

Museum and Urban Regeneration Stylization of the Decision Making Process

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Premises

Museum and cultural organizations have been recognized as a value for the vitality and character of cities particularly within the idea of “urban regeneration”, that includes the challenge to achieve long-term, strategic reshaping of cities and neighbourhoods, set against a history of short-term, area-based initiatives. Cultural investments, merging tourism strategies with local capability creation, have been seen, in this context, as effective catalysts for city regeneration processes. In this perspective the potential of museums as a tool for urban regeneration has been broadly discussed (F.Bianchini, 1993). The main scope of the projects pioneered in United States (through the creation of studios and 'cultural quarters' in run-down central districts) and therefore enhanced in England in the aftermath of 1981 recession , was to enact virtuous processes exploiting the symbolic value of arts (A.Klamer,1996) and , at the same time, the pulling effect of a growth of demand (due to public expenditure) followed by a long lasting action of an enhanced set of externalities granted by the existence of the cultural institutions (D.W.Pearce, S. Mourato, 1998;G.Sirchia,2000; M.Mazzanti, 2002).

Public policies and art management literature addresses the topic according to this trend. Much of the existing literature on urban regeneration is particularly concerned by three main issues: the motivations that are inducing public authorities to invest in culture, the role of local communities, the methods for identifying and evaluating the long term returns of these investments.

Research objective

The start up of a museum is a process characterized by a high degree of complexity, resulting from the overlapping of different cultural, museological, managerial, organizational, financial, technological issues. This complexity is, if possible, raised by the need of integrating this start up in the wider frame of territorial / urban regeneration projects.

In these cases the basic critical path finding its way through collections, exhibits, technologies, infrastructures, marketing, management and finance, is complicated by the issue of granting a consistent relationship with the local community and urban needs, capabilities and development perspectives. The focus of the process is not only on the definition of a well established museum setting, or on the enrolment of a qualified ensemble of capabilities granting an efficient management of the institution. Also the capability of managing the linkage of the whole operations to the various

stakeholders network is needed. Only this condition, as to say the presence of an enlarged consensus, is barely capable to set up the resources whose returns is measurable only in terms of externalities.

Starting from this evidences the research is trying to stylize the process underlying the decision of building a museum intertwined with wider urban projects. The paper will particularly stress:

- a- the pattern of the decision making process needed before the museum start up.
- b- the main variable influencing this process in different Italian experiences.
- c- the main success factors or threats in the various cases considered.

Methodology

The case is raised by the opportunity of implementing a feasibility study for the Archaeological site and museum of the Roman Ships in Pisa. The case is particularly rich for several reasons:

- The extension of the study (that includes the economical and managerial details of the project but also the cultural perspective and the governance issues), that gave the possibility of following all the decision making process at different level.
- The complexity of the initiative (including the excavations, the restoration of the ships, the museum building and the exhibits in a 10 year perspective), whose sustainability asks for a wider urban development issue to be addressed.
- The range of stakeholders involved (from the central authorities to the local operators),
- The historical relevance of the findings (more than 20 ships overlapped from 300 bc to 400 ac)

The research group will follow and monitor the decision making process, which is now at its turning point, in the next months and will identify the key variables influencing the frame of the institutional setting of the museum and its possible consequences on the city.

Through a comparison with at least two other examples of cultural development policies in Italy (Mart Museum in Trento, Maxi Museum in Rome) the researchers will develop an empirically consistent set of hypothesis in order to set up a frame considering the different dimensions of the projects – cultural - economical – political - and their mutual interactions.

Expected findings

Some of the literature (Landry, Greene, Matarasso, 1996) main findings on this topics are :

- Local leadership and practical, long-term vision are vital in developing a consensus around a strategic, city-wide and local approach to regeneration
- There is a need to link national policy, regional governance, city strategy and local actions in a consistent whole so that top-down and bottom-up initiatives are mutually supportive.
- The contribution of community leaders to area regeneration policy and practice is undervalued by policy makers and public service managers.
- Regeneration programmes should: budget for community capacity building from the start; ensure that stakeholders understand the need for community development; enter into formal

regeneration and service quality agreements, or community plans; and measure success in terms of community skills and residents' views.

These topics will be discussed upon the empirical evidence of the Italian cases.

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