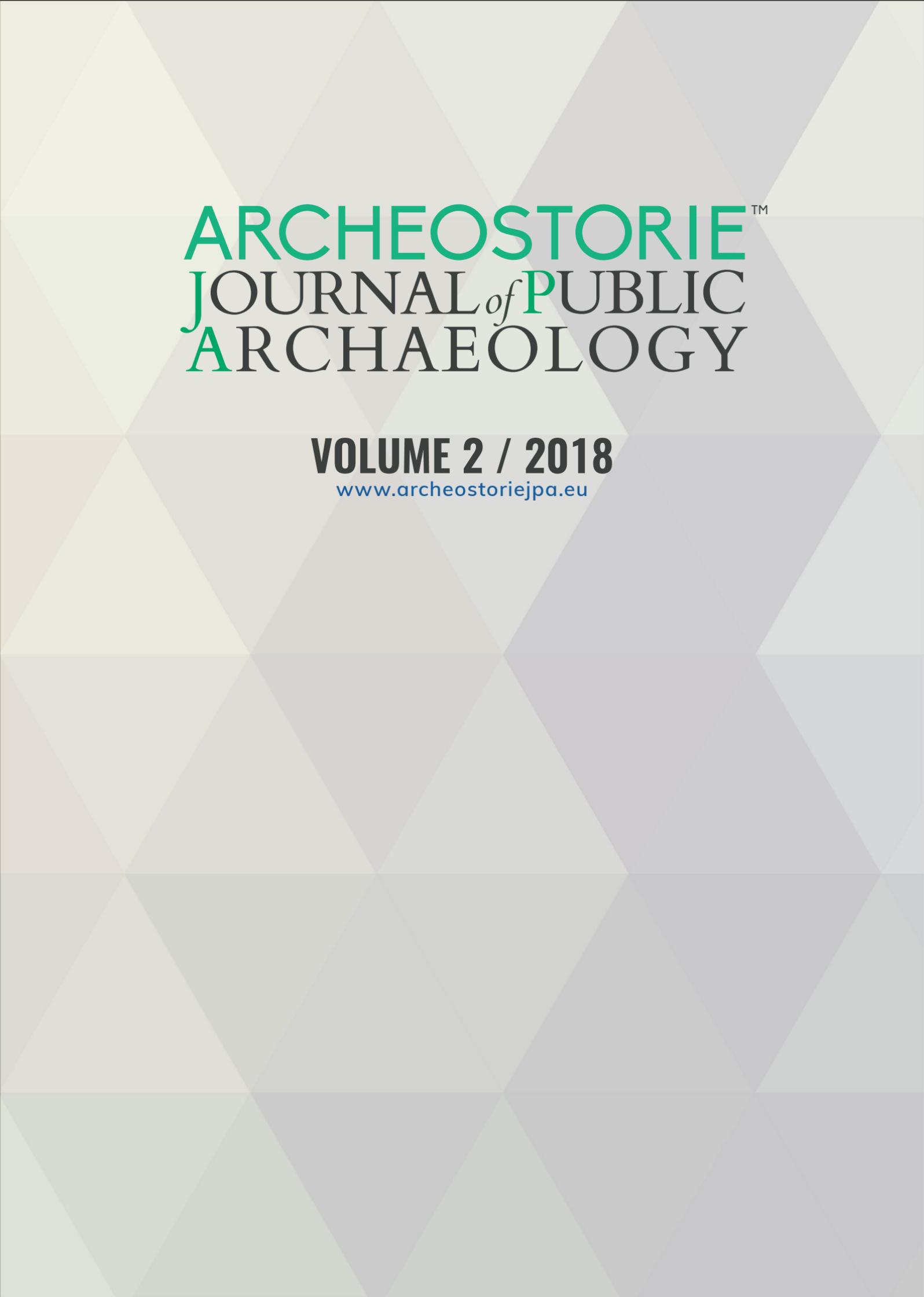


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VOLUME 2 / 2018

Topic of the Year: The Sublime Triangle



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Culture as value

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Abstract

Cultural heritage visitors are not a public of mini art historians or bonsai archaeologists. This is exactly why each and every cultural heritage destination can and should become a place for emotions and learning experiences, helping the values of tradition to become part of a people's identity, reinforcing it, making it solid and anchoring it firmly in the bay of knowledge. Today, more than ever, where traditional cultural institutions are experiencing a slump never seen before, where the language of advertising has become such a part of our rationale that, in the west, it has deleted our hypothetical, deductive approach to dialectics, cultural destinations -especially in peripheral locations- are central to an area's development, like a kind of frontier. What they need is a new way to draw in an increasingly general public, so as to cease being just a place for specialists. They need a strategy, a direction in line with the territory, as well as the necessary expertise. Decisions behind a territory's cultural growth are political rather than just technical. This means that we need a ground-up review of the relationship between culture and society, making sure we have competent structures able to work in an international setting. We need more than mission statements if we are to change things; only the work of the right people can do this.

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The figures speak for themselves; the number of visitors to cultural locations has grown over the last few years and continues to do so. As a result, there are many more opportunities for them to make the most of the social value of culture. This is even truer when considering the social makeup of visitors, which has changed a good deal over the last few years. Approach, expectations and reasons for visiting artistic locations are all different. At this point, one wonders what has changed within institutions in terms of accommodating the public, aside from food and refreshments.

When visiting a work of art or a monument, the public needs to be able to interact with it, to be able to 'set' what they see in a context they already know or which can be presented to them as an educational itinerary. We will be looking at this in more detail later but, in the meantime, it is sufficient to say that many years of experience lead me to acknowledge that the methods and common sense generated by the movie industry over the years are the best basis for constructing a missing context of a work of art. We will also discuss later how the movie's syntax can offer the new museums a narrative

medium closely connected to the structure that generates cognitive emotions.

Today, images are produced in such numbers that were impossible even to imagine just a few years ago. Now technology allows us to manipulate these images, animate them and give them a context, in a synthetic process that has never been possible before. When it comes to audiovisuals, anyone can easily access the whole production process to create a filmed sequence that in the 1970s would have taken a whole four-storey building, divided into at least five departments; now it is stored inside a PC weighing less than a kilo. Today any film or TV viewer can decode and understand its syntax and, in technical terms, even create its own. Nevertheless, the impact of all this on anyone's ability to produce and articulate language - whatever the technique - and to give it an expressive meaning remains to be seen, and so does the extent to which these skills can be transferred automatically.

However, let's start with the idea that this is a golden opportunity to develop knowledge. Pietro Montani points out how today we are faced with a "spontaneous form of literacy"

offered by the possibilities of technology, albeit disordered in its methods, rhapsodic and still linked to the default procedures settled by vendors. This process will take us somewhere in between building new procedures for meaning elaboration, and remaining mired in the “stuttering and repetition of substantially self-serving low-grade models” (Montani 2014, p. 12). What is certain is that these possibilities have a notable weight when it comes to trying out new processes to create abstractions and suggest new skills. And such processes are of crucial interest to those in the cultural heritage sector who take to heart the cognitive aspect, which is linked to the rebuilding of a context that can bring the public ‘into tune’ with a work of art or an artifact, and their historical or architectural period. Articulating these languages may be a solution to the problem of reception and knowledge.

In 2003 Umberto Eco talked about a museum consisting only of Botticelli’s *Primavera*, with a common-sense narrative that would allow visitors to approach the painting and interpret it from several viewpoints: this was the brilliance of the idea.

“(...) A single itinerary through which, at the end, one would understand everything about the *Primavera*. There would be rooms to provide an introduction to the Florence of the period, to humanistic culture and the rediscovery of the ancients, the mystical ferment of the period, and to Rome where Ghirlandaio and Perugino were working. This would include information panels and exhibits using books and engravings (from manuscripts to the first printed books that began to emerge in this period). It would be followed by works by painters who came before and inspired Botticelli, in the workshops of Lippi and Verrocchio (and, in this case, as long as the documentation is complete, it would be possible to accept excellent copies, or to take works out of storage that the museum has never exhibited), and Botticelli’s works before the *Primavera*. I would also then like to see paintings of women’s faces that herald those painted later by Botticelli or even paintings that show how the women of the period were seen differently and how Botticelli radically changed this. They should play music that Botticelli might have listened to, the voices of the poets and philosophies he could have read, and, if necessary, they should use giant photos of the Tuscan countryside. I would like

to see documents about the flora of the period to show me how Botticelli came to conceive his own flowers and trees. In short, I would then like to come to a central room where, at last, I would see the *Primavera*, with an eye educated in the manner of a 15th century Florentine. Then, in the rooms that follow, I would like there to be screens showing all of the details of the *Primavera*, from the painting solutions Botticelli used to comparisons with details used by other painters. And finally, in the last few rooms, anything that could tell me about Botticelli’s heritage, all the way to the pre-Raphaelites (Eco 2003).”

What Umberto Eco was suggesting, all the way back in 2003, is a genuinely revolutionary approach to art: rebuilding an itinerary based on visitors, aware of the way in which basic knowledge is now pared back to a bare minimum, but not giving in to the evidence nonetheless. It is a revolutionary idea to bring back artistic traditions as a part of our social identity. Therefore, alongside the work, there could be a series of narrative modules representing the elements of meaning in relation to the historical period, with an awareness of present time: a specially created construction of images, words and sounds.

The enormous possibility to manipulate digital images means that they can open the doors to stories, using a language that is ever-more specifically working for culture and articulated to influence the learning experience, without becoming fossilized in a quest for impressive effects with no internal logic. This is conditional upon the possibility that the language is decoded and used by as many people as possible, that it becomes a shared rule, such as those we learn when studying our own language in school. This is where the traditional use of audiovisuals comes in: all we need is that the doors to the different sectors are open to contamination of ideas. We need to look again at many things, and perhaps at the whole chain of value. What never changes is imagination, and in this type of activity, it takes on an essential role and becomes the most important aspect when it comes to choosing the construction and articulation of meaning in the light of an educational itinerary.

Those of us who strive to make artifacts and other items from the past interesting for all, are obliged to research different ways

to present them. In this sector, there is no consolidated tradition such as in theatre or film or even in TV; no shared codes to help us make plausible choices. However, we can interact with the sensitivity and imagination of the public, beginning with what consolidated the abovementioned traditions, film and theatre first and foremost. Arousing emotion through art and culture means being able to provide a narrative. Each and every work returns cultural value to each little local museum, with precious elements for the cognitive puzzle. It is these peripheral locations that have (and give) the highest contribution to cultural development in their area. The small peripheral museum, with its great artistic personality and its important role within the local identity, has a great deal to offer when it comes to increased value of cultural traditions in the area, with enormous tangible and intangible benefits to the growth of its society. In this way, peripheral areas can more easily become points of attraction and places to be experienced and looked upon every day by residents, not only to be visited just once; they can become genuine cultural institutions with their own cultural policies.

To this end it is useful to remember and to comment on research concerning the distribution of museum visitors in Italy carried out by Francesco Antinucci and his team (Antinucci 2007). Italy is one of the best test grounds in this field: there is 'abundance' of cultural heritage sites, covering all historical ages and representing crucial points in history for the western world as well as for all humankind. Italian cultural sites are visited by many millions of tourists every year. Michelangelo, Caravaggio, Pompeii, St. Peter's are subjects studied in all the universities around the world, but they are also the dream of many people for which they are only conversation items; consequently, there is a vast variety of reasons that attract to Italy both tourists and scholars.

Let us outline the scheme and conclusions of the research carried out by Antinucci. Its interest lies in the methodology: a comparison between the cultural tourism market and the consumer market. As we will see, they are both characterized by consolidated oligarchy. For our purpose, we take into consideration only numbers without any reference to motivations, satisfaction, emotion, memory. Nonetheless, our reasoning will be strictly

qualitative: a comparison of trends in order to risk strategic hypotheses aimed at the growth of the cultural tourism market.

According to the Italian Ministry for Cultural Heritage (MiBACT), in the last 20 years visitors to Italian museums have increased almost 3% year on year (MiBACT Ufficio Statistica 2017). This means that visitors are up almost 50% (about 25 millions), which is not bad in growth terms. If we were talking about a company and its customer base, this would be a boom. In 2017, as we are reminded by the Ministry (MiBACT 2018), more than 50 million visitors have entered Italian museums (+31% in the last four years).

According to Istat, the Italian National Statistical Institute, Italy has 4976 museums, of which 439 are run by the state, for a total of more than 110 million visitors (Istat 2016). Museums are considered as a whole, as in the Antinucci research mentioned above, because we are making a point about the Italian cultural tourism market in general. If we go from figures to a representation in mathematical terms, and we place the number of visitors per museum on the y-axis and all of the over 4000 museums on the x-axis, then the curve would be more or less as shown in Figure 1. Now we can leave the quantities behind to concentrate on trends, in order to understand if this suggests some quality data concerning visitors motivation.

We present the graph proposed by Antinucci even if his data refer to the year 2003, for consistency with his research that we consider qualitatively topical. The Istat 2016 data shifts the curve: the integral curve increases because the number of visitors increases, but the trend is exactly the same.

The curve clearly shows that fewer than 40 museums - e.g. the most visited ones which are less than 1% of the total - account for a little under half of the public. Proceeding and extending the calculation to 70% of the public, we find that these are accounted for by fewer than 4% of the museums and that over 90% of the public focuses on about 20% of the museums. Over 3500 of the 4500 state museums have no visitors.

Economists call a market distribution of this type, an 'oligopoly.' Just a few stakeholders have almost the whole market share, leaving the 'crumbs' for the others. This, as the professionals in the sector know all too well,

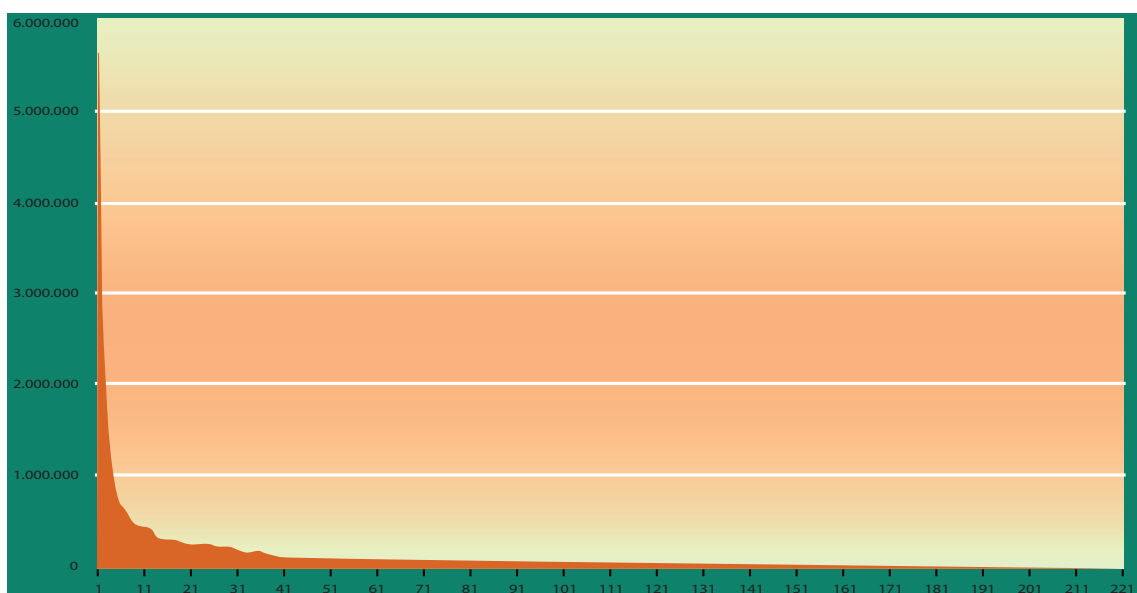


Fig.1. Number of visitors of the first 200 museums in Italy.

does not depend on the type of offer or even on its quality, but rather on the perception that visitors have of the market overall. It is necessary to take stock a moment, because the culture market is extremely complex and does not abide by traditional rules. In the same report, Antinucci considers a market segment clearly managed as an oligopoly. Few are the great Italian pasta producers that export all over the world, making great use of advertising, while there are several artisans or small producers who produce small quantities of pasta, and generally of high quality. The trend of the curve (Figure 2) shows the

importance of having a recognized brand: the consumer rewards the name much more than the quality.

This graph is very similar to the previous one. The amounts of pasta sold are expressed as a function of the manufacturers, which on the x-axis are in decreasing order according to sales factor: another 'oligopoly.' In actual fact, before Antinucci's research no one imagined that cultural heritage would behave like pasta, with a few large brands absorbing almost all of the market and the majority of manufacturers providing the rest. In this case too, distribution says nothing about product



Fig.2. Number of pasta boxes sold by the first 150 manufactures in Italy.

quality. Manufacturer number 100 may have artisan pasta with a great protein value; it may have no commercial power, but excellent attention to the artisan production process; it may not be competitive in price terms, although it is a product of great value. The graphs show how the public perceives the offer: it does not choose a single product but a 'brand.' A famous or well-advertised brand is chosen because of its fame, independently of the quality of the actual products. 'Brands' generate loyalty and loyalty leads to purchases.

A third, obvious example comes from data on visitor flows provided by the Archaeological Park of Pompeii and concerns the Vesuvian archaeological sites. The excavations at Pompeii show a Roman city frozen - with its streets, doors, houses, frescoes, trades and activities - on August 24th, 78 AD. However, there is another city with these very same characteristics, which was hit by the same eruption of Vesuvius, just a few kilometers away: Herculaneum. It is no less beautiful or interesting than Pompeii, and it doesn't just have a few less visitors because it is not as famous. Herculaneum has, roughly, a tenth of the visitors of Pompeii because it has no brand and is not considered a conversation item across the Atlantic. The visitor's motives are not tied to 'understanding life in a Roman city' or to 'why it is so splendidly preserved after one of the most awful natural events in history,' but only to having been in the place, which is what gives Pompeii a higher value than Herculaneum. Having been to Pompeii is not the same as having visited Herculaneum, in the exact same way as having a Rolex is more important than having another make of watch with the exact same functions: the social status it brings is not the same.

What are the problems that an oligopoly situation brings to its 'clients'? In the case of pasta, none at all: it is just a matter of normal market competition. If small top-quality niches remain the domain of passionate, expert enthusiasts, then the world would definitely not change; these goods have a very limited social impact.

However, culture is not merchandise. Visitor flows are not caravans to be managed or traffic to be controlled. Besides, cultural institutions use public money and their social function is crucial in defining a community and keeping it together, managing it around shared values.

Therefore, it is not just a matter of decongesting monuments or of spreading out an overly concentrated number of visitors; what is needed is shifting the focus from the museum to the individual work, giving a narrative and educational value to single works rather than to their containers, and highlighting symbolic cultural sites rather than successful brands. The fact that some works are relegated to museums abandoned by the public and, consequently, are kept out of the educational circuit, is exceedingly important. Culture is the yardstick of a society and conditions its *modus operandi*, transforming an area into communities and single individuals into a population. This is why not eating the quality pasta made by a small artisan because it does not have a big name, and keeping the 'sarcophagus of Rapolla' or 'the Riace bronzes' hidden from the general public, is not the same thing.

In an ideal world, the graph would be a straight line on a slope, with a negative angular coefficient, and there would be more or less important and visited museums, but there would be no forgotten or hidden works. This should be our aim. We can say right away that this is not a matter of marketing; it is more a question of rethinking the offer and the organization of the cultural heritage sector from the ground up, of starting up research and experimentation because no one has the recipe in his pocket. What we need, as we will see, is to learn to talk about art works, about history and tradition. From the museum to the individual work, from the general container to the specific content, from noise to narration.

On the subject of 'noise,' Antinucci's research contains some interesting data collected in front of the Vatican Museums. Researchers showed a series of pictures of very famous paintings to members of the public after their visit: Raphael, Tiepolo, and Caravaggio, who although present in the minds of those traveling to Italy, are not in the museum rooms they had just visited. It goes without saying that they were recognized as 'just seen' by quite a large number of the people interviewed. This phenomenon is linked to the myth of the brand, mixed in with the expectations of those who come from far away to see the 'country of art and culture' until it becomes a suggestion.

Those who manage these places sometimes have the same problem as the public: they tend to apply market communication rules, as if

art and culture were items in a supermarket. Those managing small niche facilities, which are perhaps precious from a cultural point of view but still far from the areas of high traffic, struggle with applying the same marketing laws, the same interpretative paradigms, without understanding that creating an alternative brand to the Vatican Museums, the Uffizi and Pompeii is practically impossible as well as useless. The same applies to administrations and institutions of important cultural locations on the periphery of a hub for international tourism, who have invested while banking on the possibility of changing traffic flows in their favor and are now faced with total failure. Market rules cannot be applied to 'non merchandise.' Cultural communication does not push the same buttons as traditional communication, especially when it comes to advertising.

Italy certainly owes its fame to its history, from the landing of the ancient Greeks to the Roman Empire, then on to the Renaissance and beyond. However, it also owes much of its international popularity to the travels of Johann Wolfgang Goethe. His journey was responsible for sending artists and designers up and down the country, who then brought back images and stories portrayed in oils or pencil, and filtered by creativity and words. Their same emotions enthralled the whole of Europe. Without underestimating the importance of, for instance, the Grand Tour that brought the Europeans to the Italian shores from the 17th century on - bringing Europe together before the Union - or the plays of Shakespeare, which brought Verona, Venice and the Rome of the Caesars to the attention of the English, Goethe's travels (e.g. his own Grand Tour) were an added value, making the educational process in Italy systematic, a journey that had to be taken by the aristocrats of the period, and which still needs taking today. Goethe tells us his impressions while mixing landscapes, people, culture and literature in a single volume. He describes the rolling hills, the proximity of mountains and sea, and the scent of the orange groves in Sicily, with wonder: "Wherever I go... everything is the way I thought it would be, and everything is new," he writes, putting together peace, security, and tranquility with the thrill of new discoveries. This sense of the expected and the new is a key we should bear in mind when

building up an experience for approaching an art work. Goethe's Italian Journey tells Europe how a man can change after traveling through Italy.

However, the book also maps out a route that, as can be seen, cuts out a whole slice of the country. This is an extremely guilty cut because, in his account, Goethe himself seems to ignore the Renaissance and Roman baroque of Bernini, Borromini, and even Michelangelo, and being strongly attracted to the ancient world of Greek and Rome, he still ignores one of the most important archaeological areas of Italy.

Goethe's route is one that tourists still tend to follow today; it is the one offered by large international tourist agencies. As you can see from Figure 3, the part of Italy outside Goethe's route is, despite its artistic and archaeological beauty, considered 'forgotten,' at least by traditional tourist flows. Visited only by niches of cultured and interested visitors, it is outside to the Venice, Florence, Rome, Pompeii axis, which seems to be still the most popular route for foreign markets.

This can be the reason behind the failure of those who have invested in trying to change consolidated flows. The 'forgotten' part of Italy, if we go back to professor Antinucci's visitors distribution graph, is the tail end, and it also includes those museums with no visitors at all. Thus the graph, the oligarchy, represents one of the distortions in the culture market: it does not just perfectly describe the existence of 'forgotten places,' but also the 'general' use of Italy and of its cultural heritage as a product, considering tourists on a par with a 'TV variety show audience.' I'm going there because it's famous; if most people like it, then it'll do for me too.

The shape of this curve shows that cultural heritage is used in a way that suffocates the sector and tightens the noose around its neck as the sector itself grows. Growth in numbers with no social consequences for the culture industry is unthinkable and self-destructive.

In order to make the cultural market and cultural tourism 'ideal and perfect,' we should change the shape of the curve, that is, distribute visitors who are now concentrated only on the most famous brands. But how to do this?

First of all, making sure that each museum object shows to the largest possible number of

people how it was created and why, because its creation was linked to a requirement and its life had a specific meaning for its contemporaries. Each work has a time and a place: a stone carved by a hand from thousands of years ago contains a story that its contemporaries were able to

interpret more or less easily, but which we cannot. Interpreting means holding a key to the message. The work to which we are referring may now be inside a museum, but originally it was somewhere different. This means the exhibition space needs to become a setting for



Fig. 3. The Goethe Italian Journey route.

its new staging. That stone is now too precious a relic for us to leave its story locked up forever. This is when research comes into play, seeking a language that can 'tune' contemporaries into past history. To do this, it is necessary to reconstruct a context that fills the distance between the visitor and the exhibit -in terms of both space and time- while also filling the basic knowledge gaps that can obstruct progress towards understanding.

In the last few years we have been researching into language, adapting the art of the traditional storytellers who, through their tales, were able to form communities. We brought real life and imaginary events together, narrating stories that never happened and, for this reason, were able to create a shared, common *modus operandi*: in short, an identity (Papathanasiou, Di Russo & Kutzicos 2017, p. 327).

Missing parts were made available in written, oral or audiovisual form, using a narrative structure in place of pieces of information with little connection to the context and too technical, useful for cataloguing the work but not for a social use of culture. Such information is obviously correct and of great use when it comes to the foundation of the story, but this is a completely different context from ours. Scholars work to build up a body of data and correspondences that suggest plausible ideas for the historical and archaeological interpretation of the work. On the contrary, we aim to attract an increasing number of people to places of culture by establishing a lasting dialogue that brings them into the world that the work represents (Dal Maso 2018).

It is not just a question of 'administering' the interpretation of scholars or curators to the public through bite-sized captions, spoon fed to them like medicine. It is a question of allowing the public to interpret the work in their own way, starting with the reconstruction of a narrative context in which the facts emerge, and allowing them to populate the surroundings through an emotional approach to the work which does not simulate the reality of the period, but creates a metaphor that can be absorbed and understood.

George Steiner (Steiner 1984) called the characteristic ability of Greek theatre to invent stories able to be reposed as current, irrespective of time period, the "energy of reiteration." In the same way, the stories we tell need to be able to 'reiterate' the thought

process of those who lived in an historical and philosophical context that is so different from our own, capturing its essence so that it can interact with the public of today. We are a long way from re-enactment in the style of TV drama; our scenography is very different from realistic reconstructions; our aim is to create imaginary, fantastic settings, because it is on that level that we can interact with the public. The personages themselves appear prehistoric, Greek, Roman, mediaeval or contemporary -according to circumstances- each with his own story to tell. The imaginative journey replaces the storyteller and, like him, is aware that the public should leave with a new feeling. Thus stories are carriers of a narrative and contain a kind of cosmology, constructed to transport values, behaviors, ways of life, and to share them as common rules of civilization.

In a museum, stories are the 'tuners' for the transmitting station. Spectators become living participants, interacting with the artifact, becoming addicted to the train of thought of the time, aware of the differences and able to go back and forth in time, experiencing a sense of anxiety if the personage before them does not behave logically and, as a result, reflecting on what they would do to remove themselves from a situation of danger. They would try to warn the protagonists of the story and put them on their guard because, at that moment, they know things that the protagonists do not. It's what we all do at the theatre or the cinema. The Greeks knew this and the Romans learned it from them, even if by reading certain books or articles today, it would seem that narration is an essential invention of modern marketing.

When Homer (or whoever) set out the epic novel, telling the story of Ulysses, with its vicissitudes and cunning, meetings and battles, he was narrating the resolute power of the return home. It was a quest for origins, *nostos*, which is more than a physical return, because it is a return to within one's own unchangeable identity. Virgil, using the same decidedly Homeric epic structure, celebrated Rome through a figure similar to Ulysses, but in an opposing context. The two, Ulysses and Aeneas, fought one another, the former, famed and victorious, and the second, a loser and fugitive. The loser, Aeneas, through dangers, shipwrecks, tenacity and hostile divinities, lands a very long, long way from home, but there he

wins, and founds the bloodline of Rome. Virgil replaced the Greek *nostos* with a migrant, who, together with his heirs, becomes a success in a foreign, unknown land. Ulysses wins the Battle of Troy and is the man behind the military strategy that allows the Greeks to win, while Aeneas starts out as a defeated migrant, and it is his success -as wanted by the gods- that shows Rome as 'the land of opportunity.' The same narrative structure underlies two ancient yet different stories that convey opposing ideas to their contemporaries.

Today, it is sufficient to learn and apply these golden rules. These stories, told orally to those who truly believed in the existence of mythological figures in the past, would convey the founding values of the society of the period. They were conceptual maps to transform men into a people, guidelines and pillars constructed by voice alone. Nothing of that told by Homer or Virgil actually happened, yet Aeneas' heirs still live in Rome, and the heirs of Ulysses are still on Ithaca, and we still talk about them at school as we might in the pub. Their world was virtual, but the legacy of the whole Roman empire was built on it. It was built on imagination and creativity, on the ability to represent the frame of reference of what you want to be: the ability to build an identity. There are many examples such as these and studying them is a basic part of our job; they are the ingredients, the raw materials we use to build new structures and apply new courses aimed at the very same thing: the achievement of a cultural experience.

Historical figures, whether real or mythological, are the connecting pieces for emotions, the bearers of pathos that lead readers (or viewers) to self-recognition, indulgence, and commiseration, taking them to experience a state of apprehension with regard to the plot, and causing them to continue on a personal mental path and to interact with their surroundings. Over time, theatre and film have constructed a common sense that makes it easier to interpret rhetorical figures and a seemingly incomprehensible syntax. They have created a language that is familiar to today's public, which everyone can read, even if they cannot write it. That language is our context for stories, it is the equivalent to what allowed the contemporaries of our stone, on show in the museum, to understand its message. Those who organize an exhibit need to provide structured

information in a narrative form. The narrative form serves two purposes: one is to attract and enthrall the public, while the second is to make it possible to assimilate information. If made virtuous, this procedure creates a self-supporting chain reaction such as the one for the production of energy, since once the information has been assimilated, the visitor is able to realize "a change from ignorance to knowledge" as Aristotle defines the *anagnorisis* within a story (*mythos*) in his *Poetics*: to understand something unknown before (Boitani 2014). This stimulates motivation and feeds attention to the learning process, which is then fed in an increasingly less complex manner. In the end, that which was just a visit becomes an experience, and the desire to try it again becomes an attraction.

Unfortunately, in the term 'investments in culture' the word culture is a secondary variable. The debate on the subject has been carried over for decades between "*apocalittici e integrati*" ("*apocalyptic and integrated*", Eco 1964), and between those who are against public funds (Haselbach et al. 2012) and those who support them: "as awareness of campaign finance increases, and as particular narratives become salient, we would expect increasing support for public financing, free media time, and/or public matching funds among those with higher levels of general political knowledge" (Jorgensen, Song & Jones 2017).

In these years when new professional domains have emerged in order to maximize the cognitive impact of museums, and when important European organizations have established the criteria for measuring this impact (Europeana Pro 2017), replacing it with the number of tickets sold carries the risk, in terms of funding, that the perspective from which the problem is tackled is strongly conditioned by administrative practices.

On the other hand, the idea of a creative and artistic approach to cultural heritage and its legacy is becoming increasingly evident and relevant in European policy documents, so that cultural heritage can interact with the creative and cultural industry, which is growing rapidly as a result of the digital revolution (European Commission 2016). Actually, this approach was clear as early as the year 2005 with the so-called 'Faro Convention' of the Council of Europe (Council of Europe 2005).

One of the important conclusions of the

report of the 'Comité des Sages' which in 2011 was asked to take stock of the state of European cultural heritage and its use for social purposes, was the need to networking the collections of European museums and libraries not only to show how rich Europe's history and culture is, but also to benefit from the spin-offs on education, innovation and the creation of new economic activities (European Commission 2011).

As an example of the contradictions mentioned above, have a look at an Italian subsidized financing in the sector of *New enterprises for the cultural industry* (Invitalia 2018). The heading is clearly related to the new opportunities in digital content production and is consistent with the new European strategies for the promotion of cultural heritage: precisely what we deal with in this paper.

You will notice that Annex 4 (to be filled in) asks the candidate to state the area of intervention he refers to: "Knowledge, fruition or management economy." It is therefore confirmed how current and advanced the strategic vision of the lenders is with respect to the reference market. However, the next line of the same form asks the candidate to indicate the activity code of the corresponding category, as listed in a 2007 Italian law, the Ateco Code. In 2007, the knowledge economy was in its infancy and almost none of the Ateco categories has any relation with the new activities. On the other hand, none of the professional profiles that the knowledge economy has created exists on that list.

This example shows how the rules are often unable to describe reality. This is not the responsibility of the agency that manages and allocates the funds (Invitalia in this case) which cannot but apply the existing law, and perhaps not even of the legislator who should run at the speed of social and market changes. Perhaps the problem is only philosophical. Perhaps Aristotle in his *Nichomachean Ethics* was right: when the problem is ethical, the solution is not the rule but the wisdom of those who apply it. Were that true, more attention should be paid to the recruitment and training of the managers, rather than race to write new laws.

The social value of culture depends on the ways and quality of its dissemination and, as affirmed also in the abovementioned 2011 report of the *Comité des Sages* (European Commission 2011) awareness of this is growing and consolidating.

Our hope is that, as a consequence of this, the professional figures we quoted as the cornerstones of the new production process, are explicitly requested by public calls and consequently evaluated. Nowadays writers, scriptwriters, directors, actors, photographers, e.g. those ancient professions that collaborate with scholars in order to make exciting new museum installations, are rarely required or even mentioned among the curricula that get points for the procurement. This is not a simple oversight: it is a deep-rooted idea that everything can be changed by continuing to embrace the fossilization of existing professions. And this is a very high risk (Di Russo 2013).

To this we can add that the current establishment within the museum sector -the non-political part- is reported by Francesco Antinucci as resisting any change to a well-established status quo, to the extent that even a potential lack of funds, "is just an excuse to hide behind whenever there is a whiff of danger. And the danger is represented by the changes to a museum's structure and operating methods that the communicative approach would require" (Antinucci 2016). My experience is that this component is weighed down by the belief that 'collaborating' with those from different cultural areas would lead to a 'reduction' in its own knowledge, a making way for barbarians, polluting perfection. Thus the work team, instead of becoming wider, closes in on itself and the music never changes.

I should say that, in some cases, resistance is justified and the defense of knowledge is an essential point, but closure isn't. These people focus on the idea that history and archaeology are professions, while telling a story isn't. Film, photography and theatre schools that nurtured talents and formed artists and technicians, are not allowed the possibility to work with experts in the field. Writers? For goodness sake! They should limit their activities to literary fairs. Directors? No way! I can stage exhibits on my own. Set designers? Absolutely not! I know how it has to be. Then we read captions like the ones that Paolo Rumiz came across along the Appian Way: "Imposing burial structure, divided lengthways by rows of columns that create four naves, covered by pseudo-groin vaults" (Rumiz 2016).

This attitude is even worse at a time in which European funds for culture are able to overcome a good deal of the presumed lack of funds.

We regularly apply for European funds to set out museums and therefore, as we know, the money is out there. Useless museum showcases are systematically fitted out again and again, lighting is refitted and works are carried out for decoration purposes but almost never to tell stories. This attitude is so deeply rooted that even when significant audiovisual facilities are set up with appropriate production, budget and skills, this is considered an embellishment of the place and does not operate with a story, with a meaning or a sense that can interact with the monument and its history. They are decorations and not stories, pastimes but no emotion, entertainment but no culture.

On the other hand, a popular and convinced attitude among communication professionals urges to overlook content in favour of suggestion, theorizing exhibitions with a very low theoretical and intellectual profile so as to guarantee appreciation and diffusion, and, in addition, with little attention to historical accuracy as well as to any emotional approach very far away from producing “cognitive experiences” (Dewey 1934).

Public officers are always ready to ask for effortless approaches. The TV model ‘burst its bank’ into the world of culture, and we will see if it brings development and cultural growth or it will only be a fleeting fashion that is bound to disappear without leaving a trace. These people want to capitalize on cultural heritage as if it were an extension of television entertainment. Last year alone we have seen (all financed with funds for culture): donut festivals together with gigantic fry-ups to commemorate a Carthusian monastery; secular parades for sovereign emperors, in order to display the carnival costumes of local processions; video mapping projects that transform historical monuments into off-season Christmas trees. According to the public officers on duty, all this should ‘enhance cultural heritage.’

What these activities have in common is the fact that they need no interpretation; they only have to ‘impress the audience’ through a direct and evocative intervention... “with the dual result of enjoying all the fun of the fair while taking part in a collective ritual” (Perniola 2004). And all thanks to public funds for culture, according to the dominant idea that anything can be culture. We agree that everything can contribute to the framework in which we live

and that we call life, but we cannot accept that everything is of equal importance.

Science, politics and art no longer exist, we have just mass communication, “a dimension that is aimed at the public with no mediation. A magic wand to transform the lack of conclusiveness and confusion from factors of weakness into examples of strength, replacing education with edutainment, policy and information with infotainment, and art and culture with entertainment” (Perniola 2004). The valorization of cultural heritage, as we understand it, aims at producing a cognitive experience and finds this widespread mentality as an obstacle on its own path.

Some authors, such as Jean Paul Fitoussi, have criticized this world without legitimate proof, which replaces “information with communication, explanation with judgement. (...) Communication consists of selecting facts, some of which are distorted and presented with the addition of allusions, impressions, feelings and resentments, until they become a system, leaving a message, and it is not important how far this is from the actual truth, as long as it carries out the task of convincing others of its authors’ ideas” (Fitoussi 2003).

These methods, which, if applied to direct commercial advertising, according to the French author, still leave the user a possibility of judgement, find a positive response within the realm of thoughts and ideas, where this retroactive mechanism does not exist: only opinion counts. Any opinion, whether it is the result of study and experience or not, makes reality indecipherable, something other than knowledge, with the result that the very involvement of experts in the work team is canceled. And the world believes it.

As a matter of fact, something new supporting academics, museum directors and public administrations exists today. Professionals that had not been involved until a few years ago, are now in action: writers, directors, set designers, costume designers, photographers and directors of photography who have learned how to tell stories through cinema and theatre, and who are now transmitting their skills to museums, exhibitions and cultural events. They have produced culture and now continue to do it around cultural heritage monuments, to the extent that those monuments, through culture, may now come back to life and take their place

in society, even if everything around them has changed.

The existing condition for a correct and useful interpretation of a work cannot be created with traditional educational tools because school-based learning is closely linked to lengthy time periods and a good deal of concentration, as well as to intense personal motivation. The experience that each teacher has before their students, every day, is to see them motivated and ready for an intense, lengthy process of thought and analysis. People entering a museum do not usually have this same motivation and therefore, once they have established a certain difficulty in interpreting it, in understanding it, they transform this feeling into frustration that turns into a rebound effect on what was perhaps the incentive in the first place. It is not enough to describe the context; what we need is a narrative structure to involve and interact with the imagination and to trigger an independent learning process.

If our body fails to produce a mineral it needs, then it becomes ill. It is not sufficient to add that mineral from the outside; we have to remove the cause preventing production. As for communication, we can consider ignorance as a kind of autoimmune disease that is both widespread and contagious. Therefore, breaking with the mechanism that prevents learning, providing excellent means of transmission (a story) to visitors, is the best method to attract and trigger the process we are talking about. Conveying enthusiasm and information, attracts and produces a sense of identification, which is how the encounter between the public and a work of art should function.

Once the learning process has been triggered, this produces a chain reaction. The feeling of satisfaction that comes from interpreting a work of art elevates the motivation that further feeds into the attention span, into curiosity and interest which in turn impacts on the understanding mechanism, feeding into it further.

The narrative structure supporting the interpretation of a work must be built by placing different types of knowledge and talent together; the more sophisticated the technology, the more important it is to choose the team with care and commitment. Experts make the story by looking at the geography and the political, philosophical and epistemological picture available with extreme

attention to detail. The place is sacred. We are in a newly conceived cultural institution and artists, writers, photographers and directors must respect this rigor as they articulate their language to create a story that will be engaging and interesting.

Unfortunately, it is not easy to make people understand that storytelling is a profession, made of talent as well as -like all trades- study and application. Unfortunately, the dominant idea is the romantic concept of genius, that lightning flash or vital breath. If my tooth hurts, I go to the dentist; but if I have to create a story using audiovisuals, I do that on my own. "*Offelee, fa el tò mestee*" ("Pastry chef, worry about your own job"), as they say in Milan when exhorting someone not to do things in which they have no expertise, and this is one of the foundations of success. On the contrary, sometimes the preconception is made worse by those who rather than understanding that what they need is a photographer, spend the time considering which camera they should use to take a useful photo for the story.

This is a paradox, but we should stress that the changes imposed within the sector need to involve in the development team new professional profiles, and integrate professions that are traditionally used in other sectors. Film and theatre above all, because a museum needs its own language to represent it, which is a language that comes from the traditional style of audiovisuals, but best suited to it. This is why we need such a vast amount of research and co-experimentation in terms of production processes and of the analysis of the results.

When the film industry was born, slowly, through constant experimentation, a group of prominent artists and intellectuals created a whole language, a syntax for images that codified the dreams and emotions in the stories. Technology made it possible to record movement in such a way as the projected image could be similar to life, and thus space and time had unusual patterns. The idea was taken from paintings of the 'window onto the world,' and from the theatre, the idea of an imaginary scene. This new language needed to be articulated so that the public could be assisted in the decoding of what they saw on the screen, while they perceived it. There was no 'product to sell;' the industry created it downstream of the language, while the self-same industry, breaking with market laws, created the supply that led to

demand. There were no purchasers in the queue, no 'need' because there was no market to be satisfied, defining a product tailored to a user profile, and there were no industrial-flavored chips to satisfy the public's taste buds. There was just a question of inventing new rules and thus a traditional industry became a cultural one. Even the theatre traditionally filled this role, inheriting the public of the street singers and growing by creating shows that contained the possibility to decode messages according to traditional concepts.

There is no nostalgia in the word 'tradition,' just pragmatism. Languages that use images have, over the course of their history, led to the creation of semiautomatic decoding systems within spectators that are now part of common sense. A close-up, a fade-out, a roll back, together with the music, all have syntactic meaning that can be recognized from the context; they are part of a cultural heritage that makes them easy to interpret. However, this is no longer enough: this is why we need research.

Let's go back to the oligopoly with which we started. If the distribution curve for museum visitors was a straight line at a negative angle (slope), we said that it would respect the existence of a 'classification of importance,' but it would distribute the public in a more even and aware manner. There would be no forgotten or hidden places. This curve exists and Francesco Antinucci suggests it: it is the distribution curve for cinema audiences in a large city, where availability is wide-ranging and articulated (Antinucci 2007). The explanation of the problem is completely within our discussion. The cinema-going public does not choose the screen, but it does choose the film. It is the container that lives from the work, not the other way around. The result is awareness of the choice that leads us to provide different offers.

To focus the culture market on cognitive experiences also means to deal with changes within the sector, especially in its patronage and management that are the alpha and omega of the cultural path who commit and handle the benefits for both visitors and the community. The sector does not generate much income and has nothing to do with market resources other than entrance tickets or the few services offered. This depends on a total lack of cultural strategy or a narrow view which hides behind

the 'we offer wine and food itineraries,' not to mention: 'I have no idea how to involve the public.' I won't repeat what I have already tried to demonstrate with regard to the social and economic value of culture as a reflection of society, but, to keep on this subject, I can talk about direct value and revenues.

Cultural and creative industries looked at in the study *The Economic Contribution of the Creative Industries to the EU in terms of GDP and Jobs* (Tera Consultants 2014) show a turnover and a number of employees extremely high in Europe, and a more recent report confirms the importance of the sector (Cisac, The International Confederation of Societies of Authors and Composers 2017). Even if there are no standard or shared criteria for data extraction and analysis, however, the qualitative trend of the sector is very clear and, looking at average growth percentages, it is embarrassing to think that downstream of such a large creative and cultural industries market, cultural institutions to supply this industry are almost completely absent. There is no organic relationship between institutions and those who produce an industrial market from intangible assets, from creativity as a raw material.

This is certainly a worrying figure and can depend on many factors: cultural institutions manage cultural heritage -studying, preserving and restoring it- but they are not considered as agents within the production process of culture; they do not 'make culture' unless it is for themselves, and industries have trouble developing a virtuous contact between the skills of institution and their own timeframe and dynamic. Management in the cultural sector is non-existent or directed at purely traditional services, 'blinded' by the idea that tourism is the only source of revenue.

On the other hand, in the presentation of the Unesco report on cultural businesses and industries, there is caution, as if no one had yet understood the true meaning of this latter; the map admits that "the positive spillover effects of CCIs on the wider economy and society must be further strengthened. Links between CCIs and education, industry, research and administration must be maximised by creating real creative partnerships. In this respect, better use could be made of intermediary institutions" (Unesco 2011).

My experience tells me that the reasons

for this lack of cultural growth lie in a mix of prejudice, false beliefs, insufficient economic preparation, inadequate management skills as well as attempts to capitalize on cultural heritage projects for local election purposes. However, local development is another thing.

Running a monument complete with everything necessary for its interpretation must be part of the initial design and planning and not an accessory function to a finished process. Capitalizing on the monument (never in the sense of leasing the asset for commercial purposes), or perhaps it would be better to say 'contextualizing,' is a cultural need in the surrounding territory, and it is the product of a shared strategy ranging from attracting investments to creating the product and assimilating the message, its history, and its results. It is necessary to provide a means to attract new users to the monument, and whatever is needed to produce items and services for the cultural industry: from content for themed television, to cinema, digital publishing, and themed exhibitions. It is equally essential to build an international network where the contextualized (and enhanced) monument can be included through its meaning and message; a message directed to a much greater public than just experts. Culture and cultural heritage are one of the few subjects of international interest in themselves. If I talk about Federico II or Caravaggio, Michelangelo or Canova, even starting from a local setting, I am dealing with a subject that can have an

audience the world over. It is the same public that will then be tourists interested in passing from a virtual experience before a page or a screen, to the real thing.

Culture comes from the Latin verb 'colere' which means 'to collect' or 'reap'; it is a farming verb and, as Curzio Malaparte wrote, "to be a peasant there, however, doesn't mean just to know how to hoe, chop, plow, seed, prune, reap, and gather grapes: it means above all to know how to mix the soil with clouds, so that earth and sky are one" (Malaparte 1964, p. 137). To mix, that is, to logically connect things that have no apparent connection, going back over experiences of life and study, with an awareness of the self and the world in which one lives, giving a body, a sense and a meaning to one's own personality, to one's own aesthetic tastes and to one's own social relations.

Addressing this means bringing as many people as possible close to culture, to the works of the past, and to art, through passion and emotion. It does not mean keeping it closed up inside castles or museums; it means invading the real environment and causing it to affect the whole society. The method used to construct and propose a story that is respectful of tradition is based on a critical spirit, on the continued calling into question of ideas and opinions, on the checking of data, the recognition of feasibility, transparency and social responsibility: all attitudes and values that, once shared, will remain in everyday life to become the 'culture of a territory.'

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