



Master Degree in Policies and Governance in Europe

Cattedra: The Politics of Cultural Heritage in Europe

What are the challenges of creating a museum cultural district? The case of the Mausoleum of Augustus, the Ara Pacis and Piazza Augusto Imperatore

Prof. Mark Thatcher

RELATORE

Prof. Luciano Monti

CORRELATORE

Federico Bencivenni
Matricola n.645072

CANDIDATO

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1. Introduction

This dissertation focuses on the theory of the museum cultural district and its applicability in the city of Rome, in particular in the area of Piazza Augusto Imperatore. The objective is to identify explanatory factors to understand if the political decisions taken in the area work in favour or against the creation of a museum cultural district. To this end, the research question “*What are the challenges of valorisation in creating a museum cultural district?*” has been formulated. A reasonable way to answer this question is to make a comparison between the existing literature on the museum cultural district and the political decisions and development that impacted the area thus far.

In the first chapter the literature on the museum cultural district will be summarized and analysed from the contributions of several authors, to identify the policies and the political decisions that have shaped the area so far, as well as understanding what is the cultural offer provided, and if it matches the requirements set out by the theory. Different authors have set out different parameters to define and explain the characteristics that make up the museum cultural district and have set out various conditions that favour the development of one; equally so, different kind of museum organization structures may interact differently or be built upon different requirements. In order to understand which elements of the theory may be reflected and found in the cases explored in the following chapters, the elements that characterize the museum cultural district and that foster its creation must be determined.

In the second chapter the methodology utilized in this dissertation and its potential weaknesses and limitations will be described to provide greater understanding of the hypothesis advanced later in the research. Another potential limitation may be the uniqueness of the case study chosen, a roman peculiarity. Most importantly the

methodology seeks to explain what Piazza Augusto Imperatore is a case of and why is it relevant to the theory.

In the third chapter, the history of the Mausoleum of Augustus will be detailed alongside the political laws and decrees that have been created and stipulated to renovate and valorise the monument, alongside the ongoing projects aimed at ensuring its reintegration in the urban landscape. Much like the Ara Pacis in the following chapter, the Mausoleum and its history will be explored in function of the creation of a museum cultural district.

In the fourth chapter, the history of the Ara Pacis will be detailed and followed by the political developments that have brought to its current form, as much controversy surrounded the creation process of the new museum, especially from prominent members of the political opposition at the time. By analysing these political developments and the Ara Pacis monument itself it will be possible to comprehend if its inherent characteristics fit the criteria set out in the previous chapter. In the previous decade several political figures were involved in the debate surrounding the new Ara Pacis museum, mostly regarding its appearance; that is not what this dissertation shall put its main focus on, instead the Ara Pacis will be observed from the point of view of a facilitator or obstructer in the creation process of a museum cultural district.

In the fifth chapter, the role of the Tim Foundation shall be explored, although not a political actor but a private one, the contribution and involvement of the foundation has been prominent enough that it may shape the future image of the Mausoleum and as a result may also influence the future development of the area in return. What this contribution means for the creation of a museum cultural district and if it will hinder it or contribute favourably is going to be explored during the course of the chapter.

In the sixth chapter, the contribution of Bulgari and the ongoing construction of the Bulgari Hotel will be explored, much in the same way as the previous chapter and the contribution of the Tim Foundation. The new Bulgari Hotel will be a prominent

structure that is going to be opened right in the heart of Piazza Augusto Imperatore, such a central location and association with a prominent brand is bound to influence the future development of the square and the surrounding area in one way or another; as such, it deserves attention and its construction and development is going to be explored and analysed in detail to comprehend what areas of the theory of the museum cultural district will be matched.

Finally, closing remarks will be given on the findings that will lead to some theories being provided regarding the causes of the challenges of valorisation and creation of a museum cultural district. This research was inspired by the role that museums and heritage at large play in the identity of their respective urban centres, and the necessity to attract a larger crowd by innovating. Other Italian cities including Milan are experimenting with different organization structures to explicitly replicate successful European experiences (Di Francesco, Minuti, 2021). This dissertation aims to provide greater insight into the challenges that the process of valorisation faces in the creation of such districts.

2. Theoretical Framework

The research question “What are the challenges of valorisation in creating a museum cultural district?” “derives from the assumption that creating a museum cultural district is challenging and that it valorises the area in which it is located. It also implies that with the creation of a museum cultural district comes valorisation; with that assumption follows another, that the creation of a museum cultural district is both desirable and beneficial and should thus be pursued where its creation would be applicable. The objective of any administrative body is to ensure that the heritage under their administration, in this case museums, have the best visibility and present the collections held within them to the highest standard to provide the best cultural offer possible, attract the most visitors, be administered in the most efficient way possible and be economically vibrant. The city of Rome, although not lacking in heritage and museums, can still pursue different avenues for the betterment of heritage valorisation and tourist attraction, especially when compared to museums in other countries that may be considered less gifted in cultural heritage quality but more capable and able to valorise their cultural heritage and attract larger crowds of tourists by adopting more innovative approaches. It is reasonable then to assume that the political sphere will enact policies that fall in line with the museum cultural district model and it is equally reasonable to assume that the political sphere may pursue the objective of valorisation through different means. However, in order to understand what are the challenges of the valorisation process it is first imperative to understand the theory itself, therefore, this chapter will be dedicated to the analysis of the theory behind the museum cultural district.

Each author builds upon the theory of their predecessors either giving a critic analysis of the museum cultural district or providing greater insights in the classification of the conditions that allow the birth of such a district both internal and external. For the

purpose of the dissertation it is fundamental to provide a general understanding of the theory behind the museum cultural district, to this end, several prominent authors have been selected.

2.1 Cultural Districts, Economic Rights and Sustainable Economic Growth

The museum cultural district, was first theorized by Walter Santagata in “*Cultural Districts, Economic Rights and Sustainable Economic Growth*” (2002); he defines it as a particular type of cultural district usually situated in the historical centres of cities, a product of public policy and accurate city planning geared towards the valorisation of historical and artistic heritage through an innovative network. Its creation causes an increase in the demand for services as a result of and increased flux of tourists, including hotel services. The author points out that most museums in Italy do not have sufficient resources, therefore by grouping them in museum districts would go against the dispersion of competencies with the correct public policy. According to Santagata, each museum district strives towards an optimal size to create positive externalities as a mean to increase the qualitative growth of the museum district in question, he then lists what he deems are the main positive externalities: Network externalities, consumption externalities, externalities of time and economies of scale and scope. *Network externalities*, regard the high density of museums in a limited space granting visitors a greater concentration of cultural offer and goods. *Consumption externalities* refer to the increase in connections of the utility a consumer acquires. *Externalities of time* are the optimization of time by having access to a greater collection in a shorter period of time. *Economies of scale and scope* allow the improvement of the provision of commercial services, as both staff and collections can be managed with greater results via centralization.

While the theory presented by the author does not provide a minimum size requirement or a guideline for the creation of a museum cultural district, the

externalities listed by the author allow an analysis of the externalities present in the area of Piazza Augusto Imperatore.

According to Santagata's externalities the Ara Pacis and Mausoleum of Augustus benefit from being located in the same square, thus benefiting from the close proximity in a limited space and, it is thus safe to assume that the square benefits from network externalities. Piazza Augusto Imperatore also seems to benefit from the consumption externalities referred by Santagata, given their close proximity tourists are likely to visit both monuments to satisfy their cultural needs, the externalities of time are also satisfied since only a brief walk is necessary to go from one museum to the other. The economies of scale and scope cannot be commented on yet, as how it will be detailed later on, the Mausoleum of Augustus has yet to open to the public, as such only premature speculations can be made.

2.2 I distretti Culturali le Collezioni Sabaude di Torino

Silvia Santagata in "*I distretti Culturali le Collezioni Sabaude di Torino*" (2002) builds upon the work of Walter Santagata, providing the definition of a museum cultural district to differentiate it from a museum network and a museum system. The fundamental characteristics of museum districts are the spatial concentration of museum institutions, the tie with the social and cultural history of the territory in which it is located, the unified theme of the collections held in such museums as expression of a unified theme and finally the existence of a hierarchy as expression of a unitary policy.

Furthermore, according to the author, a district is different from a network since a network is dispersed in a territory and the system lacks a unification of content. Much like Walter Santagata, the author states that museum cultural districts are born in within historical city centres, making it easier to reach a critical mass of public and tourists. The geographical concentration of cultural activities favours a centralization of administrative matters, coordination and communication of cultural activities. The district is born out of a political decision and not a spontaneous event. Two

preconditions are necessary for the creation of such district: the presence of a permanent collection inside the museum institutions and a human capital specialized in museum management. The cultural district is thus a product of the city's authority to valorise their artistic and sociocultural heritage; furthermore, it is important to remember that any form of coordination is either a political or collective phenomenon. Cultural museum districts could not exist if the social environment would not welcome them, they are institutions that preserve excellent testimonies of the past, there would not be a museum district if no shared history or tradition existed. Silvia Santagata then identifies five goals for a cultural museum district;

The first one is the creation of an identity mark to be recognized at the international level adding symbolic value for the district and the city has a hole.

Identification value generated in citizens is also fundamental for the territory in which the district is placed, such as organizing special events throughout the year.

Creating a museum cultural district will allow the city's political authority to reorganize the museum sector in a more rational way.

Democratization of access to culture and the valorisation of the artistic heritage is an expected outcome of the district; as an investment in reputation is essential to consolidate the image of the museum and the city in general.

The final effect of the creation of a museum cultural district are positive externalities in the areas in which the district is born, especially the touristic sector.

The hierarchy of the museum cultural district implies a decentralized leadership capable of greater autonomy and capability of managing museums, centralization causes conflict between museum curators and the director general. However, most importantly, the author proposes a distinction between voluntary museum networks and non-voluntary museum networks. While the first are born out of a common desire between the various museum institutions to form a district and allow a greater degree of centralization the second necessitates an external intervention. In this case

institutions may be stimulated to integrate the existing law and regulation that enshrine the necessity of museum cultural district or that at least incentivize its creation. It is important not to forget that without a willing act, the idea of a district could not exist.

Cultural museum systems and museum cultural districts vary significantly; systems favour horizontal connections between museums and often ignore the vertical relationship of the museums with the territory, they are usually vast and often can reach interregional scale whereas districts are strongly tied to the territory in which they are situated and thus represent the typical model of urban organization. The homogeneity of content within these museums is another fundamental difference between museum districts and museum systems. Museum districts have homogeneous collections tied around a central theme whereas museum systems have a vast and heterogeneous array of culture that is too vast to be grouped under a single theme. It is often the case that Italian museums have a medium to high level of cultural content whose quality is distributed on the territory following different needs. The author continues; some scholars believe that the museum system represents the ideal solution for Italian museums as it valorises the external sensibility and allows to better recognize opportunities tied to the growth of tourism and the influx of visitors, it would allow institutions to offer a greater array of services at a lower cost and organize superior quality initiatives, as well as promoting and valorising permanent collections. Resource scarcity often forces organization to create ties between them to coordinate reach greater stability.

On the other hand, for a museum district to thrive, the cultural offer must be standardized, valorising the territory and creating an integrated system and diversified services to avoid internal competition between cultural initiatives. The district has to rely mainly on new mediums of communication and creating a network of partnerships.

The dual purpose of museum district is increasing the number of programs geared towards the conservation and preservation of cultural heritage and ensuring appropriate levels of access for the public. The development of common projects towards districts allows cultural heritage to be more accessible to visitors. New technologies such as dedicated websites and virtual reality centres contribute to remove barriers to entry, and allow a wider public to access these cultural resources through means that they would previously not have had access to. These new mediums act as info points, and allow easy access to data on cultural heritage through pictures text or sound that can be contextualized in innovative ways.

Silvia Santagata expands greatly the requirements and goals of the museum cultural district; most importantly she introduces the notion of the involuntary museum district, which requires an external intervention to be born. Piazza Augusto Imperatore has the characteristic to fall within this category, having the potential to become one, should the necessary law and regulation be introduced. Furthermore, Silvia Santagata stresses the importance of the democratized access to culture, a necessity to lower the barriers of entry; technology plays a central role in attracting visitors. Partnerships is the other main way in which it differentiates itself from a system, innovation lies at the heart of the museum cultural district.

2.3 Alla Ricerca Dei Distretti Culturali. Un'analisi Critica Della Letteratura

In “*Alla Ricerca Dei Distretti Culturali. Un'analisi Critica Della Letteratura*” Fernando G. Alberti, Jessica D. Giusti (2009), the authors describe the phenomenon of museum cultural districts as a result of a well thought out public policy that is applied at the local level with the precise objective to increase the number of visitors, and as a result improve the economic activities connected to it. A secondary benefit identified by the authors is an improvement of public image; such an act is an investment in reputation. The decision to adhere to cultural museum district coincides

precisely with the search for an ideal dimension in terms of efficiency, quality and visibility. The authors exemplify how the complex terminologies, concepts and phenomena are used for heterogeneous realities.

According to the authors, policy makers have found in cultural networks the ideal answer there are problems that face museums today. Museum networks fall within the objectives of the reorganization process of Italian museums. It is opportune to specify the difference between the structural and organizational forms of these networks systems and districts, although the limit between one and the other is not well defined. The network is defined as a net of non-competitive relations that connects autonomous entities in the absence of a unitary control.

A network is thus a system of interconnection between different actors each one contributing with different specific factors and able to foster possible synergies and occasions for cooperation. Different from the network is the term museum system; with the term system it is important to stress the relations and ties of different nature that one actor has with the others. In this way, it is immediately noticeable how in a system hierarchical relations can be sustained. With the museum phenomenon the concept of system is intended to refer to the relations that the single museum entity on the territory has with other privates or public actors present on such territory. The authors provide two tables (Figure 1 and 2) to visualize the different types of museum organization structures.

The territory represents the glue in terms of interaction integration between the actors involved. Although the expression museum system is present in literature dedicated to the management of cultural heritage, it is not always the case. Initially the term was attached to a precise geographic role, such as civic level regional or national, for a specific technological sector, artistic archaeological and scientific, to identify the need of a coordination between museums when it comes to extending services to the public and facilitate the fruition through planning and access to information.

Amongst the determinant elements of the museum system is the belonging of the museums to a specific geographical context and organization between these museums, that allows the pursuit of a specific objective not possible if pursued individually. According to Alberti and Giusti, the concept of cultural integrated system is defined instead by some authors as a system devoted to presenting an integrated cultural offer from a territory and its public of reference, bettering the quality and quantity of fruition. The net can be the instrument to pursue these objectives but does not coincide with the culturally integrated system. A network of cultural organizations becomes a culturally integrated system only if within its objectives lies the willingness to integrate and coordinate its cultural offer towards an improvement for its users.

Tabella 2. Distretti, reti e sistemi museali a confronto.

Forma organizzativa	Concentrazione spaziale dei musei	Legame con storia sociale e culturale del territorio	Unitarietà di contenuto	Ambito di eccellenza	Gerarchie organizzative
Distretto museale	Si	Si	Si	Internazionale	Si
Rete museale	No	Si	No	Nazionale	No
Sistema museale	Si	Si	No	Nazionale	Si

Fonte: Santagata (2000)

(Figure 1)

Tabella 3. Distretti culturali vs. reti e sistemi museali: le principali differenze.

Distretto culturale	Sistema/rete museale
Oggetto compatto e di qualità con creazione di una 'atmosfera culturale'	Mescolanza di entità eterogenee
Profondo rapporto tra beni culturali e radici storiche dell'esperienza locale	Meccanica giustapposizione di competenze per ridurre i costi di gestione
Costruzione di immagine di un territorio e investimento in reputazione (frutti nel medio periodo, duraturi e non reversibili)	Mero aumento dei visitatori e dei flussi di turismo culturale
Creazione di una densa rete di interazioni e stimolazioni tra cittadini e istituzioni culturali.	Tendenza alla unione di servizi quali la didattica, le esposizioni, la comunicazione, il marketing, il restauro, ecc.

Fonte: Olmo, Santagata, Scamozzi (2001)

(Figure 2)

The authors then synthesize the creation process of a district in three phases. The first is the activation of district activities, dependent on the cultural resources present in the territory, alongside the human capital and favourable socio-political and economic conditions, sometimes the authors precise, activated by purely incidental factors. The second is the gestation period; characterized by a process of accumulation of knowledge, specialization and information exchange between the actors involved. The third phase is the take-off; meaning the recognition of being in a district form; whose characteristics have consolidated from the first phase and have involved prominent public and private actors.

Once again in the analysis of the authors, the importance of the territory is stressed once again alongside the requirement to have appropriate cultural resources. The distinction by the authors of three distinct phase in the creation of a museum cultural district summarizes what they deemed was the most commonly agreed development of a district, therefore it is possible to speculate in which phase the district might be in.

From what is discernible from the literature, Piazza Augusto Imperatore is certainly geographically concentrated and has a high cultural offer consisted of the square

itself, for its historical importance, and the museums of the Ara Pacis and the Mausoleum of Augustus, who have shaped the area around them and are deeply connected as will be detailed in future chapters. As in regards to the development of the area, it was clearly policy driven since public institutions have been deeply involved with the projects undertaken in the area. The area is also very touristic thanks to the Ara Pacis museum, furthermore, during its short first opening the museum of the Mausoleum of Augustus was amongst the most popular museums in Rome (Roma Capitale, 2021). Silvia Santagata perhaps gives the most appropriate definition of the situation in Piazza Augusto Imperatore, as it could be classified as a non-voluntary museum cultural district. According to the classification of Alberti and Giusti it could also be classified as a district in the first phase of its existence, in the activation process of its district activities; it presents several characteristics of a museum cultural district but lacks the willingness to “ignite it” by policy makers, although at first glance it would seem like a good candidate to become one.

3. Methodology

In order to answer the research question “What are the challenges of valorisation in creating a museum cultural district?” the dissertation shall utilize the case of Piazza Augusto Imperatore and the monuments situated in that area as a case study to attempt to understand what are the factors that aid or constrain the creation of a museum cultural district.

In particular, this dissertation is attempting to convey the transition process of a museum cultural district from concept to reality by taking as an example the primary target of the theory; the Ara Pacis and Mausoleum of Augustus are prominent monuments situated within the historical city centre of an artistic city with a strong connection to the territory and, according to the author, holding great potential for an increase of the flux of tourists and an increase in the economic vibrancy of the surrounding area. By providing greater insight in the transformation process of an area rich in cultural heritage to museum cultural district, this dissertation is a case of applicability of the theory chosen. The case selected for this dissertation aims to help identify some of the major unforeseen challenges that emerging museum cultural districts face by applying the theory in a great urban environment famous for its heritage and thus theoretically the ideal recipient that should benefit most from the creation of such a district.

The method utilized will be an inductive method where the independent variable shall be the political decisions and developments on the area and the dependent variable shall be the development of a museum cultural district. Piazza Augusto Imperatore contains within it the Mausoleum of Augustus, perhaps the most prominent monument situated in the square as well as having the museum of the Ara Pacis next to it; the political decisions taken around these monuments and their history required

inquiry to understand their current forms and the role they play in that area. After having examined the museums, the involvement of the TIM Foundation and Bulgari is going to be explored in similar fashion to determine what role they have played in the valorisation process of the square. After that, it will be possible to formulate hypotheses to attempt to list what are the challenges facing the creation of a museum cultural district. It is possible to extrapolate some weaknesses and limitations in the method described above however, as the works around the square are not yet complete including the opening of the Mausoleum of Augustus, projected to be completed in 2024 (Pretto, 2023), and the inauguration of the Bulgari Hotel, set to open on the 9th of June 2023 (Il Messaggero, 2023), it is perhaps premature to reach conclusions regarding the overall cultural attraction of the potential museum cultural district. Another limitation is what has already been explored in the theory, what size should the district aim to reach? This dissertation is thus limited to the area of Piazza Augusto Imperatore and will not explore a potential enlargement. Research of this kind on the applicability of the museum cultural district is necessary for a transposition of the theory to the territories it seeks to valorise.

4. The Mausoleum of Augustus

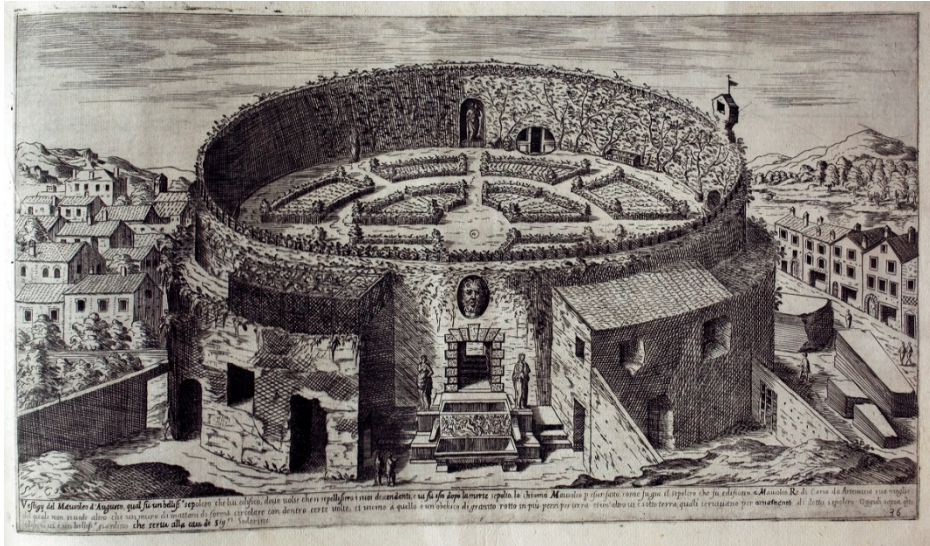
In this chapter the history of the mausoleum shall be explored to give the historical context behind the monument and the area which now harbours it. The history will then be followed by the political decisions taken regarding the current and future role of the monument in the current urban location to determine if its restoration process acts as a facilitator or constrain to the creation of a museum cultural district.

The monument began its existence as the mausoleum and resting place of the Julio-Claudian dynasty, containing within it the tomb of the emperor himself, his family and close friends; serving as a symbol of prestige and power projected by the dynasty. The construction of the mausoleum as well as several other monuments still visible today in Rome, including the Ara Pacis, were part of the propaganda campaign that Augustus undertook after consolidating his power, a highly political move that associated Augustus with Roman prestige and excellence, enshrining them as one and the same in the eyes of the empire (Riccomini, 1996). Therefore, the monumental mound served both a private and a public role, the first as a personal tomb for his family and the other as a symbol of power. The most recent visual reconstruction of the original form of the mausoleum was made possible thanks to the most recent archaeological findings (Figure 3).



(Figure 3, artribune.com)

Although recorded as splendid by ancient sources the mausoleum's prestige would diminish in the following centuries, the monument would in fact succumb to neglect and the dome would collapse on itself due to a lack of maintenance. Unlike other monuments of its type however, the identity of the monument would never be lost, nor would it be forgotten to whom the mound belonged to. We have in fact a written record dating back to the 10th century AD that on top of the remains, the church of *S. Angelo de Agosto* had been built, demonstrating the first change in function of the monument. Subsequently, it undertook another transformation, being converted into a castle by the Colonna family, which would be subsequently be destroyed during an uprising in the 12th century. In the centuries following the destruction of the fortress, mausoleum would be victim to a systematic process of spoil; being deprived of all precious marbles that would be used to construct other buildings. Despite the systematic pillaging, by the 16th century, the remains of the mausoleum belonged to the Soderini family; and so the upper level of the mausoleum was converted into a private renaissance garden (Figure 4).



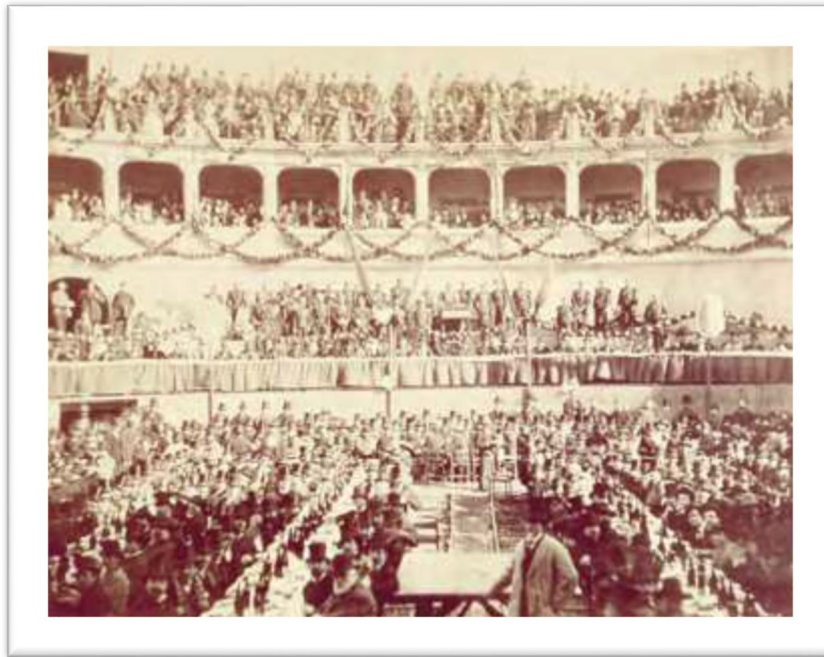
(Figure 4, Gabinetto Comunale delle Stampe.)

During the middle of the 1700s the monument was acquired by the Correa family and changed function once more, this time being turned into an amphitheatre for spectacles with fireworks, and animal shows (Figure 5).



(Figure 5, rerumromanarum.com)

In 1802 the property of the mausoleum was transferred to the Camera Apostolica and in 1810 it became the first prose theatre for daily plays. Subsequently in 1873 the property was transferred from the Camera Apostolica to the Demanio del Regno d'Italia, the building was fitted to host shows and events such as the feast offered in 1875 in honour of Giuseppe Garibaldi (Figure 6).



(Figure 6, museodiroma.it)

Between 1881 and 1883 the Telfener count rented the amphitheatre and renamed it Amphitheatre Umberto Primo. It was then covered with a glass dome but the Pubblica Sicurezza deemed it unsafe for a lack of emergency exits and so the project to make the building an opera theatre was finally abandoned (Agnoli, Carnabuci et al. 2014). Sold in 1907 to the Comune di Roma, after adhering to safety norms and thanks to a new exit way opened where the ancient entrance was located; the Correa was transformed into a concert hall and renamed Auditorium Augusteo (Figure 7), renowned worldwide for its near perfect acoustic (Agnoli, Carnabuci et al. 2014; Riccomini, 1996).



(Figure 7, sovraintendenzaroma.it)

The destiny and destination of the monument was about to change once more however, with its most radical change yet. With the ascent of fascism in Italy, Rome as a whole would be subject of a series of changes on the urbanistic level aimed at serving the new regime's propagandistic needs. During a speech held in the Campidoglio in 1925 Mussolini proclaimed of wanting to transform Rome in a vast, orderly and powerful city as it was during the reign of Augustus (Riccomini, 1996). In the following years the city would be significantly reshaped around the fascist concept of 'romanness', and all ancient buildings that could be tied to the glory of imperial Rome would be part of a city-wide project of 'liberation' and isolation as part of the regime's will to draw a parallel between the glory of ancient Rome and the ascent of the fascist party (Malone,

2017). According to the vision of the dictator, old medieval neighbourhoods had to be demolished and the old ancient monuments of the city had to be isolated, giving them more relevance and prestige. To reach this objective a new wave of impulse to excavation efforts and archaeological research was undertaken, in his own words “*The most August monuments of antiquity must be unburied or freed from the parasitic encrustations accumulated throughout the centuries*” (Betti 2011). In this historical and political context, the mausoleum represented a perfect opportunity for the regime and in particular for Mussolini himself to align his image to that of Augustus, and so excavation works began in 1926. Under the direction Giulio Quirino Giglioli and Angelo Maria Colini, the neighbourhood around the mausoleum was demolished and the auditorium built on top of it was taken apart to reveal the ancient ruins beneath it. According to the 1931 Piano Regolatore the mausoleum should have been situated in the middle of a modern square surrounded by modern buildings and freed of all additions build on top of it over the course of the centuries. Exceptionally important was the time frame in which the works were taking place, 1936 would be in fact the anniversary of the 2000 years since the birth of Augustus, which coincided with the fascist conquest of Eritrea and Abissinia which would officially establish the birth of the fascist empire. Numerous projects were drawn up to give the mausoleum new life; amongst many, the project of Adalberto Libera was to have, within the inner chamber of the mausoleum, the names of the soldiers fallen in the Abyssinian and Eritrean campaigns. Said names would be written with bronze letters on the walls of the inner chamber with a statue of Augustus in the middle (Figure 8).



(Figure 8, Archivio Storico Capitolino.)

In the end however, the design that triumphed would be the one of architect Antonio Muñoz, who proposed the final predisposition of the mausoleum as a ruin adorned with arboreal elements. In the original intentions of Mussolini, the mausoleum would function as his own; to be entombed within it and forever associate his image with that of Augustus. This plan would never come to fruition, after the beginning of the excavation works, it was clear that no relics or remains from the original mausoleum were hidden underneath it, contrasting with the expectations of the regime; in fact, whatever could have been salvaged was taken away in the previous centuries and the building was quickly given the unflattering name “Rotten tooth” (Betti 2011; D’Agostino, 2014) (Figure 9). This finding quickly curbed the enthusiasm surrounding the monument’s recovery and excavation works slowed down significantly until they came to a full stop in 1942 due to the ongoing war.



(Figure 9, artribune.com)

Up until this point the mausoleum had failed to fulfil the regime's expectations, the meagre skeleton of the once marbled mound proved to be too little to be transformed into something else, as well as remaining completely alienated from the surroundings that were purposefully built around it, situated several meters below street level and incapable of taking advantage of its full size to marvel the viewer. Restoration works would only be completed in 1950 several years after the end of the war, but by this point the damage had been done; all enthusiasm surrounding the monument had vanished, deprived of a public or social function, completely isolated from its surroundings and strongly associated with the now gone fascist regime, the mausoleum had by this point lost purpose. Following the 1950s works, the monument would remain inaccessible (Cellini, 2015), and would be condemned to oblivion, not visited by tourists or ever mentioned amongst the list of notable monuments in the city, even ignored by most of Rome's citizens. The same fate would be reserved to its surrounding

area, condemned to a slow process of urban decay. The shapeless ruin was not grandiose enough to be fully embraced by fascist propaganda and yet too strongly associated with the fascist regime to be redeemed in the eyes of the newly instituted Italian Republic.

What is immediately discernible from the condensed history of the monument provided above is the highly political association that the monument has earned due to its historical context. Although not remotely comparable to the controversies surrounding the construction of the new museum of the Ara Pacis (as will be explained in the next chapter), the Mausoleum of Augustus was part of a political process regarding its restoration and several pieces of legislation were passed to achieve this goal and open it again to the public. With *GU 5a Serie Speciale - Contratti Pubblici n.133 del 14-11-2007* the preliminary archaeological works were announced for the monument and its square in preparation for the restoration process. Only after the conclusion of the preliminary archaeological inquiries would the following piece of legislation: *Conversione in legge, con modificazioni, del decreto-legge 8 agosto 2013, n. 91, recante disposizioni urgenti per la tutela, la valorizzazione e il rilancio dei beni e delle attività culturali e del turismo. (13G00158)* finalize the public tender project of the restoration with the approval of the budget of € 8.804.099,43 alongside several requirements regarding the quality of the construction materials, the acoustic impact of the materials on the surrounding square and the improvement on information on the ongoing works. The following act (*GU 5a Serie Speciale - Contratti Pubblici n.138 del 29-11-2017*) would declare the winner of the tender for a budget of 5.965.449,51€. What can be considered remarkable within these pieces of legislation is their high standard of care given to the monument during the works from a technical point of view, and yet little is provided in the sense of what the restoration of this monument is supposed to be. Given the peculiar history of this monument and its long-standing incapability of being integrated in the surrounding area some consideration of this aspect would be expected in the legislation and yet no such consideration or comment is made;

equally surprising is the absence of any statement regarding the future role of the mausoleum in the wider heritage system of the city beyond acting as a museum dedicated to its own history. It is possible to theorize the lack of a singular vision for the role of the mausoleum and the surrounding area; beyond the mention of the willingness to pursue valorisation, there seems to be no clear consensus of what role the mausoleum should cover beyond the simple function of museum. Although once fully restored the monument is projected to be the life centre of Piazza Augusto Imperatore, no specific plan has been made public to synergize at best the mausoleum itself and the adjacent Ara Pacis museum, not as an administrative separate area such as a district nor within the Sistema Musei Civici; this lack of a clear vision is perhaps linked to the timeframe length of the operation, due to the length of the restoration process (often aggravated by numerous delays), the local administration is unable to make concrete plans that will likely exceed the political mandate of the local administration. The theory of the museum cultural district does not offer time frames for the creation of such district, as a result significant delays may result in undesired obstacles to its creation. The project of the restoration of the monument is approaching the 20-year mark since its approval in 2006, accompanied by numerous delays, ballooning costs and 5 different administrations with different political views. This frequent change of direction can make the vision of the role of a monument in an ever evolving urban landscape challenging, and should not be underestimated as an obstacle to the creation of a new museum cultural district. If each administration is unlikely to be re-elected after one term in office, the likelihood of said administration to initiate projects they are not likely to see the end of are even slimmer.

Bettini (2017) commented on the issue and provided some insight on the long time frames and the tendency to avoid public tender procedures when the administration had the chance to. *«The lack of public tender for contracts is one of several administrative distortions that the Autorità Anticorruzione has contested on several occasions, calling it an unacceptable anomaly. It is considered one of the causes of Mafia Capitale. An observer might*

rightly claim that well-meaning politician should give his best and shake up the bureaucratic machine; unfortunately, it is not that simple. The first obstacle of this hypothetical honest politician is the calendar, in order to prepare a multi-million contract, nominate the commission, announce the public tender and proclaim a winner, including all the bureaucratic requirements, two hundred days pass on average. » Considering that a mayor's mandate lasts 5 years on average, almost fifth of their time in office would be spent just to declare a winner.

Unlike the Mausoleum, the next chapter is going to explore another monument that has had a clear role in the urban development of the area.

5. The Ara Pacis

In this chapter the history of the Ara Pacis will be described alongside the political decisions that shaped it and its surroundings, to have a comprehensive picture of the historical and political debate around the project. After having covered the developments around the Ara Pacis it will be possible to assess what were the decisions that aided and constrained the development of a museum cultural district. The decision to place the Ara Pacis on the Lungotevere, next to the Mausoleum of Augustus, was taken in 1937 by Benito Mussolini, who chose this solution from amongst several proposed by a commission chaired by the education minister Bottai. Initially the idea was to cover the altar with a pseudo arcade, to embellish the 4th side of Piazza Augusto Imperatore, which was beginning to appear too plain for the expectations of the regime. It was subsequently decided to substitute the colonnade with a pavilion for which various designs were produced. In all of them the architect Ballio Morpurgo envisaged a structure made of costly materials with bronze and porphyry finishing, but in the end the shortage of time and funds dictated different choices: painted cement and marble stone imitating travertine on simplified architectural forms (Figure 10).



(Figure 10, arapacis.it)

Morpurgo was promised that he would be able to make alterations to the pavilion once it had been inaugurated, on the 23rd of September 1938, only three months after the first stone was laid, but shortly afterwards the outbreak of war put an end to the architect's aspirations. In July 1943, the glass was blown out of the pavilion during the bombing of San Lorenzo and, with the fall of the fascist regime and the end of the war, what to do about the Ara Pacis became the object of fierce contention. Various different hypotheses were aired, including moving the altar to the interior of the Mausoleum of Augustus, or the Aventine hill, in a prominent position overlooking the Circus Maximus. In the meantime, while these ideas were being evaluated in a competition setup, the shattered glass where was replaced by a wall more than 4 meters high in false marble. This wall was destined to remain in place until 1970, when the ministry of public education, abandoning any idea of moving the altar to another location, consented to the restoration of the pavilion and the installation of new glass panels, paid for by the Rotary clubs of Rome. During the 1980s the Ara Pacis underwent restoration, but already by the mid-1990s it was showing undisputable signs of serious deterioration, as a result of unsuitable ambient conditions. It became apparent at the time that the 1938 pavilion could not be adapted to meet modern standards. Once the idea of moving the altar had been abandoned, due to the fragility of its reassembly, new thought was given to the possibility of substituting the protective building around it. In 1995 Rutelli's Junta invited in Rome an *équipe* of "archistars" that were responsible for the urban transformations in Madrid Barcelona and Paris. On the 12th of February 1995 at the Palazzo delle Esposizioni, the then mayor of Rome Rutelli and his councillor Domenico Cecchini welcomed the *équipe* of experts including 3 architects that fundamentally changed the cities reported above. From Madrid came Edmondo Mangada, responsible of the capital's city plan. From Barcellona came Oriol Bohigas, architect of the 1992 Barcelona Olympics, and finally from Paris came Nathan Starkma, urban councillor of Ville Lumière's municipality. These personalities were part of a large plan to

renovate Rome and transform it significantly in an attempt to replicate the successful experiences that had already taken place abroad, amongst these projects was the willingness to give the Ara Pacis a new museum. In the spring of 1996, the Rutelli administration invited the American architect Richard Meier to design a new museum for the Ara Pacis, not merely a new container stated the architect, but a building worthy of the work of art is housed, which could safeguard its security and give a kick start the process of renovation of Piazza Augusto Imperatore. Rutelli stated during an interview: «If you are looking for a culprit of the Ara Pacis project, I am responsible». (Nathanson, 2002). This was the beginning of the ten years long project, at times faced with intense opposition as the new museum reopened discussion on the historic centre of Rome exactly where it had been interrupted 50 years earlier: in fact, since the fall of the fascist regime nothing on the scale had been undertaken within the Aurelian walls. Meier was faced with severe design constraints, but when in 1998 his proposal was approved, it became clear that his design would transform the restrictions into strengths: the long but narrow sight became the point of departure for division of the building into three distinct sections, the construct a large semi-basement for exhibitions, the problem of the slope on the south end was resolved by placing a stairway and fountain which served as a link with the surrounding urban area. Furthermore, requirements for total thermal and acoustic insulation, particularly from the noise created by adjacent traffic, and the impact of the large amount of glass specified in the Commission. In other respects, the project could be defined as revivalist, mostly because of the materials chosen, for example the inclusion of a fountain recalling the old Porto di Ripetta, and with the presence of an auditorium, a reminder of the demolished Corea Amphitheatre built on top of the mausoleum. In 2000 Rutelli's project was approved, works began and the Ara Pacis itself was wrapped up for protection, as if departing for a long journey. At the end of that year demolition of the old pavilion started, amidst growing opposition; the destruction of the original structure, which was decided had been a Morpurgo masterpiece, was regretted and it was put about that the new building would have hidden forever the

remains of the old Ripetta port structure (Figure 11), the memory of whose loss, (although nothing was spared by the construction of the Lungotevere and the Cavour bridge) is still a source of dismay in the historical context of the city. The old Porto di Ripetta was in fact an important connection point between Rome and the Tiber and provided a fundamental connection that has since been lost.



(Figure 11, museodiroma.it)

A ministerial Commission was entrusted with the study of modifications to the mayor design and work was halted. In July 2001 archaeological examinations in the area were undertaken, but not right up against the monument, in order not to risk structural damage. At that stage alterations to the plain foundations were made in order not to disturb the archaeological layers. At last in 2003, the new plateau foundations were built and in April 2006 your Ara Pacis was reopened to the Roman people in its new

museum. Harsh criticisms were raised against the project in 2001, the sub secretary of the Beni Culturali Vittorio Sgarbi met with the then mayor of Rome Walter Veltroni and raised several doubts concerning the project. *«It will never be done. It is a moral and ethical duty to avoid such a travesty. An “ultrapolitical” and antiglobal matter to avoid a horrendous American extravaganza »*. Veltroni declared after the meeting that no significant change was to be made to the project. However, Sgarbi confirmed his willingness to fight against the new museum: *«The Ara Pacis signed by Meier will never see the light of day. It is an etic-moral matter regarding a project that all architects, from Aymonino to Calatrava, deem horrible. I cannot allow, on the basis of signed papers, that in that in such a place in Rome, a pizzeria is to be built, an absurd cheese bowl such as this project. »* (Giuliani, 2001). Sgarbi proclaimed his intention to block all further development with landscape constrains. The lack of a public tender procedure for the creation of the new museum and the lack of harmony between the new project and the surrounding area were the most pressing issues. During his political campaign for mayor Alemanno declared in 2006: *«Should we win on the 28th we will disassemble the glass case and reassemble it on the outskirts of the city. »* Critic was also then capogruppo Regione Fabio Rampelli criticized the mayor for the project. *«Veltroni should apologize to the city for the unsportsmanlike way he chose to demolish the old rationalist Morpurgo glass house and decide the new construction, take act of the criticism and possibly allow a referendum. »* (Mambelli, 2006). After the change of the mayor of Rome and some criticism directed at the very existence of the project (then turned into modifications), Mayor Alemanno through a deliberation in January 2009 and with the agreement of Meier announced that the external wall of the Ara Pacis was to be lowered to allow a better view of the church of San Rocco. Alemanno stated: *« The project presented today is the solution to the controversies of the past. More than once have I stated that the choice of collocating Meier’s work in that context was wrong. Today’s project is amazing. We will unite*

the requalification of Piazza Augusto Imperatore, the modifications to the museum's structure and the under passage that will allow the pedestrianisation of a large portion of the Lungotevere and creating a green space in which several works of art coexist. » (RomaToday, 2010). Little more than one-year after this declaration a public tender procedure was held to award the winner of the construction of the underway passage. Mayor Alemanno came under heavy criticism after prematurely declaring the Todini group the winner of said public tender. The opposition argued that the regular verification procedure had to take place and that no winner was to be declared; and called for the intervention of the Commissione Trasparenza. In May 2012, the Ufficio Città Storica di Roma Capitale declared that no winner was to be awarded for the construction of the under passage since none of the projects presented adhered to the preliminary project presented as a base for the public tender (RomaToday, 2012). Alemanno was quick to respond that a new project was already in the works, but all attempts to build the under passage were ultimately abandoned.

Many years later Rutelli briefly commented the controversies and attacks directed at the Ara Pacis. The famous art critic Federico Zeri reportedly told him «*You will never be able to do it*» regarding the realization of the new Ara Pacis museum. Many of his colleagues would instead work to organize campaigns of para-terrorism on the “Wrecking of the Ara Pacis” (Rutelli, 2020) «*I am still waiting for the apologies of those who went so far as to call it “a gas station”, demanding its demolition or at most its deportation.* » (Rutelli, 2022).

5.1 Interview with Francesco Rutelli

I had the pleasure of interviewing Francesco Rutelli in April 2023 to ask him about the impact of culture in urban renovation.

What can be considered the most successful examples of urban renovation using culture as a catalyst?

«The example of the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao has undoubtedly been the most successful example so far, not only was it able to revitalize the Basque culture but it was also able to breathe new life into Bilbao both socially and economically, creating massive interest in what has always been a traditionally difficult region to valorise, with its own language unrelated to any other in Europe. »

More than 20 years have passed since the beginning of the work on the Ara Pacis Museum, what are the main challenges to valorisation in Piazza Augusto Imperatore?

«Since the opening of the new Museum, the Ara Pacis has seen great success becoming one of the most visited museum in the Musei Capitolini, it cannot be understated how much of a difference it has made for the monument if we consider how the old glass cover by Morpurgo had critical shortcomings regarding the exposure of the Ara Pacis to smog and structural instability caused by heavy traffic on the Lungotevere, absent or rare at the time the structure was completed. »

Could Piazza Augusto Imperatore become a museum cultural district once the Mausoleum of Augustus has been ultimated?

«It is difficult to say, the Mausoleum itself is in a poor state after it was spoiled from the Augusteo that was built upon it a century ago; what is visible today is merely a fraction of what it has once been throughout the centuries. In these cases, technology can provide an indispensable help to this kind of heritage that is hard to appreciate without knowing the historical context behind it, as such virtual reality can be of great help. This said, time will tell if once the monument is ultimate, it will capable of being successfully integrated in its surroundings. Should these efforts prove to be successful Piazza Augusto Imperatore has the potential to be a prime district of international importance given the presence of the monuments and the currently underway Hotel Bulgari, the area would benefit from it. In

recent years, culture has already proven to be an engine of urbanistic rebirth, after we had worked to build the new Auditorium of Rome and after the opening of the MAXXI the surrounding area has experienced great economic benefits and fostered new development. »

It is remarkable how much political decision making has shaped the area both towards its current form and how much backlash has been raised against development. The area has improved significantly from the point of view of visibility thanks to the new Ara Pacis Museum and has proven to be economically viable as demonstrated by the number of visitors in 2021 considering the reduction in numbers from previous years caused by the pandemic (Roma Capitale, 2021). Equally surprising is how a similar experience has not been attempted since then, considering the overall success of the operation to valorise an incredible example of historical heritage. It is possible to hypothesize from Rutelli's experience that political opposition can be a major obstacle to valorisation. The backlash that the Ara Pacis museum project experienced has been central to the debate surrounding the structure, such stark opposition to a project that aims to change the landscape of the historical centre can be considered as a major obstacle by policy makers and damaging to their careers and potential re-election in the future, as a result the willingness to undertake such projects is severely diminished. Future mayors are more likely to avoid changing the urban layout of the historical city centre due to the vivid memory of the Ara Pacis case, although an arguably great success for the valorisation of the area it came at a steep cost in terms of criticism.

In the following chapter another actor and its involvement, will be analysed for its contribution to the development of the area.

6. The TIM Foundation

The Tim Foundation has been the most important private entity to be involved with the Mausoleum of Augustus, in this chapter its involvement shall be analysed to comprehend if the contribute given by it is in line with the principles of the museum cultural district and if overall its involvement has contributed or hindered the creation of such district.

Most public and private collaborations are born out of the necessity of additional financing for the valorisation of cultural heritage. Only at the beginning of the 2000s was it made apparent that involvement of private individuals was not in contradiction with the spirit of the Italian Constitution but was perfectly coherent with Article 9 «The Republic promotes development of culture and scientific and technical research. The Republic safeguards the historical and artistic heritage of the nation and its landscape. »

In 2004 with art. 120 Codice dei Beni Culturali e del paesaggio, the Codice Urbani: *«È sponsorizzazione di beni culturali ogni contributo, anche in beni o servizi, erogato per la progettazione o l'attuazione di iniziative in ordine alla tutela ovvero alla valorizzazione del patrimonio culturale, con lo scopo di promuovere il nome, il marchio, l'immagine, l'attività o il prodotto dell'attività del soggetto erogante. »*

In this new legal regime, the possibility of a private sponsor being involved with the preservation of culture was made possible. Such was the case the Mausoleum of Augustus and the collaboration of the Comune di Roma and the Sovrintendenza Capitolina with the Tim Foundation.

The restoration process of the mausoleum would take much more than anticipated, in fact, the first phase of the archaeological inquiry began in 2007 but would subsequently be plagued by numerous delays and eventually requiring additional

funds for its completion. In a deliberation of the Giunta Comunale in Protocollo RC n. 275597/08 of the 14th of January 2009, the project for the valorisation of the monument awarded to the project *Urbs et Civitas* led architect Francesco Cellini, foresaw a total expense of 17 million euros for the archaeological works required to restore the Mausoleum, divided according to the figure below (Figure 12). These funds were not sufficient however, and the necessity for the involvement of a private actor providing additional funds made itself apparent.

B) Somme a disposizione dell'Amministrazione				
Imprevisti	225.000,00	10	22.500,00	247.500,00
Opere in economia	100.000,00	10	10.000,00	110.000,00
Opere rimborso a fattura	100.000,00	20	20.000,00	120.000,00
Spostamento sottoservizi e relativi allacci ai pp.ss.	300.000,00	20	60.000,00	360.000,00
Oneri per la redazione della progettazione preliminare, definitiva ed esecutiva (contributo 2% C.N.P.A.I.A. compreso)	756.795,32	20	151.359,06	908.154,39
Oneri per la redazione della progetto della sicurezza di cui al D.L. gs. n°494/96 e s.m.i. (contributo 2% C.N.P.A.I.A. compreso)	135.347,92	20	27.069,58	162.417,51
Oneri per la direzione dei lavori (contributo 2% C.N.P.A.I.A. compreso)	442.136,55	20	88.427,31	530.563,86
Oneri per il Coordinamento della sicurezza in fase esecutiva di cui al D. L. gs. n°494/96 e s.m.i. (contributo 2% C.N.P.A.I.A. compreso)	225.579,87	20	45.115,97	270.695,85
Oneri per il pagamento del premio per la partecipazione al concorso (comprensivo di I.V.A. e contributo C.N.P.A.I.A.)	50.000,00			50.000,00
Ulteriori spese tecniche per: rilievi, sondaggi, assistenza al R.U.P., assistenza alle indagini archeologiche, ecc.	507.276,88	20	101.455,38	608.732,26
Spese di pubblicità	4.580,12	20	916,02	5.496,14
Contributo in favore dell'Autorità dei ll.pp. (art.1 – commi nn° 66 e 67 della L. 23/12/2005 n°266)	500,00			500,00
Oneri di cui all'art. 92 del D. L. gs. n°163/2006 e s.m.i.	95.940,00			95.940,00
Importo totale somme a disposizione dell'Amministrazione	2.943.156,67		526.843,33	3.470.000,00
TOTALE A)+B)	15.243.156,67		1.756.843,33	17.000.000,00

(Funds available for the administration, Figure 12)

In the following years thanks to further legal development, the Art Bonus law was introduced, allowing incentives for private patronage, in fact according to *Art. 1*

Legge 29 luglio 2014, n. 106 e s.m.i. and to the Legge di stabilità 2016 del 28 Dicembre 2015, n. 208, a 65% tax credit could be awarded to cultural patrons (Ministero della Cultura, 2014).

The line between patron and sponsor is somewhat blurred however; although no study has been published by TIM in this regard, it is possible to hypothesize economic benefits gained through image return. « *In practice, it is difficult to spot true patrons: in fact, if they stay anonymous they cannot be identified and if they choose to remain public they still receive a minimum amount of notoriety and advertising return that makes them similar to sponsors*». (Dolores, 2019).

According to their balanced paper of 2017, the Foundation stepped in during the restoration process of the monument starting in 2016 for the duration of three years while being involved with the completion of the consolidation and valorisation projects by working in close contact with the Comune di Roma. In line with the previous delays however, the time span for the works on the mausoleum would subsequently increase in the balance sheet of the following year (2018) where the time span for the completion elongated to five years, and the official proponent institution switches from the Comune di Roma to the Sovraintendenza Capitolina ai Beni Culturali. Subsequently in the balance sheet of 2019 it is stated that according to the deal made with Roma Capitale in 2015 TIM could be entitled to 25% of the ticket sales of the mausoleum as part of the valorisation costs of the project. According to their webpage, amongst the core principles of the foundation is the willingness to fund projects aimed at improving technological innovation and specifically the valorisation of art and culture.

The complexity of the developing relationship between TIM foundation in the Comune di Roma is demonstrated by the equally complex nature of the official acts detailing the partnership between the two. According to the official acts of the Comune di Roma, as reported in *Protocollo RC n. 33190/2020*, the TIM Foundation supported the project with a sum equal to 6 million € for the completion of the second

phase of restoration of the monument and a further 2 million € for its valorisation (Il Giornale dell'Arte, 2021). Throughout the years the conventions between the Sovrintendenza Capitolina and the TIM Foundation have been updated with several official acts the last of which being *D.D.N. 462 PROT. N. RI/24300 of 5/08/2021, approvazione dello schema di convenzione recante le modifiche delle convenzioni, stipulate tra la Sovrintendenza Capitolina e la fondazione TIM, GIÀ fondazione TELECOM, con atto notarile in data 22.12.2015 (REP. N. 66782/24477), con atto notarile in data 20 luglio 2016 (REP.284/176) e con atto del 20.12.2018 (REP. N. 69692/26.017)*. Although these acts are public in nature, I have been made aware by the Comune di Roma its contents concern the privacy of the private actors involved and these pieces of the legislation and as such cannot be disclosed. Acts of patronage initiated more recently are now negotiated through private deals by Protocollo RC n. 25142/18 Deliberazione n. 23 Estratto dal verbale delle deliberazioni dell'Assemblea Capitolina (Comune di Roma, 2019).

6.1 Interview with Luca Josi

The idea of this financial help and act of patronage was the brainchild of the then Director of Brand Strategy, Media & Multimedia Entertainment Luca Josi, an act of patronage or *mecenatismo*. I had the pleasure of interviewing Luca Josi in April 2022 to ask what where the main reason for the involvement of the TIM Foundation.

Why was the mausoleum chosen in particular?

«The restoration of the mausoleum a fixed idea of mine, in 2015/2016 the foundation was involved in too many projects that were too far and few in between. It needed something more central, more visible, the mausoleum on the other hand, was a perfectly suited candidate and a visible commitment of Tim to culture. In 2014, the 2000-year anniversary of the death of Augustus was already out of sight for the monuments reopening. The

mausoleum itself was not only one of the most important monuments in Rome, but represented the perfect act of patronage given that the remains of Mecenate where once held in the mausoleum».

What is the process of private and public involvement with the restoration of monument?

«In Italy the concept of collaboration between the public and the private is antiquated, until recently the expected outcome of private involvement was simply additional income for the restoration of the monument and that was it. Even though in our case the Foundation donated the funds, there needs to be a further incentive for private involvement since the public sector cannot cover by itself all cultural heritage in need of restoration. We have heard many times the false anecdote that 70% of all works of art in the world are held in Italy, even if this was true, Italy does not have 70% of all the funds in world required to maintain said works of art. Through sponsorship it is possible to create a new model of collaboration between both sides, on the part of the public entity there is a natural fear of external involvement, what they will never have to worry about however, is the location of the monument, since it will never be moved or stop being accessible to citizens».

I have heard that you're also involved with the project of the virtual tour of the mausoleum, is it correct?

«Absolutely, the virtual tour is a great challenge for me and my team, it is a new technology that hopefully will be able to connect further visitors and monument, even being able to witness the previous incarnations of the mausoleum. We have already done a virtual reconstruction of the history of the monument on the Mausoleums of Augustus website. Recently there has been some concern surrounding virtual tours with the fear that they could potentially competes and even discourage physical tours, this fear is of course

unfounded. The objective of a virtual tour is not substituting physical tours but instead advertising them, and hopefully functioning as an incentive to go and see the mausoleum physically».

A part of what will be the virtual tour for the mausoleum has been shown in April 2021, Luca Josi hosted a demonstration of the capabilities of a virtual tour to the founder of Facebook and the Metaverse Mark Zuckerberg, demonstrating what the technology could be developed for (Youmark, 2021). Virtual reality is currently a new technology under development, the main draw of which is the capability of showing the viewer, in the case of museums tours, snaps in time of a certain place by “walking in it”. The impetus of selecting the mausoleum was not merely a unilateral choice from Luca Josi however, as President Giuseppe Recchi of the TIM Foundation stated:

«Our group allows people to communicate with one another, but the Tim Foundation has decided to expand this communication throughout the centuries. The history of the mausoleum has not always progressed under fortunate circumstances, the ambitions and hopes of Augustus who constructed this monument could no longer remain in a limbo. We have decided to get involved through this productive partnership with the Sovrintendenza Capitolina to give back the Mausoleum to Rome and the world. However, the idea of its restoration is not enough, we want to fully appreciate this opportunity to reflect on Augustus’ heritage, and that extraordinary hero of peace that bears his name, and the first globalization in history. For this reason, we have not only invested resources in the mausoleum but also all of our creativity» (Fondazione Tim, 2019).

TIM sees in the mausoleum a cultural value that matches with the identity of their product, as explained by president Giuseppe Recchi when he described the creativity that the company invested in the monument.

For the time being it is not yet possible to give a definitive judgment on the operation as it is still ongoing, although formally in 2020 for a brief period of time the mausoleum was made accessible to visitors, the restoration project is not yet completed as the interior still needs to be fully transformed into a museum. These chronic delays can be attributed to the pandemic and the yet to be completed gardens surrounding the mausoleum, which should complete the connection between the monument and Piazza Augusto Imperatore.

The creation of a virtual tour is both an advancement in technological research and a gateway to enhance the cultural offer for visitors, without competing with a normal tour. Therefore, this operation seems to be coherent with the theory of the museum cultural district and its involvement is not only helping to improve the consumption externalities of the mausoleum by lowering the cognitive investment required to appreciate it without lowering the cultural offer; but it is also helping to develop new technologies as a whole. This collaboration between the Comune di Roma and the Tim foundation can be considered beneficial in term of the creation of a museum cultural district, as it matches with the increased accessibility to visitors mentioned by Silvia Santagata by creating websites and virtual reality centres, furthermore a partnership network has been established with innovation as its main motor. What can be considered peculiar is that despite this collaboration has seen the deep involvement of the TIM Foundation, no major criticism was raised against them, most likely due to the non-altering nature of the intervention on the monument.

In the next chapter another private actor involved with the valorisation process of Piazza Augusto Imperatore will be analysed and its contribution measured.

7. The Bulgari hotel

The requalification of Piazza Augusto Imperatore is a multifaceted process that has involved both the public and the private sphere, to this end, in this chapter the involvement of Bulgari shall be analysed to quantify what cultural contribution was provided to the square and the mausoleum, as different actors may differ greatly in methods and means with the requalification process. The controversies surrounding the new hotel shall be discussed with equal attention as the political sphere was deeply involved in the process and as such it becomes part of the challenges of valorisation concerning the public sphere, partnership with private actors and the political debates that come with it.

At the beginning of the 2000s, several properties of the INPS were sold to the FIP (Fondo Immobili Pubblici) at a price much lower than the market price, including the INPS building in Piazza Augusto Imperatore, that was sold for 22 million € whereas market price at the time estimated the property to be worth 82 million €. The FIP was a private entity and many were vehemently against this sale-off; however, when the INPS appealed in 2005 to the TAR to contest the acquisition of the building by FIP, it was rejected. The choice of selling the property was considered a political decision and as such unquestionable for the administrative judge (Fornari, 2005).

Nearly a decade later the FIP was entertaining the possibility of the sale of the building in question, and protests followed shortly after. «The future skyline of the city is a suite overlooking the homeless», this was the slogan of the Action protesters when they occupied the old INPS building in 2015. That year all the tenants and businesses operating there received an eviction notice. At the time deals were underway to sell the property by September 2015. The protesters were expressing their dissatisfaction with the systematic depopulation of the city centre in favour of luxury hotels and

private apartments for the super-rich. Commenting the occupation by Action, Marco Miccoli of the PD would go on to declare: «Although keeping a safe distance from the practice of occupation, the themes underlined by the militants of Action cannot be ignored. The sale of state property heritage is involving important foreign and national investors as well as a significant amount of capital; however, the city and its health is put at risk, put down to its knees and subject to a strict repayment plan and victim of speculations that have deprived Rome's citizens of crucial funds destined to better their living standards and unable to gain any social benefit. Social and housing crisis, new levels of poverty and unemployment crisis require a reflection: is it possible to allocate a portion of income derived from this complicated system of management and sale of Rome's immobile heritage to help the systemic problems that plague the Comune? In the next days I will kick start new parliamentary initiatives aimed at clearing the situation regarding the management of FIP and ask the relevant ministers how this income can be used for the city's benefit».

(RomaToday, 2015).

The 8th of September 2015 the PD wrote a letter directed at the Ministry of Economy and Finance and Ministry of Cultural Heritage and Tourism, questioning the conversion of the building into a luxury hotel given the great speculative interest surrounding the property (Miccoli, 2015).

In 2020, on the Bulgari Hotels website, a video announcement was released where the Maison Bulgari announced the opening of a new hotel in Piazza Augusto Imperatore where are the ex INPS offices once where located. This announcement was made with a promotional video detailing the offer the hotel would provide to its guests; with the now ex-mayor of Rome Virginia Raggi appearing in the video to solidify the partnership between the two (Bulgari, 2020).

The acquisition of the ex-INPS offices by Bulgari was not met with unanimous acclaim, on the contrary it was followed by controversy. The property which is now

rented by Bulgari for the inauguration of the hotel belongs to the Benetton group. Such property previously belonged to the FIP; at the time of the acquisition the M5S was in open conflict with the Benetton group following the tragedy of the Morandi bridge, and stated multiple times that they would not strike any deals with them under any circumstance. However, the then mayor of Rome Virginia Raggi, struck a deal with the Benetton group for the acquisition of the building in Piazza Augusto Imperatore. Furthermore, this acquisition was much more favourable for the buyer than anticipated. The acquisition of the rationalist building was made possible due to the Beni Culturali giving up their pre-emption right of acquisition; and so the building went to the Benetton group, Edizione Property for 150 million euros. The acquisition of the property itself has been greatly criticized for essentially gifting a valuable public asset for 150 million euros, much lower than the market price (varying from estimate to estimate between 187 to 210 million €), to the Benetton group instead of renting the property itself and turn a profit themselves. This is no insignificant detail considering that although the FIP is a private entity, their primary goal dictated by law is the pursuit of public interest. The request to ask permission for the conversion into a touristic structure (protocol QI/2016/197154) was presented the 14th of November 2016. The Campidoglio had given the green light after a few months with permit n. 193 of 31/07/2017, upon authorization of Soprintendenza Speciale for the renovation works to change the destination of use. Works would begin the 28th of February 2018 following the communication of the beginning of the works, transmitted via Pec from the director of the project on the same day (Di Majo 2020).

Although the sale of the building was legal, the principle behind it was questionable; if in 2017 the building already had the required permit for being transformed into a hotel then why did the FIP not rent the property itself knowing full well that it was very desirable location? What was the reason that compelled the FIP to not transform it into a hotel themselves and instead decided to sell the property outright for a price much lower than the market one?

In 2021 Fabio Rampelli of FDI and vice president of the Chamber of Deputies heavily criticized the acquisition process and the eviction of a then 92 years old tenant from his apartment after being denied the right of pre-emption he was entitled to. As reported in the parliamentary inquiry of the 17th of September 2021 Rampelli added: «The concession of the property was given through a private deal without public tender procedure and not least important, without the obligatory preventive informative towards the restaurant owners; they should have been able to participate in the public tender for the acquisition of the building, in violation of the decree by the Ministry of Economics and finance of November 2002 and 2003 an Article 3, 3 bis and 4 of the decree n. 351 of 2001, of the principle on transparency and the right of pre-emption recognized to the tenant of a building for commercial destination».

Concerning these criticisms directed at the sale of the ex-INPS building, Sartore, sub-secretary during Draghi's government, deflected the accusations limiting herself to state that the FIP is a private entity that cannot be influenced by the state and that the tenants do not have a right of pre-emption. Rampelli contested this answer arguing that this modus operandi was in stark contrast with the objective of the company to strive for the public good (Di Majo, 2021).

Needless to say the acquisition and conversion of the ex INPS property was harshly criticized. From all political parties questions came in regarding the principle and practice of the sale, specifically how it was supposed to benefit the general public in the first place.

Regarding the involvement of Bulgari, by the time of the luxury hotel announcement, the famous jewellery brand had already partnered with the Comune di Roma several times for acts of patronage. Throughout the years Bulgari has partnered with the Comune di Roma on several occasions; in 2014 Bulgari donated 1,5 million € for the restoration of the Spanish steps in Piazza di Spagna (LVMH, 2016). In 2016 the restoration of the mosaics in Caracalla's bathhouse was completed thanks to the

contribution of Bulgari, who donated 50,000€ (Vogue, 2016). Once again in 2019 Bulgari donated an additional 500,000€ for the restoration and construction of access points to Largo Argentina (Ronchi, 2021). Finally, in 2021 Bulgari donated 120,000€ for a new illumination system for the Ara Pacis Museum (De Tommasi, 2021). Bulgari is thus no stranger to acts of patronage towards Rome and their commitment to the preservation of Rome's cultural heritage has been proven more than once; however, since the inauguration of the Bulgari hotel has yet to be at the time of writing, its contribution to the requalification of Piazza Augusto Imperatore has to be proven.

Although not yet open to the public, the insight provided above can allow us to make comparisons with the theory of the museum cultural district; to begin with, the hotel is placed in the historic city centre of Rome and despite not being a museum institution, its institution and construction was the precise result of the presence of the mausoleum and the Ara Pacis museum, falling in line with the requirement to help the district reach its tourist requirement, and presenting itself as a connection with the figure of Augustus as stated by Bulgari themselves, the hotel will be heavily inspired by the imperial role of Augustus. The increased number of tourists attracted by the hotel will increase the touristic activity in the area and presumably increase the economic activity for the adjacent museums, helping to reinforce the attraction of a new potential district.

Much discussion has surrounded this yet to be opened hotel, and its impact on the area cannot be overlooked, both from a political perspective and a purely physical one, considering how prominent it has been in the political debate and how it will impact the image of the square once the hotel will be opened to the public. The new business has potential to contribute positively to a potential new district and was born out of the collaboration between a private entity and the Comune di Roma; although not without controversy. Given what has been discussed above, the construction of the new hotel has undergone with many challenges regarding the legitimacy of acquisition of the building and the prominence it has gained in the public debate. It is

possible to hypothesize that the acquisition of public property from a private actor that seeks to radically change its function, especially one considered historical or impactful on surrounding heritage, is met with stark opposition and heavy scrutiny from all the political parties that are not directly supporting the initiative. This approach seems to follow the pattern behind the controversy surrounding the Ara Pacis, irrespective of party affiliation.

8. Closing remarks

From what has been described in the previous chapters the area of Piazza Augusto Imperatore poses a puzzling case. Although it presents many of the characteristics necessary for the creation of a museum cultural district including the quality of the cultural offer, the limited geographical area, the unified content that unites its parts and the attraction of new business, Piazza Augusto Imperatore has remained so far a relatively obscure area in the historical centre of Rome. The square has many of the characteristics that a museum cultural history requires such as the positive externalities mentioned by Walter Santagata, namely: *Network externalities*, *Consumption externalities* and *Externalities of time*. Equally so Piazza Augusto Imperatore reflects the homogeneity of content emphasized by Siliva Santagata and the positive externalities of tourism presumably attracted by the new Bulgari hotel and the reliance on technology and democratisation of culture born out of the collaboration with the Tim Foundation. The area can also be considered to be in the first phase described by Alberti and Giusti, activating its district activities by restoring its cultural assets.

At the same time however, the area has not been safe from controversy, the construction of the Ara Pacis museum and the Bulgari hotel were met with incredible political opposition, and the time required to valorise the square has taken almost 30 years and several delays. From what has been explored so far there seem to be many factors that prevent the creation of a museum cultural district besides the explicit willingness to institute one. These obstacles have prevented thus far the creation of a museum cultural district; it is thus opportune to formulate hypotheses as to why these obstacles have been so prevalent in preventing the creation of a museum cultural district.

The first hypothesis is the lack of a unified political vision for the area. Given how many mayors have overlooked the development of the area, often having radically different views and opinions on the most successful way to valorise it, no one so far has had the ambition or possibility to initiate a project that they are not likely to see the completion of as mayor or will be actively ignored or opposed by their successors, thus preventing any initiative to create such a district, such was the case in the succession of Alemanno to Veltroni, at first before becoming mayor Alemanno proclaimed he would dismantle the Ara Pacis museum only to change his mind later on and try to propose changes that were never implemented. The second hypothesis is political opposition; anyone willing to leave a permanent mark in such a central part of Rome will face fierce criticism and opposition aimed at discrediting their political credibility, discouraging any long term initiative that would hinder their political future. By using as a reference the experiences of the creation of the Ara Pacis museum and the acquisition of the Bulgari hotel future administration may be discouraged by said examples and avoid being involved with projects that might face such criticism to hinder their potential re-election in office; unwilling to take this risk inaction may be perceived as preferable. The third hypothesis is the time frame required to create such a district, if we consider that the idea for the creation of the new Ara Pacis museum began in 1995 and that the Mausoleum of Augustus will not be fully opened until 2024 the valorisation process has lasted for the better part of 30 years. Considering all the restrictions tied to historical monuments, bureaucratic procedures necessary to enact urban changes and the necessary funds required to make those changes, not to mention the many changes of mayor that have taken place, such a prospect is seen as daunting and so not pursued. The fourth hypothesis is a mixture of the previous three, any change to the urban landscape that is perceived as radical will almost certainly face backlash, as a result policymakers are unwilling to make such changes that alter heritage beyond their preservation, because perceived as politically damaging and taking too long to see its completion in office; as a result,

no long term plan of innovation or reorganization of heritage is put in place, substituted instead by systematic discouragement, the changes that take place are less ambitious and take a considerable amount of time to be completed. In “*Tutte le strade partono da Roma*” (referring to the initiative to construct the new Ara Pacis museum) Rutelli perhaps puts it more eloquently: «Had we proceeded by public tender procedure, it would have run aground like all the previous experiences, exactly like the project for Piazza del Parlamento, we really could not have made it» (Rutelli, 2020). What has been analysed throughout this dissertation is aiming to provide a modest contribution to the theory of museum cultural district by underlying the main issues that have emerged during the research. Although an area rich in cultural heritage situated in the heart of an art city, benefitting from multiple advantageous externalities mentioned in the theory and supported by both prominent businesses and in collaboration with the local administration; these advantages have proven not to be sufficient on their own. The time frame required for the creation of a museum cultural district may take several decades, as a result planning plays a crucial role in determining the future development of the district; delays should be taken into account and the lengthy process should foresee alternating administrations. The involvement of administration and legislative bodies is fundamental as stresses by the authors that have explored the museum cultural district in the past, nevertheless a common thread is required to assure continuity throughout the development of said district. Future museum cultural districts should not rely mainly on the quality of the cultural offer within the district but rather at ensuring that policies are introduced to foster the development of a district for several years to come, in the case of Piazza Augusto Imperatore decades. The wider implication of this dissertation on the theory of museum cultural districts, is to encourage future developments of the theory to put greater emphasis on providing guidelines to encourage multiparty cooperation on the creation of such a district for a successful “ignition” of the district, especially necessary in a country such as Italy that stands to benefit more than most from such developments.

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10. Summary

This dissertation focuses on the theory of the museum cultural district and its applicability in the city of Rome, in particular in the area of Piazza Augusto Imperatore. The objective is to identify explanatory factors to understand if the political decisions taken in the area work in favour or against the creation of a museum cultural district. To this end, the research question “*What are the challenges of valorisation in creating a museum cultural district?*” has been formulated. A reasonable way to answer this question is to make a comparison between the existing literature on the museum cultural district and the political decisions and development that impacted the area so far.

To this end, the dissertation covers the different monuments and actors that have shaped the area. A summary of the monuments’ history will be provided and the actors, both public and private that have contributed to the development of Piazza Augusto Imperatore will be analysed after having discussed the theory of the museum cultural district and having laid out the methodology.

Theoretical framework

The research question “*What are the challenges of valorisation in creating a museum cultural district?*” derives from the assumption that creating a museum cultural district is challenging and that it valorises the area in which it is located. It also implies that with the creation of a museum cultural district comes valorisation; with

that assumption comes another, that the creation of a museum cultural district is both desirable and beneficial and should thus be pursued where its creation would be applicable. To analyse the theory three authors have been selected to comprehend their contribution to the theory in preparation of the comparisons that will be made later on regarding Piazza Augusto Imperatore.

Walter Santagata in “*Cultural Districts, Economic Rights and Sustainable Economic Growth*” (2002) defines museum cultural districts as a particular type of cultural district, usually situated in the historical centres of cities, a product of public policy and accurate city planning geared towards the valorisation of historical and artistic heritage through an innovative network. According to Santagata, each museum district strives towards an optimal size to create positive externalities as a mean to increase the qualitative growth of the museum district in question, he then lists what he deems are the main positive externalities: Network externalities, consumption externalities, externalities of time and economies of scale and scope. While the theory presented by the author does not provide a minimum size requirement or a guideline for the creation of a museum cultural district, the externalities listed by the author allow an analysis of the externalities present in the area of Piazza Augusto Imperatore. According to the externalities listed by the author, Piazza Augusto Imperatore benefits from network externalities, consumption externalities and externalities of time due to their very close proximity.

Silvia Santagata in “*I distretti Culturali le Collezioni Sabaude di Torino*” (2002) builds upon the work of Walter Santagata, providing the definition of a museum cultural district to differentiate it from a museum network and a museum system. The fundamental characteristics of museum districts are the spatial concentration of museum institutions, the tie with the social and cultural history of the territory in which they are located, the unified theme of the collections held in such museums as expression of a unified theme and finally the existence of a hierarchy as expression of a unitary policy. Furthermore, Silvia Santagata stresses the importance of a

democratized access to culture, a necessity to lower the barriers of entry; in this case technology plays a central role in attracting visitors.

In “*Alla Ricerca Dei Distretti Culturali. Un’analisi Critica Della Letteratura*”

Fernando G. Alberti, Jessica D. Giusti (2009), the authors describe the phenomenon of museum cultural districts as a result of a well thought out public policy that is applied at the local level with the precise objective to increase the number of visitors and as a result the economic activities connected to it.

The main contribution of the authors can be synthesized in what they classify as the creation process of a district in three phases. The first is the activation of district activities, dependent on the cultural resources present in the territory, alongside the human capital and favourable socio-political and economic conditions, sometimes the authors precise, activated by purely incidental factors. The second is the gestation period; characterized by a process of accumulation of knowledge, specialization and information exchange between the actors involved. The third phase is the take-off; meaning the recognition of being in a district form; whose characteristics have consolidated from the first phase and have involved prominent public and private actors.

Methodology

In order to answer the research question “What are the challenges of valorisation in creating a museum cultural district?” the dissertation shall utilize the case of Piazza Augusto Imperatore and the monuments situated in that area as a case study to attempt to understand what are the factors that aid or constrain the creation of a museum cultural district. The method utilized will be an inductive method where the independent variable shall be the political decisions and developments on the area and the dependent variable shall be the development of a museum cultural district.

It is possible to extrapolate some weaknesses and limitations in the method described above however, as the works around the square are not yet complete, as a result it is perhaps premature to reach conclusions regarding the overall cultural attraction of the potential museum cultural district. Another limitation is what has already been explored in the theory, what size should the district aim to reach? This dissertation is thus limited to the area of Piazza Augusto Imperatore and will not explore a potential enlargement.

The Mausoleum of Augustus

Originally built as the resting place of the Julio-Claudian dynasty, in the following centuries the mausoleum would succumb to neglect in the following centuries and repurposed several times, at the beginning of the 20th century it was transformed into a concert hall and renamed Auditorium Augusteo. This would be its most famous form but not the last, with the ascent of the fascist regime Mussolini took interest in the monument. All ancient buildings in Rome that could be tied to the glory of imperial Rome would be part of a city-wide project of ‘liberation’ and isolation as part of the regime’s will to draw a parallel between the glory of ancient Rome and the fascist party. In the original intentions of Mussolini, the mausoleum would function as his own; to be entombed within it and forever associate his image with that of Augustus. This plan would never come to fruition however, after the beginning of the excavation works, it was clear that no relics or remains from the original mausoleum were hidden underneath it, contrasting with the expectations of the regime; in fact, whatever could have been salvaged was taken away in the previous centuries. This finding quickly curbed the enthusiasm surrounding the monument’s recovery and excavation works slowed down significantly until they came to a full stop in 1942 due to the ongoing war. Restoration works would only be completed in 1950 several years after the end of the war after which the monument would remain virtually inaccessible (Cellini, 2015).

In 2006 a public tender was held to award the project that would renovate the monument and insert in the current urban landscape, the *Urbs et Civitas* project led by architect Francesco Cellini won and since then works have been underway to reopen the mausoleum to the public once more. Several pieces of legislation have been passed to finalize the restoration process and award the winner of the public tender that will renovate the garden surrounding the monument. What can be considered remarkable within those pieces of legislation is their high standard of attention granted to the monument during the works from a technical point of view, and yet little is provided in the sense of what the restoration of this monument is supposed to be. Given the peculiar history of this monument and its long-standing incapability of being integrated in the surrounding area some consideration of this aspect would be expected in the legislation and yet no such consideration or comment is made; equally surprising is the absence of any statement regarding the future role of the mausoleum in the wider heritage system of the city beyond acting as a museum dedicated to its own history. It is possible to theorize the lack of a singular vision for the role of the mausoleum and the surrounding area; beyond the mention of the willingness to pursue valorisation, there seems to be no clear consensus of what role the mausoleum should cover beyond the simple function of museum.

The Ara Pacis

The old Ara Pacis museum was constructed in 1938 by architect Ballio Morpurgo as a wider urban redevelopment surrounding the Mausoleum of Augustus, and remained unchanged since. During the 1980s the Ara Pacis underwent restoration, but already by the mid-1990s it was showing undisputable signs of serious deterioration, as a result of unsuitable ambient conditions. It became apparent at the time that the 1938 pavilion could not be adapted to meet modern standards, as a result in the spring of 1996, the Rutelli administration invited the American architect Richard Meier to design a new museum for the Ara Pacis. A ministerial Commission was entrusted with the study of

modifications to the mayor design and work was halted. In July 2001 archaeological examinations in the area were undertaken, but not right up against the monument, in order not to risk structural damage. At that stage alterations to the plain foundations were made in order not to disturb the archaeological layers. At last in 2003, the new plateau foundations were built and in April 2006 your Ara Pacis was reopened to the Roman people in its new museum.

Harsh criticisms were raised against the project in 2001, the sub secretary of the Beni Culturali Vittorio Sgarbi met with the then mayor of Rome Walter Veltroni and raised several doubts concerning the project. Sgarbi proclaimed his intention to block all further development with landscape constrains. The lack of a public tender procedure for the creation of the new museum and the lack of harmony between the new project and the surrounding area were the most pressing issues. Many years later Rutelli briefly commented the controversies and attacks directed at the Ara Pacis. The famous art critic Federico Zeri reportedly told him *«You will never be able to do it»* regarding the realization of the new Ara Pacis museum. Many of his colleagues would instead work to organize campaigns of para-terrorism on the “Wrecking of the Ara Pacis” (Rutelli, 2020) *«I am still waiting for the apologies of those who went so far as to call it “a gas station”, demanding its demolition or at most its deportation.* » (Rutelli, 2022).

I had the pleasure of interviewing Francesco Rutelli in April 2023 to ask him about the impact of culture in urban renovation.

Could Piazza Augusto Imperatore become a museum cultural district once the Mausoleum of Augustus has been ultimated?

«It is difficult to say, the Mausoleum itself is in a poor state after it was spoiled from the Augusteo that was built upon it a century ago; what is visible today is merely a fraction of what it has once been throughout the centuries. In these cases, technology can provide an indispensable help to this kind of heritage that is hard to appreciate

without knowing the historical context behind it, as such virtual reality can be of great help. This said, time will tell if once the monument is ultimate, it will be capable of being successfully integrated in its surroundings. Should these efforts prove to be successful Piazza Augusto Imperatore has the potential to be a prime district of international importance given the presence of the monuments and the currently underway Hotel Bulgari, the area would benefit from it. In recent years, culture has already proven to be an engine of urbanistic rebirth, after we had worked to build the new Auditorium of Rome and after the opening of the MAXXI the surrounding area has experienced great economic benefits and fostered new development. »

It is possible to hypothesize from Rutelli's experience that political opposition can be a major obstacle to valorisation. The backlash that the Ara Pacis museum project experienced has been central to the debate surrounding the structure, such stark opposition to a project that aims to change the landscape of the historical centre can be considered as a major obstacle by policy makers and damaging to their careers and potential re-election in the future, as a result the willingness to undertake such projects is severely diminished.

The Tim Foundation

The Tim Foundation has been the most important private entity to be involved with the Mausoleum of Augustus. The Foundation stepped in during the restoration process of the monument starting in 2016 for the duration of three years while being involved with the completion of the consolidation and valorisation projects by working in close contact with the Comune di Roma. In fact, amongst the core principles of the foundation is the willingness to fund projects aimed at improving technological innovation and specifically the valorisation of art and culture. In line with the delays concerning the restoration process however, the time span for the works on the mausoleum would subsequently increase in the balance sheet of the

following year (2018) where the time span for the completion elongated to five years. In total, the TIM Foundation supported the project with a sum equal to 6 million € for the completion of the second phase of restoration of the monument and a further 2 million € for its valorisation (Il Giornale dell'Arte, 2021).

The idea of this financial help and act of patronage was the brainchild of the then Director of Brand Strategy, Media & Multimedia Entertainment Luca Josi, an act of patronage or *mecenatismo*.

I had the pleasure of interviewing Luca Josi in April 2022 to ask what where the main reason for the involvement of the TIM Foundation.

I have heard that you're also involved with the project of the virtual tour of the mausoleum, is it correct?

«Absolutely, the virtual tour is a great challenge for me and my team, it is a new technology that hopefully will be able to connect further visitors and monument, even being able to witness the previous incarnations of the mausoleum. We have already done a virtual reconstruction of the history of the monument on the Mausoleums of Augustus website. Recently there has been some concern surrounding virtual tours with the fear that they could potentially competes and even discourage physical tours, this fear is of course unfounded. The objective of a virtual tour is not substituting physical tours but instead advertising them, and hopefully functioning as an incentive to go and see the mausoleum physically».

The creation of a virtual tour is both an advancement in technological research and a gateway to enhance the cultural offer for visitors, without competing with a normal tour. Therefore, this operation seems to be coherent with the theory of the museum cultural district.

The Bulgari Hotel

At the beginning of the 2000s, several properties of the INPS were sold to the FIP (Fondo Immobili Pubblici) at a price much lower than the market price, including the INPS building in Piazza Augusto Imperatore, that was sold for 22 million € whereas market price at the time estimated the property to be worth 82 million €. The FIP was a private entity and many were vehemently against this sale-off; however, when the INPS appealed in 2005 to the TAR to contest the acquisition of the building by FIP, it was rejected. The choice of selling the property was considered a political decision and as such unquestionable for the administrative judge (Fornari, 2005).

Nearly a decade later the FIP was entertaining the possibility of the sale of the building in question, and protests followed shortly after. «The future skyline of the city is a suite overlooking the homeless», this was the slogan of the Action protesters when they occupied the old INPS building in 2015. That year all the tenants and businesses operating there received an eviction notice. At the time deals were underway to sell the property by September 2015.

The acquisition of the rationalist building was made possible due to the Beni Culturali giving up their pre-emption right of acquisition; and so the building went to the Benetton group, Edizione Property for 150 million €. The acquisition of the property itself has been greatly criticized for essentially gifting a valuable public asset for 150 million €, much lower than the market price (varying from estimate to estimate between 187 to 210 million €), to the Benetton group instead of renting the property itself and turn a profit themselves. Although the sale of the building was legal, the principle behind it was questionable; if in 2017 the building already had the required permit for being transformed into a hotel then why did the FIP not rent the property itself knowing full well that it was very desirable location?

Criticism came from all the political parties even being discussed thoroughly during a parliamentary hearing.

In 2020, on the Bulgari Hotels website, a video announcement was released where the Maison Bulgari announced the opening of a new hotel in Piazza Augusto Imperatore where are the ex INPS offices once where located. This announcement was made with a promotional video detailing the offer the hotel would provide to its guests; with the now ex-mayor of Rome Virginia Raggi appearing in the video to solidify the partnership between the two (Bulgari, 2020).

Regarding the involvement of Bulgari, by the time of the luxury hotel announcement, the famous jewellery brand had already partnered with the Comune di Roma several times for acts of patronage. Throughout the years Bulgari has partnered with the Comune di Roma on several occasions; in 2014 Bulgari donated 1,5 million € for the restoration of the Spanish steps in Piazza di Spagna (LVMH, 2016). In 2016 the restoration of the mosaics in Caracalla's bathhouse was completed thanks to the contribution of Bulgari, who donated 50,000€ (Vogue, 2016). Once again in 2019 Bulgari donated an additional 500,000€ for the restoration and construction of access points to Largo Argentina (Ronchi, 2021). Finally, in 2021 Bulgari donated 120,000€ for a new illumination system for the Ara Pacis Museum (De Tommasi, 2021).

Much discussion has surrounded this yet to be opened hotel, and its impact on the area cannot be overlooked, both from a political perspective and a purely physical one, considering how prominent it has been in the political debate and how it will impact the image of the square once the hotel will be opened to the public. The new business has potential to contribute positively to a potential new district and was born out of the collaboration between a private entity and the Comune di Roma; although not without controversy.

It is possible to hypothesize that the acquisition of public property from a private actor that seeks to radically change its function, especially one considered historical

or impactful on surrounding heritage, is met with stark opposition and heavy scrutiny from all the political parties that are not directly supporting the initiative.

Closing remarks

From what has been described in the previous chapters the area of Piazza Augusto Imperatore poses a puzzling case. Although it presents many of the characteristics necessary for the creation of a museum cultural district including the quality of the cultural offer, the limited geographical area, the unified content that unites its parts and the attraction of new business, Piazza Augusto Imperatore has remained so far a relatively obscure area in the historical centre of Rome. The square has many of the characteristics that a museum cultural history requires such as the positive externalities mentioned by Walter Santagata, namely: *Network externalities*, *Consumption externalities* and *Externalities of time*. Equally so Piazza Augusto Imperatore reflects the homogeneity of content emphasized by Siliva Santagata and the positive externalities of tourism presumably attracted by the new Bulgari hotel and the reliance on technology and democratisation of culture born out of the collaboration with the Tim Foundation. The area can also be considered to be in the first phase described by Alberti and Giusti, activating its district activities by restoring its cultural assets.

At the same time however, the area has not been safe from controversy, the construction of the Ara Pacis museum and the Bulgari hotel were met with incredible political opposition, and the time required to valorise the square has taken almost 30 years and several delays. From what has been explored so far there seem to be many factors that prevent the creation of a museum cultural district besides the explicit willingness to institute one. These obstacles have prevented thus far the creation of a museum cultural district; it is thus opportune to formulate hypotheses as to why these obstacles have been so prevalent in preventing the creation of a museum cultural district.

The first hypothesis is the lack of a unified political vision for the area. Given how many mayors have overlooked the development of the area, often having radically different views and opinions on the most successful way to valorise it, no one so far has had the ambition or possibility to initiate a project that they are not likely to see the completion of as mayor or will be actively ignored or opposed by their successors, thus preventing any initiative to create such a district, such was the case in the succession of Alemanno to Veltroni.

The second hypothesis is political opposition; anyone willing to leave a permanent mark in such a central part of Rome will face fierce criticism and opposition aimed at discrediting their political credibility, discouraging any long term initiative that would hinder their political future. The creation of the Ara Pacis and the Bulgari hotel reflect this.

The third hypothesis is the time frame required to create such a district, if we consider that the idea for the creation of the new Ara Pacis museum began in 1995 and that the Mausoleum of Augustus will not be fully opened until 2024 the valorisation process has lasted for the better part of 30 years.

The fourth hypothesis is a mixture of the previous three, any change to the urban landscape that is perceived as radical will almost certainly face backlash, as a result policymakers are unwilling to make such changes that alter heritage beyond their preservation, because perceived as politically damaging and taking too long to see its completion in office; as a result, no long term plan of innovation or reorganization of heritage is put in place, substituted instead by systematic discouragement, the changes that take place are less ambitious and take a considerable amount of time to be completed.

What has been analysed throughout this dissertation is aiming to provide a modest contribution to the theory of museum cultural district by underlying the main issues that have emerged during the research. Although an area rich in cultural heritage situated in the heart of an art city, benefitting from multiple advantageous

externalities mentioned in the theory and supported by both prominent businesses and in collaboration with the local administration; these advantages have proven not to be sufficient on their own. The time frame required for the creation of a museum cultural district may take several decades, as a result planning plays a crucial role in determining the future development of the district; delays should be taken into account and the lengthy process should foresee alternating administrations. The involvement of administration and legislative bodies is fundamental as stresses by the authors that have explored the museum cultural district in the past, nevertheless a common thread is required to assure continuity throughout the development of said district. Future museum cultural districts should not rely mainly on the quality of the cultural offer within the district but rather at ensuring that policies are introduced to foster the development of a district for several years to come, in the case of Piazza Augusto Imperatore decades. The wider implication of this dissertation on the theory of museum cultural districts, is to encourage future developments of the theory to put greater emphasis on providing guidelines to encourage multiparty cooperation on the creation of such a district for a successful “ignition”, especially necessary in a country such as Italy that stands to benefit more than most from such developments.