

Moving beyond the collateral effects of the Patrimonialisation

The Faro Convention and the ‘Commonification’ of Cultural Heritage

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Abstract How can the potentialities of the Faro Framework Convention be improved if they are put in relation to the paradigm of the ‘commons’ and to its innovative democratic capacity in terms of social justice and inclusive principles and values? After having underlined the main elements of innovation which characterize the Faro Convention, especially with respect to the intangible cultural heritage, the diverse risks which can affect the patrimonialization of cultural heritage are taken into account, paying particular attention to the processes of identitarian instrumentalization; folklorization and museification; urban and social disaggregation. In order to avoid these risks, the ‘commons’ approach is proposed as a different way to recognize, implement and transmit cultural heritage through its ‘commonification’. This process is already at work in many different contexts, fields and sectors, as it will be illustrated by some concrete examples of commonification of cultural heritage throughout Europe.

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Keywords Cultural Heritage. Patrimonialisation. Commons. Faro Convention.

1 Introduction

This paper aims to analyze how the potentialities of the Faro Framework Convention can be improved, finding a concrete application, if they are put in relation to **the paradigm of the Commons** and to its innovative democratic capacity in terms of social justice. Indeed, this paradigm could interplay with the processes of patrimonialization of cultural heritage, providing guidance based on inclusive and egalitarian principles and values.

After having underlined the main elements of innovation which characterize the Faro Convention, few pages are devoted to the diverse risks – identitarian instrumentalization; folklorization; urban and social disaggregation, etc. – which can affect each process of the patrimonialization of cultural heritage.

In order to avoid these risks, the Commons approach is proposed as a different way to recognize, implement and transmit cultural heritage through its ‘commonification’. This process is already at work in many different contexts, fields and sectors, as it will be illustrated by some concrete examples of commonification of cultural heritage throughout Europe.

I will focus mainly on the issue of intangible cultural heritage¹ – the most difficult to recognize and to protect, the easiest to be instrumentalized.

European societies which are part of the Council of Europe represent the political and geographical context in which this analysis is developed.

2 The Faro Convention: Innovation and Importance

The right to Culture has been affirmed in many important juridical texts (Art. 22 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights; Art. 27 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and Art. 15 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights).

The *Framework Convention of the Council of Europe on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society*, signed in Faro in 2005, goes beyond the simple affirmation of this right. Indeed, this European text implies a very significant effort towards the elaboration of a new framework which could implement and make concrete this right.

In order to do this, the Faro Convention defines some innovative concepts, such as those of **heritage community** (Art. 2(b)) and **common heritage of Europe** (Art. 3), and redefines in an innovative way the key concept of **cultural heritage**.

In this effort of redefinition, the Faro Convention seems to be oriented by a dynamic view of the relationships between culture on the one hand and people, times and places on the other. Indeed, this Convention reveals a diverse attitude compared to the more static vision that we can find in the definitions utilized by the Unesco Convention for the Safeguarding

¹ Nevertheless, the distinction between tangible and intangible heritage is never absolute. Every heritage is the result of a mixture of tangible and intangible assets, because each tangible cultural product has to be evaluated by looking at the context it implies, taking into account its symbolic value. At the same time, each intangible significant needs a tangible environment and a concrete implementation to be perceived.

of the Intangible Cultural Heritage.²

In the Faro Framework Convention, cultural heritage is defined in a very extensive way with respect both to the content and to the subjects (the people), who have to recognize cultural resources as such.

As for the content of cultural heritage, the Convention speaks about tangible and intangible cultural resources, without specifying precise typologies. In relation to the subject who has to recognize some resources as part of cultural heritage, the Convention speaks about people who identify and assign a founding and constitutive value to cultural assets, through a process of social construction. In this sense cultural heritage «is not an end in itself but has the object of furthering the well-being of individuals and the wider expectations of society» (Thérond 2009, p. 10).

Regarding to the notion of 'heritage community', the Faro Framework Convention highlights «the voluntary, public nature of membership» together with «the idea that heritage communities exist because their members share common values and objectives, high among which is the perpetuation of the valued heritage» (Fojut 2009, p. 20).

Therefore, local or social criteria of membership are not taken into account: heritage community is intended as an extremely inclusive concept that does not refer to definitively constituted communities, but implies the perpetual opportunity of their creation and evolution, along with the possibility that everyone can belong to different heritage communities at the same time.

Moreover, the constant reference to human rights in the Faro Framework Convention, particularly in relation to the **common heritage of Europe**, points out how the first **cultural asset** which is in common between the diverse heritage communities in Europe - permitting at the same time their recognition and protection - is particularly represented by Europe's democratic roots.

Indeed, cultural heritage is at once local and global, being a complex system whose richness lies in the differences which compose it; and human difference can be recognized and protected only on the basis of human rights and democracy. These latter, despite all their historical ambiguities and limits,³ are the main values upon which Europe has declared to have built its political identity. Its common heritage is the common thread that binds all national Constitutions, but also the International Conventions and regulations devoted to the recognition and the protection of human rights. The European Union as well as the wider organiza-

2 Anyway, the Unesco Convention has the great merit of having permanently institutionalized the intangible cultural heritage as a new class of assets.

3 See, among the enormous amount of studies on this issue, Arendt 1948 and, more recently, Žižek 2005.

tion called Council of Europe were born out of the refusal to deny others their dignity. It is to this that it must remain true and, despite the difficult situation that migrations and minorities are facing in these last years,⁴ this is a fundamental component of the common heritage of Europe.

From this perspective, the Faro Framework Convention is thus oriented to avoid the risk of self-reference and identitarian confinement, which could originate from the emphasis on cultural differences.⁵ The Convention also highlights the risks which affect the processes of **cultural reification**⁶ and that are often a collateral effect of the patrimonialization of cultural resources:⁷ this kind of reification modifies in negative terms the relationships between cultural assets and citizens (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 2006, p. 162).

3 The risks to be prevented in the process of patrimonialization

3.1 The risk of an identitarian instrumentalization

The globalization of economic markets and political powers, together with the globalization of people's lives (in terms of geographic displacement, life styling, etc.), in a context marked by the strong increase in poverty and precariousness, is a phenomenon which can originate fear and alienation. One of the most dangerous reactions we are witnessing today is the identitarian enclosing often based on xenophobic ideologies and on the inability to trust in the possibility of future confluences and connections between different populations.

4 See, i.e., Igansky 2014.

5 To understand how these kinds of processes have developed in Europe, see i.e. Sennett 2011.

6 Generally speaking, reification means that process of transformation of human actions and relations, but also thoughts, concepts and knowledge into 'res', things, intended as whole and completed objects. As Vandenberghe explains: «Although reification has received the greatest attention in Western Marxism, and above all in Lukács, it is important not to restrict the use of the concept to that tradition but to see that the concept and the word can also and already be found in the work of Kant, Hegel, Nietzsche, Dilthey, Husserl, Heidegger, Simmel, and Max Weber to criticize the dehumanizing, rationalizing, calculating and alienating tendencies of modernity». See. Vanderberghe 2001, p. 12993. This process undermines the understanding of the complexity lying under the production of cultural heritage, and can inhibit its implementation and transmission.

7 The concept of patrimonialization, when is related to the cultural heritage, describes the processes through which intangible or tangible cultural assets are transformed into a defined heritage: «Patrimonialization entails the existence of a space which is differentiated by objects and other patrimonialized elements, usually a museum, a natural park or a similar space, and if that is not possible, differentiated times. The exhibition function usually blocks out other functions and makes it clear that we are dealing with heritage; it is made visible and visitable», see Frigolé 2010, p. 14.

Indeed, an increasing plurality characterizes our societies. Migration movements have brought traditions, values and histories which were unknown within European territories. Also the multiculturalist approach – which is supposed to be open-minded towards diversity, but looks at other cultures as something immutable and monolithic – is revealed as incapable of perceiving the transformative potentialities that each cultural heritage implies, along with the opportunities that the connection between different cultural heritages can open. Moreover, this rhetoric does not seem adequate to recognize and give value to the **syncretic cultural heritage** which is already emerging in Europe, of which the common heritage of Europe is an emblematic example.

Conversely, we often assist to the stigmatization, banalization and misunderstanding of others' cultural heritage. In this framework, the necessity of recognizing and preserving intangible cultural heritage risks being instrumentalized as a pretext for strengthening the imaginary of confined communities which find their main tie in the refusal of alterity and in the negative evaluation of everything that seems to be different and is therefore perceived as an enemy (Zagato 2013). Cultural heritage in itself can become, in this situation, an instrument of oppression (Silverman, Ruggles 2007, p. 3) and separation, instead of an element which can contribute to social cohesion.⁸

3.2 The risks of 'folklorization'⁹

The transformative processes connected to the patrimonialization of the intangible cultural resources can also lead to the risk of crystallizing these resources (Ciminelli 2009). In effect, these processes can modify the nature of cultural resources as shared social constructions, through dynamics

⁸ From this viewpoint, the case of Roma people is emblematic: most of members of this population are forced to entirely adapt their lifestyle to prejudices that other people have built against them: behind the false myth of Roma people who 'choose' to live in camps, for instance, that population is actually marginalized throughout Europe in concentration zones in extreme living conditions.

⁹ Sophia Labadi describes 'folklorization' as a process that «can also include turning the elements [of the intangible cultural heritage] solely into tools for economic profit adapting/simplifying their performance for tourist or emptying their content and as a result alienating the communities related to them» (Labadi 2013, p. 141).

of **'folklorization'** (Ben Younes 2009) and/or **'museification'**,¹⁰ for instance for touristic exploitative aims.

Through the essentialization of the notion of culture, by stereotyping groups or populations, these dynamics can thus destroy the nature of cultural heritage as a continuously evolutionary process. This normally leads to the underestimation of the potentialities that cultural assets can have with respect to people's daily living, and may prevent their transmission to future generations, except in the form of evocation of a distant past.

We thus meet phenomena of «narrative reduction; folklorization, globalization and loss of identity, which lead to a loss of legitimacy. This loss of legitimacy is synonymous with deep transformation of expertise, massification and banalization of all forms of authenticity» (Popescu 2013, our transl.).

When cultural heritage is exclusively valorized as a tourist attraction, out of any social project, people inhabiting the territory within which this heritage is expressed will have just marginal benefits, usually negligible in comparison with the possible negative consequences.

3.3 The risk of urban and social disaggregation (gentrification)¹¹ and abandonment

At the same time, the recognition, preservation and implementation of cultural heritage in its complexity risks being hardly compatible with the dynamics of a globalized economy, which imposes criteria of homologation, conformity and efficiency that are often difficult to reconcile with the slow times of traditions, knowledge and their transmission.

The current system is marked by the speed of exchanges and encounters, and the necessity that everything can be measured in terms of profit and monetary value: this can lead to a more or less conscious abandonment and/or destruction of the tangible and intangible cultural heritage, if they are considered as 'useless'. Or, in the best of cases, they are taken into

10 As Popescu (2013) explains, 'museification' can be a strategy of safeguard and conservation of the intangible cultural heritage, but it can also become a process of separation between things and their context, between heritage and communities. Indeed, the creation of a museum for gathering all the materials related to the traditional knowledge, can preserve this knowledge from oblivion, but can also crystallize it, by undermining its capacity to be renewed. Many scholars have underlined the same risk with respect to tangible cultural heritage, often in relation with urban spaces and tourism: «The risk for a city or place with excessive levels of tourism is of becoming a 'destination' and not a 'place', and of becoming a 'frozen city' marked by the dissolution of the social fabric» (Auclair; Fairclough 2015, p. 13).

11 Gentrification is a process of 'renewing' deteriorating areas through the replacement of the lower-income groups by relatively affluent incomers. The risks of this process in terms of social segregation and exclusion have been widely explored. See, i.e., Lees 2008.

account, as said above, in a merely folkloristic way and with respect only to the possibility that they become touristic assets.

This deformed vision of the cultural heritage is at the base of, and at the same time is nourished by, the processes of individualization and the breaking of social relations.

These processes are currently occurring, for instance, with respect to the practice of the reconfiguration of urban spaces. In most cases, the recognition of a place, a monument, but also a practice, as part of a cultural heritage, is performed in an excluding way, due to a purely economic valorization. This is the situation in the historical centers of many European towns, with their architectural and artistic richness, with their heritage of crafts and knowledge, habitudes and rituals. From the rediscovery of the patrimonial value of the ancient part of the towns, the processes of patrimonialization have mainly coincided with practices of **gentrification**, everywhere with similar consequences: «with the eviction of the original inhabitants not only the character of those quarters is lost, but a whole way of living dies as well. Old traditions and communal life are no longer present when the original residents are replaced» (Gruber 2009, p. 10). The consequence is the museification of historical centers, after having denuded them of their pulsing heArt. In order to protect cultural heritage, and above all in its intangible forms, conversely, spaces of sociability and the environment in which heritage takes shape and is expressed needs also to be protected (Jadé 2006). This means that human and relational dynamics have to be respected.

The kind of patrimonialization that coincides with the privatization of cultural (tangible and intangible) assets, and with their elitist management, blights - instead of contributing to their recognition, empowerment and reproduction - the heritage communities, by preventing their future development.

For those people who have been displaced by gentrification - and who mostly live in situations of poverty or fragility - places of sociability are more and more substituted by places of consumption: in the new neighborhood where they are pushed to live, ancient squares have been replaced by shopping centers where social mixture has less space to be reproduced.

At the same time, these people will perceive that the cultural resources they owned have not helped them to find a place in the society: these resources, doubly devaluated, will be at risk of disappearance.¹²

¹² Therefore, between poverty and cultural heritage a complex relationship occurs. People who hold a certain kind of intangible cultural heritage are often those living in poverty and precarious conditions, such as the artisans outclassed by mass production, or the gentrified population expelled from historical town centers. At the same time, these people are often excluded from access to other cultural resources.

In this respect, the social and spatial separation between different social classes is a selective device which can define the type of cultural heritage which 'deserves' to be maintained and reproduced, and the one that is destined to be lost.

Cultural practices are usually devaluated, along with knowledge and crafts, when the social and economic utility of a particular heritage disappears in front of other people's eyes, and when intangible assets become meaningless for new generations. This is the case of the **rural zones** in Europe, where heritage communities have been wrecked by the absence of services and opportunities, and where people are often forced to emigrate towards urban or commercial districts where they will be individualized and alone.

All these situations denote an increasing separation between **the Culture** considered and protected because it is a heritage of the middle and high classes, and the **popular heritage** which is going to disappear or, in the best of cases, become a metacultural product embalmed for a touristic use. It is the historical separation between 'artists' and 'artisans', between 'works of art' and 'popular productions', which implies the depreciation of the know-how, techniques and knowledge of the majority of people (Puglisi 2011). On the contrary, «Heritage is not to be connected just to Great Men, Great Moments, and Great Monuments, but firstly regards people and their histories, places of living, struggles, the 'corner of the street'» (Bazin 2013, our transl.).

The abandonment of this kind of heritage is also associated to the marginalization affecting aged people, more and more considered from the viewpoint of their economic lack of value with respect to the market criteria. Indeed, they are the roots of each cultural heritage and the natural source of its reproduction, due to their capacity to create bridges between past, present and future generations. Facing an economic model which needs young, highly skilled, flexible people, ready to change their jobs and locations, habits and skills (Sennet 1999), aged people are cast away, with the result that the possibility of intergenerational interaction is reduced.

For inverting these processes, also in this case, any attempt of museification of intangible cultural heritage will be inadequate: collecting memories, listing habits or old trades, will at most produce a sentiment of melancholy detached from the present time.

Therefore, how can these processes of degeneration or abandonment which are entailed by processes of patrimonialization of cultural heritage be avoided?

The paradigm of the Commons can be an interesting tool to move forward in this direction.

4 The Paradigm of the Commons and the Faro Convention

In the guide 'Living in dignity in the 21st century – Poverty and inequality in societies of human rights: the paradox of democracies', published by the Council of Europe, Commons are defined as «the particular kinds of resources that need to be protected from exploitation for private profit, because they are essential for ensuring a dignified life for each member of a human community» (Sciurba (ed.) 2013, p. 48).

There is an evident affinity between this definition of Commons and the cultural heritage as it is intended by the Faro Framework Convention. A dignified life cannot be realized merely through access to the resources needed for surviving. It involves the possibility to find a deep and shared meaning in the human lives, and the valorization of people's histories, competences and relationships with one another and with the places and times of their existences. Moreover, cultural heritage is naturally owned by everyone, as the result of the interaction between history, landscapes and people; it is produced by the horizontal crosses and accumulations of these interactions. Consequently, it cannot be possessed other than in a collective way, and in regard to the term 'possession' it may not be appropriated.

If generally speaking the Commons emerge from a mix between 'having' and 'being', cultural heritage is the most illustrative example of this mixture. Cultural heritage is an eminently «Total Social Fact», in the meaning coined by Marcell Mauss (1966) with respect to all those 'facts' which ontologically undertake the majority of the dynamics within a society.

In addition, cultural heritage, especially when intangible, corresponds to the characteristics of non-excludability and non-rivalry that are typical of some conceptions of the Commons (particularly in the case of intangible assets): «The intangible heritage is not exhausted by its use. Conversely, its use allows it to be preserved and to be developed» (Queffelec 2013).

If the full potential of the Commons is expressed when they are managed as such, with respect to intangible cultural heritage we can also go further: its **commonification** (its management as a common) is probably the only way to preserve it and to revive it.

What is more, with regard to the **common heritage of Europe**, the concept of Commons fits perfectly with the intrinsic plurality of this new definition: European cultural heritage is not simply composed of the neutral summation of all the diverse cultural heritages which can be discovered, listed, promoted and implemented in the different European territories. Indeed, it is mostly a **common expression of the European consciousness** which has to be manifested in the particular manner in which all these actions are accomplished.

Finally, the heritage communities closely resemble the **communities of interest** that Commons require to be recognized and managed: commu-

nities which share priorities and objectives, without necessarily involving ethnic or national belonging and with a strong inclusive potential:

The idea of Commons presupposes the existence of a community in the sense of a stable population with a strong social network complying with social norms promoting sustainable equal access, integration and sharing, conservation and the renewal of common goods. There is a biunivocal correspondence between community and the management of common-pool resources: just as it is true that the presence of a community is vital to the appropriate management of common resources, so it is true that common management of that which is held in common helps build up and nourish the community itself, strengthening social cohesion and social bonds. In contrast, the privatization of Commons breaks those bonds and undermines social cohesion, contributing to the growth of a fragmented society of consumers (competing with each other for access to scarce resources and commodified services). As several authors have pointed out, it is the community itself that establishes its own rules for self-government, in other words that decides democratically on the rules and procedures with built-in incentives for responsible use and punishments for overuse (Sciurba 2013, p. 175).

In this perspective, the processes of privatization of tangible cultural heritage, which are spread throughout Europe, are clearly breaking down the relationships between heritage and communities: «in doing so, a fundamental alienation between subjects and objects occurs which reifies heritage and hinders its lively preservation in community life, and leads to social segmentations that cannot be solved through the post-political strategies of identity politics» (Gonzales 2014, p. 360). Similar consequences are produced by all kind of degeneration which affect the above quoted processes of patrimonialization, also with regard to intangible cultural heritage.

Therefore, the starting point for reversing these processes is the re-appropriation of cultural heritage, to give concreteness to their values through the cooperation of «a variety of people, competences, disciplines at the service of a collective dynamic» (Bazin 2013, our translation).

Thus, how can the paradigm of the Commons be effective for the revitalization of the tangible and especially intangible cultural heritage, from the perspective of a renewed collective construction of social cohesion and meaning?

5 Towards the commonification of cultural heritage: some proposals and some concrete examples

Some concrete examples can now be given, starting from highlighting those processes that have more urgently to be reversed, in order to really give life to the principles of the Faro Convention, also in relation to intangible heritage.

The first processes to invert are certainly those which do not protect the relationships between communities and heritage, such as the process of reconfiguration of the urban spaces which, as in the cases of gentrification, risk to break the interactions between territory, tangible and intangible cultural heritage, and inhabitants.

The factual distinction between «Non-places» (Augé 1992), where business and economic production is based, and 'places' where cultural heritage can take shape, is quite problematic if the first category outclasses the second: the impressive spread of hypermarkets which led to the closure of small shops and to the death of many forms of local handcrafts, for instance, have to be rethought with respect to its consequences, not only in terms of economic profit, but above all in relation to the loss of social utility which it can entail.

Regarding from this perspective the processes of gentrification, the old inhabitants of the historical town centers should not be displaced anymore. It could be much more productive, in a social but perhaps also economic view, to encourage and support dynamics of self-recovery of the houses that require being restructured, mixing professional workers with residents who have expertise in the sector. Every worksite, in any case, could be transformed into an open learning space. The challenge is how to offer incentives for people to be pushed to share their skills in the aim of the well-being of all, starting from their own well-being. In doing so, all forms of privatization of tangible cultural heritage should be limited, as well most of the exogenous interventions which ignore or give no value to the anthropological dimension. Conversely, hybrid and participatory forms of joint management between private enterprises, institutions and citizens should be promoted, also in order to grant a continuous accessibility to cultural assets.

Citizens' practices which are indispensable to preserve and reproduce intangible cultural heritage are often in need of accessible spaces for developing: tangible cultural heritage, such as monuments, ancient buildings, and also squares, could be managed with this aim. Going further, it is even possible to intervene on abandoned brownfield sites, reconverting them into cultural centers with social or even economic and artistic functions. When spaces cannot be integrally and permanently reconverted, a multifunctional adaptation of public and private places can also be viable.

Foyers of theatres for instance could become, on Sunday mornings, places of exchange of knowledge through open workshops, exhibitions of local handcrafts and other activities integrated within a shared program.

These kinds of initiatives could lead to forms of re-appropriation of tangible cultural heritage through the valorization, reproduction and transmission of intangible cultural heritage. This can generate feelings of respect and benevolence in the citizens with regard to urban spaces; feelings which can be stimulated if these spaces are perceived as a part of one's own life. The active sharing of tangible heritage is thus not in opposition to its preservation.

Therefore, even the business of cultural tourism could become, in some cases, a shared venture, the rules of which are established by the local communities, with a part of the profits redistributed for the implementation of public utilities on the territory.

With respect to the more peripheral zones that are not immediately identified as places marked by the presence of a cultural heritage, programs of urban re-generation should be implemented. In some European countries they have already been launched, by providing **participative urbanistic pathways** which integrate within the same project tangible goods (e.g. construction, recycling, demolition of buildings) and intangible assets (actions of social, economic and cultural development) (Ciaffi; Mela 2011, pp. 100 and ss.).

This is what is occurring in Marseilles, where some inhabitants have launched the *Hotel du Nord* Project, with the aim of rediscovering, and of allowing others to rediscover, the cultural richness of the neighborhoods that are usually less visited by tourists, and which are at risk of poverty and abandonment. A non-collateral objective is also to offer new economic chances for people who live there. The project has formally to be implemented by a cooperative, the President of which explains how «what is produced is sold, what is sold is produced, in the interests of those persons who live, work or temporarily stay in those neighborhoods».¹³

In some European sites, the paradigm of the Commons is redesigning small parts of urban spaces. There, the actual challenge is how to combine these new experiences with the ancient competences of people. In this sense, the **shared gardens**, an increasing urban practice, can offer a good location, becoming for instance a place of transmission for traditional agricultural knowledge, by transforming these gardens into open learning spaces.

As Livio De Santoli wrote in the book he devoted to the 'energy communities', «the re-appropriation of our fathers' agricultural experiences firstly needs the commitment of our sons. A shared garden can relearn

13 See <http://hoteldunord.coop/> (2015-09-15).

many forgotten notions: the difference between a tuber and a fruit, the taste of celery and the smell of basil. If, in addition, older people from the neighborhood or village are engaged in this learning activity, it thus opens the possibility of building a real social center» (De Santoli 2011, p. 23, our transl.).

Shared gardens, depending on the season, could also become gastronomic locations, where the ancient local culinary traditions could use the products of a land which has been collectively cultivated.

Certainly, in order that all these activities could be realizable, the rules of access to public spaces have to be rethought, as already stated. Moreover, new fiscal system, which could favour initiatives based on the common pooling of resources which valorize the sharing of cultural heritage should be promoted.

In parallel, the abandonment or the forced urbanization of rural zones or little villages are other processes that may be reinverted to give place to new forms of commonification of intangible heritage. Indeed, intangible heritage as a common could play a central role in the revaluation and future development of rural areas.

In the little village of Castelbuono, in the area of Palermo (Sicily), the inhabitants have put in place an experiment which links together **ancient traditions and innovative practices** in the ecological sector. The ancient Sicilian custom of using donkeys as means of transportation has been adapted to be employed in differentiated waste collection: the animals, endangered by extinction, have been reassessed and protected to perform this door-to-door collection in a sustainable ecological manner. Moreover, garbage collectors who work with donkeys are ex-marginalized citizens with personal histories of social disease, alcohol or drugs problems, or who are affected by physical or psychiatric handicaps. Being organized within a cooperative, and monitored by the local social services, these persons have now been reintegrated into the labor market and into society.

As in a virtuous circle, it would be possible to imagine that part of the collected waste could be available to be recycled by local artisans, once they have learnt specific techniques for reusing and recycling different materials. These techniques could be taught by highly-qualified young people who could thus have the possibility of performing work experience in places where no young people usually remain.

In the case of the old crafts, the challenge is how new forms of revitalization could take shape through processes of re-functionalization of artisanal products which could be re-adapted to the new economic targets of production and fruition (even touristic), without renouncing their specificity and originality.

The exceptional characteristics of some handcraft activities actually lies in their being at the opposite site with respect to the industrial logic of homologation: their distinctive elements can be valorized in the direction

of a recuperation and regeneration of these activities exactly through their distance from the industrial competition. This means giving new strength to the elements which distinguish the forms of artisanal production from those of mass production: the slow process, the transmission of technical knowledge, the certified quality and origin of the materials employed in the sustainability of the work process, the respect for human resources and, in particular, the unicity of each manufactured good.

The first step is the participative identification of this exceptional cultural heritage, by proceeding, for instance, to cartography of the competences and know-how of each territory, with the aim of their networking in relation to the diverse potentialities and needs of each site.

Such kinds of activation need the co-participation of experts, such as anthropologists, sociologists, associations specialized in the cultural promotion, and figures able to orient this process within the economic market. Nevertheless, all these specialists have to accompany, without any form of substitution, the process of identification which has to remain in the hands of local social actors who will be the protagonists of the transformative processes.

The new digital technologies, for instance, have to be at the disposal in the elaboration of the cartography, while the new technology of mechanical production will be employed in the re-functionalization of the artisanal merchandises.

The reconversion of ancient handcrafts, with respect to the new needs expressed by the territories, with the aim of making these handcrafts economically productive, will facilitate their transmission to the younger generations who will be, in their turn, essential resources in the phase of re-actualization of knowledge within a virtuous circle characterized by the exchange of experiences and competences between different generations.

During the phases of activation of these processes, public institutions, at a local but also European level, should offer forms of funding and sustenance. It's worth the pain, because the potential economic reactivation and advantages in terms of social cohesion can be extraordinary.

A project based on these premises is going to be launched in Palermo (Sicily), starting from a proposal elaborated by the cultural association CLAC¹⁴ The starting objective is the revitalization of the old handcrafts sited in the historical center of the city (coppersmiths and tinsmiths, potters, weavers, artisans working wicker) putting them at service of the street-food sector, an important part of the local cultural heritage, which is in increasing expansion due to its close connection to the touristic market. The general aim of the project is the reactivation of a local economy through the transmission of certain ancient artisanal competences. A public unde-

14 See <http://www.clac-lab.org/> (2015-09-15).

rutilized space has already been identified for the installation of an ‘incubator’ inside which the revitalization and the transmission of handcrafts will take place. The project, called *Crezi-Food-Kit*, has been selected and funded by a relevant national cultural foundation and is going to stArt.

The same association, CLAC, is also working on the elaboration of forms of auto-narration for discovering and recognizing local cultural heritage in some particular Sicilian zones. From this perspective, memories are seen as an essential element for rethinking urban regeneration, by taking into account the particular histories of each neighbourhood in the attempt not only to preserve, but also to bring memories to life.

By thinking that Museums have to be spaces of active participation for a collective rehabilitation of the territories, CLAC has launched, two years ago, the project *Mare memoria viva*, basing it in an ancient district of Palermo, of which building speculation and impoverishment had cancelled the original vocation of a seaside village. *Mare memoria viva* is «an innovative project about culture, community and the valuing of a territory. A **multimedia urban eco-museum** located in different sites; a geo-blog that grows with the stories and images contributed by its users; an innovative offering of tourist and cultural attractions; the memory and the present of Palermo’s relationship to its sea».¹⁵

The Eco-museum has been set up thanks to the participation of hundreds of people who donated old photos, videos, books, and, above all, their own memories and narrations. A shared path of memory has thus been built, with the aim to modify the present time: a present time in which the sea has disappeared after have being submerged by pollution and debris, while the ancient inhabitants have abandoned the zone, with the result of the breaching of any community relationship among them and between them and the territory.

Such a model is evidently reproducible in many other places and with respect to other issues around which a collective memory can be rebuilt.¹⁶

Eco-museums are usually particular types of institutions which overcome the traditional idea of what a museum has to be: a place characterized by a prevalently passive fruition. Alternatively, the Eco-Museums conceive culture and cultural heritage as integrated in a dynamic and relational view. Public institutions are usually called to have a supportive role with regard to local communities, by creating a strong interrelation with the territory in which the eco-museum is based.

15 See <http://www.marememoriaviva.it> (2015-09-15).

16 Similar projects have been set up in Sicily in other zones (i.e. the project ‘Belice epicentro memoria viva’, <http://www.clac-lab.org/site/belice-epicentro-della-memoria-viva-3/> (2015-09-15).

These kinds of solutions are being experimented with also in more difficult contexts than Palermo: in San Adriano, in the Asturias Region, for example. In this little village, the rural economy has been outclassed by the touristic business, and many projects of revaluation of the cultural heritage have failed due to the lack of the local population's involvement, and the deficiency of a long-term perspective. All the cultural centers and museums which had been projected and built have never been opened, with the consequence of an enormous waste of resources and an increasing distrust on the part of the inhabitants. Facing these institutional failures, a local association, *La ponte*,¹⁷ has projected and set up an eco-museum with the participation of the local community: it is appropriate to say that the local community itself has been reconstituted around this project. This eco-museum has finally valorized the tangible cultural heritage of San Adriano, such as the archaeological sites based in the zone, and also the intangible heritage related to ancient rural knowledge. Thanks to this, new occupational opportunities for many local young people have been opened (González; Fernández 2013).

These examples certainly move in the direction envisaged by the Faro Framework Convention when it invites to «promote the use of materials, techniques and skills based on tradition, and explore their potential for contemporary applications» (Art. 9.d), and to endorse «the objective of quality in contemporary additions to the environment without endangering its cultural values». (Art. 8.d). Furthermore, these forms of cultural production imply the added value lying in the construction and strengthen the relationships between people, also belonging to different generations: only the deep sociability which comes from 'sharing' can guarantee the transmission and implementation of cultural heritage in the long-term.

The patrimonialization of cultural resources has thus to be conceived and put in place as a participative process both in the moment of the recognition of cultural heritage and in the phase of their revitalization and preservation.

Nevertheless, the implementation of these kinds of practices needs creativity and imagination – characteristics which mark many different citizens' actions in this long period of economic crises¹⁸ – but also some essential material changes.

From a juridical point of view, the recognition of cultural heritage as a common certainly requires the formalization of a new legal status which can't be the one of 'public property'. A common is not just a good to be shared in abstract, but one that needs to be concretely managed in a shared and consensual manner. A new juridical elaboration is thus re-

17 See <http://www.laponte.org> (2015-09-15).

18 Cf. <https://respondingtogether.wikispiral.org/> (2015-09-15).

quired to provide a wide legal framework which could be specified in each different context and situation.¹⁹ Regarding the Commons, no universal formula can be applied in all contexts, but some general principles have to be adapted in different circumstances.²⁰

From an economic point of view, besides the already mentioned fiscal incentives aimed at the development of those activities which imply a high social value, and the establishment of more open rules which guarantee access to spaces and assets, other types of stronger interventions are undoubtedly necessary.

In the face of contemporary widespread economic difficulties, more and more people meet increasing difficulties in the realization of a dignified life. The shared access and management of the Commons, along with the revitalization of cultural heritage, as stated, can make a contribution to changing this condition. However, if the risks which submerge single existences are too pervasive, people will not find the courage to launch new activities and initiatives. A form of basic security which can offer the certitude to face at least the more essential needs is thus indispensable.

For this reason, the introduction in every European country of an unconditional and universal basic income (Van Parijs; Vanderborght, 2005), could be an interesting measure for favoring the preservation and the development of cultural heritages as Commons.²¹

The implementation of an effective right to security (in a non-defensive sense, but intended as the possibility to imagine and build a viable project of life), is the essential premise for people to be engaged in shared activities of responsabilization and valorization with respect to their own competences, and to the potentialities of the territories in which they live.

19 Indeed, the paradigm of the 'commons' does not pretend to offer any universal model, contrary to what Unesco does when the institution claims to protect the universal heritage of humankind. Commons is, in fact, a «situated concept» in the sense that «heritage might be conceived as a common in a specific site where a heritage assemblage can be created: an interested community, people with the necessary knowledge to act as mediators between market and state forces and the community, and to understand the potential of heritage for economic development, and so on» Gonzàles; Fernández 2013, p. 250.

20 The first of these principles, already quoted, is that each singular cultural heritage intended as a common takes shape and is implemented, transmitted and revitalized only by the heritage communities (characterized by an inclusive and open attitude).

21 The relation between the basic income and the paradigm of the 'commons' has been explored in detail in the above mentioned guide elaborated for the Council of Europe (Sciurba 2013), which also demonstrates how basic income is a viable possibility, also and above all in these times of economic and financial 'crises'.

6 A provisional conclusion: preserving and implementing (in)tangible cultural heritage as Commons

This paper has presented some suggestions that could interrelate the processes of patrimonialization of cultural heritage, in the framework of the Faro Convention, with those of commonification of resources in contemporary European societies.

Article 8 of the Faro Framework Convention insists on the necessity «to utilize all heritage aspects of the cultural environment» to «enrich the processes of economic, political, social and cultural development» and to «promote an integrated approach to policies concerning cultural, biological, geological and landscape diversity to achieve a balance between these elements».

These words are perfectly compatible with the recognition of cultural heritage as a common. Moreover, this recognition can give to these words a deeper meaning, in particular with regard to the concept of ‘development’ which, when it is put in relation with the Commons, implies a democratic participation of all the involved social actors. This participation concerns the shared elaboration of the rules which establish and consolidate the processes of recognition, protection and implementation of heritage, and also the shared evaluation of the ecologic sustainability and durability of these processes (for instance with respect to the transmission to future generations).

The list of intangible cultural heritages established by Unesco,²² and continuously updated, is obviously an important step towards the promotion of those cultural heritages which have been identified as such. Nevertheless, it is even more important to develop targeted strategies with the aim, on the one hand, to revitalize intangible cultural heritage which has been already recognized and, on the other, to protect those forms of intangible cultural heritage which are more difficult to identify because they have no concretization in specific activities with a recognized collective value.

The **Commons approach** suggests thinking about the active role of heritage communities as the first subjects which are entitled to recognize a cultural heritage as such; it also implies a new kind of right of access with respect to this heritage, which leads to the concrete possibility that people directly manage and implement cultural resources. In relation to the common heritage of Europe, as it is defined by the Faro Convention, the Commons approach also valorizes differences and mixtures within a common view of interaction and mutual respect. The paradigm of the Commons can thus implement the definition of ‘cultural heritage’ and ‘heritage

22 Cf. <http://www.unesco.org/culture/ich/index.php?pg=00559> (2015-09-15).

communities' by making them interact with a complex cluster of rights which are the essential requisites of a dignified life for all people. From this viewpoint, the rediscovery of a cultural heritage as a common can give shape to new collective, dynamic and open identities with enormous advantages for the territory in which they are expressed. In this perspective, the Commons approach can come to the rescue against the processes of identitarian closure associated to some ideas of cultural heritage.

Moreover, the paradigm of the Commons can be adequate to identify and preserve cultural heritage with respect to its performative and transformative capacity (Ferracuti 2011, p. 216), in order to avoid all risks of folklorisation, reification and museification that patrimonialization can produce.

This paradigm can thus contribute to progress towards the valorization of cultural heritage as an instrument of social cohesion and well-being for all, through a shared revitalization of the cultural resources with the aim of producing **social utility**.

In this regard, the valorization of a cultural shared heritage depends on the possibility to renew it in relation to the actual social needs and lifestyles of people. In the accomplishment of this transition, the availability of mechanical, artistic and technological resources is an essential premise: «It is not like going back. The Commons of tomorrow are partly to defend and preserve, partly to rebuild, partly to invent, depending on the gathered experience» (Helfrich 2010, p. 10, our transl.).

This assumption may be a guideline for rethinking the development of cultural tourism, but also in the development of new forms of sustainable and cooperative economy which, through the active safeguarding of cultural heritage, could become a tool against poverty and social exclusion. In these terms, cultural heritage could be envisaged as a powerful tool for giving a social role to more marginalized and impoverished people, who could find a new meaning for their lives and experiences.

The point is to give people, and mostly people considered unproductive within the economic market, the possibility to play an active role in the society in which they live, allowing them to participate in its development, without being forced to renounce to their own stories and experiences which represent a great treasure for all. In consequence, the main question is how to empower local communities with the aim of allowing them to discover, or rediscover, their potentialities and to live their cultural heritage as a common that makes sense for the present and may become a base on which the future can be built.

The main aim of this article was to provide some useful suggestions to move in this direction.

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