

Participated Planning of a Heritage Walk: a Conscious Involvement of the Community

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Abstract This paper focuses on how to give value to the cultural context of a specific territory by engaging local communities in a process of knowledge and non-formal education. Starting from the recommendations of the Faro Convention, this paper investigates heritage walks as a possible practice to create cultural, social, and economic value. The main aim is to propose a new methodology that may consider the positive effects of the planning phase on the realization of heritage walks, making heritage walks the result of a creative process of cooperative learning.

Summary 1 Introduction. – 2 Implementing Faro . – 3 *Le Vie Dei Fiumi* Project. – 4 Participating to a Heritage Walk. – 5 a Pedagogical Approach for the Planning of a Heritage Walk.

Keywords Heritage walk. Study circle. Participative approach.

1 Introduction

In 1948 The UDHR declared that “everyone has the right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts and to share in scientific advancement and its benefits”.¹ After almost seventy years, the needs of the world population have changed following social, economic and political changes; however, it is still necessary to pursue the promotion of cultural participation within the communities.

The Faro Convention represents the international instrument to activate a *shared re-appropriation of culture*. In this instrument, CH is meant as the result – in constant evolution – of the interaction between people and places. The Faro Convention fosters a concept of CH that embraces and comprehends all tangible and intangible aspects which contribute to express values, beliefs, traditions, and knowledge of the people. Furthermore, the meanings and uses that are attributed to objects and places are crucial in order to determine the value of CH.

CH is fundamental to valorize cultural differences, promote intercultural

1 UDHR, art. 27.1.

communication and sustainable economic development, and it represents a major source of social activity and human development.

Art. 7 of the Faro Convention – “Cultural Heritage and Dialogue” – deals with the issue of CH in a social perspective:

The Parties undertake, through the public authorities and other competent bodies, to:

- a. encourage reflection on the ethics and methods of presentation of the cultural heritage, as well as respect for diversity of interpretations;
- b. establish processes for conciliation to equitably deal with situations where contradictory values are placed on the same cultural heritage by different communities;
- c. develop knowledge of cultural heritage as a resource to facilitate peaceful co-existence by promoting trust and mutual understanding with a view to resolution and prevention of conflicts;
- d. integrate these approaches into all aspects of lifelong education and training.

This article is part of the second session, which is focused on the contribution of cultural heritage to society and human development. It is rather clear, then, that the role assigned to CH concerns the constructive process of an inclusive, democratic and sustainable society. The Faro Convention emphasizes the need to question the choices which the presentation of CH is grounded on. Given that this article mainly addresses to public authorities, the question is deontological: is the interpretation of a CH unique and unambiguous? Different communities can assign to the same CH different values and interpretations. Art. 7 of the Faro Convention urges that the principle of diversity of interpretations should be implemented and used also (and above all) in lifelong learning and training. In para. c), CH is considered as an important resource for cultural diversities and the knowledge of CH becomes the instrument to realize an actual and peaceful coexistence between members of different communities or between inhabitants and tourists. Knowing the culture of a certain community makes it possible to build a relationship of reciprocal trust and to better comprehend one’s own differences. Knowledge and relations create the conditions to actually appreciate the other overcoming fear and reaching the following steps: caution, tolerance, acceptance (Clutterbuck, Poulsen, Kochan 2012).

In para. d), art. 7 continues by declaring the intention of integrating these approaches into all aspects of lifelong education and training. How is it possible to achieve these goals? In this paper, I will propose how to answer this question by adopting a pedagogical approach to the CH, that is by exploiting it to create social value.

2 Implementing Faro

During the meeting of 27-9 May 2013, the CDCPP adopted an “Action Plan to promote the Faro Framework Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society 2013-15”.² This plan suggests a scheme of operational strategies, such as the Faro Free Applications (FFAs) devoted to encourage the implementation of the Faro Convention in Europe and to stimulate the ratification of the Convention by signatory States, including Italy.³

The FFAs were conceived as operating tools which have been exploited in pilot projects and afterwards the intention was to move those strategies in other contexts (D’Alessandro 2005).

Moreover, the CoE promotes cooperation by asking associations and other public bodies to extend and to update – on the basis of their practical experience – the directions and descriptions provided by CoE. Urban Revelation Workshops focus on achieving the social target of integration – people belonging to different communities – by re-discovery, re-using and updating forgotten sites and places in degradation status. This operation is a useful policy, which allows or promotes value increase of the place and at the same time it helps to establish a sense of identity and community among those who actively take part in the revelation process.

Discovering or rediscovering the social, historical and cultural value of something that previously was detached, helps in supporting communities to create useful connections with their landscape. These connections are crucial in order to manage CH. Metropolitan trails allow us to discover suburban areas and look at them from an inclusive point of view; moreover, they can establish connections between downtown and suburbs.

Among various proposals of FFAs an important role is played by the cooperatives of inhabitants requiring strong organisational skills and a good collaborative work within the HC.⁴ Cooperatives are relevant bodies that organize guided tours and touristic accommodations in private houses in order to meet, save and transmit CH and improve quality of life and local economy. For facilitating the concrete adoption and success of such actions, the cooperation with public bodies is important. To this purpose, it can be useful to set up an heritage commission devoted to

2 <http://www.coe.int/en/web/culture-and-heritage/faro-action-plan>.

3 Seventeen member States of the Council of Europe have ratified the Convention (Armenia, Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Georgia, Hungary, Latvia, Luxemburg, Montenegro, Norway, Portugal, Republic of Moldova, Serbia, Slovak Republic, The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Ukraine) and five have signed it (Albania, Belgium, Bulgaria, Finland, Italy, San Marino).

4 Faro Convention, art. 2(b): “a heritage community consists of people who value specific aspects of cultural heritage which they wish, within the framework of public action, to sustain and transmit to future generations”.

gather proposals and needs from citizens, associations and heritage communities. Hence, the heritage commission becomes the necessary link between the needs of citizenry and local administrators policies. One of the smartest tools among those indicated by the Action Plan and the CoE are the *heritage walks*, which trigger virtuous mechanism and promote an authentic knowledge of the landscape, specifically considered as a connection between mankind and environment. Heritage walks are *cultural routes* aimed at rediscovering territory and its history through direct contact with witnesses: people who lived and live in these regions holding a strong memory of them.

Undertaking these actions can have positive consequences. For example, a free direct involvement of citizens through an active presence support cultural dialogue, improve the quality of life and the empowerment of mankind. Moreover, the direct management of the FFAs increases interest and knowledge of the local territory and this activates a mechanism of re-appropriation and recognition of the CH in which people are included.

3 Le Vie dei Fiumi Project

In Regione Veneto, the Venice Office of the CoE and the CESTUDIR⁵ engage themselves along this policy by activating a synergic action, both scientific and institutional, in order to disseminate and promote the application of the Faro Convention.

The goal of the project is to introduce a concrete application of Faro Convention's principles, developed through a strategy conceived by Ca' Foscari University: a project which proposes an operational approach aimed at detecting and integrating the application tools of the Faro Convention. A multidisciplinary approach places an academic research project into an area in which theoretical statements are systematically transformed in practical activities, allowing a prompt and real feedback to be produced.

Le *Vie dei Fiumi* project, active since 2015, is coherent with the principles of the Faro Convention featuring an operative and local concern. The project considers as area the territory surrounding Brenta river, with a particular focus on the environs of Nove in Vicenza district: a territory famous for artistic pottery handcraft.

Brenta river has always been crucial for pottery: wood for furnaces has been transported through flotation, stones were necessary for pottery mixture and water power run mills.

So Brenta is a natural path, full of history, in which human work pro-

5 For more information about CESTUDIR: <http://www.unive.it/pag/31191>.

duced artworks worth of attention.

In 1729, Gio Batta Antonibon set up the first factory of majolica in Nove (cf. Ericani, Marini, Stringa 1990). Over the years, techniques and repertoires were enlarged: potteries, majolicas and crockeries, ordered by wealthy customers, became more and more artistic and handworks of excellent quality. Since the mid-nineteenth century, the manufacturing has specialized on objects exploited for practical use in country life. This new 'popular' production has been characterized also by a specific artistic style which was the industrial expression of manufacturing (also known as *neorococò*) (cf. Baroni 1932). It is easily understandable how the landscape of Nove preserve an intimate and precious relationship with the polyhedral world of pottery, despite it is not a growing sector anymore and it is strongly affected by social and economic influences - not only local but also global - which are the effect of recent modifications of international markets.

Brenta is a route that brings with itself culture, history, traditions. Since many crafts no longer exist, the role played by memories is in this context even more meaningful.

Le Vie dei Fiumi project is a cultural operation to valorize and focus on an ICH which must be known and shared. It is articulated along three main axes which include the different activities. Communities are involved through the language of Theatrical Animation. The artistic medium is recognized as a way of instant communication capable of stimulating and setting up metaphors and similarities, linking the past, present and future.

Le Vie dei Fiumi Project is devoted to record all the features of the involved CH, especially the less known ones, through the digitalization of (tangible and intangible) CH in order to favour preservation and accessibility. The *modus operandi* of the project is based on a network approach capable of involving social actors, discussion of topics and sharing of resources.

The participants to the project are: the CESTUDIR, the Management Department of Ca' Foscari, the Scuola Grande Arciconfraternita di San Rocco (Venice), Municipality of Nove, Arti Rappresentazione Association (Vicenza), Nove Terra di Ceramica Association (Nove), Faro Venezia Assocation (Venice) and Bochaleri Association (Venice).

Aiming at an effective cooperation, relationships with secondary schools constitute a priority for the *Le Vie dei Fiumi* Project: the intent is to actively involve those schools and institutes with an artistic specialization in a patrimonialization work, concerning territory and cultural landscape. The creation of a network of schools engaged in the project is fundamental in order to gather, exchange and preserve identity, history and continuity of the different territory knowledge and perceptions.

The project's scope is to embrace the art, know-how, memories of places

and the connections between mankind and nature. This approach is possible through a historical, documentary, artistic and performative *fil rouge* which could be formative for new generations, stimulating attention on important aspects and profiles about knowledge and CH which often are considered only secondary. The project is devoted to establishing a connection aimed at improving knowledge of a part of the territory of Regione Veneto.

The means that can be exploited for motivating this process are various: historical and artistic tools concerning a peculiar feature of Veneto's heritage; performative arts preserving the memory of events and the direct contact with the people who live, work and know the territory.

Relating institutional approaches and participatory methods may stimulate conscious reflections about history of places. Against the prevailing trend of a touristic monoculture, which is trivializing also the Venetian culture, focus must be directed on more human-scaled and full of history touristic routes.

4 Participating to a Heritage Walk

The focus is now into one of the Faro Convention's implementation instruments: the heritage walk.

In the occasion of the 2016 European Heritage Days dedicated to "Culture is Participation", the Office in Venice of the CoE promoted and coordinated the organization of heritage walks extending the area beyond the Venetian lagoon. *Le Vie dei Fiumi* project organized and managed two initiatives, respectively in Nove and in Vicenza. The latter has been organized in cooperation with the UNESCO Club of Vicenza and it proposed two itineraries, one on the river and the other around the city centre, which both offered opportunities to know the city from different perspectives. In Nove (Vicenza), home to the ceramic artistic crafts, the participants in the heritage walk *Nove l'Arte della Terra* had the opportunity to visit the Alessio Tasca's factory; he was an artist and ceramic designer who, in the '80s, operated the renovation of an ancient ceramic factory and managed to turn it into an environment filled with art and passion. Fabbrica di Rio varotta is usually inaccessible to the public audience though it has a high cultural value which would deserve to be known, shared and valorized (cf. Meneghello 1989).

Our witness has been Marina Tasca, Alessio's daughter, who moved and involved the guests by narrating the story, the aspirations and desires of her father while he carried out this unique project.

The walk continued with the visit to the Baccin Cecchetto Stringa Mill, also called 'Mulino Pestasassi', as it was used to ground the stones of the Brenta river then used to create the ceramic paste, paint and glaze. Since June 1991, the Mill complex is under the protection of the Soprintendenza

ai Beni Ambientali e Architettonici del Veneto and has been declared an especially important building by Italian Ministero per I Beni Culturali (cf. Stringa 1968). Besides getting to know its important history, which highlights the connection between the Serenissima Repubblica and Veneto's mainland, the participants had the chance to talk with one of the Stringa brothers, owners of the site, who addressed curiosities and doubts of participants about also the current ceramic business.

The third and last part of the heritage walk was the Ceramiche Barettoni ex Antonibon factory with Mr. Barettoni, its owner who was a great witness and storytellers about his factory, his workers and decorators, and his family. Barettoni Company is the most ancient in Nove (VI) and on 18 April 1732 received concessions by the Serenissima Repubblica for ceramic objects production. The social privileged reserved to certain professional figures working in this domain allowed to reflect upon the role of the craftsman artist and his evolution in time. At the end of the heritage walk, an artistic performance called "Sorgenti" was proposed and organized by Arti della Rappresentazione Association; it was a generative metaphor of Mother Earth about which the painter Marilena Cipro has created and exposed some artwork inspired by the theme of the performance. Curators, storytellers, artists and participants shared a convivial experience where feedback and impressions have been collected.

The brief report on the experience is necessary to introduce and analyse the characteristics of the heritage walk instrument. First of all, the heritage walk promotes the knowledge of the *genius loci* of a territory and to create with it identity and awareness' connections. A heritage walk is structured upon three fundamental elements: the topic, both transversal and multi-disciplinary, the places and the witnesses. The chosen places for such an activity must be significant, as they represent the connection with the identity of the territory and of its inhabitants. Sites usually inaccessible to the public audience are usually chosen, in order to promote the knowledge of something culturally highly valuable but external to the traditional touristic itineraries. It is important to underline the importance of the action of opening a closed space to the visitors, so that the community takes possession of the CH and includes it again in its imaginary and knowledge. A witness is someone who works and lives in the context who is being visited and he/she represents the living historical memory of the events and history of the cultural landscape.⁶ In the attempt to detail our topic even more, it could be interesting to examine what a heritage walk is not.

Firstly, this tool has nothing to do with traditional school education, as it excludes the Teacher-Learner relationship; knowledge is in fact acquired through interaction. Secondly, in such a context, marketing and

6 URL <https://farovenezia.org/azioni/le-passeggiate-patrimoniali/> (2017-12-15).

business are not taken into consideration since the goal is not political or commercial promotion, but knowledge and authentic valorization. Finally, a heritage walk cannot be considered a mainly tourist product in its traditional meaning. This consideration arises from the fact that during this kind of activity we do not transfer processed knowledge and the figure of the tour guide is substituted by the one of the witness. The favoured logic in this process is the one of the encounter, that means meeting someone and share emotions, experiences and stories. This direct contact with the CH consents the creation of identity connections with the territory and to build or rebuild the reality as it is perceived and lived by the community.

Moreover, the heritage walk is planned by the same members of the heritage community involved, becoming thus an instrument of aggregation, knowledge, sharing and cultural participation.

The latter evidently represents one of the three pillars that makes the heritage walk a complete and functional cultural offer. First, it allows to express and respect the right of CH: every citizen has the right to take part to the cultural life, promoting thus an active awareness aimed at re-taking possession of the tangible and intangible CH, which includes values, stories, traditions of the cultural landscape.

Citizen is involved and included in cultural transmission and valorization process. The role played by the concept of *common good* is particularly important in this context: during a heritage walk we have access to places which - in a more or less recent past - conserve a specific identity value, as in a traditional sport practice, a cultural practice, a traditional knowledge. In this sense, thus, a place constituting a collective property and implying and collective usage by the community, it is fundamental to build the connection citizen/inhabitant and territory. From a cognitive perspective, the communicative method similar to storytelling starts a profound memorization process, since various connections between different types of memory are made (active working memory, passive working memory, long-term memory).⁷

The single participant to a heritage walk activates an empathic and generative listening, to increase one's knowledge and meta-knowledge dynamically and recursively.

Given the above it is evident how taking part to a heritage walk is useful and constructive. The user is enriched and stimulated, he lives personal experiences that brings him/her to knowledge also through emotions and human relations, he improves his personal culture.

In this analysis, we want to underline how taking part to the planning

7 URL <http://www.christopherspenn.com/2014/08/the-cognitive-importance-of-storytelling/> (2017-12-15).

of a heritage walk develops virtuous dynamics. Focusing on the process, the heritage walk becomes the output of a *formative participative process*.

The consequences in this case are deeper, with results on the HC both on the short and long term. Among the different consequences, we can count intergenerational and intercultural meeting, activation of complex competencies and learning networks and the usage of a real participative approach in order to implement an authentic valorization of the tangible and intangible CH of a territory. Finally, it is possible to point out that the community is not only invited to know, but it also becomes the protagonist and maker of a cultural, social and value productive process.

5 A Pedagogical Approach for the Planning of a Heritage Walk

This final section is devoted to refining the format of the heritage walk with a proposal concerning its design and planning. The Faro Convention proposes a collective process for taking consciousness towards

a group of resources inherited from the past which people identify, independently of ownership, as a reflection and expression of their constantly evolving values, beliefs, knowledge and traditions. It includes all aspects of the environment resulting from the interaction between people and places through time. (art. 2(a))

As yet, no guideline of any sort defining or structuring the planning phase of the heritage walk exists. However, it is clear that the heritage walk represents a product made by citizens for citizens. The process must be bottom up wise, not the contrary. But the question is: how? Which is the best way to stimulate the participation of a single person to such project? Moreover, how is it possible to let people have the right to be an active part in the cultural life of a city or territory in general?

Giving a model to this creative and designing phase, could extend the importance of the heritage walks. In this way, the it acquires added value and becomes more effective from several points of view: since it achieves social and pedagogical goals, as well as cultural ones.

It will become a Faro Convention application tool that reaches real different and important social goals as well as educational and cultural goals.

Specifically, it is suggested to adopt a particular formatting and educational tool, which is relevant for the projecting of a heritage walk: we refer to the learning approach called 'Study Circle'. This methodology represents a good practice of active citizenship and it's useful for the empowerment of both individuals and communities. In such a way, each HC can find the right place in the society and it is supported in recognizing

its value and knowledge within a context of democracy.

The Study Circle is a self-managed educational modality for adults. Both goals and programs of the Study Circle are directly decided and scheduled by the participants. In this context, the mentor has a very important role, as he/she is the person appointed to monitor the activity of the group in all the meetings and helps to support the execution of the educational program. At the end of the activities the lesson learned are made concrete through a specific product, i.e. anything useful for the growth of the community. This product is well selected and designed by the participants.

The Study Circle features the following characteristic:

- non-formal: this means it is not a traditional teaching. The program is flexible and structured by the participants themselves according to their own requirements or needs;
- self-directed: both final goals and products come out exclusively from participants decision and therefore they are decided by the Study Circle itself;
- experiential: each single participant carries his/her own experiences into the group, so he/she contributes with his/her individual knowledge and experience to the overall circle;
- collective: the effectiveness of the Study Circle depends from the level of cooperation and sharing of knowledge and experience. Only if each participant offers his/her personal contribution and shares within the group the acquisition of new integrated knowledge may become possible.

The Mentor manages and coordinates the Study Circle: he/she facilitates the learning inside the group by creating the best working conditions for cooperation and good relationships among the participants. He/she establishes a positive context and creates good motivations.

According to this model, the heritage walk plays the role of the product of a Study Circle. A group of citizens personally and actively participate to the understanding and valorization of its territory.

The single individual, the participants, the group, the HC and the overall population will benefit from this learning process, whose outcome is constituted by the cooperatively designed heritage walk. This can be seen as the result of an educational process, self-standing, bottom up, in the hands of the citizens.

So far, heritage walks have always been thought and designed by single individuals or associations. On the contrary here it is proposed a different *modus operandi* taking into consideration the process which leads to the design of the heritage walk.

On these basis, it can be claimed that participation is the best way to obtain a real democracy in culture. It's well know that culture is one of the factors that contribute to improve the quality of life and a better use of free

time which can favour longer life expectations (Grossi, Ravagnan 2013). According to this statement, the fundamental aspect of this proposal is the learning process performed during the design phases. The methodology used within the Study Circle is coherent with the one of Ricerca Azione Partecipativa (Orefice 2006): starting from concrete real-life topics of and going through a path which involves analysis and research guided by the mentor. The educational goals are effectively reached thanks to the relationships and connections held and developed during the knowledge process: mutual exchange and sharing activate learning process which is very different from that delivered by standard school or Academia.

The Cooperative learning (Comoglio 2000) which underlines the *study circle method* involves individuals and makes them work together for a common goal, featuring: positive interdependency, individual responsibility, face to face interaction, support to a more effective way to use personal abilities and job evaluation.

Several researches and studies expressed the idea that when correctly used, 'cooperative learning' gives superior results in terms of quality than the traditional education as it guarantees a better learning, it facilitates the development of high level cognitive abilities, it promotes a strong attitude to work in team and helps people to have faith in themselves (2000).

In conclusion, the Study Circle is a tool mainly addressed to the local development exploiting a concept of development which is in line with the concept of change: the focus is not on quantitative growth but more specifically on quality, social and cultural values. For these reasons, it is important to improve the FFAs by making them more effective, and it is also important to promote such participating cultural praxis, above all when it concerns long-life learning for adults and school education.

Going back to art. 7 of Faro Convention, para. b) urges to find a way to equally manage all those situations in which CH is understood in different ways by different communities. This kind of participatory learning may provide a starting point. Knowing ourselves and our historical and cultural context foster everyone to become an active citizen within a process of building up a cohesive society and it also activates virtuous dynamics against the loss of European cultural values.

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