the networking is more in the background.

A striking contrast between a composite reality versus a one-way rhetoric then emerges. By analysing the co-existence of Antiruggine and OEF we observe two different models of cultural entrepreneurship, and we face a phenomenon variegated in itself. On one side, Antiruggine is the new example of cultural entrepreneur but also the new version of old stories like those musicians such as Bach: extraordinary performers but also smart entrepreneurs able to build an economic system based on the intelligent use of their artistic competence. On the other side, OEF is an innovative example of how a public institution can support the territory investing in training and research as major dimensions of a process of incubation of young artists.

To summarise, the local concentration of cultural entrepreneurship is a process of spontaneous emergence, eventually supported by favourable conditions in the context. In the story of Antiruggine we witnessed a considerable activism – often voluntarism – that gets structured and becomes economic activity as well. But this all follows emergent and idiosyncratic schemes in each case, escaping a top down logic as a governance mode. At the same time, the existence of OEF gives support to young artists and contributes to build a favourable context for all those experiences like Antiruggine.

And if we further compare such exploded phenomenon with the international mainstream literature on culture and creativity led development, we face an even more contrasting situation: the multiplicity of meanings, concrete experiences and labels that we untangled little has to do with the one-way, linear, almost mechanistic rhetoric of “culture → local development”. We face a sort of imbalance: on the one hand, the analysis of the behaviour of cultural entrepreneurs reflects the evidence of a blurred and fluid reality, of

multiple trajectories and different modes of cultural entrepreneurship. On the other hand, we are confronted with a canonical, official discourse that casts cultural clusters as almost an *ex machina* territorial governance mode, explicitly oriented to increase the competitiveness of an area, especially in times of financial crisis.

At the end of this work we think that more room should be given to collect a number of stories, which can tell us how the encounter between culture and economy can take place in a specific context, deconstructing the canonical and somehow fictitious picture offered by the mainstream literature.

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