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Exploring the role of grassroots sociocultural organizations in city shaping and cultural development.

A Comparative Study Between Italy and France.

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“What does it mean to produce a territory? It entails a series of actions. To redesign, to reimagine, to reshape, to reclaim, and to revive a theater isn't merely a matter of appropriation, it expands the inquiry towards aesthetically plausible forms capable of forging new connections and reshaping the environment in which we live. Re-imagining cultural spaces leads to a poetic dimension, departing from a mere abstract affair. The endeavor is to bring into being, to indeed produce and construct a space where it is possible to find certainty, ensure one's freedom, and give duration to the actions undertaken”¹

Introduction

The contemporary urban landscape serves as a critical arena for exploring major global transformations, offering a pivotal viewpoint for scholarly investigation into how economic, political, and social trends intersect and shape international relations.

In the shift towards the post-industrial urban paradigm, the macroeconomic processes exert a palpable influence on the urban scenario, evidenced by the closure and abandonment of factories. This phenomenon results in the depopulation and desertification of specific urban zones, seemingly undergoing irreversible transformation. The fate of these spaces, characterized by remnants of the erstwhile industrial era, warrants inquiry into their future trajectory.

How have cities reshaped their identities amidst the ever-evolving currents of the global economy?

The emergence of post-Fordism heralds a diversification in wealth production methodologies, underscored by technological innovation and the ascendancy of cognitive capitalism. Simultaneously, there is an easing of regulatory frameworks governing both urban and global spheres, catalyzed by the ascendancy of neoliberal doctrines since the late 1970s. Consequently, cities find themselves increasingly emancipated from the centralized authority of the state, assuming more responsibility for urban welfare provision. They are compelled to reimagine the spatial configurations that once underpinned their economic vitality, and to cultivate competitiveness within the global marketplace.

Within this context, culture occupies an ambiguous position, serving both as a mechanism for the economic regeneration of complex urban districts and as a mode of expression to advocate for the “right to the city”, a concept expounded by sociologist Henry Lefebvre during the socio-cultural revolution of 1968.

The ambivalence of cultural and artistic role lies at the heart of comprehending urban transformations. Political scientist Margit Mayer argued that in cities implementing gentrification strategies and policies to attract tourists and creative classes, there exists fertile ground for alternative milieus and creatives to thrive. These milieus

¹ Interview to Ilenia Caleo, actress and performer, in, S.M.U.R Self Made Urbanism Rome, *Roma città autoprodotta – Ricerca Urbana e Linguaggi Artistici*, Manifestolibri, 2014.

actively organize and resist the neoliberal restructuring of urban spaces. They endeavor to safeguard liberated areas, promote alternative lifestyles, and establish social economy initiatives².

Building upon these premises, this thesis advances a critical lens on urban heritage, advocating for a perspective that transcends preservation and valorization of cultural assets, and instead emphasizes the regeneration of spaces that hold potential for public reclamation, through cultural and artistic practices.

By shifting the focus from mere preservation to active revitalization, urban heritage can become a catalyst for social cohesion and sustainable urban development.

To this end, the lens of urban regeneration has been chosen, given its contemporary relevance, not only for its potential to influence sustainable development by mitigating land consumption but also as a practice of imagination. Therefore, it allows for the analysis of alternative modes of urban development that effectively include those who require the advocated services: performers, city dwellers, or youth seeking places of socialization.

Henceforth, at the international level, there is a growing consensus that achieving sustainable development goals necessitates active participation from communities in decision-making processes. This principle is underscored by initiatives such as the New European Agenda for Culture and Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 11.4 of the United Nations Agenda 2030, which explicitly advocate for the implementation of cultural and urban policies prioritizing citizen engagement in regenerative processes.

This emphasis on community involvement follows a pattern that is further supported by the work of international NGOs such as Trans Europe Halles, committed to facilitating grassroots community initiatives aimed at reclaiming abandoned spaces and revitalizing them into vibrant hubs for arts and culture.

While national and local governments are mandated to adhere to directives from international organizations in policy implementation, they are equally tasked with addressing the demands articulated by their citizens.

Within this framework, the role of artistic and cultural practices in urban transformation processes assumes nuanced dimensions, often existing alongside a dearth of institutional support³. Nevertheless, these practices serve as potent antidotes to the exacerbation of phenomena such as marginalization and socio-spatial inequalities, particularly at the micro-urban scale.

From these issues, the desire to answer the following research question has arisen:

How have grassroots sociocultural initiatives, defined as practices and movements emerging from the needs and aspirations of local communities and often outside established institutions, intersected, and engaged with institutional public entities? Furthermore, what consequential impact do these interactions have on the formulation of cultural policies and the prospective urban fabric of cities?

² N. Brenner, P. Marcuse & M. Mayer (Eds.) *Cities for people, not for profit: Critical urban theory and the right to the city*. Routledge, 2012.

³ F. Campagnari, A. Ranzini, *Rigenerazione urbana dal basso tra paradigma e ambiguità: verso una agenda di ricerca.*, in Crobe, S. *Pratiche di rigenerazione urbana e cultura. Sguardi critici tra co-creazione, istituzionalizzazione e conflitto. Tracce Urbane. Rivista Italiana Transdisciplinare Di Studi Urbani*, 9(13), pp.6-20, 2023.

In order to answer the research question a comparative perspective between Italy and France national and local context has been adopted. The decision to conduct a Franco-Italian comparison stems from the comparable evolution of the two national contexts. This similarity helps mitigate the influence of national variables, allowing for a concentrated examination of the distinctiveness of each urban regeneration framework and cultural policy system.

In Italy, the national government, through the Ministry of Culture, has recently begun considering the theme of urban regeneration through culture, as evidenced by the December 2023 publication of *IBRIDAZIONE: New Policies for the Cultural Regeneration of Places* a project born from collaboration between the Ministry of Culture, the U-Rise Master's program at IUAV University, and the national cultural centers' network of Lo Stato dei Luoghi.

In France, the interest of the Ministry of Culture in new uses of spaces through culture and arts can be traced back to the 2001 *Rapport Friches, laboratoires, fabriques, squats, projets pluridisciplinaires: une nouvelle époque de l'action Culturelle* by cultural operator Fabrice Lextrait.

It is evident that an operational urban planning approach has actively engaged in the international discourse on using culture for urban and economic development in France, supported by targeted public policies. Conversely, in Italy, urban regeneration through culture, particularly at the local level, has been largely driven by grassroots social and political movements, the Third sector, and the private sector, amidst a more traditional and legislatively constrained urban planning approach. This discrepancy can be attributed, among other factors, to a variance in the prevailing conceptualization of culture within the respective national contexts. In Italy, the notion has been predominantly linked to the safeguarding, and subsequently to the valorization, of cultural heritage. Therefore, there is a fervent societal debate advocating for spaces dedicated to cultural production and contemporary artistic experimentation. This discourse highlights a perceived deficiency in institutional offerings that adequately cater to the needs of artists.

Conversely, in France, since the latter half of the 20th century, a more expansive understanding of culture has emerged. This broader interpretation encompasses not only the conservation of cultural artifacts but also embraces artistic and cultural creation, ensuring a comprehensive array of rights and devising a legislative framework that ostensibly aligns more closely with the perceived needs and objectives.

The disparity in the conceptualization of culture between Italy and France underscores the necessity for a thorough examination of their distinct approaches to urban development, particularly concerning the objectives and targets of socio-cultural policies.

To delve into this issue, a methodological framework was employed, combining bibliographic research with ten semi-structured interviews conducted with a diverse array of experts and professionals. Among which there are institutional figures, representatives of the public administration, academics, artists, and activists who played pivotal roles in the case studies analyzed in both France and Italy.

To facilitate a thorough examination of the research subject, the analysis is structured into four chapters.

The primary aim is to undertake a comprehensive Literature Review that offers a nuanced understanding of the role of culture and art in urban development, as viewed through the prism of social sciences. It delineates

the historical evolution and intersection of culture and urban regeneration, along with the academic discourse surrounding these concepts, offering critical insights into diverse perspectives and scholarly debates. Subsequently, the second part delves into the pivotal role of culture within urban planning and its function in fostering civic engagement within urban landscapes. This section notably explores the transition from conventional top-down planning paradigms to more participatory bottom-up approaches, thereby spotlighting the emergence of grassroots cultural initiatives as illustrative cases.

In light of the thesis's objective to scrutinize the interplay between local and national public institutions in Italy and France vis-à-vis grassroots organizations, it becomes relevant to investigate both countries' attitudes toward cultural production and urban innovation. Consequently, a thorough examination was conducted to discern the advancements achieved at the national level in urban regeneration, through an analysis of extant regulations. Moreover, the inquiry extends to delineate how the administrative framework in both nations, notably regarding the degree of decentralization and devolution of power, has shaped the formulation of a cohesive strategy for urban regeneration. Lastly, attention was directed toward the proactive measures implemented by public institutions to foster the emergence of "New Territories of the Art"⁴, drawing attention to the differing trajectories observed between France, where such initiatives often evolve within formal frameworks, and Italy, where informal spaces frequently serve as incubators for these endeavors.

Having laid down these foundational considerations for comprehending the phenomenon within the two national contexts, the subsequent chapters delve into the analysis of selected case studies. More specifically, the third chapter endeavors to undertake a comprehensive examination of the urban landscapes of Rome and Marseille, where the focal case studies developed. These cities, serve as a representation of the cultural and regenerative policies enacted in Italy and France, both characterized by a robust cultural milieu, thereby epitomizing the inherent contradictions within their respective national frameworks: Rome often characterized as a 'do-it-yourself' city⁵, contrasting with Marseille's portrayal as a strategic focal point for national initiatives targeting economic, social, and cultural development.

The concluding chapter provides a comprehensive examination of the four selected case studies: La Friche La Belle de Mai in Marseille on one hand, and Angelo Mai, Fondazione Piccolo America, and Spin Time Labs in Rome, on the other hand.

The analytical categories for these case studies were chosen following an ex-post analysis of the interviews conducted, allowing for the identification of key elements characterizing the dialogue between these experiences and local/national political and administrative institutions.

Furthermore, it was considered relevant to ascertain their socio-cultural alternative positioning within the respective urban contexts, thereby elucidating potential implications for public endorsement.

⁴ Cfr. F. Lextrait, *Friches, laboratoires, fabriques, squats, projets pluridisciplinaires, une nouvelle époque de l' action Culturelle*, Documentation Française, Paris, 2001.

⁵ C. Cellamare. *Città fai da te. Tra antagonismo e cittadinanza. Storie di autorganizzazione urbana*. Chapter I, paragraph 9. Donzelli Editore, Roma, 2019.

The interest in these cases arises from their unique status as social experiments and their impact within the examined urban contexts, significantly influencing the cultural and urban policies of the respective cities.

Their analysis is relevant for empirically investigating the processes of space reuse for cultural and artistic purposes within the urban public sphere, while also addressing the tensions between legality and social justice in the Roman cases, and the dynamics between gentrification and cultural production in the Marseille case.

To conclude, the aim of this research is to contribute to the discourse on urban development and cultural policy by offering an examination of grassroots sociocultural movements and their interaction with institutional frameworks in Italy and France. By analyzing the case studies and contextualizing them within the broader socio-political landscape, this study seeks to highlight the potential of cultural-led revitalization initiatives to foster social cohesion and sustainable urban development, while also addressing the complexities and challenges inherent in advocating for alternative societal framework and cultural paradigms within contemporary urban environments.

Chapter I - Culture and Art as a mean of Urban Development and Participation

Examining the pivotal role of cities as dynamic focal points for analyzing global dynamics, we recognize them as critical arenas where local and global forces intersect, shaping contemporary socio-economic landscapes.

The aim of this chapter is to comprehensively explore these dynamic relationships by synthesizing theoretical insights, historical analyses, and contemporary perspectives. This review includes both research articles and a range of secondary data (e.g., including reports, institutional and corporate databases) that have taken these perspectives into consideration.

Structured into two main sections, the inquiry delves into the diverse roles played by the artistic and cultural sectors in shaping urban landscapes and fostering community engagement.

The decision to divide the conceptual discussion into two sections was based on the reflection that the international academic debate has been focused on one hand on the role culture can play in economic development through urban regeneration, and on the other hand on the criticisms of such economic employment. These criticisms have led to discussions on cultural planning and participation, as well as adopting a more inclusive perspective in the use of culture in society.

This literature review first highlights the importance of these aspects and then also demonstrates the need for a deep understanding of grassroots sociocultural initiatives in urban regeneration.

The first section examines the pivotal role of culture in urban regeneration, tracing its historical evolution and scrutinizing its intersection with society. Urban regeneration has been traditionally approached from various perspectives, with architecture and sociology prominent among them. This section focuses on the social sciences approach to urban regeneration, acknowledging its interdisciplinary nature and its varied manifestations in different countries such as England, France, and Italy.

Transitioning to the second section, the aim is to highlight the pivotal role of urban planning and citizen participation in crafting culturally vibrant and socially inclusive cities. Through a nuanced exploration of urban and cultural planning paradigms, the evolution from conventional top-down planning approaches to more inclusive frameworks prioritizing social justice and cultural equity is analyzed.

This literature analysis holds significant importance for the objective of this comparative thesis as it facilitates an in-depth comprehension of how specific phenomena, including the proliferation of neoliberalism, globalization have impacted cultural policies regarding urban regeneration in Italy and France. On the other hand, delving into these macro processes within urban contexts affords a deeper comprehension of the resistance and grassroots reactions that have arisen in response to them. By examining these arguments, we aim to elucidate how such influences inform the strategies employed for urban renewal in the respective nations, thereby fostering a comprehensive understanding of the intricate interplay between cultural dynamics and urban development policies.

1. The role of the Artistic and Cultural sector in urban development

1.1 Culture and Urban Regeneration

Before embarking on an exploration of the conceptual framework concerning the role of culture in urban regeneration, it is imperative to establish precise definitions for the key concepts central to this research. As foreshadowed in the introductory discourse, the decision has been made to scrutinize urban development through the prism of urban regeneration, owing to its contemporary significance vis-à-vis environmental and social sustainability concerns. Notably, it provides an apt framework for comprehending the endeavors of grassroots movements within the contemporary urban milieu.

1.1.1 Perspective on the Conceptualization of Culture

First and foremost, it is relevant to establish the meaning of *culture* within the context of this dissertation.

The concept of culture is inherently multifaceted and often open to various interpretations, each shaped by its association with specific contexts.

UNESCO provides a comprehensive definition of culture as "the set of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual, and emotional features of a society or a social group"⁶. This definition transcends the realms of art and literature, extending to encompass lifestyles, ways of coexisting, value systems, traditions, and beliefs. It aptly acknowledges both cultural production and the collective understanding of cultural values. Building upon UNESCO's definition, sociologist Giulia⁷, highlights two distinct perspectives for approaching culture. The first, more restrictive viewpoint, equates culture solely with the arts and tends to isolate it from society, thereby risking ethnocentrism and elitism. The second perspective views culture as a complex way of life "recognizing the implicit underpinnings of social existence and the overt expressions of societies"⁸. This position places a greater emphasis on the diversity of cultures, rather than treating culture as a monolithic concept. The sociologist further delves into the concept of culture by presenting it as an "expression of human life", encompassing a wide array of behaviors, material manifestations and ideas that serve as a reflection of a broader social phenomena.

This definition aligns with the insights of sociologist Wendy Griswold, who underscores the necessity of bridging the humanistic perspective, where culture is studied in isolation from society, with social science perspectives that view culture as a system of meanings dynamically intertwined with the social world⁹.

This interpretation highlights the importance of delving into the multifaceted facets of culture, including its production, distribution, and consumption.

⁶ UNESCO. *UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity*. Paris: UNESCO, 2001. p.3

Retrieved from: http://www.unesco.org/new/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/HQ/CLT/pdf/5_Cultural_Diversity_EN.pdf

⁷ G. Allegrini. *Partecipazione e innovazione culturale a impatto sociale*, in: *Il valore sociale della cultura*, Milano, FrancoAngeli, 2022, p.58.

⁸ W. Griswold, T. Oaks. "The sociology of culture." *The SAGE Handbook of Sociology*. London: SAGE Publications, 2005, pp. 254-266.

⁹ W. Griswold. *A methodological framework for the sociology of culture*. Sociological methodology, 1987. pp.1-35.

In this dissertation, the outlined conceptualizations of culture are especially pertinent, as the study aims to delve into the social manifestation of culture within urban environments, spanning from its abstract conceptualization to its tangible effects on shaping public policy. Consequently, culture is analyzed within a broader societal and political context, reflecting its pervasive influence on diverse facets of urban life.

Other than the *habitus* of culture it is relevant to understand what forms of creativity it encompasses. The World Conference on Cultural Policies in Mexico City of 1982, recognized culture as a primary source of intellectual renewal and human growth. It is conceived as encompassing all forms of creative activity, not limited to traditional high arts but also popular mass¹⁰. Aligning with these claims, Zukin's research challenges the notion that culture is confined to traditional high arts. In light of that, culture is pervasive, multifaceted force encompassing all forms of creative expression, whether they are traditional, popular or rooted in the everyday experience of urban life.

According to this expanded definition of culture, two distinct dimensions emerge: the anthropological and the aesthetic ones¹¹. Zukin underscores the limitations of a singularly aesthetic conception of culture, which, if left unchallenged, could potentially cater to the interests of the elite, ultimately homogenizing the rich diversity and vibrancy inherent in modern culture. In contrast, the anthropological perspective offers a more holistic understanding, capturing the multifaceted layers and complexities inherent in cultural dynamics¹².

From these definitions, culture emerges as both a product of society and an intrinsic feature within it, representing the collective expression of societal norms, values, and attitudes.

One might argue that the urban environment and the cultural sphere are inherently interconnected, where cultural landmarks play a pivotal role in shaping the identity of the city, while the city itself provides an ideal incubator for the flourishing of cultural sectors. Thus, as extensively discussed by scholars such as Blessi, Grossi, Sacco, Pieretti and Ferilli,¹³ the urban environment reveals itself as a privileged canvas for cultural activities. It frequently serves as the host to significant cultural institutions, events, and programs, attracting top talents and engaging diverse, substantial audiences with considerable spending capacity.

In the context of this dissertation, the term culture takes on a nuanced role, encompassing both productive and anthropological dimensions. It acts as a dynamic force, actively shaping the societal landscape. Within this framework, culture goes beyond conventional artistic or historical paradigms, adopting a comprehensive, interdisciplinary perspective. This inclusive viewpoint encompasses the diverse dynamics that contribute to the continuous evolution of communities, influencing and responding to the prevailing socio-cultural environment.

¹⁰ World Conference on Cultural Policies, *Final Report*, 2nd, Mexico City, 1982

¹¹ Miles, S., & Paddison, R. *Introduction: The Rise and Rise of Culture-led Urban Regeneration*. *Urban Studies*, 42(5-6), 833-839, 2005, pp. 833-839.

¹² Blomley, N., Review of *The Cultures of Cities*, by S. Zukin. *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 22(1), 1997, pp.134-136.

In anthropology, culture is broadly defined as the complex system of shared beliefs, behaviors, customs, traditions, symbols, and practices that characterize a particular group of people. It encompasses the knowledge, values, norms, language, rituals, and material artifacts that are transmitted from one generation to another within a society or social group.

¹³ G.T. Blessi, E. Grossi, P.L. Sacco, G. Pieretti, and G. Ferilli. *The contribution of cultural participation to urban well-being A comparative study in Bolzano/Bozen and Siracusa, Italy*, *Cities*, 2016 Vol 50, pp. 216–226

1.1.2 Defining Urban Regeneration: Principles and Challenges

Social scientists and urban planners Roberts and Sykes in *Urban Regeneration: A Handbook*, defined urban regeneration as a “comprehensive and integrated vision and action which leads to the resolution of urban problems, and which seeks to bring about a lasting improvement in the economic, physical, social and environmental condition of an area that has been subject to change”¹⁴. Aligning with this definition, in 1997, social scientist Graham Pinfield offered a definition of urban regeneration as "a form of comprehensive management intended to continuously improve economically, socially, and physically declined areas through a strategic partnership between public and civil sectors, within the framework of a city-wide progress plan"¹⁵. They argue that urban regeneration is the result of a complex interaction between factors propelling physical, social, environmental, and economic transformation. Simultaneously, it represents a reaction to the opportunities and difficulties posed by urban deterioration in a specific location at a particular point in time. Therefore, urban regeneration is interpreted as a multifaceted concept aimed at the transformation of ailing urban areas—whether residential, commercial, or open spaces—that exhibit signs of physical, social, and economic decline. This process seeks to inject fresh vitality and sustainability into these communities, with a focus on long-term improvements in various aspects of the local quality of life, encompassing economic, social, and environmental dimensions¹⁶.

As argued by urban sociologist Kyu Hong Hwang, this approach encompasses the revitalization of communities, job creation, income growth, and the revival of abandoned built environments¹⁷. Achieving these objectives not only enhances urban competitiveness but also involves the preservation of historic and cultural assets, the establishment of settlement stability, and the enhancement of the urban environment. These elements are particularly relevant for the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-HABITAT) interpretation of urban regeneration, emphasizing its role in revitalizing underutilized resources, redistributing opportunities, and ultimately fostering urban prosperity and an enhanced quality of life¹⁸. However, the international organization recognizes that urban regeneration initiatives are complex, often protracted, and carry the risk of gentrifying private spaces or privatizing public ones. Therefore, it advocates for the active involvement of residents in promoting local economic development while safeguarding the value of public spaces. A key consensus in the field is that urban regeneration necessitates diverse approaches, including the redevelopment of brownfields, economic diversification, heritage preservation and repurposing, the reactivation of public spaces, and the strengthening of service delivery.

¹⁴ P. Roberts, & H. Sykes. *Urban regeneration: A handbook*. SAGE Publications Ltd, 2008.

¹⁵ G. Pinfield. *The use of indicators in local sustainable development planning: A response to Jeb Brugmann*. *Local Environment*, 2, 1997, pp. 185-187.

¹⁶ LGA Local Government Act, London, 2000.

¹⁷ Hwang, K. H. *Finding urban identity through culture-led urban regeneration*. *Journal of Urban Management*, 3(1-2), 2014, pp. 67-85.

¹⁸ UN-HABITAT, *Urban regeneration*, UN-Habitat website, available at <https://unhabitat.org/topic/urban-regeneration>

To counterbalance the possible drawbacks of urban regeneration projects, Roberts and Sykes, identify principle that serve as the hallmark of urban regeneration¹⁹. They underscore the importance of initiating the process with a thorough analysis of the urban area's condition. This entails a simultaneous and integrated approach to adapting physical infrastructure, social structures economic foundations, and environmental conditions. Thus, successful urban regeneration, as highlighted by the authors, involves the rehabilitation of land and existing built environments while fostering consensus through broad stakeholder involvement.

1.1.3 Urban regeneration: from Reconstruction to Global Competition

The conceptualization and implementation of urban regeneration have undergone significant transformations in response to global geopolitical and economic dynamics.

The journey of urban regeneration has been documented by economists and social scientists Stöhr²⁰ and Litchfield²¹. According to them, the historical roots of this phenomenon trace back to the aftermath of World War II. Initially focused on *reconstruction*, the emphasis was on repairing war damage and expanding urban areas through government-led initiatives. The 1960s marked a transition to the *revitalization* period, incorporating rehabilitation efforts and a more balanced partnership between public and private sectors. Moving into the 1970s, the role of the private sector gained prominence, accompanied by the decentralization of local government. The focus shifted toward *in situ renewal* and neighborhood initiatives, although still largely concentrated on the periphery. This coincides with what Litchfield highlights as “the discovery of the inner city” and the initial steps toward the formulation of urban policies, leading to a surge in urban initiatives²². Building upon these changes, the 1980s witnessed a decline in the notion that the central state should provide all the resources for urban policies. Instead, an emphasis on partnerships, private sector involvement, and special agencies gained ground, imbuing urban redevelopment with a more commercial orientation. Social intentions increasingly favored community self-help with selective state support.

It is in the 1990s that a semantic evolution happened, with the adoption of the term *regeneration*. As articulated by urban planners including Couch, Sykes, and Börstinghaus²³, the new planning approach that emerged since the late 1990s broadened the perspective from mere revitalization to a more comprehensive reevaluation of the economic, social, and even cultural aspects of urban areas, aligning them with the emerging global competition logic.

If the transformations witnessed between the 1960s and 1970s can be attributed to the transition from Fordism to post-Fordism, the new paradigm that emerged in the 1990s has been analyzed by several Neo-Marxist

¹⁹ P. Roberts, & H. Sykes, 2008, *cit.* p.14.

²⁰ Stöhr, W. *Local Development Strategies to Meet Local Crisis*. Journal of Entrepreneurship, 1989.

²¹ Lichfield, D. *Urban Regeneration for the 1990s*. London Planning Advisory Committee, London, 1992.

²² The term "inner city" typically refers to the central or core area of a city, often characterized by dense urban development and historically serving as the economic, cultural, and administrative hub. The inner city is commonly associated with the original, older parts of a city where industrialization and commercial activities initially flourished. Over time, these areas may experience economic decline, social challenges, and physical decay, leading to urban regeneration initiatives aimed at revitalizing and improving the overall quality of life in these urban cores. The concept of the inner city varies in its specifics across different urban contexts and regions.

²³ Couch, C., Sykes, O., & Börstinghaus, W., *Thirty years of urban regeneration in Britain, Germany, and France: The importance of context and path dependency*. Progress in Planning, 75(1), 2011, pp. 1-52.

scholar David Harvey²⁴ and political scientist Gilles Pinson²⁵ as being shaped by the rise of neoliberalism in the 1980s.

According to Pinson, the theoretical extension of the neoliberal doctrine has produced a practical effect on the administration of public space, first the urban one with the aim to overcome regulatory town planning seen as passive and obstructive and to transform agencies into protagonists of productive planning, based on the activation of property markets. Therefore, from state to private and from citizens to agencies, distancing urban creation and design from the needs of the community as a whole²⁶.

As the denouement of the 20th century unfolded, globalization indelibly imprinted its influence upon the global economic and societal panoramas, effecting a profound restructuring of the domain of urban regeneration. This metamorphosis, in turn, substantively redefined the trajectory of urban development, thereby accentuating the ascendancy of cities as pivotal nodes of global exchange and developmental hubs within the broader global framework.

Significantly, the ramifications of globalization on urban regeneration furnish pivotal contextual considerations for this research. Geographer Clark and Wojcik consider the unimpeded flow of capital across international borders, facilitated by globalization, the cause of a surge in foreign direct investment (FDI) in urban areas. This influx of capital has ignited regeneration initiatives and bolstered infrastructure development²⁷. Furthermore, cities have evolved into global business centers, attracting multinational corporations. This phenomenon has catalyzed the rejuvenation of once-declining urban regions and transformed former industrial zones into contemporary business districts. According to sociologist Guido Martinotti, it is during this period that the concept of the *diffuse* or *global city* begins to emerge, signifying a paradigm shift in response to recent socio-economic transformations, notably globalization and technological advancements. The term *diffuse* underscores the transcending of formerly rigid spatial delineations, but it also alludes at the dispersion of urban functions throughout the territorial expanse²⁸.

Secondly, several studies have highlighted the profound impact of globalization on housing and real estate, as illustrated by urban sociologists Knox and Taylor²⁹. In global cities, occurrence is foreign investors acquiring real estate properties, a trend that can drive property values upward and serve as a catalyst for the regeneration of urban neighborhoods. However, the impact of globalization is nuanced, presenting a dual nature. While it introduces new investments and opportunities, it also carries the potential for the displacement of lower-income residents. This issue is subject to extensive scholarly debate and will be thoroughly examined in the ensuing chapters.

²⁴ D. Harvey. *The right to the city*. The city reader. Routledge, 2015.

²⁵ Gilles Pinson, author of *La ville néolibérale* published by Presses Universitaires de France in 2020, argued that the way in which neoliberalism differs from liberalism distorts its social significance. As the thought of economists such as Hayek and Friedman show, the most radical neoliberals wanted to make *the market* the basic principle of the organization of society and advocated its extension to all areas that make up social life, including family, justice, and education.

²⁶ G. Pinson. *La ville néolibérale*. Presses Universitaires de France, 2020.

²⁷ G.L. Clark, and D. Wójcik, *The Geography of Finance: Corporate Governance in the Global Marketplace*. Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2007.

²⁸ G. Martinotti. *Four populations: Human settlements and social morphology in the contemporary metropolis*. European reviews, 4(3), 229-241, 1996.

²⁹ P. Knox, & P. Taylor (Eds.), *World Cities in a World-System*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995.

Within this framework, culture has assumed a pivotal role in the realm of urban regeneration processes. Hence, globalization has enriched cities with cultural diversity, fostering the exchange of ideas and traditions. This cultural diversity is recognized as a powerful force in driving creativity and innovation, qualities frequently harnessed for urban regeneration endeavors. Consequently, many cities have leveraged their cultural assets to fuel urban revitalization and become competitive on the global market. The arts and creative industries have played a central role in breathing new life into neighborhoods, establishing vibrant cultural hubs³⁰.

Cultural planner Mercer encapsulates these changes by stating that the cultural reorientation in the positioning and marketing of towns and cities responds to the profound implications of globalization and the new economic paradigm at the beginning of the 21st century. In this new era, technology, creativity, human capital, and innovation capacity emerge as crucial factors influencing how cities function and thrive³¹.

1.1.4 Cultural Dynamics in Urban Regeneration

The initial convergence of culture and urban regeneration can be traced back to the counterculture movements of the 1960s and 1970s. These movements, marked by a focus on alternative lifestyles, arts, and creativity, posed a direct challenge to conventional urban planning approaches. Driven by a robust political objective to instigate societal transformation and achieve social justice, culture and creativity were recognized as potent tools for reshaping urban spaces and dismantling hierarchical societal structures³².

A notable aspect highlighted by cultural policy scholars Bianchini and Parkinson is the transformative trajectory of culture from the 1960s-70s to the 1980s-90s, characterized by a discernible shift in tones from protests³³. As argued by them, the co-optation of culture by institutions, redirecting it toward investments in the city's image, altered its role from a means of opposition during the counterculture era to a mainstream tool in urban planning. This transition reflected a broader move from the social and political concerns prevalent in the 1970s to the economic development and urban regeneration priorities that gained prominence in the 1980s. Economic changes affecting different cities and regions, coupled with political shifts to the right and fiscal pressures on local governments, led decision-makers to view cultural policies as valuable tools for diversifying local economies and fostering social cohesion. This evolution marked a departure from the earlier emphasis on cultural access for disadvantaged groups and a reconceptualization of cultural policy's role in political communication and mobilization strategies.

Furthermore, urban planner Camarinhas highlighted the shift in the approach to urban planning to address the decline of traditional manufacturing industries in cities in the 70s', emphasizing a broader attention to city

³⁰ Bianchini, F., & Parkinson, M. (Eds.), *Cultural policy and urban regeneration: the West European experience*. Manchester University Press, 1993

³¹ C. Mercer. *Convergence, Creative Industries and Civil Society*, Culture Unbound, 1, 2009, pp. 179-204.

³² C. Gottlieb. *Residential short-term rentals: Should local governments regulate the industry*. Planning & Envtl. L. 65, 2013.

H.L.Lofland. *A World of Strangers; Order And Action In Urban Public Space*. Waveland Pr Inc, 1973.

S. Zukin. *Landscapes of power: from Detroit to Disney World*. Univ of California Press, 1993

³³ F. Bianchini & M. Parkinson (Eds.), 1993, *cit. p.17*.

design³⁴. Urban revitalization began to encompass not only physical transformations but also considerations of the social and economic dimensions of urban areas.

This change in perspective is crucial for the purpose of our dissertation and reflect a recognition that revitalizing cities required a holistic strategy that addressed not only the built environment but also the underlying social and economic factors contributing to urban decay and unemployment.

In this shift, Scott highlights how the cultural dimension has been generally invoked as instrumental tool in relation to general policy aims with a stronger focus on leisure and physical refurbishment³⁵. Thus, according to Bianchini and Parkinson³⁶, many city decision-makers saw the development of cultural policies as a valuable tool in diversifying the local economic base and achieving greater social cohesion. Over the 1980s and the first half of the 1990s, the resonance of the topic became increasingly significant, as various research and policy thrusts started to raise questions about the genetics of creativity and innovation in spatial agglomerations³⁷.

The main consequences of cultural policies implemented in the 80s was the construction of positive urban images, developing the tourism industry, attracting inward investment and strengthening the competitive position of cities. The consolidation of cultural policy's function as a strategy for "economic development, city marketing and physical regeneration"³⁸ has not set aside socio-political considerations of city governments, it was a period of coexistence of community and elite-oriented consideration which have driven to contradictions and the predominance of one over the other, leading in certain urban context to the Ruth Glass' coined term and popular phenomenon, gentrification³⁹.

The increasing role of culture in economic development and city branding has been asserted also by urban and cultural researcher Beatriz Garcia⁴⁰, who argued that the convergence between culture and economics in the urban contexts has been accentuated since the late 1990s with the expansion of city marketing techniques and their progressive transformation into city branding strategies. Furthermore, the work of Richard Florida and his theory of the *creative class* in the late 20th century emphasized the importance of creative and knowledge-based industries in urban regeneration⁴¹. Specifically, as it will be discussed forward in this dissertation, a human centered approach started to prevail, focused on the role of artists, designers, and innovators in driving urban development.

Beyond the evolution of the doctrine, In Europe, certain events have taken on symbolic importance in the evolution of this process. Hence, urban sociologist Andy Pratt argue that the revitalization of London's

³⁴ C. T. F. Camarinhas. *The construction of modern scientific urban planning: Lisbon under French urbanisme influence (1904–1967)*. Planning Theory & Practice, 12(1), 2011, pp. 11-31.

³⁵ R. Kruger, S. Buckingham. *Towards a 'Consensual' Urban Politics? Creative Planning, Urban Sustainability and Regional Development*. International Journal of Urban and Regional Research, 2012.

³⁶ F. Bianchini & M. Parkinson (Eds.), 1993, *cit. p.17*.

³⁷ A.J. Scott. *Cultural-products industries and urban economic development: Prospects for growth and market contestation in global context*, Urban Affairs Review, 39(4), 461-490, Sage Publications, 2004.

³⁸ *Ibidem.* p. 482

³⁹ Ruth Glass coined this term in 1964, which will be extensively discussed in the following paragraphs.

⁴⁰ B. García, *Cultural policy and urban regeneration in Western European cities: lessons from experience, prospects for the future*. Local economy, 19(4), 312-326, Taylor & Francis Group 2004.

⁴¹ R. Florida, *The rise of the creative class*. Hachette, London, 2002.

Docklands in the 1980s, marked by the construction of Canary Wharf, exemplified how culture-led regeneration could metamorphose formerly industrial areas into thriving business districts⁴².

Furthermore, Falanga and Nunes claimed that the establishment of new programs and funding opportunities for urban regeneration has evolved alongside the restructuring of institutional arrangements, extending from the national level to supranational agencies, and cascading down to regional and local authorities⁴³. As an example of this, the European Capital of Culture program, initiated in 1985, has played a pivotal role in fostering culture-driven urban rejuvenation in European cities, urging cities to invest in cultural infrastructure and events. Since 2010, Europe's economic strategies, from the Lisbon Strategy to Horizon 2020, have been directed toward achieving three common objectives: smart growth (centered on skills, research, and innovation), sustainable growth (linked to environmental and sustainable development), and solidarity growth (aimed at bolstering employment and training for enhanced economic, social, and territorial cohesion). Within these three goals, Europe is bolstering national and local governmental bodies, thus enhancing territorial responsiveness and cultural competitiveness through the promotion of multi-sectorial and multi-actor networks⁴⁴.

Therefore, looking at the International Organizations' Activity, the beginning of the new millennium led to a growing attention to culture as a factor of sustainable development and social cohesion, as can be recognized in various guidelines, policies, and strategies that translate the cultural perspective through its inclusion in different disciplinary fields. As an example, the establishment of the UNESCO Creative Cities Network in 2004 recognized the importance of culture and creativity in urban development⁴⁵, as well as subsequent declarations by the United Nations and Agencies on Culture and Development and Diversity, and the Hangzhou Declaration of 2013⁴⁶, which places culture at the center of sustainable development. Consequently, cities around the world joined the network to share best practices and collaborate on cultural initiatives.

1.1.5 Shifting Perspectives: Exploring Community-Led Regeneration Movements in Urban Culture Discourse

In recent years, a discernible shift in the discourse surrounding culture-led urban regeneration has become evident. If the 1990s witnessed the neoliberalization of the market, influencing urban policies to strategically employ culture as an instrument for enhancing international competitiveness among cities, in contemporary debates a response to this instrumental use of culture has emerged, characterized by a heightened

⁴² A. C. Pratt, *Urban regeneration: From the artsfeel good factor to the cultural economy: A case study of Hoxton, London*. *Urban studies*, 46(5-6), 2009, pp. 1041-1061.

⁴³ R. Falanga, M.C. Nunes *Tackling urban disparities through participatory culture-led urban regeneration. Insights from Lisbon*. *Land Use Policy*, 108, 105478, 2021.

⁴⁴ M. Cerreta, G. Daldanise, & S. Sposito. *Culture-led regeneration for urban spaces: Monitoring complex values networks in action*. *Urbani izziv*, 29, 2018, pp. 9-28.

⁴⁵ The UNESCO Creative Cities Network (UCCN) was created in 2004 to promote cooperation with and among cities that have identified creativity as a strategic factor for sustainable urban development. Almost 300 cities around the world which currently make up this network work together towards a common objective: placing creativity and cultural industries at the heart of their development plans at the local level and cooperating actively at the international level.

<https://en.unesco.org/creative-cities/home>

⁴⁶ Available at: [International Congress "Culture: Key to Sustainable Development", Hangzhou, China, 2013](#)

emphasis on the sustainability and social impact of culture, transcending mere economic considerations. Notably, there is a growing advocacy for models of urban regeneration through culture that deviate from conventional top-down approaches and instead advocate for initiatives originating from grassroots movements. As an exemplification of this shift in priorities, the attention of cultural economy scholars, such as Valeria Morea and Francesca Sabatini, is increasingly focusing on “Community-Led Regeneration Movements”⁴⁷. In fact, grassroots and community-led regeneration movements in various cities have emphasized the importance of local culture, heritage, and community engagement in shaping urban development. These movements are – and have been – considered as a resistance force from top-down approaches of urban renewal⁴⁸, and as deeply argued by sociologist and urban planner Ruth Glass, they are spaces of power re-appropriation by citizens, capable of creating an alternative to gentrified districts⁴⁹. This is related to the spread, within urban regeneration programs and funding schemes, of participatory approaches that are believed, by the words of urban sociologist Alan Harding “to be responsible for maximizing positive impacts against social exclusion and isolation and reduce poverty in deprived urban areas”⁵⁰.

Second, there has been a growing emphasis on making cultural-led urban regeneration more sustainable and inclusive. This is understandable from the efforts of international, national and local government to address issues of displacement, social equity, and environmental sustainability in cultural-led projects. For instance, Goal 11 of the United Nations Agenda 2030 stands for Sustainable Cities and Communities, aiming at creating cities more livable, environmental-friendly, and socially inclusive, also through the protection and valorization of cultural and natural heritage⁵¹.

The evolution outlined above finds reference in the work of Graeme Evans professor of creative and cultural economy. In his work, he distinguishes three models through which cultural activity is incorporated into the regeneration process: culture-led regeneration; cultural regeneration; culture and regeneration⁵².

In the initial phase, *culture and regeneration* may not be fully integrated, often due to separate management responsibilities or a lack of advocacy. This results in limited cultural initiatives, such as public art programs, without active promotion or recognition in the development process.

Cultural regeneration takes a step further, considering culture as an integral part of a broader strategy that includes environmental, social, and economic dimensions. This approach, exemplified by Birmingham's renaissance project⁵³, often follows a top-down model, potentially diminishing the perspectives of local communities.

⁴⁷ V. Morea, F. Sabatini. *The joint contribution of grassroots artistic practice to the alternative and vital city. The case of Bologna and Venice (Italy)*. *Cities*, 135, 2023, pp. 1-12.

⁴⁸ C. Landry and F. Bianchini, Landry C., & Bianchini F., *The Creative City*. Demos, London, 1995.

⁴⁹ R. Glass. *London: Aspects of Change*. Centre for Urban Studies UCL, London, 1964.

L. Kern, *Gentrification is inevitable and other lies*. Verso Books, 2022.

⁵⁰ A. Harding. *Urban Regimes in a Europe of the Cities?* *European urban and regional studies*, 4(4), 1997, pp. 291-314.

⁵¹ Based on the holistic understanding of the term culture, cultural studies researcher George Yudice (1999) argues that in the global era the role of culture has assumed unprecedented significance and that its redefinition as a resource has enabled it to be used as the means for resolving political as well as socio-economic problems, including those of the city.

⁵² G. Evans. *Measure for Measure: Evaluating the Evidence of Culture's Contribution to Regeneration*. *Urban Studies*, vol. 42, no. 5/6, 2005, pp. 959–83.

⁵³ BCC (Birmingham City Council) *Birmingham's Renaissance: How European Funding has Revitalised the City*. Birmingham: Birmingham City Council, 2003.

The *culture-led regeneration* model positions cultural activity as the driving force behind urban revitalization. This approach, seen in Marseille hosting the European Capital of Culture program in 2013, emphasizes the social impact of arts-based projects, aiming in theory (and not always in practice as will be discussed later in this dissertation) to combat social exclusion, enhance resident well-being, and encourage community participation.

Nevertheless, starting in the 1990s, the trajectory of urban cultural policies, primarily oriented toward economic development, has progressively eroded its once-prominent role as a critical force capable of challenging the status quo⁵⁴. Bianchini highlighted the problematic nature of this trend, as he argued that top-down and profit oriented cultural initiatives often had limited potential to foster community development and promote social participation⁵⁵. Thus, he identifies a spectrum of dilemmas that remain highly relevant in comprehending the challenges associated with an essentially economic approach to culture.

These dilemmas encompass spatial concerns, such as the tension between the city center and its peripheries, and the risk of gentrification. They extend to economic development issues, including the balance between encouraging consumption over production. Additionally, cultural funding dilemmas arise, with the need to decide between supporting temporary activities like events and festivals or permanent endeavors like infrastructure.

The exposition presented thus far establishes a foundational framework for understanding the intricate relationship between culture and urban regeneration and the enduring dilemmas. This framework highlights its profound interconnection with significant global social, economic, and political transformations, as well as the imperative to diversify societal economic perspectives. A substantial portion of the forthcoming deliberation endeavors to delve deeply into the evolution of this doctrine. As noted by the political economist Pier Luigi Sacco⁵⁶ different paradigms have impacted cultural policies administration and academic debate, among which the most resonant are:

- Richard Florida's *Creative Class*, a group composed by the millions of people who work in information-age economic sectors and in industries driven by innovation and talent, forming a class believed to bring economic growth to neighborhoods and countries that can attract its members⁵⁷.
- Charles Landry's *Creative City*, which is a call to action for innovative urban planning and management, based on remarkable instances of innovation and regeneration from throughout the world, seeking to demonstrate how to plan and act creatively when confronting urban challenges⁵⁸.
- Scott's concept of the *Cognitive-Cultural Capitalist City* which presents a robust theoretical framework for understanding contemporary urbanization processes. This framework revolves around the

⁵⁴ F. Bianchini, *Culture, conflict, and cities: issues and prospects for the 1990s*. Cultural policy and urban regeneration: The West European experience, 1993, pp. 199-213.

As Beatriz Garcia (2004) sustained: "the evolution the evolution of global, service-oriented economy has placed culture at the very center of urban development and has shifted traditional notions of culture as art and heritage to a view of culture as an economic asset".

⁵⁵ F. Bianchini *Remaking European Cities: the role of cultural policies* in F. Bianchini and M. Parkinson, eds (1993) *Cultural Policy and Urban Regeneration: the West European Experience* (Manchester: Manchester University Press), 1993.

⁵⁶ E. Grossi, G.T. Glessi, P.L. Sacco. *Cultural, creative, and complex: A computational foundation of culture-driven urban governance*, Cities, 140, 2023.

⁵⁷ R. Florida. *Cities and the creative class*. Routledge, 2005.

⁵⁸ C. Landry. *The Creative City: A Toolkit for Urban Innovators*, London, 2008.

distinctive logic of learning, creativity, and innovation that is evident in today's cities, exerting a profound influence on various urban outcomes. Notably, it holds significant policy implications, as it also offers a critical perspective on existing policy approaches rooted in creative city concepts⁵⁹.

1.2 Theories of the intersection between Culture and the City: merits and risks

1.2.1 Forging the Creative City: Navigating Economic Growth and Social Cohesion

The notion of the Creative City took hold in 1990, the year Glasgow was proclaimed European Capital of Culture. The Creative City was described as a whirlwind of innovation in all spheres of life especially in the arts, design, and new media⁶⁰. The first formulation of the Creative City was influenced by a series of assumptions which took shape during the process of economic and political restructuring fed by the acceleration of globalization in the last decades of the 20th century⁶¹. What had a particular impact in those years was the collapse of the industrial world, which was reflected by semi-abandoned physical landscapes left behind by the flight of production resources, understanding that it would have left multiple social problems. Based on these premises, the Creative City appears to respond to two fundamental needs of the new millennium, even if often challenging to reconcile: to stimulate the economic growth of countries in an increasingly globalized and competitive world, in which cities become the economic center of nations and motors of the global economy and to increase social cohesion and the involvement of citizens in the evolution of neighborhoods⁶². However, scholarly discourse frequently posits that this trajectory has resulted in the formulation of novel societal strata and paradigms, exemplified by the concept of the creative class introduced by Richard Florida and the duality of center-periphery (which, in part, supplants the traditional urban-rural dichotomy)⁶³.

Henceforth, the conceptual framework formulated by Bianchini and Landry endeavors to integrate these dual facets, directing the focal point of contemplation towards creativity as the primary instrument for innovation and the wellspring of vitality for the urban milieu⁶⁴. Their discourse accords substantial significance to both citizens' initiatives and institutional entities, valuing them equivalently to the discernment of urban planners, policymakers, and public administrations. From their vantage point, a Creative City is one wherein citizen actively employ innovation to address pertinent social challenges⁶⁵.

⁵⁹ A. J. Scott. *Social economy of the metropolis. Cognitive-cultural capitalism and the global resurgence of cities*. Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2008.

⁶⁰ B. Quinn *Arts festivals and the city*. Culture-led urban regeneration, 2020, pp. 85-101
Finkel, R., & Platt, L, *Cultural festivals and the city*. Geography Compass, 14(9), 2020.

⁶¹ C. Segovia, J. Hervé, *The creative city approach: origins, construction and prospects in a scenario of transition*. City Territ Archit 9, 29, 2022.

⁶² A. J. Scott. *Città e regioni nel nuovo capitalismo: l'economia sociale delle metropoli*. Bologna: Il mulino, 2011.

⁶³ S. Sassen. *The global city*. New York. 1991

⁶⁴ C. Landry & F. Bianchini, *The Creative City*. Demos, London, 1995

⁶⁵ These encompass concerns such as discontent with the constructed environment, burgeoning sentiments of alienation and apprehension, social disintegration, disparate mobility, and the erosion of local identity, communal spaces, and a sense of community.

In the year 2000, Charles Landry played a pivotal role in advancing the initial concept of the creative city, elevating it into a more comprehensive and cohesive policy recommendation, culminating in the construction of a structured framework seamlessly integrating perspectives from cultural planning with urban governance⁶⁶. At the core of Landry's paradigm is the notion that creativity, when strategically harnessed, can invigorate all dimensions of urban life, particularly enhancing the cultural vibrancy of the city. Central to this vision is the recognition of artists and their creative capacities as valuable assets, appreciated for their ability to engage with local communities, anticipate socio-cultural shifts, and offer innovative perspectives to address contemporary societal challenges⁶⁷.

To achieve these outcomes, Bianchini advocates transcending the traditional conception of material cultural assets and encourages a broader perspective that incorporates elements of a more nuanced nature. This expanded view encompasses intangible aspects.

1.2.2 New Residents in contemporary urban landscape: The Creative Class.

In linking urban evolution to creativity and culture, a significant shift occurs from the concept of the Creative City to Richard Florida's seminal idea of the Creative Class. Florida's framework gained traction in urban administration debates from the 2000s onwards, shaping discourse and elucidating key aspects of this thesis⁶⁸. Florida posited the emergence of a new socioeconomic class in post-industrial societies: the Creative Class. Comprising individuals from creative and knowledge-based sectors like technology, design, arts, and entertainment, this class includes artists, scientists, engineers, educators, and more. Florida argues that cities should attract this class to stimulate economic growth, requiring both economic infrastructure and vibrant cultural environments. Thus, cities are tasked with fostering an environment that appeals to creatives, employing a top-down approach. This underscores the recognition that cultural capital and the clustering of talent can generate new development opportunities, where economic growth intertwines with social quality and cultural production⁶⁹. The main point of Florida's argument is that regional economic advantages are no longer based on raw materials or on competition for companies, but creativity has replaced raw materials or natural harbors as the crucial wellspring of economic growth⁷⁰.

Hence, by facilitating the ingress of this class, it becomes instrumental in fostering the advancement of emerging technologies, artistic manifestations, and entrepreneurial enterprises⁷¹. In addition to emphasizing

⁶⁶ C. Landry, 2008, *cit.*, p.19.

⁶⁷ V. Montalto, V. Alberti, F. Panella, & P.L. Sacco. *Are cultural cities always creative? An empirical analysis of culture-led development in 190 European cities*. Habitat International, 132, 2023.

⁶⁸ R. Florida, *The rise of the creative class*. Hachette, London, 2002.

⁶⁹ The work of economist Michael Porter (2000) and others, emphasizes the role of clusters of related and supporting industries. According to this work, clusters operate as geographically concentrated collections of interrelated firms in which local sophisticated and demanding customers and strong competition with other firms in the same industry drive the innovation process.

M. E. Porter. *Location, clusters and company strategy*, in G.L. Clark, M.A. Feldman and M.S. Gertler (eds) *The Oxford Handbook of Economic Geography*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000, pp. 253-74,.

⁷⁰ M.S. Gertler, R. Florida G. Gates & T. Vinodrai. *Competing on Creativity*. Placing Ontario's Cities in North American Context, 2002.

⁷¹ Florida named it as the "three Ts" theory. A city, in his view, should provide Technology (the right provision of infrastructure for the creative economy), Talent (in the sense that creative class is much more willing to settle where already other creative people are) and Tolerance (meaning an open environment to art and culture and encouraging the acceptance of non-conformity).

their impact on the economic development, Florida particularly underscores the creative class's ability to influence a tolerant environment that embraces non-conformity and accentuates diversity and inclusion⁷².

The notion of the Creative Class, championed by Richard Florida, has sparked significant discourse within the field of urban studies. Although its impact on modern urban development is evident, there has been a growing body of critical analysis highlighting its potential limitations and ramifications for social inclusivity. A key aspect of these critiques revolves around the issue of social exclusion, wherein the clustering of creative individuals in particular urban areas may unintentionally worsen urban disparities and marginalize certain segments of the population.

Moreover, the issue of economic exclusivity underscores the disparities inherent in accessing creative class professions⁷³. The prerequisite for advanced education and specialized skills within these industries erects barriers for individuals lacking access to such resources. Consequently, this perpetuates socioeconomic inequalities, favoring those with privileged educational backgrounds and resource accessibility in pursuing creative endeavors.

Geographic concentration further compounds these challenges, as creative class workers gravitate towards designated creative hubs, often resulting in heightened living costs and the phenomenon of gentrification⁷⁴. The influx of creative talent can alter the socio-economic fabric of communities, displacing long-standing residents and disrupting established social dynamics.

Interestingly, critics draw attention to the lack of diversity within the creative class, contrary to Florida's assertion of its inclusivity⁷⁵. Historically marginalized groups, including individuals of color, women, and those from lower-income backgrounds, encounter systemic barriers hindering their participation in creative industries. This discrepancy raises fundamental questions regarding the equitable representation and accessibility within the creative class paradigm, necessitating a reevaluation of its purported inclusivity and societal impact.

Henceforth, there are contradictory outcomes of cities' efforts to attract a new middle class, as highlighted by scholars such as Pier Luigi Sacco and Leslie Kern⁷⁶. Urban sociologist Kern observed that as creative industries need to attract new workers, they transform cities to adapt their cultural and physical environments to align with the preferences of cosmopolitan individuals⁷⁷. Thus, as Sacco argues, in this process, artists, creatives, and existing residents can become unintended victims of redevelopment and gentrification.

⁷² He argues that cities and regions that are welcoming to a diverse range of individuals, regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, or sexual orientation, are more likely to attract creative talent. According to Florida, the winners in an age that values these attributes include gay-friendly San Francisco, laid-back Austin, multi-cultural New York, and progressive Minneapolis.

See also S. Malanga. *The curse of the creative class*. *City Journal* 14, 2004, pp. 36-45.

⁷³ J. Peck. *Struggling with the creative class*. *International journal of urban and regional research*, 29(4),2005, pp. 740-770.

⁷⁴ S. Zukin. *Competitive Globalization and Urban Change*. *Rethinking Global Urbanism*, 2012, pp. 17-22.

S. Sassen. *The global city*. New York. 1991.

⁷⁵ D. Leslie and J.P. Catungal. *Social justice and the creative city: class, gender and racial inequalities*. *Geography compass*, 6(3), 2012, pp.111-122.

E.J. McCann. *Inequality and politics in the creative city-region: Questions of livability and state strategy*. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 31(1), 2007, pp. 188-196.

⁷⁶ L. Kern. *Gentrification is inevitable and other lies*. Verso Books, 2022.

⁷⁷ F. Panella, & P.L. Sacco, V. Alberti, V. Montalto. *Are cultural cities always creative? An empirical analysis of culture-led development in 190 European cities*. *Habitat International*, 132, 102739, 2023, p.3

In recent times, there appears to be a discernible shift in Florida's perspective, acknowledging the contradictions inherent in his doctrine, this is evident in his authorship of a new text in 2017⁷⁸, about cities increasing inequalities, acknowledging the importance of social cohesion and inclusion for sustainable development. Neglecting these aspects, the text suggests, can lead to unintended consequences, transforming culturally vibrant cities into exclusive and socioeconomically unequal spaces.

1.2.3 The shadow sides of cultural impact on society: Scott Cognitive-Cultural Capitalism

The criticisms directed at Richard Florida's concept of the Creative Class afford a nuanced exploration of two pivotal phenomena elucidating the role of culture within the urban milieu: Scott's theory of Cognitive-Cultural Capitalism and the intricate dynamics of Gentrification, both inherently characterized by displacement. Delving into these dimensions is pertinent to the thesis objectives, as a discerning comprehension thereof enables a critical analysis of the grassroots cultural experiences that manifest in response to these urban dynamics.

Scholars Corsani and Lazzarato⁷⁹, noted that the emergence of cognitive capitalism resulted in two simultaneous mechanisms of inequality: on the one hand the so-called creative class was exposed to a new situation marked by greater precarity and exploitation⁸⁰. On the other hand, the influx of creative workers into cities and the development strategies implemented to meet their demands (cultural amenities, establishment of creative clusters in districts, cultural projects and the regeneration of brownfields and industrial areas through culture) have redefined access to the city's physical area and its services, resulting in the exclusion of its poorer peripheries. This phenomenon, commonly referred to as displacement, stands as a prominent consequence of gentrification, a topic extensively explored by sociologists and geographers alike. As articulated by urban sociologist Zukin, this process involves the replacement of an existing population by a more homogeneous group of in-movers, thereby reducing residential density and altering the social fabric of a community⁸¹.

The legacy of A. Scott, in his seminal work *Beyond the Creative City: Cognitive-Cultural Capitalism and the New Urbanism*, provides a critical analysis of the instrumentalization of culture within the framework of capitalist economies⁸². Scott contends that capitalist economies are progressively favoring non-standardized products across various sectors such as technology, finance, and culture. This trend fostered the emergence of creative clusters within cities, indicating a transition from production-centric to consumer-oriented urban paradigms.

⁷⁸ R. Florida. *The new urban crisis: How our cities are increasing inequality, deepening segregation, and failing the middle class-and what we can do about it*. Hachette UK. 2017.

⁷⁹ A. Corsani, & M. Lazzarato. *Hétérogénéité des parcours et mutations des pratiques de travail des intermittents du spectacle*, 2009.

⁸⁰ In 2012, Polity Press published *Cognitive Capitalism* by French economist Yann Moulier Boutang. Cognitive Capitalism argues that the political economy born with Adam Smith no longer offers us the possibility of understanding the value, wealth, and complexity of the world economic system. It has risen since 1975, with the rise of new technologies. This type of capitalism is an economic system characterized by the fact that "the object of accumulation consists mainly of knowledge, which becomes the basic source of value, as well as the principal location of the process of valorisation"

Y. Moulier Boutang, *Cognitive Capitalism*. Polity Press, Cambridge, 2012.

⁸¹ S. Zukin. *Gentrification: culture and capital in the urban core*. Annual review of sociology, 13(1), 1987, pp. 129-147.

⁸² A.J. Scott. *Beyond the creative city: cognitive-cultural capitalism and the new urbanism*. Regional Studies, 48(4), 2014, pp. 565-578.

His work underlines the intricate fusion of economy and culture within the urban landscape, wherein economic outputs undergo a notable infusion of aesthetic and semiotic meaning. This amalgamation finds tangible expression in the idiosyncratic architectural landmarks and heritage marketing endeavors prevalent in major global city centers. Thus, Scott observes that forms of creative expression within contemporary cities are not mere manifestations of individual ingenuity but are intricately intertwined with the complex interplay of production relations, social dynamics, and the urban milieu at large. His discourse underscores the instrumentalization of culture for economic ends amid the transition from Fordism to post-Fordism, propelled by neoliberal imperatives⁸³.

Central to his thesis is the notion of *social restratification*⁸⁴ within cities boasting vibrant cognitive-cultural economies, manifesting in the emergence of the creative class juxtaposed against a low-wage service underclass. This restructuring not only transcends traditional socio-economic divisions but also reflects a discernible cleavage rooted in knowledge-based and immaterial capital disparities.

Scott's pioneering work thus constitutes a seminal critique of the instrumentalization of culture in the post-industrial city, offering profound insights into the transformative effects of cognitive-cultural capitalism on urban dynamics and social stratification.

1.2.4 The complexities of Gentrification: Cultural Capital, Economic Dynamics, and Spaces of Resistance

Building upon the aforementioned considerations, gentrification emerges as a multifaceted phenomenon emblematic of the dynamics inherent in cognitive-cultural capitalism and its profound ramifications for the structural and social composition of modern cities.

This concept was first coined by Ruth Glass in 1964, describes a transformative process in urban areas where working-class neighborhoods are gradually infiltrated by middle-class residents. This influx leads to a significant change in the social and economic dynamics of these communities, often resulting in the displacement of the original working-class inhabitants.

As argued by urban sociologist Irene Rinaldi, it begins with the transformation of the labor force⁸⁵. Specifically, the decline of the working class and the rise of the white-collar and management class can be seen as the first step. The emergence of a creative class, particularly linked to new digital professions in the post-industrial era, ensues, fostering an appreciation for traditionally low-income neighborhoods due to their cultural and architectural diversity, be seen as an alternative to the homogeneity of wealthier areas. As

⁸³ In a 2014 interview with *L'Espace géographique*, Scott highlighted that the urbanization process under capitalism is fundamentally marked by the spatial accumulation of economic activities. This perspective is complemented by Glaeser's (2011) assertion that cities have undergone a transformation, shifting from being centers of production in the 20th century to becoming consumer-oriented cities in the 21st. These insights underscore the evolving nature of urban dynamics within the context of capitalist economies, emphasizing the centrality of economic activities and the changing functions of cities over time.

A.J. Scott. *Villes et régions du capitalisme cognitif et culturel*. *L'Espace géographique*, vol. 43, no. 3, 2014, pp. 215-226.

E. Glaeser. *The Triumph of the City: How Our Greatest Invention Makes Us Richer, Smarter, Greener, Healthier and Happier*. Penguin Press, 2011.

⁸⁴ A. J. Scott, *Residential adjustment and gentrification in Los Angeles, 2000–2015: theoretical arguments and empirical evidence*, *Urban Geography*, 40:4, 2019, pp. 506-528

⁸⁵ I. Rinaldi. *Gentrification: Guida semiseria a un fenomeno urbano*, Tab edizioni, Roma, 2022.

gentrification continues, the neighborhood evolves to cater to the preferences of wealthier residents. This gradual transformation may result in the erasure of the original neighborhood culture, leading to the transformation of an area into a middle-class neighborhood⁸⁶.

Urban sociologist Giovanni Semi contends that gentrification is closely intertwined with the rise of neoliberalism⁸⁷. Therefore, as cities became the focal point of Western societies during modernity, the petty bourgeoisie recognized the economic opportunities in specific areas and invested capital in their redevelopment⁸⁸.

Therefore, As Zukin asserted, gentrification profoundly influences urban landscapes, fostering a global uniformity while erasing cultural and typological identities. The phenomenon reflects the agglomeration of large corporations in downtown areas, attracting new investors and consumers⁸⁹.

In such a context, culture once again assumes a pivotal role, offering collective identity and social credentials to new middle-class residents. Indeed, beyond the valorization of local culture, gentrification often involves the strategic deployment of cultural discourse to rationalize entrepreneurial interests.

At this juncture, a crucial distinction arises. Individuals spearheading the initial wave of gentrification, notably artists and bohemians, lack substantial economic capital but exhibit heightened cultural capital instead⁹⁰. Consequently, this phenomenon renders the neighborhood more appealing within the urban landscape, thereby making it more susceptible to speculation by new investors, consumers, and tourism alike.

The influx of cultural producers may inflate housing costs, posing long-term affordability challenges. Despite their limited economic power, artists and creatives contribute to revitalizing decaying neighborhoods⁹¹. However, in the face of large redevelopment plans supported by the state and entrusted to private companies, the influence of these gentrifiers is questionable, they themselves risk being subject to the phenomenon of displacement.

Despite the attractiveness generated by the cultural and creative contributions of the initial gentrifiers, Leslie Kern posits that within urban landscapes dominated by gentrification, spaces of resistance endure⁹². Interestingly, these spaces frequently originate from cultural and artistic experiences. Indeed, as argued by Kern⁹³, citizens have the capacity to reassert their presence in urban spaces through cultural and artistic means, employing innovative strategies to articulate dissent and promote awareness. This underscores an urban development paradigm that prioritizes social and participatory dimensions over economic and identity-based considerations.

⁸⁶ N. Smith and P. Williams (edited by). *Gentrification of the City*. The City, Routledge Library Editions, 1986.

⁸⁷ G. Semi. *Gentrification. Tutte le città come Disneyland?* Vol. 829, Il Mulino, Bologna, 2015.

⁸⁸ Notable examples include Greenwich Village in New York and Notting Hill in London, in general the gentrification process is more related to the Anglo-Saxon world.

⁸⁹ Cfr. S. Zukin. *Gentrification: culture and capital in the urban core*, 1987.

⁹⁰ P. Bourdieu. *Forme di capitale*. Armando Editore, 2021

⁹¹ L. Kern. 2022, *cit.* p. 22.

⁹² Leslie Kern, in her aforementioned book "Gentrification is Inevitable and Other Lies," surveys in the final sections of the book (pp. 214-284) a series of experiences across Western countries that have sought to react and resist to gentrification, and proposals to act as anti-gentrification actors.

⁹³ L. Kern, *Gentrification is Inevitable and Other Lies*, Verso Books, 2022, pp. 224.

2. Urban Planning and Citizen Participation

Following an examination of the historical and theoretical interplay between culture and urban regeneration, the subsequent segment of the literature review will delve into the realms of Urban Planning and Citizen Participation in urban transformations. Recognizing the inherent risks associated with gentrification underscores the imperative of embracing an urban planning framework that prioritizes citizen engagement. These conceptual underpinnings serve as foundational elements for comprehending urban governance within the purview of sustainable urban development.

2.1 Cultural Perspectives in Urban Planning

As articulated by several scholars, such as urban sociologist Tom Borrup, the recovery of dialogue between artistic and cultural practices and spatial planning holds significant promise for inspiring critical perspectives on urban development and forms of mutual learning^{94 95}. Today, culture is considered as a powerful tool for promoting just planning in contemporary society, celebrating diversity, fostering creativity and inclusivity and ultimately contributing to more equitable and sustainable urban environments. As Mercer highlighted, the cultural turn in urban planning emerged as a response to the spread of the new economy.⁹⁶ The concept of cultural planning in Europe was introduced by Franco Bianchini⁹⁷. While the idea had already gained traction in the US and Australia, Bianchini approached it from a distinctly European perspective, emphasizing the centrality of cultural resources⁹⁸. He expanded beyond the conventional notion of material assets⁹⁹ to encompass more intricate elements, including the inclination towards civic engagement and diverse lifestyles. From this standpoint, culture transcended its role as a mere instrument for revitalizing declining cities; instead, it emerged as a multifaceted dimension that permeated all facets of urban and public life. In *The Power of Culture in City Planning*, Tom Borrup advocates for a paradigm shift, urging the integration of cultural master plans alongside traditional urban planning considerations such as transportation, housing, and parks¹⁰⁰. Moreover, he emphasizes the need to reorient city comprehensive planning to prioritize people over land uses. This approach entails a fundamental shift towards creating cities that prioritize human well-being, social cohesion, and cultural vibrancy, thereby fostering more livable and inclusive urban environments.

⁹⁴ T. Borrup. *Just planning: What has kept the arts and urban planning apart?* *Artivate*, 6(2), 2017, pp. 46-57.

⁹⁵ D. Pinder. *Urban interventions: art, politics and pedagogy*. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 32(3), 2008, pp.730-6.

⁹⁶ When Mercer refers to new economy, he means the Post-industrial economy. Thus, traditional urban characteristics such as density, diversity, turn of the [19th/20th] century architecture and vacant industrial and commercial warehouse space – negative location factors in the old economy – are potentially positive factors in the new economy because they are attractive to those who bring with them the potential for economic growth.

C. Mercer. *Cultural planning for urban development and creative cities*. Self- published manuscript, 2006.

⁹⁷ F. Bianchini, *Cultural planning and time planning: The relationship between culture and urban planning*. Chapter in C. Greed (ed.), *Social town planning*, London: Routledge, 1999. pp. 195-202.

⁹⁸ F. Bianchini. 'Cultural Planning' and Its Interpretations. In *The Routledge Research Companion to Planning and Culture*. Routledge, 2016. pp. 377-391

⁹⁹ Cfr. C. Segovia, J. Hervé, *The creative city approach: origins, construction and prospects in a scenario of transition*, 2022.

¹⁰⁰ T. Borrup. *The power of culture in city planning*. Routledge; 2020.

However, Borrup posited that neither city planning, nor cultural planning have fully prioritized equity and social justice concerns within their practices, often contributing to the perpetuation of social, cultural, economic, and spatial inequities. Despite this, echoing Leslie Kern's assertion that “Gentrification is not inevitable”, Borrup identifies opportunities for cultural planning to embrace principles of justice – to be “just”.

The author highlights a significant issue in urban planning: the oversight of cultural factors that affect various aspects of human life, including behavior, livelihoods, settlement patterns, social practices, and leisure activities. Borrup argues that neglecting these cultural dimensions hampers the ability of planners and policymakers to effectively address urban challenges across different domains. Furthermore, Borrup cautions against viewing cultural planning solely as a means for the arts sector to obtain resources, as this approach may restrict practices and worsen cultural divisions within communities¹⁰¹.

Indeed, culture, often perceived in its most aesthetic and alluring guise, can be selectively deployed as an exclusive instrument for the development of specific neighborhoods at the expense of others¹⁰². However, when culture is employed judiciously, taking into account the needs of diverse communities and aimed at enhancing services, it can substantially contribute to the establishment of a framework for equitable urban planning. Consequently, a distinction emerges between urban planning informed by cultural considerations and the practice of cultural planning itself.

Urban planning, delineated as the systematic orchestration of spatial allocation and regulatory frameworks within an urban landscape, encompasses the strategic arrangement of physical infrastructures, economic frameworks, and sociocultural dynamics, with a keen awareness of their impacts on urban denizens¹⁰³. Conversely, Cultural Planning, as elucidated by Borrup, extends beyond the superficial dimensions of aesthetics or artistic expression. Originating in the early 1990s, this concept signifies a shift in urban cultural policy led by arts agencies and nonprofits. Its aims include bolstering financial stability of cultural institutions, exerting local leadership, and shaping municipal cultural policies. It focuses on developing cultural facilities, public art, festivals, and optimizing public spaces, enhancing community cultural sector capacity, fostering self-organization and collaboration across sectors to address civic challenges¹⁰⁴. It is fundamentally oriented toward community advancement, and assets to foster societal progress and welfare. Within this framework, culture assumes a pivotal role as a catalyst for community enrichment and development, transcending its traditional association solely with artistic or aesthetic endeavors.

¹⁰¹ T. Borrup. *Just planning: What has kept the arts and urban planning apart?* 2017, p. 46.

¹⁰² Cfr. J.Peck, *Struggling with the creative class*, 2005.

¹⁰³ S. Fainstein, J.Forester, K.L. Lee, T. Na’puti, J. Agyeman, N.J. Stewart, J. Novy, A. Dedekorkut Howes, P. Burton, S. Norgaard, N.R. Smith. *Resistance and Response in Planning*. Edited by Susan S. Fainstein and John Forester. *Planning Theory & Practice*, 16, 2023, pp.1-39.

¹⁰⁴ T. Borrup. *Cultural planning at 40: The community turn in the arts*. *Journal of Urban Culture Research*, 18, 2019, pp. 33-34

2.1.1 Advancing Social Justice through Cultural Planning

Cultural planning, owing to its nuanced grasp of community needs in contrast to traditional physical planning, harbors the potential to advance social justice, evolving into what can be termed as "just planning." Thus, British practitioner-scholar Lia Ghilardi asserts that, "cultural planning is not the 'planning of culture', but a cultural (anthropological) approach to urban planning and policy"¹⁰⁵. These assumptions follow the idea that cultural planning has evolved with an ever-increasing focus on society. In support of this consideration, Mercer argues that – compared to traditional cultural policies – cultural planning is intrinsically more democratic, more conscious of the realities of cultural diversity and more aware of the intangible features of cultural heritage and patrimony¹⁰⁶.

To test these hypotheses, in 2006 Mercer conducted a significant analysis aiming to identify the potential contribution of arts and culture in specific contexts. Regarding social inclusion, arts and culture have demonstrated a positive correlation between cultural diversity and productive diversity¹⁰⁷.

They can help ensure that urban cultural strategies do not solely result in gentrification and ethnic cleansing but also contribute to safer streets, enhanced retail diversity, and increased diversity of populations and experiences in urban centers.

Mercer's analysis aligns with the concept of "cities produce citizens," attributed to Patrick Geddes, a pioneer in urban planning¹⁰⁸. This idea emphasizes that planning should focus not only on goods and commodities but also on people's lives and cultural practices. Mercer underscores the importance of relearning civic arts to foster civic development alongside physical and urban renewal¹⁰⁹. Cultural planning, therefore, must involve a fully consultative and rigorous process of community cultural assessment.

The role of culture in urban planning has opened avenues for a deeper understanding of human dynamics within urban environments. Borrup delves into the concept of *just planning*, which integrates cultural sensitivities and analyses into all facets of urban development¹¹⁰.

¹⁰⁵ L. Ghilardi. *Cultural Planning and Cultural Diversity: Research Position Paper 4*, In Bennett, T. *Differing Diversities: Cultural Policy and Cultural Diversity*, Council of Europe Publishing, 2001. p.125.

¹⁰⁶ C. Mercer and P. Taylor. *A Cultural Development Strategy - Towards a Cultural Policy for Brisbane*. Prepared for the Brisbane City Council, 1991.

¹⁰⁷ Cfr. C. Mercer. *Cultural planning for urban development and creative cities*. 2006.

¹⁰⁸ P. Geddes. *Cities in Evolution: An Introduction to the Town Planning Movement and to the Study of Civics*. University of Michigan Library, 1915.

The concept "cities produce citizens" is attributed to Patrick Geddes, a Scottish biologist, sociologist, geographer, and town planner who lived from 1854 to 1932. This concept reflects Geddes' belief that cities play a fundamental role not only in shaping physical environments but also in influencing the development and character of their inhabitants. He is credited as originator of the practice known as urban planning in the late 19th century.

¹⁰⁹ The concept of civic art pertains to the intersection of art and public life, highlighting art's contribution to and enhancement of public spaces, civic engagement, and community development. It encompasses diverse artistic expressions, including sculptures, murals, street art, installations, and performances designed for and exhibited in public spaces. Various artists, architects, urban planners, and theorists, such as Jane Jacobs and Theaster Gates, have discussed and promoted this concept over the years. Jacobs, in her essay "The Death and Life of Great American Cities," emphasized the significance of public spaces and the role of art in fostering vibrant and diverse communities. Meanwhile, Gates, an artist and urban planner, is renowned for his efforts in revitalizing neglected neighborhoods through art and community engagement.

¹¹⁰ T.Borrup, 2017, *cit. p.27*.

The overarching aim of just planning is to foster social justice and equity in urban development and governance. Drawing from scholarly contributions by urban planners Jacobs, Gehl, Fainstein, and Borrup, the essence of just planning lies in ensuring equal access to basic services, resources, and opportunities for all residents¹¹¹. It underscores the importance of inclusive participation from diverse community groups in the planning process to address their unique needs and concerns. To provide some examples, in response to concerns about gentrification and rising property values, Just Planning strategies advocate for policies that safeguard affordable housing options in culturally significant neighborhoods, ensuring the flourishing of these communities¹¹². Within this framework, the provision of public spaces, community gardens, and cultural events serves as catalysts for intercommunity dialogue and mutual understanding.

These principles resonate with the objectives outlined in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, particularly Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 11 on sustainable cities¹¹³. Recognizing culture as a catalyst for development, the Agenda emphasizes the protection of cultural and natural heritage, along with inclusive and sustainable human settlement planning and management (Target 11.3)¹¹⁴.

This global framework underscores the transformative potential of culture in fostering participatory and integrated approaches to urban development.

In conclusion, the integration of cultural perspectives into urban planning signifies a paradigm shift towards more inclusive and equitable cities. Embracing bottom-up approaches through cultural participation empowers communities to shape their urban environments, driving progress towards sustainable and resilient urban futures.

2.2 Cultural Participation

Acknowledging the symbiotic relationship between cultural vitality and urban development, the exploration of active participation in cultural evolution serves as a critical avenue for understanding how communities coalesce around shared cultural identities and values, through a bottom-up approach. By examining the mechanisms through which citizens engage in cultural production, we can elucidate the dynamic interplay between grassroots cultural movements and institutional frameworks, shedding light on the democratization of cultural production and consumption within urban contexts.

Therefore, the final segment of this literature review will focus on the role of participation in cultural planning, culminating in the ultimate element of understanding for the comparative analysis between France and Italy.

¹¹¹ J. Jacobs. *The death and life of great American cities*. New York: Random House. 1961.

J. Gehl, *Cities for people*. Island press, 2013.

¹¹² L. Lees. *A reappraisal of gentrification: towards a 'geography of gentrification'*. *Progress in human geography*, 24(3), 2000 pp. 389-408.

¹¹³ UN General Assembly, *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, 21 October 2015, A/RES/70/1, available at: <https://www.refworld.org/docid/57b6e3e44.html>

¹¹⁴ Target 11.3 of the Sustainable Development Goal 11 states: "By 2030, enhance inclusive and sustainable urbanization and capacity for participatory, integrated, and sustainable human settlement planning and management in all countries."

2.2.1 Exploring the Dynamics of Cultural Participation: From Consumption to Production

First and foremost, it is relevant to define the concept of *cultural participation*.

According to the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) definition, cultural participation in urban environment refers to the engagement of individual and communities in various cultural activities and experiences within a city or metropolitan area. It encompasses a wide range of activities and interactions that contribute to the cultural vibrancy and diversity of urban environments, underscoring the pivotal role of cultural participation in urban development¹¹⁵.

Its significance lies in the fact that the issue of access to culture, and participation, are now regarded as urgent issue in a context of dramatically growing inequalities generated by the Covid-19 pandemic¹¹⁶, so it becomes important to reflect on the role of culture as a capacity building component of a welfare system and the role of culture in redistributing wealth¹¹⁷.

In addition, a redefinition of the concept of cultural innovation is taking place which, as highlighted by Liberatore and Niessen, goes beyond a purely entrepreneurial approach to culture management and recognizes culture as a form of citizenship and participation in democratic life and relates it to the creation of shared social value and social cohesion^{118 119}.

Thus, as argued by several scholars, the active promotion of cultural involvement emerges as a potent mechanism for addressing the underlying causes of social and economic marginalization, fostering community connections, nurturing critical social skills, and validating self-expression and self-worth, particularly among marginalized individuals and communities¹²⁰. These aspects are particularly emphasized by the definition of cultural participation provided by the European Union, which places a particular emphasis on ensuring access to culture for diverse population groups, reflecting a policy objective of dismantling barriers that hinder such access¹²¹.

¹¹⁵ OECD. *Cultural participation as a driver of social and economic impact*, in *The Culture Fix: Creative People, Places and Industries*, OECD Publishing, Paris, 2022, p.43
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1787/44b3088a-en>

¹¹⁶ The term Pandemic refer to the COVID-19 pandemic, which has been a global health crisis caused by the novel coronavirus SARS-CoV-2, characterized by widespread infections, significant morbidity and mortality, and far-reaching socioeconomic impacts. The COVID-19 pandemic, originating in late 2019, led to a cascade of unprecedented events, including extensive illness and loss of life, overwhelmed healthcare systems, lockdowns and travel restrictions, economic disruptions, and accelerated vaccine development efforts on a global scale, fundamentally reshaping societies, and healthcare practices worldwide.

¹¹⁷ G. Allegrini, *Partecipazione e innovazione culturale a impatto sociale*, in: *Il valore sociale della cultura*, Milano, FrancoAngeli, 2022, pp. 57 - 89

¹¹⁸ R. Paltrinieri, *Il valore sociale della cultura per lo sviluppo delle comunità e dei territori: cosa significa partecipazione culturale?*. «PANDORA», 2019, 8/9, pp. 122 - 125

¹¹⁹ Cultural innovation refers to the creation, adoption, or adaptation of new ideas, practices, or expressions within a cultural context, often resulting in positive changes, evolution, or transformation within that culture.

¹²⁰ T. Brownett. *Social capital and participation: The role of community arts festivals for generating well-being*, *Journal of Applied Arts and Health*, Vol. 9/1, 2018. pp. 71-84.

Deloitte. *Art & Finance Report*. 2019.

R. Rivas. *The impact of participation in theatre arts on the social skills development of students with significant cognitive disabilities*, PhD Dissertation, California State University, Fullerton, CA, 2016.

G. Tavano Blessi, et al. *New trajectories in urban regeneration processes: Cultural capital as a source of human and social capital accumulation – Evidence from the case of TOHU in Montreal*, *Cities*, Vol. 29/6, 2012. pp. 397-407.

¹²¹ EU. *Policies and Good Practices in the Public Arts and in Cultural Institutions to Promote Better Access to and Wider Participation in Culture*, European Union, 2012

Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/assets/eac/culture/policy/strategic-framework/documents/omc-report- access-to-culture_en.pdf.

Secondly, given the assumption that cultural participation plays a pivotal role in inclusive urban development, it is essential to distinguish the various forms it can take.

The definition provided by UNESCO delineates cultural participation as encompassing “the activities involving both the audience and active participants in consuming cultural products and engaging in cultural activities and experiences”¹²².

In the evolving landscape of cultural participation, a discernible shift has occurred from its traditional focus on cultural consumption to an increasing emphasis on production¹²³.

Therefore, cultural participation can be characterized as either active or passive. Passive engagement entails individuals accessing and appreciating cultural experiences and assets created by others, while active participation involves individuals contributing directly and overtly to the production of cultural experiences themselves¹²⁴. Additionally, consultant in the arts and cultural sector Alan Brown, and others, proposed a spectrum, particularly pertinent in the domain of performing arts, which distinguishes between receptive and participatory stages¹²⁵. The receptive stage encompasses spectatorship and experiential involvement, whereas the participatory stage involves audiences contributing creative ideas, co-creating artistic practices, and sometimes even controlling the artistic process. This spectrum underscores the evolving role of audiences from passive observers to active collaborators¹²⁶. This element is pivotal in our dissertation as it enables us to understand how culture effectively serves as a tool for engaging communities.

Thirdly, Sacco, Ferilli, and Tavano Blessi underscore the evolving nature of cultural participation, particularly in the context of digital platforms and contemporary cultural landscape, highlighting the emergence of new paradigms in cultural production and consumption, where traditional boundaries between creators and consumers are increasingly blurred¹²⁷. Their framework identifies three distinct regimes: the patronage regime, historically privileging high arts and public funding; the cultural and creative industries regime, emphasizing market-driven cultural consumption; and the open platforms regime, which warrants particular attention. In this regime, the demarcation between content creators and users becomes increasingly blurred, facilitated by digital technology and countercultural movements. Self-organized communities and social media platforms enable the widespread dissemination of user-generated content, thereby mitigating socio-educational and economic barriers to cultural access.

¹²² UNESCO, *UNESCO Framework for Cultural Statistics*, 2009.

Available at: http://uis.unesco.org/sites/default/files/documents/unesco-framework-for-cultural-statistics-2009-en_0.pdf.

¹²³ For example, this transition is underscored by the expanding number of individuals equipped with the requisite tools and skills to create and disseminate cultural and creative content.

¹²⁴ OECD, *Cultural participation as a driver of social and economic impact*, 2022, p.44.

¹²⁵ A.S. Brown, J.L. Novak-Leonard, S. Gilbride, *Getting in on the act: How arts groups are creating opportunities for active participation*, Janes Irvin Foundation, San Francisco, CA, 2011.

¹²⁶ G. Allegrini, 2022, *cit. p.10*

¹²⁷ P. Sacco, G. Ferilli and G. Tavano Blessi, *From Culture 1.0 to Culture 3.0: Three socio- technical regimes of social and economic value creation through culture, and their impact on European cohesion policies*, Sustainability, Vol. 10/11, 2018. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su10113923>.

2.2.2 The Right to the City: A Holistic Framework for Urban Development and Social Inclusion

In the realm of the critical urban theory¹²⁸, the discussion on cultural participation as a catalyst for social inclusion has its roots in Henry Lefebvre's influential work, *Le droit a la ville*^{129 130}. The concept of the Right to the City embodies a profound ambition to reshape urban environments, rooted in the pursuit of spatial justice. As articulated by Lefebvre, it represents both a “fervent outcry and a compelling demand”¹³¹. The cry resonates with the deep-seated anguish of modern life's alienation, while the demand implores us to confront this reality head-on and forge a more meaningful, less estranging urban existence—one that is imbued with playfulness yet deeply engaged. This conceptualization transcends mere access to urban resources; it encompasses the fundamental right to participate in the city's transformation. Accordingly, the Right to the City emerges as a collective prerogative, recognizing that substantial shifts in urbanization and city dynamics necessitate the active involvement and influence of the community at large¹³².

As such, Harvey argues that it is not just the prerogative of individual property owners or powerful entities to shape the city development; rather it is something that should involve the input, desired and needs of the broader community¹³³.

Hence, the overarching aspiration of the right to the city transcends mere legal articulation of rights, pivoting towards a comprehensive restructuring of the urban milieu. This reconfiguration seeks to attenuate the hegemonic influence of exchange value and global capitalism within urban domains, thereby fostering an environment wherein all denizens are empowered to engage in the governance and cultivation of a city oriented towards the collective welfare rather than profit maximization—a vision encapsulated by the notion of a "city for people, not profit"¹³⁴. Radical approaches perceive it as a project of profound social transformation, wherein inhabitants exercise appropriate control over urban space and resources, enabling them to autonomously manage these elements for their own benefit¹³⁵.

¹²⁸ N. Brenner. *What is critical urban theory?* City,13:2, 2009. Pp. 198 - 207

According to Neil Brenner, critical urban theory is generally used as a shorthand reference to the writings of leftist or radical urban scholars during the post-1968 period—for instance, those of Henri Lefebvre, David Harvey, Manuel Castells, Peter Marcuse and a legion of others who have been inspired or influenced by them, such as Jane Jacobs. Critical urban, instead of affirming the current state of cities as an expression of timeless laws of social organization, bureaucratic rationality, or economic efficiency, critical urban theory underscores the politically and ideologically mediated, socially contested, and thus flexible nature of urban space. It emphasizes the ongoing (re)construction of urban space as a locus, medium, and consequence of historically specific social power dynamics. Critical urban theory is firmly rooted in an adversarial stance not only towards established urban knowledge paradigms but also towards prevailing urban configurations. It asserts the potential for an alternative, more democratic, socially equitable, and sustainable model of urbanization, even if such potentials are presently suppressed by dominant institutional frameworks, practices, and ideologies. In essence, critical urban theory entails the scrutiny of ideology (including socio-scientific paradigms) and the examination of power dynamics, inequality, injustice, and exploitation, both within and across urban landscapes.

¹²⁹ H. Lefebvre. *Le Droit à la ville suivi de Espace et politique*, Paris, Anthropos. 1968

¹³⁰ Lefebvre's seminal work, *Le droit à la ville* emerged just prior to the historic uprisings of workers and students in May 1968 in Paris. During this period, cities worldwide became arenas for contesting capitalism, war, patriarchy, and racism, advocating for the construction of alternative socio-political frameworks and urban experiences (Harvey, 2008). Against this backdrop, Lefebvre's "The Urban Revolution," crafted in the milieu of the 1968 upheavals, prognosticated that urbanization would assume a central role in the perpetuation of capitalism, thereby becoming a focal point of political and class contention.

¹³¹ H. Lefebvre, *Writings on cities*, Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1996, p.158.

¹³² D. Harvey. *The Right to the City*, New Left Review, vol.53, 2008. pp.23-40

¹³³ Ibidem. pp.33-37

¹³⁴ N. Brenner, P. Marcuse, & M. Mayer. *Cities for people, not for profit: Critical urban theory and the right to the city*. Routledge, 2012.

¹³⁵ M. Purcell. *Possible worlds: Henri Lefebvre and the right to the city*. Journal of urban affairs, 36(1), 2014. p.145.

The historical proponents of this right are urban social movements, whose activism has evolved since the 1970s and spans across both the Global North and the Global South. As argued by urban sociologist Margit Mayer, the right to the city is universal as it integrates and articulates an array of concerns that have gained significant momentum amidst years of neoliberal urbanization, particularly exacerbated by the repercussions of the financial and economic downturn. Thus, the right to the city has brought to the forefront the erosion of social, economic, and political entitlements¹³⁶. A remarkable point is that this erosion is felt not only by historically marginalized and disadvantaged demographics but increasingly by comparatively advantaged urban inhabitants as well. Their aspirations for an enriching urban existence are thwarted by the escalating privatization of public spaces, the gentrification processes altering their neighborhoods, and the encroachment of intensified interurban competition upon their daily lives. As the Right to the City fundamentally opposes the notion of exclusive property rights over urban spaces and instead strives to encourage urban policies that prioritize justice, sustainability, and inclusion within cities, self-managed cooperation, even if not able to replace state authority, has the potential to become a much stronger organizing principle in urban life¹³⁷.

In the contemporary context, the advocacy for the right to the city has emerged as a prominent agenda item both locally and globally. Organizations and policy networks with urban-centric mandates have diligently worked to establish a more robust institutional framework for the realization of this right. Consequently, it has transitioned beyond mere academic and policy discourse, resonating significantly within activist circles and garnering attention from international bodies such as UNESCO and UN-Habitat, which have embraced its principles to guide initiatives aimed at fostering inclusive and sustainable urban development.

Complementary endeavors involve the formulation of charters that articulate the Right to the City, such as the *World Charter for the Right to the City*, the *European Charter for Human Rights in the City*, and the *Montreal Charter of Rights and Responsibilities*¹³⁸.

The *World Charter for the Right to the City*¹³⁹ articulates, in Article 1.2, the entitlement of all individuals to participate directly and through representation in the formulation, definition, implementation, and fiscal distribution and management of public policies and municipal budgets. Articles 2.1 and 2.2 emphasize the social function of the city, advocating for equitable access to urban resources and promoting socially just and environmentally balanced uses of urban space and soil, under conditions of security and gender equity.

These provisions collectively champion a participatory, socially responsible, and environmentally sustainable vision of urban development.

The legacy of Lefebvre has been embraced across diverse academic and political contexts, offering an intriguing analytical framework for scrutinizing the role of alternative cultural centers in asserting the right to

¹³⁶ M. Mayer. *The "Right to the City" in Urban Social Movements*. Chapter in N. Brenner, P. Marcuse, M. Mayer (eds. by) *Cities for People not for Profit, critical urban theory and the right to the city* N. Brenner, P. Marcuse, M. Mayer, Routledge, 2012.

¹³⁷ C. Althorpe, & M. Horak, M. *The end of the right to the city: A radical-cooperative view*. *Urban Affairs Review*, 59(1), 2023. Pp. 25-29.

¹³⁸ United Cities and Local Governments. *The European Charter for the Safeguarding of Human Rights in the City*. Saint Denis, 2001. Available at: https://uclg-cisdp.org/sites/default/files/documents/files/2021-06/CISDP%20Carta%20Europea%20Sencera_baixa_3.pdf

¹³⁹ World Charter for the Right to the City (2005). Available from: http://portal.unesco.org/shs/en/ev.php-url_id=8218&url_dp=do_topic&url_section=201.html.

occupy and transform urban spaces. Henceforth, Jane Jacobs posited that cultural centers, acting as hubs for assembly and collaboration, possess the potential to play a pivotal role in participatory urban planning and revitalization endeavors¹⁴⁰.

As will be further highlighted, artists are frequently positioned as key actors within urban social movements, while culture has been consistently regarded as a mechanism for re-appropriating spaces and cultivating communal bonds.

2.2.3 Cultural Organizations as Third Place

If the Right to the City serves as the foundational framework for delineating the essence of participation within the urban sphere, the actual enjoyment of this right hinges upon the existence of spaces and modes of collaboration. In the pursuit of facilitating participation, cultural organizations have emerged as influential catalysts, channeling the profound social effects that cultural engagement can yield. As Giulia Allegrini argues, cultural organizations and their art spaces, steeped in a culture of engagement, act as vital social forums where audiences collectively interpret and collaboratively generate intrinsic cultural value^{141 142}. As argued above, in contemporary cultural development strategies, there is a notable shift towards fostering participation, collaboration, and reciprocity¹⁴³.

The concept of third places, as proposed by sociologist Ray Oldenburg, is integral to promoting social inclusion and community development. These third places serve as public spaces outside of the traditional realms of home and work, where individuals gather informally to interact and foster community bonds¹⁴⁴. They play a crucial role in strengthening social connections, enhancing civic engagement, and contributing to the democratic fabric of society. In advocating for the creation of urban spaces dedicated to cultural activities, the contributions of Oldenburg carry considerable weight. He asserts the right to develop social spaces distinct from both the domestic sphere and places of employment. These spaces are interpreted as environments that offer enriching experiences conducive to personal growth, rather than as avenues for escapism. They serve as arenas for leisure and social interaction within a societal framework that predominantly prioritizes productivity and purposefulness¹⁴⁵.

Building upon these premises, cultural centers can be conceptualized as third places, embodying principles of accessibility and multifaceted socio-cultural engagement. They serve as inclusive gathering spots where

¹⁴⁰ S. Cozzolino. *Insights and reflections on Jane Jacobs' legacy. Toward a Jacobsian theory of the city*. Territorio (72), 2015. pp.151-178.

¹⁴¹ G. Allegrini, 2022, *cit. p.10*

¹⁴² This role transcends passive spectatorship, extending to the co-production of meaning, development of interpretive and imaginative faculties, and co-creation of both experiential and artistic value. In parallel, sociologist Walmsley underscores the importance of an Audience Engagement approach to enhance public and citizen involvement in cultural events. This approach reshapes the relationship between cultural organizations and audiences, fostering a horizontal, non-hierarchical exchange that transforms audiences into active partners in the cultural and artistic sphere.

B. Walmsley. *Audience engagement in the performing arts: A critical analysis*. Springer Nature. 2019

¹⁴³ G. Allegrini; R. Paltrinieri, *Audience Engagement and Cultural Diversity*, Comunicazioni Sociali, 2022, 1, pp. 121 - 134

¹⁴⁴ R. Oldenburg. *The great good place: Cafés, coffee shops, community centers, beauty parlors, general stores, bars, hangouts, and how they get you through the day*. 1989.

¹⁴⁵ R. Oldenburg, D. Brissett. *The third place*. Qual Sociol 5, 1982. pp. 265–284.

individuals from diverse backgrounds converge to engage in artistic expression, cultural exchange, and community enrichment. These centers facilitate the integration of varying abilities, experiences, artistic practices, age groups, and cultural heritages, thereby fostering collaborative and creative endeavors among participants, spanning both amateur and professional domains. Through their diverse programming and extensive outreach initiatives, cultural centers play a pivotal role in establishing local and national networks, advocating for multiculturalism, and enriching the cultural tapestry of communities.

2.2.4 Grassroots Movements and Spontaneous spaces for culture

Following the discussion on the concept of the Right to the City and the pivotal role of Third Places in augmenting the function of cultural centers within society, it is relevant to conclude the analysis of cultural participation by delving into the various levels and modalities of aggregation it can encompass.

While the current body of literature predominantly focuses on urban planning carried out at the national or local administrative levels, especially regarding cultural policies formulated through top-down decision-making processes, contemporary scholarly discourse is increasingly showing a growing interest in grassroots artistic practices. These practices have shown promise in promoting urban regeneration, offering an alternative viewpoint to governance models characterized by centralization and influenced by prevailing macroeconomic trends.

Several studies conducted by scholars within the Italian academia have endeavored to investigate the extent to which grassroots organizations have influenced urban dynamics and governance.

Cultural economists Morea and Sabatini begin with the premise that while cultural policies have generated benefits in certain spheres, they have often neglected to recognize the adverse consequences inherent in their own implementation¹⁴⁶. As previously discussed in this chapter, the advent of cognitive capitalism has precipitated two simultaneous forms of inequality. Firstly, the creative class, as delineated by Richard Florida, has encountered heightened levels of job insecurity and exploitation, leading to exacerbated precarity. Secondly, the influx of creative workers into urban areas, coupled with the urban planning strategies tailored to accommodate their needs, has reshaped the accessibility of city spaces and services. Consequently, economically disadvantaged communities have been marginalized, a phenomenon extensively examined by scholars such as Leslie and Catungal and Zukin¹⁴⁷.

They investigate the idea that besides the creative city and the planning attempts to rationalize city-making, lies a substrate of creative individuals and practices, which can be identified as grassroot urban ecosystem¹⁴⁸.

¹⁴⁶ F. Sabatini, V. Morea. *The joint contribution of grassroots artistic practices to the alternative and vital city. The case of Bologna and Venice (Italy)*. 2023, p.1.

¹⁴⁷ D. Leslie & J.P Catungal. *Social justice and the creative city: class, gender and racial inequalities*. 2012.
S. Zukin. *Gentrification: culture and capital in the urban core*, 1987.

¹⁴⁸ F. Sabatini, V. Morea. *The joint contribution of grassroots artistic practices to the alternative and vital city. The case of Bologna and Venice (Italy)*, 2023, p.2.

According to urban planner Currid-Halkett, independent and bottom-up arts organizations are constitutive of the buzz of the local creative economy¹⁴⁹, and identify and sympathize with other groups which have been excluded from the institutional discourse, the urban space, and the creative city policy, constituting the body of “non-conforming individuals, non-mainstream sub-cultures and various sorts of marginalized social groups”¹⁵⁰.

Therefore, Morea and Sabatini claimed that the creative city appeared divided between two systems: the hegemonic system, which responds to the planning of formal institutions and grassroots movement systems, bringing vitality and alternatives to the official development strategies. While interacting with groups that have been marginalized from society, they interact also with formal organizations, sometimes creating a collaborative development model that can consider all civil and institutional parties of society¹⁵¹.

This consideration holds particular importance within this dissertation, as its primary objective is to scrutinize the manner in which these organizations have fostered dialogue with the institutional facets of society and what this dialogue has produced.

Engineer and urbanist Cellamare contextualizes this phenomenon within the contemporary historical period, characterized by intricate processes and practices of reappropriation within their living contexts¹⁵². According to him, these experiences encompass a diverse spectrum, including informal and self-constructed methods of urban landscape self-management, housing occupations, cultural production space takeovers, and the temporary utilization of public areas for organized collective activities. Much like social urban movements, Cellamare contends that these practices, even within meticulously planned Western cities, represent reactions and alternatives to the prevailing logic of neoliberal control and development. These expressions not only address basic human needs but also reflect aspirations for an enhanced quality of life and a more active role in shaping one's living environment.

Therefore, the architect and urban planner Lidia Decandia add another layer to this analysis, underscoring the emergence of dispersed creativity in urban environments, which diverges from conventional planning paradigms¹⁵³. Through a meticulous examination of contemporary urban landscapes, it becomes evident that this novel aesthetic often originates from unconventional sources. Decandia cites the aesthetics of reuse as a prime example, resulting from experimental practices during the repurposing of abandoned urban structures in suburban locales. The transition from passive consumption of cultural artifacts to active participation in their creation stands as a pivotal aspect of this evolving cultural milieu. The burgeoning interest among citizens in reclaiming agency within urban planning processes serves as a tangible manifestation of this transformative ethos.

¹⁴⁹ E. Currid-Halkett. *The warhol economy*. In *The Warhol Economy*. Princeton University Press. 2020.

¹⁵⁰ L. Nadal. *Discourses of urban public space: USA 1960–1995. A historical critique*. New York: Columbia University Press. 2000. p.149.

¹⁵¹ F. Sabatini, V. Morea. *The joint contribution of grassroots artistic practices to the alternative and vital city. The case of Bologna and Venice (Italy)*. 2023. p.3

¹⁵² C. Cellamare. *Autorganizzazione e Riappropriazione dei Luoghi*, in M. Gissara, M. Percoco, E. Rosmini (Eds). In *Città immaginate. Riuso e nuove forme dell'abitare*, Manifestolibri, 2019, pp.31-41

¹⁵³ L. Decandia. *Oltre i simulacri: La Ricerca di una creatività dispersa, brulicante e diffusa per costruire inedite forme di urbanità*, in M. Gissara, M. Percoco, E. Rosmini (Eds). In *Città immaginate. Riuso e nuove forme dell'abitare*, Manifestolibri, 2019, pp.43-51.

Consequently, the adoption of spontaneous space reuse practices necessitates an exploration of organizations and movements operating beyond institutional frameworks and established models of urban revitalization. Such investigations hold the promise of illuminating societal needs and offering insights into revitalizing public spaces to nurture inclusivity and developmental objectives. Given the rich historical lineage of processes involving the reappropriation of public spaces across Europe, and notwithstanding the considerable variations in national and local contexts, discernible commonalities in trends and movements emerge, warranting attention from a societal standpoint. As succinctly articulated by Decandia, "The imperative for urbanity, in its collective dimension, fundamentally underpins the notion of place appropriation and self-organization."¹⁵⁴

To draw some conclusion, the discourse surrounding contemporary urban development emphasizes a broader understanding of urban planning, encompassing not only regulatory functions but also cultural considerations and community engagement in urban regeneration. Incorporating cultural planning into urban agendas seeks to foster participatory environments that go beyond service provision, aiming for inclusive and socially just urban spaces. Thus, "just" urban planning is characterized by a high degree of social inclusion, community involvement, and cultural diversity, granting citizens the agency to participate in shaping their cities. Building upon the insights of theorists like Lefebvre and Oldenburg, who highlight the reactive nature of grassroots movements against sole top-down planning and advocate for alternative spatial paradigms, cities grapple with forging new modes of collaboration between hierarchical planning structures and bottom-up initiatives.

Within this framework, the Italian and French experiences in urban governance, offer valuable insights into the complexities of modern urban development. These experiences reflect a nuanced interplay between administrative systems and evolving grassroots movements, each influenced by unique historical, cultural, and institutional contexts. The emergence of decentralized creativity and active citizen engagement stands out as central tenets in contemporary urban discourse, underscoring the significance of innovative urban aesthetics stemming from unconventional sources, and challenging traditional planning norms. By embracing collaborative approaches and drawing lessons from grassroots initiatives, urban planners and policymakers might better address the shortcomings of existing urban development models. In essence, the pursuit of urban development necessitates a multifaceted understanding that integrates diverse perspectives and engages stakeholders at all levels of decision-making.

¹⁵⁴ *Ivi.*, pp.49

Chapter II - Italian and French attitude towards cultural production and innovation in the urban context

Building upon the literature review conducted, the primary aim of this chapter is to enhance comprehension regarding the diverse tiers of governance associated with cultural-led urban regeneration in both Italy and France.

The objective is to discern how specific factors have shaped the implementation of public policies related to culturally driven urban revitalization, with a particular emphasis on space repurposing. This analysis underscores the shift from a model of public policies founded on the centralized authority of the state to governance structures built on the establishment of inter-organizational networks¹⁵⁵. This transition represents a shift from a top-down approach to a more bottom-up methodology.

Crucial to comprehend the evolution of public policies and the adoption of participatory and collaborative solutions to mitigate conflicts and administrative gaps is the dynamic interplay between the state, regions, and cities.

The analysis will be conducted considering these variables:

- 1) The commitment of the State in implementing urban and cultural public policies.
- 2) Administrative decentralization and cultural democratization.
- 3) Public Institutions' focus on "New Territories of the Arts" as alternative forms of cultural production¹⁵⁶.

The comparison between Italy and France was chosen because, as noted by political scientist Gilles Pinson, they share peripheral legacies inherited from the Napoleonic model, and have undergone similar processes of decentralization and strengthening of local executives, despite the divergent outcomes of this process. This includes the development of urban planning systems that assign a significant role to public plans, legal regulation, and public services¹⁵⁷. Furthermore, both Italy and France have strategically embraced cultural-led urban regeneration to catalyze economic development, foster social cohesion, and preserve their rich historical and artistic heritage. Despite the commitment to cultural policies, disparities emerge in States' interpretation of culture, funding for cultural initiatives, the overarching objectives of urban regeneration projects, and the formulation of policies targeting the revitalization of abandoned spaces.

¹⁵⁵ R. Mayntz, *Modernization and the logic of interorganizational networks*. Knowledge and Policy, 6(1), 1993, p.5.

¹⁵⁶ F. Lextrait. *Une nouvelle époque de l'action Culturelle*. Rapport à Michel Duffour, Secrétariat d'État au Patrimoine et à la Décentralisation Culturelle, May 2001.

The term "New Territories of Art" (Nouveaux territoires de l'art) was introduced in the Lextrait report published in 2001 under the auspices of the French Ministry of Culture. It corresponds to an attempt to identify and explore new types of artistic creation spaces, marking the developments of this creation at the end of the 20th century.

Cfr. F. Lextrait, *Friches, laboratoires, fabriques, squats, projets pluridisciplinaires, une nouvelle époque de l'action Culturelle*. Rapport d'étude, 2001.

¹⁵⁷ G. Pinson, *Projets et pouvoirs dans les villes européennes : une comparaison de Marseille, Venise, Nantes et Turin*, Thèse de doctorat en Science politique, Sceince-Po Rennes, 2001.

Moreover, Italy and France share several features in their way of adapting to the neoliberal tendencies spreading in Europe in the '90s. In fact, as argued by Pinson and Morel Journal¹⁵⁸, while in Northern Europe (UK, Netherlands, Scandinavia) and the US developed highly bureaucratized urban administration have led to potential government failures susceptible to neoliberal reactions (reforms emphasizing privatization, externalization and market discipline on urban administrations took more extreme forms with dramatic effects), Southern European countries (France, Italy and Spain) had a historical pattern of delegating public service provision to private firms and establishing joint-venture companies combining public and private capital for development projects since the late 19th century. Thus, countries of the North, where national integration proceeded smoothly, prioritized *efficiency* in local government, while the *community* dimension dominated in the South, where regional and local divisions have persisted over time. Therefore, Southern nations like Italy and France exhibiting a predisposition towards public-private collaboration and emphasizing social cohesion objectives.

Initiating our exploration with state-driven initiatives led by relevant ministries and the current regulatory framework, we will delve into the nuanced dynamics of decentralization, assessing its role in the adaptation of public policies and devolved powers at regional and local levels. The scrutiny will extend to contemporary trends, emphasizing new forms of regeneration that spotlight grassroots experiences.

Before embarking on an in-depth analysis of the urban regeneration policy framework in the two countries considered, it is relevant to establish a comprehensive understanding of urban governance and its cultural implications.

Urban Governance, Cultural Policies, and the Evolution of Citizen Participation

Urban governance entails the use of collaborative approaches for decision-making and action, with a particular emphasis on involving residents¹⁵⁹.

The focus is on questions of democratic representation, power, and decision-making¹⁶⁰. This approach to urban governance is applicable at various territorial levels, ranging from local to national, and covers all facets of development, including economic, social, environmental, political, and cultural dimensions.

Political scientist George Cavallier provides a clear definition of urban governance as "a way to involve the capacity and shared responsibility for a project, the ability to establish a collective framework for supportive actions and strategic planning that brings key actors together at a political decision-making level. At every

¹⁵⁸ This definition is the one formulated by G. Pinson, C. Morel Journal, *The Neoliberal City – Theory, Evidence, Debates*, in Territory, Politics, Governance, Vol. 4, No. 2, 2016. pp. 143-144.

¹⁵⁹ In this dissertation, governance is defined as the framework of decision-making arrangements in which various actors pursue their interests by entering into agreements and compromises with other stakeholders. These agreements and the consensus formed are not rooted in a pre-existing value system but evolve gradually through continuous interactions, leading to attainable objectives.

¹⁶⁰ On the issue see M. Raco, *Governance, Urban*, in R. Kitchin & N. Thrift (eds by), *International Encyclopedia of Human Geography*, Elsevier, 2009, pp. 622-627.

level, partnerships should be formed around a common strategy and a collective framework for intervention, giving purpose to urban action and presenting a motivating urban project to engage all parties¹⁶¹”.

Since the 80s, reforms of urban governance have been at the heart of broader changes to the welfare system of neoliberal regulations and control. As argued by Mike Raco, those policies have led to a new emphasis on multiagency partnership, working, active citizenship, community empowerment and local government modernization¹⁶². Thus, novel approaches to participatory democracy have emerged alongside the conventional system of representative, elected governance, empowering local communities and individual citizens.

On the other side, several scholars have highlighted the downturns of this approach¹⁶³. Through their research it emerges that the widespread promotion of active citizenship as a solution to economic problems has inadvertently exacerbated socio-economic inequalities, as it shifts the responsibility for addressing these issues onto individuals, disproportionately affecting vulnerable and marginalized populations who lack the resources and access to political power to make significant change.

Furthermore, as argued by the neo-Marxist geographer and anthropologist David Harvey, the rise of neoliberal economic policies and deregulation, often associated with discourses of governance, has allowed for the concentration of wealth among the elite¹⁶⁴. From this interpretation, active citizenship can be seen as a smokescreen for these policies, further deepening inequality. Hence, as the responsibility for addressing economic issues shifts from state to individuals, the welfare state diminishes in importance¹⁶⁵.

In this context, Bourdieu noted that active citizenship requires access to education, information, and networks, which are often unequally distributed, limiting the ability of disadvantage groups to engage effectively in governance¹⁶⁶. Hence, as argued by Pinder, artistic and cultural experiments, can serve as critical process, anticipate possibilities and contribute to reclaiming a utopian and radically transformative dimension of urban projects. By deconstructing existing frameworks, they create imaginative spaces that challenge conventional thinking and offer new perspectives on urban issues¹⁶⁷.

This insight holds great significance for the objective of this research. Since the late 1990s, urban governance has embraced the ideas of citizen participation and collaboration among diverse stakeholders as integral to its agenda. Understanding how these aspirations manifest in practice is essential, as culture can play an effective educational role in fostering consciousness on the urban governance scenario and enabling people to play an active role. As will be elucidated in subsequent sections, this interconnection finds support in the management

¹⁶¹ G. Cavallier. *Challenges for Urban Governance in the European Union*, European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions, Dublin, Ireland, 1998, p.39.

¹⁶² M. Raco, *Governance, Urban*, 2009, p.623.

¹⁶³ See, P. Bourdieu. *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste*, Harvard University Press, 1984.

C. Tilly, *Citizenship, Identity and Social History*, in *International Review of Social History*, v.40, no S3, 1995, pp. 1-27.

D. Harvey. *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*, Oxford University press, 2007.

A. Sen. *The idea of Justice*, Harvard University Press, 2009.

¹⁶⁴ D. Harvey, 2007, *cit.* p.42.

¹⁶⁵ G. Esping-Andersen. *The Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism*, Princeton University Press, 1990.

¹⁶⁶ P. Bourdieu. 1984, *cit.* p.40.

¹⁶⁷ D. Pinder., *In defense of utopian urbanism: imagining cities after the 'End of Utopia'*. *Geografiska Annaler. Series B, Human Geography*, 84(3/4):229-41, 2002.

and co-implementation of numerous urban regeneration initiatives across European Union nations, including Italy and France, which are overseen and financially supported by the Ministry of Culture. Thus, human geographer Thomas Schmitt, argued that because culture is understood as a reference to overarching sense and meaning relationships in human practices and institutions, then a cultural-governance approach would be equivalent to a reconstruction of the social steering of the production of sense and meaning¹⁶⁸.

In academic literature, the concept of cultural governance is employed in various ways. According to political scientist and management Jae Moon, cultural governance is defined as “government’s direct and indirect involvement in the promotion and administration of programs of cultural organizations, existing in specific geographic boundaries with unique financial and administrative arrangements”¹⁶⁹. Henceforth, the aim is to ensure the promotion, protection, and sustainable development of cultural resources while engaging various stakeholders, including government bodies, cultural institutions, artists, and communities.

This delegation and/or distribution of power by the State, however, does not imply its weakening. As noted by social scientist Christopher Hood, actors and political institutions have assumed a less central and more nodal role in the elaboration and implementation of projects, particularly in urban policies¹⁷⁰. They are less central because they no longer possess the resources necessary for full control over project development and operational management. However, they are more nodal because they still retain resources that enable them to bridge disjointed elements, foster intersectionality and coherence in public action, construct and facilitate cooperation among networks of actors, especially through the construction and realization of a shared project. Political control over urban projects is less evident in defining project substance and more evident in overseeing the overarching framework within which involved actors operate¹⁷¹.

This preamble enables us to make two fundamental observations: firstly, cultural urban governance might serve as a valuable avenue for fostering citizen participation. It holds the potential to serve as an effective educational tool, raising awareness about the urban governance landscape and empowering individuals to actively engage in shaping it. Yet, the tangible capacity to engender such benefits is significantly contingent upon the cultural policy framework embraced by the governing body¹⁷². Secondly, the decentralization of state power in defining urban development programs has not diminished its influence; it has led, on the one hand, to increased civic participation in the design phase and, on the other hand, to greater competition among social and cultural organizations for access to state funding.

¹⁶⁸ T. Schmitt, *Cultural Governnace as a conceptual framework*, Max Planck Institute for the Study of Religious and Ethnic Diversity, MMG Working Paper 11-02, 2011, pp.44-48.

¹⁶⁹ M.J. Moon, *Cultural Governance. A Comparative Study of Three Cultural Districts*. In: *Administration & Society*, 33, 2001. pp.432.

¹⁷⁰ C. Hood, *The Tools of Government*, Chatham, Chatham House Publishers, 1983.

¹⁷¹ G. Pinson, *Projets de ville et gouvernance urbaine, Pluralisation des politiques et recomposition d'une capacité d'action collective dans les villes européennes*, *Revue française de science politique*2006/4, v.56, Éditions Presses de Sciences Po, 2006, pp. 619-651

¹⁷² M. Falk, T. Katz-Gerro, *Cultural participation in Europe: Can we identify common determinants?*. *J Cult Econ* 40, 127–162, 2016.

1. Policies and Regulatory Framework

1.1 Urban Regeneration in Italy: Diverse Paths, Administrative Challenges

Cities in northern Europe have taken the lead over Italy in addressing issues related to economic decline stemming from globalization and the crisis in entire industrial sectors. They have been proactive in identifying new opportunities for economic revitalization through diversification and the implementation of urban regeneration policies¹⁷³. Initiatives falling under the umbrella of urban policies began to emerge in Italy in the late eighties, coinciding with the integration of urban concerns into the national political agenda. Similar to trends in other European nations, distinct and overt urban policies were implemented with three primary objectives: enhancing urban competitiveness and fostering economic growth; promoting social cohesion and combating exclusion; and addressing urban security¹⁷⁴. Even though their initial response was delayed, Italian legislators have, since the end of the last century, leveraged new laws at supranational, national, and regional levels. These regulatory frameworks, marked by high innovation compared to traditional planning methods, have brought in more streamlined procedures for administrative measures focused on regional transformation¹⁷⁵. Despite these achievements, Italy currently lacks a national strategy for cities, as the European Union had anticipated it should have, and as other European countries have defined^{176 177}. Instead, there is a sectoral urban policy coordination at the national level, with an Inter-ministerial Committee for Urban Policy (CIPU)¹⁷⁸ and various urban agendas, linked to the Ministry of Environment and Energetic Security and the Ministry of Infrastructure and Sustainable Mobility¹⁷⁹.

¹⁷³ Cfr. L. Shurmer-Smith, D. Burtenshaw *Urban decay and rejuvenation*. In: Pinder D (ed) *Western Europe. Challenge and change*. Belhaven Pres, London, 1990, pp 125-141

C. Couch, O. Sykes, and W. Börstinghaus, *Thirty years of urban regeneration in Britain, Germany and France: The importance of context and path dependency*, *Progress in Planning*, v.75:1, 2011, pp. 1-52.

¹⁷⁴ M. Allulli and W. Tortorella. *Cities in search of Policy, The urban issue in the Italian political agenda*, *Métropoles [En ligne]*, v. 12, 2013.

¹⁷⁵ A. Trono, M.C. Zerbi, V. Castronuovo. *Urban Regeneration and Local Governance in Italy: Three Emblematic Cases*. In: Nunes Silva, C., Buček, J. (eds) *Local Government and Urban Governance in Europe*. The Urban Book Series. Springer, Cham, pp.171-193, 2016.

¹⁷⁶ The Urban Agenda for the EU, established in 2015 by the Pact of Amsterdam agreed upon by the Eu Ministers Responsible for Urban Matters, is an integrated and coordinated approach to deal with the urban dimension of EU and national policies and legislation. By focusing on concrete priority themes within dedicated Partnerships, the Urban Agenda seeks to improve the quality of life in urban areas. The text has been updated in 2021.

Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/policy/themes/urban-development/agenda_en

¹⁷⁷ A. Calafati. *L'agenda urbana delle città italiane*, 2021.

Testo rivisto dell'intervista condotta il 7 maggio 2021 dal Gruppo di lavoro di *Progetto Italiae*, coordinato da Giovanni Vetrutto presso il Dipartimento per gli Affari Regionali e le Autonomie (DARA) della Presidenza del Consiglio dei Ministri.

¹⁷⁸ The Inter-ministerial committee for Urban Policy formulates proposals for the development, adoption, and subsequent implementation by the relevant Ministers of the National Urban Agenda and its related implementing guidelines. This includes monitoring its implementation status in line with the directives established by the European Union and the United Nations, closely related to the National Strategy for Sustainable Development, of which it constitutes the component for urban areas.

<https://www.governo.it/it/articolo/comitato-interministeriale-le-politiche-urbane-cipu/19377>

¹⁷⁹ Here it is available Italy National Urban Agenda for Sustainable Development: <https://www.mase.gov.it/pagina/linee-guida-nazionali-l-agenda-urbana-nazionale-lo-sviluppo-sostenibile>.

Here it is available the Urban Agenda of the Ministry of Infrastructure and Sustainable Mobility: <https://www.mit.gov.it/comunicazione/news/politiche-urbane-approvata-lagenda-urbana-del-ministero-delle-infrastrutture-e>

In addition, urban regeneration does not find a complete definition in national legislation, despite numerous references to it in state laws and not always convergent definition in various regional laws¹⁸⁰. An attempt to define urban regeneration, has recently been made by Article 2 of the new consolidated text of draft laws No. 911 on urban regeneration, presented on October 18, 2023, to the presidency, by the Senate of the Republic, and currently under examination^{181 182}. It defines urban regeneration as “a set of Actions of urban and building transformation in urban and infrastructural areas on built-up areas and building complexes that do not result in land consumption and sealing, generated by a coordinated set of urban, building, socioeconomic, technological, environmental, and cultural interventions and designed according to criteria that use methodologies and techniques related to environmental sustainability, ensuring a *zero net* land consumption (...).”¹⁸³ In particular, this bill asserts the urgency of approving the law on urban regeneration "in order to guarantee protection and regeneration not only environmentally but also socially (...) to raise the level of quality of life, in historic centers as well as in suburbs, with neighborhood services, functionally integrating areas with deep greenery and natural spaces, residences, economic activities, public and commercial services, work activities, technologies, and spaces dedicated to shared work, so-called coworking, and remote work, social, cultural, educational, and didactic services and activities, as well as spaces and facilities for leisure, meeting, and socialization¹⁸⁴". Therefore, this definition aligns with the comprehensive evolution of the concept of urban regeneration underscored in the previous chapter, emphasizing the importance of enhancing the quality of life rather than mere physical revitalization of buildings.

Nevertheless, the absence of a unified national plan has led to the proliferation of diverse models of urban regeneration across Italy, with each region and city forging its own unique path. This lack of systematic planning has, on occasion, resulted in notable administrative gaps and non-updating of regulations, further compounded by a reluctance to foster entrepreneurial ventures and to repurpose existing urban assets in a manner that maximizes their value and potential for the community. Consequently, these administrative deficiencies have, in certain cases, paved the way for private initiatives, particularly evident in cities like Milan where the real estate market exerts significant influence, aligning with the global city model¹⁸⁵. Conversely, in other instances, these gaps have spurred self-organization through civic network initiatives, serving as a response to the challenges posed by austerity urbanism, especially notable in cities like Rome. This

¹⁸⁰ XVIII Camera dei Deputati Servizio Studi Dipartimento Ambiente, *Le politiche di Rigenerazione Urbana, prospettive e possibili impatti*, In collaborazione con CRESME, 2022, p.13.

¹⁸¹ Senate act No. 911, *Disposizioni in materia di rigenerazione urbana, ambientale e sociale*, XIX Legislatura, 18 October 2023. Available at: <https://www.senato.it/service/PDF/PDFServer/BGT/01391075.pdf>

¹⁸² Other bills concerning urban regeneration are also being examined by the commission, including bill S761, first proposed by Senator Maurizio Gasparri, titled "Provisions on urban regeneration."

¹⁸³ Senate act No. 911, *Disposizioni in materia di rigenerazione urbana, ambientale e sociale*, 2023, p.7.

Furthermore, the establishment of the National Fund for Urban Regeneration is envisaged. At the Ministry of Economy and Finance, the national fund for urban regeneration interventions is established, with a financial endowment of 100 million euros for each of the years 2024, 2025, and 2026. By decree of the Minister of Economy and Finance, in agreement with the Minister of the Environment and Energy Security, the Minister of Infrastructure and Transport, and the Minister for Cultural Heritage and Activities, subject to agreement in the Unified Conference referred to in Article 8 of Legislative Decree 28 August 1997, no. 281, to be issued within one hundred and twenty days from the date of entry into force of this law, the timing and methods of allocation of the fund among the regions and autonomous provinces are established, taking into account the soil ecological balance drawn up by the municipalities pursuant to Article 5, paragraph 4.

¹⁸⁴ *Ivi*, p.3.

¹⁸⁵ A. Calafati. *L'agenda urbana delle città italiane*, 2021, p.13.

multifaceted landscape underscores the imperative of a nuanced understanding of the diverse approaches to urban regeneration in Italy, shaped by local contexts and socio-economic dynamics.

Moreover, the Alleanza Italiana Per lo Sviluppo Sostenibile / Italian Alliance for Sustainable Development (ASviS), Position Paper 2023 has witnessed an unprecedented commitment to urban regeneration, with a multitude of programs dedicated to this cause¹⁸⁶. The ongoing implementation of the *Programma Straordinario per le Periferie* / Extraordinary Program for the Suburbs since 2015, coupled with initiatives such as *Sviluppo Urbano Sostenibile* / Sustainable Urban Development (SUS) under cohesion policies and the *Programma Innovativo per la Qualità dell'Abitare* / Innovative Program for Living Quality (PINQUA) demonstrates an effort toward revitalizing urban spaces.

The *Piano Nazionale di Ripresa e Resilienza* / National Recovery and Resilience Plan (PNRR) aligns with these efforts, allocating substantial funds for *Piani Urbani Integrati* / Integrated Urban Plans (PUI), managed by the Ministry of Interior, focusing on the peripheries of Metropolitan Cities. Noteworthy is the emphasis on citizen participation in defining PUIs, highlighting a shift toward collaborative planning involving local administrations, industry associations, civil society organizations, and citizens. The interventions may involve co-design with the Third Sector and the participation of private investments up to 30%. The primary objective is to reclaim urban spaces and existing areas to improve the quality of life by promoting processes of social and entrepreneurial participation. Projects should give back to communities an identity through the promotion of social, cultural, and economic activities, with particular attention to environmental aspects¹⁸⁷.

Hence, it appears that, Italy's urban regeneration strategy involves legislative, financial, and citizen engagement facets. However, challenges arise from the reliance on the PNRR for funding, given diverse regional priorities. Citizen participation in Integrated Urban Plans is emphasized, but practical challenges exist in incorporating diverse perspectives. The National Institute for Urban Studies (INU) underscores the need for innovation in urban and territorial planning, extending beyond traditional aspects¹⁸⁸. Reforms should enhance urban coexistence and support integrated local and national development through improved governance. While progress is evident, a complete national Urban Agenda is still evolving.

In the meantime, regions have taken legislative action on the matter. The impetus came in 2009 with the Silvio Berlusconi government's *Piano Casa*/ Housing Plan, which encouraged building redevelopment by offering volume bonuses and comprehensive deregulation¹⁸⁹. Following the implementation of the plan, many regions formulated their own legislation, yielding varied outcomes.

¹⁸⁶ ASviS - Alleanza Italiana per lo Sviluppo Sostenibile (Eds.), *Position Paper 2023 – Governo del Territorio, Rigenerazione Urbana e Politiche Abitative per lo Sviluppo Sostenibile*, giugno 2023.

¹⁸⁷ The investment 2.2 is part of Mission 5, Component 2 (M5C2) of the National Recovery and Resilience Plan (PNRR) dedicated to social infrastructure, families, communities, and the third sector. Investment 2.2 allocates 2.49 billion euros for Integrated Urban Plans (PUI).

Here is the link to the Ministry of Interior page concerning PUI: <https://www.interno.gov.it/it/m5c2-investimento-22-piani-urbani-integrati>

¹⁸⁸ S. Viviani. *La Presidente nazionale presenta le dieci proposte dell'INU per la rigenerazione urbana*. Istituto Nazionale di Urbanistica, 2017.

[10 proposte INU.pdf](#)

¹⁸⁹ The "Piano Casa" refers to provisions introduced by the Berlusconi government via Legislative Decree 112/2008, effective from April 1, 2009. It allows for the expansion of existing buildings, bypassing existing regulatory plans, to revitalize the construction sector

As elucidated by engineer and urban planner Cellamare, few regions have distinctly and innovatively tackled the issue¹⁹⁰. Cellamare underscores that in nearly all instances, there has been a deficiency in an integrated approach, primarily emphasizing the urban and building facets rather than the socio-economic dimension. Furthermore, many regional statutes have prioritized economic enhancement through urban planning incentives and regulatory streamlining, often disregarding the participation of residents.

1.1.1 Evolution and Challenges of Cultural Policy in Italy: A Historical Perspective

As discussed in the preceding chapter, the conception of an integrated urban agenda underscores the pivotal role played by the production and promotion of cultural and artistic activities. In Senate Bill No. 911 as well, the imperative of urban regeneration, which encompasses cultural activities, is explicitly articulated¹⁹¹. Furthermore, the Ministry of Culture has notably shifted its focus toward the nuanced dimensions of urban regeneration through cultural initiatives. The urban sociologist Alfredo Mela captures this shift, defining urban cultural policies as measures implemented by public entities, often in collaboration with diverse private actors, to foster the cultural life of the city, incorporating economic and social objectives¹⁹².

Despite the disorganization of cultural policies and norms throughout the decade, certain experiences set the stage for significant changes at national and international levels¹⁹³. Political sciences' researcher Giovanni Secchi's outlines the two-phase evolution of cultural policies in Italy. The post-war era until the 1970s emphasized promoting "high culture," concentrating on historic city centers and neglecting suburban areas. The second phase, influenced by the 1968 movements, witnessed a shift towards citizen participation, responding to emerging social and cultural needs¹⁹⁴.

In the wake of such movements, Renato Nicolini, Deputy Culture Commissioner of Rome (1976-1985), played a pivotal role in this transformation. The 1977 *Estate Romana* challenged the traditional notion of *high culture*, empowering citizens through exhibitions, street performances, films, and debates. This marked a significant change, influenced by administrative decentralization and a growing social need to reclaim urban spaces, introducing the concept of ephemeral cultural policies¹⁹⁵.

The perspective on culture shifted away from exclusive control by intellectuals, becoming more inclusive. Cultural events opened up to local associations, both professional and amateur, fostering citizen participation and framing culture as a form of leisure for a broader audience. The Roman model significantly impacted the cultural policies of Italian and European cities during the 1980s and 1990s.

and meet housing needs without increasing land consumption. While initially intended for a limited period, most regions have extended or permanently integrated these regulations into their legislation.

¹⁹⁰ Cfr. C. Cellamare. *Rigenerazione senza abitanti*, chapter in G. Storto (a cura di). *Territorio senza governo. Tra Stato e regioni: a cinquant'anni dall'istituzione delle regioni*. DeriveApprodi. 2020.

¹⁹¹ Senate act No. 911, *Disposizioni in materia di rigenerazione urbana, ambientale e sociale*, 2023, p.3

¹⁹² Cfr. A.Mela, *Sociologia delle Città*, Carocci, Roma, 2006.

¹⁹³ Cfr. L. Bobbio. *I governi locali nelle democrazie contemporanee*, Edizioni Laterza, Roma-Bari, 2006.

¹⁹⁴ G. Secchi. *Politiques Culturelles, Regimes Urbains et processus de Regeneration dans deux Villes Europeennes : Sassari (Italie) Et Saint- Etienne (France)*. Science politique. Università degli studi di Sassari, 2015, pp. 83-91.

¹⁹⁵ To further delve into the topic: M. Testoni. *Renato Nicolini, La giotosa Anomalia*. Edizioni Efesto, 2022.

As analyzed by Belfiore, during this period Italian cultural policy was affected also by the global neoliberal trend¹⁹⁶. In the 1980s, heritage began to be seen as a readily exploitable economic asset capable of ensuring a substantial return on investment.

Therefore, from the 1990s, the Ministry of Culture broadened its cultural policy objectives. While previously focused on protecting cultural heritage, this decade witnessed an expanded state interest in improving and promoting cultural activities. Reforms included the corporatization of national cultural institutions, defining policies with regional and local authorities, and involving the private sector in cultural financing. Despite these efforts, their effectiveness was hampered by frequent changes and corrections, hindering a thorough assessment of their impact¹⁹⁷. The rise to power of Berlusconi inexorably reversed the trend of state investment. In fact, the nomination of May 2008 of Sandro Bondi for the role of Minister of Culture was characterized by a series of controversies that led him to be defined as one of the worst cultural ministers of Italian history¹⁹⁸. In total, the public expenditure for culture decreased by 10.5% between 2001 and 2014¹⁹⁹. Private funding also decreased significantly, as did public funds allocated to local administrations (-45.8%)²⁰⁰ these measures, while on one hand aimed to address the crisis of 2008, on the other hand, moved under the ideological assumption that culture was not regarded as an asset capable of improving the economic situation, thus becoming increasingly distant from political agendas²⁰¹.

With Dario Franceschini's appointment in 2014, during the Renzi government, culture regained prominence within public institutions²⁰². Central to Franceschini's political philosophy is the notion that Italy's cultural heritage can serve as a significant economic catalyst, given its capacity to draw substantial tourist numbers²⁰³. Consequently, there is a resurgence of the notion prevalent since the 1980s and 1990s: culture as a driver for economic growth, emphasizing not only the preservation but also the valorization of cultural assets to enhance the appeal of the nation.

From this succinct analysis, it becomes evident that within the realm of national public policies, culture has either received inadequate support or has predominantly been perceived as a vehicle for bolstering the nation's economic prosperity, chiefly through tourism associated with cultural assets.

1.1.2 Navigating the Complexity: Fostering Urban Regeneration in Italy

¹⁹⁶ E. Belfiore. *Ubi major, minor cessat: A comparative study of the relation between changing cultural policy rationales and globalization in post-1980s England and Italy*, e-Thesis, 2006.

¹⁹⁷ G. Secchi. *Politiques Culturelles, Regimes Urbains et processus de Regeneration dans deux Villes Europeennes : Sassari (Italie) Et Saint- Etienne (France)*, 2015, p. 90.

¹⁹⁸ La Repubblica. 2010. *È scontro tra Bondi e i soprintendenti Granata: "Il peggior ministro di sempre"* La Repubblica, 16/11. Available at http://www.repubblica.it/politica/2010/11/16/news/beni_culturali_scontro_bondi_so_vrintendenti-9177967/.

¹⁹⁹ Compendium, *Cultural Policy Profile 'Italy'*, May 2022. Available at: <https://www.culturalpolicies.net/database/search-by-country/country-profile/?id=20>

²⁰⁰ R. Ciccarelli. 2013. *Tagli all'istruzione targati Gelmini: 10 miliardi e 100 mila cattedre in meno*. Il Manifesto, 26/03. Available at <http://www.flegil.it/rassegna-stampa/nazionale/tagli-all-istruzione-targati-gelmini-10-miliardi-e-100-mila-cattedre-in-meno.flc>

²⁰¹ As reported by Alice Borchi in her Phd dissertation, the Minister for Economy at the time, Giulio Tremonti, when justifying the cuts for public funding for culture, said that "culture does not put food on the table" (*con la cultura non si mangia*): the former Minister has always denied saying these words, but they encapsulate the general disbelief of the politics of the time towards cultural value.

²⁰² Matteo Renzi is an Italian politician who served as the Prime Minister of Italy from February 2014 to December 2016.

²⁰³ A. Borchi, *Culture and economic crisis: cultural value in Italy from 2008 to the present day*, PhD thesis, University of Warwick, 2017, pp. 85-90.

In the contemporary Italian landscape, the Directorate-General for Contemporary Creativity (DGCC)²⁰⁴, established in 2019 within the Ministry of Culture, assumes a pivotal role. The genesis of this administrative entity dedicated exclusively to contemporaneity traces back to the establishment of the Directorate-General for Contemporary Art and Architecture (DARC) in 2000. This seminal development marked a significant departure whereby the preservation of cultural heritage and landscapes was integrated with a conscientious regard for contemporary art and architecture, signifying their parity with historical heritage. The inception of DARC represented a groundbreaking initiative, underscoring the imperative of integrating traditional endeavors in safeguarding, protecting, and restoring ancient artifacts with the proactive promotion, encouragement, and amplification of contemporary creative expressions.

The overarching objective of the DGCC encompasses a multifaceted mandate that spans the promotion of contemporary art and architecture, bolstering cultural and creative enterprises inclusive of design and fashion, and pioneering innovative, participatory approaches nationwide. Central to its mission is the cultivation of urban regeneration initiatives, facilitated through collaborative agreements with both public and private entities. Notably, the Urban Regeneration Office, a constituent branch of the DGCC, has been instrumental since 2015 in spearheading transformative endeavors, with a particular emphasis on revitalizing Italy's urban peripheries. Within these locales, culture operates as a catalyzing force for the revitalization of social capital, engendering a renewed sense of community and civic engagement.

Of significance are the public funding initiatives that have been pivotal in undergirding endeavors aimed at the preservation and valorization of cultural and historical heritage. Among these, the inception of the *Creative Living Lab* in 2018 stands as a seminal endeavor, fostering collaborative projects geared toward the urban rejuvenation of vulnerable territories²⁰⁵. In alignment with the objectives outlined in the *National Recovery and Resilience Plan* (PNRR), these initiatives serve as conduits for effectuating sustainable and inclusive development paradigms, thereby imbuing Italy's cultural landscape with renewed vitality and dynamism.

A noteworthy initiative in this context is the *Piano Nazionale Borghi*, allocating 1.02 billion euros to enhance the *attractiveness*²⁰⁶ of villages. This comprehensive plan encompasses the recovery of historical heritage, requalification of public spaces, creation of thematic routes, and financial support for various cultural and economic activities. Its goal is to invigorate local economies by showcasing the unique products, knowledge, and techniques of each territory²⁰⁷.

²⁰⁴ The link to the DGCC website is available at: <https://creativitacontemporanea.cultura.gov.it>

²⁰⁵ The Creative Living Lab, established in 2018, funds shared projects for urban regeneration in Italian suburbs, addressing social, economic, and environmental challenges. It promotes innovative, high-quality micro-projects in culture and creativity, targeting the transformation of abandoned spaces and neglected green areas. Objectives include creating activity hubs to enhance urban life, raising awareness on regeneration, and fostering community identity and belonging.

Here is the link to the website: <https://creativitacontemporanea.cultura.gov.it/creativelivinglab/>

²⁰⁶ In the context of urban regeneration, "attractiveness" refers to the qualities and features of a city or urban area that make it appealing and desirable to residents, visitors, investors, and businesses. These qualities can include a mix of factors such as cultural amenities, architectural heritage, recreational spaces, safety, cleanliness, accessibility to transportation, economic opportunities, affordability of housing, and overall quality of life. Urban regeneration efforts often aim to enhance these aspects of a city in order to attract people and investment, revitalize neighborhoods, and stimulate economic growth.

²⁰⁷ With an allocation of €1020 million and coordinated by the General Secretariat - Service VIII, Investment 2.1 "Piano Nazionale Borghi" aims to leverage the potential of small Italian historic centers ("Borghi") for sustainable tourism, countering overcrowding in major art cities. Through the "National Village Plan," the initiative supports economic and social development in disadvantaged areas, emphasizing cultural regeneration and tourism revitalization. Actions include heritage restoration, enhancement of public spaces,

Two initiatives, *Culturability* and *Ibridazione*, provide an insightful glimpse into Italy's creative endeavors at the local level, illustrating a shifting trajectory. The *Culturability* project, supported by the Unipolis Foundation, backs cultural and social innovation projects, focusing on grassroots regeneration processes and engaging entities predominantly led by individuals under 35²⁰⁸. *Ibridazione*, a collaboration between DGCC, U-Rise Master's program of IUAV University in Venice, and Lo Stato dei Luoghi²⁰⁹ It is a process of reflection and collective intelligence among the entities involved in cultural-based regeneration in Italy, with particular emphasis on the concept of hybrid cultural centers created through the regeneration of disused, abandoned, or underutilized properties. Engaging 250 entities nationwide, it reflects a collective desire to redefine policies in a participatory manner²¹⁰.

On December 22, 2023, recommendations were published following a consultation process among national cultural organizations. These recommendations contain numerous tools to enhance the current policy system for cultural-based urban regeneration and provide a detailed definition of the concept, aiming to establish a common glossary²¹¹.

Furthermore, the document delineates the characteristics of the new hybrid cultural centers, facilitating a nuanced and comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon²¹². This exemplifies a policy framework capable of flexibly responding to contemporary shifts, demonstrating adaptability to evolving cultural dynamics and societal changes.

The analysis of cultural policies regarding urban regeneration at the national level in Italy highlights several crucial points. The absence of a dedicated Ministry for Urban Affairs has led to the dispersion of responsibilities among multiple ministries, including the Ministry of the Interior, the Ministry of Economy and Finance, the Ministry of Environment and Energy Security, and the Ministry of Culture. The Ministry of the

creation of cultural services, development of thematic itineraries, and financial support for local economies. Ministerial Decree No. 453 of June 7, 2022, allocated €761,866,602.09 to 309 municipalities, achieving milestone M1C3-12 by June 30, 2022. Funds were distributed for pilot projects in 20 municipalities and local initiatives in 289 villages below 5,000 inhabitants, aiming to address abandonment risks and stimulate local economies through cultural, social, and economic revitalization efforts.

Further information at this link: <https://pnrr.cultura.gov.it/misura-2-rigenerazione-di-piccoli-siti-culturali-patrimonio-culturale-religioso-e-rurale/2-1-attrattiva-dei-borghi/>

²⁰⁸ From 2009 to 2012, the Unipolis Foundation supported cultural spaces in challenging contexts, including the Bibliocasa in L'Aquila after the 2010 earthquake, the Mammut Territorial Center in Naples' Scampia neighborhood, and the Balate Children's and Youth Library in Palermo between 2011 and 2012. Since 2013, Unipolis has promoted culturability calls to fund projects in cultural and social innovation, particularly focusing on spaces arising from regeneration efforts. Since 2020, the requirement for a majority of participants under 35 has been eliminated, allowing attention to shift to cultural centers facing transitional phases and economic instability.

²⁰⁹ The Network 'Lo Stato dei Luoghi' is composed of organizations and individuals involved in activating spaces, managing areas, or participating in cultural-based regeneration experiences in our country.

<https://www.lostatodeiluoghi.com/chi-siamo/>

²¹⁰ DGCC, Lo Stato dei Luoghi, IUAV. *Ibridazione, nuove politiche per la rigenerazione culturale dei luoghi*, 2023

<https://creativitacontemporanea.cultura.gov.it/ibridazione-rigenerazione/>

²¹¹ DGCC-Direzione Generale Creatività contemporanea, Lo Stato de Luoghi, Università IUAV di Venezia, *Ibridazione: Nuove politiche per la Rigenerazione culturale dei luoghi – Raccomandazioni finali*, December 2023.

Available at: https://creativitacontemporanea.cultura.gov.it/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/Raccomandazioni-Ibridazione-Rigenerazione_compressed.pdf

²¹² The new hybrid cultural centers are characterized by their diverse audiences and activities, which intersect and mingle, fostering social and cultural exchange. They explore participatory decision-making and artistic co-creation, promoting social and civic innovation. These centers experiment with innovative economic models, combining opportunities from various functions and territories to support youth entrepreneurship and Cultural and Creative Industries. Furthermore, they contribute to social cohesion and inclusion in the communities they serve.

Interior traditionally oversees matters related to local governance, public safety, and territorial administration, encompassing urban regeneration aspects like infrastructure development and community enhancement. Simultaneously, the Ministry of Culture, tasked with preserving cultural heritage, promoting the arts, and fostering creativity, plays a significant role in urban regeneration through cultural initiatives aimed at preserving and valorizing cultural assets.

Conversely, since 2009, there has been a gradual transfer of responsibility for this issue to the regions, as we will explore in greater depth later on. This distributed responsibility framework allows for potential collaborative efforts, including civil society organizations, to address the multifaceted challenges of urban regeneration. However, it also poses risks of resource fragmentation and a lack of cohesive objectives. The absence of a unified national policy exacerbates these challenges, potentially resulting in disjointed initiatives, divergent development paths, and missed opportunities for shared learning and progress. A national policy framework could facilitate the exchange of best practices and insights from successful urban regeneration projects, creating a collective knowledge base across regions.

Furthermore, a cohesive national policy can articulate a comprehensive vision for urban regeneration aligned with broader national development goals. Without such a framework, there is a tendency for short-term, ad-hoc approaches that prioritize immediate gains over long-term sustainability and resilience objectives. The effectiveness of urban regeneration initiatives depends on resource allocation to cultural activities and the level of attention from both national and local administrations to this critical aspect of societal and spatial transformation.

1.1.3 Disparities, and Civic Initiatives: Implementing Cultural Policy in Italy

According to Article 9 of the Constitution of the Italian Republic, Italy should promote the development of culture and scientific research and should protect the landscape and the historical and artistic heritage of the Nation²¹³. However, recent research by Compendium – Cultural Policies and Trends²¹⁴, on Italy suggests that in past years governmental efforts have been mainly on protecting the visible heritage such as churches, palaces, and works of art, while a comprehensive cultural promotion agenda remains somewhat ambiguous. This trend is characterized by a more restrictive definition of culture, centering on the safeguarding and consumption of cultural assets.

The study also reveals depressed levels of participation in cultural initiatives, with recent national efforts primarily addressing economic barriers to cultural consumption. Significant disparities in the provision of local cultural services are highlighted, with municipalities playing a pivotal role due to the decentralized nature of decision-making. However, this decentralization results in varying levels of investment and priority for cultural initiatives, leading to a lack of uniformity in the availability and quality of services across regions.

²¹³ Costituzione della Repubblica Italiana, Art.9.

²¹⁴ Compendium, *Cultural Policy Profile 'Italy'*, May 2022. Available at: <https://www.culturalpolicies.net/database/search-by-country/country-profile/?id=20>

This decentralized and voluntary approach, has its drawbacks, as evidenced by the absence of nationwide statistical coverage, making it challenging to comprehensively assess the state of cultural facilities such as cultural centers, civic recreation centers, reading centers, and cultural youth clubs on a national scale.

Therefore, other organizations have taken on the task of mapping cultural organizations. Notably, the cultural association *Che Fare?*²¹⁵ has published in 2020 the grassroots mapping of new Italian cultural centers²¹⁶. This is a significant initiative aimed at identifying and documenting, in a participatory manner, the proliferation of new cultural centers at the local level. This *bottom-up* methodology signifies an approach that involves communities and local stakeholders directly in the identification and registration of such centers. *Che Fare?* tries to play a key role in facilitating this process, serving as a catalyst for civic participation and the promotion of new cultural spaces. This mapping not only provides an overview, even if not extremely precise, of the richness and diversity of emerging cultural centers but can also contribute to informing more effective cultural policies by highlighting the specific cultural needs and dynamics of different communities in Italy.

Moreover, community artistic creation finds expression in initiatives such as those of the Italian Cultural Recreational Association (ARCI). This is the largest and oldest Italian cultural and social promotion association, boasting hundreds of thousands of members and numerous associations, clubs, *case del popolo* (people's houses), and mutual aid societies throughout Italy.

Furthermore, the Association advocates for the implementation of the subsidiarity principle, as stated in Article 118 of the Italian Constitution, through the role of associations and the Third Sector.

As outlined in the National Statute approved at the XVIII National Congress held in Rome from December 1 to 4, 2022:

“ARCI APS” (hereinafter referred to as “ARCI” or “Association” in this text) is a social promotion association and a national associational network in accordance with the Third Sector Code (Legislative Decree 117-2017, hereinafter referred to as CTS), organized at multiple territorial levels. ARCI APS has its legal headquarters in Rome, is autonomous and pluralistic, an active subject in the Italian and international Third Sector system, an integrated network of people, values, and places of active citizenship that promotes culture, sociality, and solidarity. ARCI promotes, supports, and safeguards the self-organization of individuals as a fundamental practice of democracy, participation, and a concrete response to the needs of communities. It actively promotes cultural expression, creativity, and access to knowledge and emphasizes the recognition of cultural rights, universal access to education and technology, and supports various art forms such as music, literature, visual arts, theater, and live performances²¹⁷”.

Advocating for the implementation of the subsidiarity principle means supporting the idea that social, economic, and cultural issues should be addressed at the most local and community-based level possible. Hence, this entails empowering non-profit organizations, community groups, and associations to take on

²¹⁵ *Che fare?* Is an agency for cultural transformation, supporting communities, cultural organizations, institutions, and public entities. They also assist those who help individuals, networks, and territories to grow, tackling increasingly ambitious cultural, social, and political challenges.

Here the link to the website: <https://che-fare.com>

²¹⁶ “*Che fare?* Grassroots mapping of New Italian cultural centers” is available at: <https://www.che-fare.com/almanacco/territori/lacall-to-action-mappatura-nazionale-nuovi-centri-culturali-chefare/>

²¹⁷ XVIII Congresso Nazionale ARCI Aps, *STATUTO NAZIONALE ARCI APS*, 2022.

Available at: <https://www.arci.it/chi-siamo/statuto/>

responsibilities and provide services that are best suited to their expertise and proximity to the issues at hand. It means providing access to sustainable funding, fostering capacity building through training, encouraging collaboration and networking among organizations, and ensuring institutional recognition and support from local and national authorities²¹⁸.

Therefore, the promotion of cultural production in Italy is also propelled by third-sector associations and non-governmental cultural entities, which play a pivotal role in shaping the country's cultural landscape. Their collaborative endeavors, at times backed by the Ministry of Culture, substantially contribute to the formulation and implementation of public cultural policies. This collaborative dynamic underscores a multifaceted interplay between governmental support and the proactive engagement of non-state cultural entities, elucidating a nuanced and intricate framework within which cultural promotion and policy enactment operate.

1.2 Administration of cultural-led urban regeneration in France

In Italy, the ongoing process of delineating state legislation concerning urban regeneration contrasts with the relatively limited support afforded to cultural policies aimed at fostering cultural production, a situation partly ascribed to the comparatively lower allocation of funds to cultural services in comparison to the European average. On the contrary, in France, the evolution of public policies on urban regeneration since the establishment of the Fifth Republic underscores a pivotal aspect of French urban governance: the enduring significance of state directives, even amidst initiatives of decentralization and the delegation of authority to municipalities.

In fact, as widely argued in the literature the State has actively collaborated in the definition of local urban administration through *contratualization*, moving to the *government à distance* at the end of the XX century²¹⁹. National governments, particularly during the François Mitterrand presidency (1981-1995), have been able to significantly influence the implementation of cultural policies for cities. Indeed, the centrality of culture and art in development strategies and the economic opportunities that arise from them are part of the French political tradition, as highlighted by considerable national expenditures dedicated to the cultural sector²²⁰.

²¹⁸ According to Bes Report 2022 of National Institute of Statistic (Istat), the importance of landscape and cultural heritage for our country does not seem to find adequate reflection in public finance programs, as evidenced by a comparison with other EU countries regarding general public expenditure for functions related to Cultural Services (which include the preservation and valorization of heritage) and Biodiversity Protection and Landscape. In the biennium 2020-2021, Italy's public expenditure on Cultural Services amounted to around 5 billion euros: a figure comparable to that of Spain, among the major economies of the Union, but significantly lower than those of France and Germany (amounting to 16.6 and 15.3 billion euros respectively in 2020). Over the biennium, Italy's expenditure has increased significantly (by 3.4% in 2020, compared to an average growth of 1.5% in the EU27, and a further 3.3% in 2021), but it remains among the lowest in Europe relative to Gross Domestic Product: 2.9 per thousand, compared to a EU average of 4.8 per thousand in 2020.

Cfr. Istat. *Rapporto Bes 2022: Il benessere equo e sostenibile in Italia*. 2023.

Available at: <https://www.istat.it/it/files//2023/04/Bes-2022.pdf>

²¹⁹ Cfr. R. Epstein., *Gouverner à Distance. Quand l'État Se Retire Des Territoires.Esprit* (1940-), no. 319 (11), 2005, pp. 96–111.

G.Pinson. *Quelle gauche urbaine ? L'Économie politique*, 2020. 1, 85-102

²²⁰ The major domains of culture such as live performance, heritage, architecture, visual arts, recorded music, archaeology, publishing, and video games cumulatively generate billions in revenue each year. For instance, this amounted to 49.2 billion in 2019.

The State participates in financing culture through aids, investments, and subsidies because culture is a wealth for the country, both economically and patrimonially. Each year, a budget (aggregated across multiple ministries) of 17 billion euros is allocated to culture.

Despite the significant financial contributions to cultural sectors, a cohort of intellectuals, including social scientists, cultural economists, and urban sociologists, advocates for a transformation in state intervention. They argue for a recalibration of cultural and political approaches to public intervention aimed at countering and transcending the commercialization of artistic production²²¹. These assertions find resonance in the scholarship of political scientist Pinson, who posits that the urban left's policies during the 1970s and 1980s played a pivotal role in facilitating the *urbanization* of economic functions inherent to informational capitalism. Policies centered on the preservation of architectural and urban heritage, the promotion of pedestrianization, the enhancement of public transportation and sustainable commuting modes, alongside the support for alternative forms of cultural expression, are posited as instrumental in accommodating the principal activities of informational capitalism²²².

1.2.1 Evolution of Urban Renewal Policies in France: From SRU Law to NPNRU and Beyond

While in Italy, urban renewal policy is predominantly anchored within the regional framework, in France, it primarily relies on two principal actors: the State and the municipalities. They are actively engaged across urban renewal projects, spanning from their conceptualization to their execution, leveraging their competencies in housing and urban planning, inclusive of interventions within sensitive urban areas.

Despite the devolution of powers and administrative decentralization since the 1970s, urban regeneration continues to exhibit a significant degree of centralization, with national-level guidelines largely dictating policy direction. Since 2004, numerous large-scale programs have been promoted in this sector, showcasing the state's willingness in furnishing a comprehensive regulatory framework.

The Law No. 2000-1208 of December 13, 2000, concerning Solidarity and Urban Renewal, known as SRU²²³, is considered the law that radically transformed urban planning in France. The foundational principles of the law are essentially three: solidarity, sustainable development; the strengthening of democracy; and decentralization. It aimed to reduce social inequalities by encouraging a mix of housing types, including social housing within urban developments.

Furthermore, it placed a strong emphasis on sustainable development, reflecting a growing awareness of environmental issues and it enhanced democracy and decentralization by stressing on the involvement of local communities in the decision-making process. It included provisions for the creation of *Plan Local d'Urbanisme* / Local Planning for Urbanism, PLU and reinforced regulations related to zoning, land use and development²²⁴. According to social scientist Quilichini, these legal instruments provided a framework for

<https://www.culture.gouv.fr/themes/Financement-de-la-culture>

²²¹ F. Lextrait, *Pour une politique culturelle transversale*. NECTATRT vol. 4, no. 1, 2017, pp. 37-46.

²²² G. Pinson. 2020, *cit.* p. 51.

²²³ Loi n° 2000-1208 du 13 décembre 2000 relative à la solidarité et au renouvellement urbains, Journal officiel de la République française, 289, 14 décembre 2000.

<https://www.ecologie.gouv.fr/loi-solidarite-et-renouvellement-urbain-sru>

²²⁴ In France the Plan Local d'Urbanisme (PLU) is the primary urban planning document at the municipal level.

local authorities to align their planning process with the objective of the SRU law²²⁵. This comprehensive public policy applies to the city as a whole, but it also reaches its limits when it comes to addressing neighborhoods located in sensitive urban areas²²⁶. Therefore, it has been complemented by an adapted mechanism: urban renovation. Established by the *Loi Barloot* of August 1, 2003²²⁷.

This mechanism does not question the approach initiated within the framework of urban renewal policy but also responds to the specific needs of Sensitive Urban Zones (ZUS) by deciding to standardize procedures and consolidate funding. The law of August 1, 2003, defines actions to be implemented in various domains to enable sustainable development in sensitive urban areas and ensure that every resident in these neighborhoods has access to decent living conditions²²⁸.

Through this law, it has been created in 2004 the Agence Nationale pour la Renovation Urbaine /National Agency for Urban Renovation (ANRU)²²⁹, responsible for implementing the *Programme National de Renovation Urbaine* / National Program for Urban Renovation (PNRU, 2004-2014) with the objective of renovating and transforming priority neighborhoods in cities, as well as implementing other national-scale programs such as future investments and the *Programme National de Requalification des Quartiers Anciens Dégradés* / National Program for the Rehabilitation of Deteriorated Historic Neighborhoods, (PNRQAD). It is a public industrial and commercial institution (EPIC) under the supervision of the Ministry responsible for Urban Affairs, which objective it to finance and supports the transformation of neighborhoods under the Urban Policy throughout France²³⁰.

According to Pinson and Morel Journel, the adoption of the PNRU completely changed the landscape of cooperative relationships between the State and local authorities. In fact, the focus shifted from constructing responses tailored to specific problems in each neighborhood towards a national plan setting clear objectives and non-negotiable principles of action – demolition, reconstruction, residentialization – all implemented by an agency²³¹.

The National Urban Renewal Agency put local governments in competition for access to subsidies, thus paving the way to the *government à distance* theorized by Epstein²³².

Under the *Loi de programmation pour la ville et la cohésion urbaine (Loi Lamy)*/Law on Urban Programming and Cohesion du 21 février 2014²³³, the French government introduced the *Nouveau Programme National de*

²²⁵ F. Albert, P. Quilichini, *Habitat et politique de la ville*, dans : GRIDAUH éd., *Droit de l'Aménagement, de l'Urbanisme et de l'Habitat 2021. Droit de l'urbanisme et transition énergétique*. PARIS, GRIDAUH, « Droit de l'Aménagement de l'Urbanisme de l'Habitat », 2021, p. 433-452

²²⁶ Cfr. P. Subra. *Heurs et malheurs d'une loi antiségrégation : les enjeux géopolitiques de la loi Solidarité et renouvellement urbain (SRU)*, Hérodote, 2006/3 (n° 122), p. 138-171.

²²⁷ Loi n° 2003-710 du 1 août 2003 d'orientation et de programmation pour la ville et la rénovation urbaine, Journal officiel de la République française 177, 2 August 2003.

²²⁸ *Ibidem*.

²²⁹ *Agence Nationale pour la Rénovation Urbaine (ANRU)*, 2003.

²³⁰ Thus, urban renovation projects are built upon contract between municipalities and ANRU, which gathers different public partners, in charge of the allocation and track of invested funds.

Cfr. ANRU website: <https://www.anru.fr/presentation-de-lanru-et-de-son-action>

²³¹ G. Pinson, C. Morel Journel. *Beyond Neoliberal Imposition: State-Local Cooperation and the Blending of Social and Economic Objectives in French Urban Development Corporations*. Territory, Politics, Governance, 2016, p.118.

²³² R. Epstein. *Gouverner à distance : Quand l'Etat se retire des territoires*. 2006, 11, pp.96-111.

²³³ Loi n° 2014-173 du 21 février 2014 de programmation pour la ville et la cohésion urbaine, Journal officiel de la République française n°0045 du 22 février 2014.

Renouvellement Urbain/ New National Program of Urban Renovation (NPNRU 2014-2024), managed by ANRU, aiming to transform 450 neighborhoods by 2030. Unlike its predecessor, the NPNRU emphasizes urban regeneration over mere renovation, addressing economic and social functions alongside physical redevelopment. Responding to criticisms of previous policies, which focused predominantly on demolitions and reconstructions, the NPNRU prioritizes resident involvement throughout the renewal process²³⁴. This co-construction is facilitated through the establishment of citizen councils that are involved in various stages: definition, implementation, and evaluation. Additionally, in each neighborhood, a project house allows residents to access information, monitor operations, and interact with project leaders and elected officials²³⁵. Furthermore, with the *Loi Lamy* in 2014, France underwent an update of its *Politique de la Ville*, which governs city contracts between the national government and inter-municipal bodies and municipalities²³⁶. The 2015-2020 city contracts operate on multiple fronts, focusing on the advancement of economic activities and employment, the promotion of social cohesion, and the enhancement of living conditions and urban regeneration. This strategic framework is formulated through a participatory process involving various stakeholders.

In France, the trajectory of urban renewal policies reveals a complex interplay between centralized directives and decentralized implementation. While legislative efforts have aimed to address social disparities and promote sustainability, challenges persist regarding the effective translation of policy objectives into tangible improvements within disadvantaged urban areas. The shift towards urban regeneration, albeit welcomed, necessitates critical evaluation of its implications on local communities and the extent to which participatory mechanisms truly empower residents in decision-making processes.

1.2.2 The Intersection of Urban Planning and Cultural Policies: A French Perspective

The NPNRU is beginning to show an interest in initiatives that involve cultural institutions, increasingly considered essential for promoting the inclusion of residents in urban regeneration projects²³⁷.

This is also known as the *Loi Lamy* of February 21, 2014, named after the Minister Delegate for Urban Affairs, François Lamy, is the Law on Urban Programming and Urban Cohesion. It implements a reform of the urban policy framework to concentrate resources on the most disadvantaged areas. Now, to identify priority neighborhoods, a single criterion is required: income per capita.

²³⁴ Urban socialist Reneaud Epstein argued that the billions invested in demolition and reconstruction have indeed transformed the urban planning of large housing complexes, but these transformations have not been followed by the expected “renewal” of their population: “with urban renewal, we recreate the ghetto, but in a cleaner way.”

²³⁵ Cfr. *Qu'est-ce que le Nouveau Programme National de Renouvellement Urbain ?* ANRU website: <https://www.anru.fr/le-nouveau-programme-national-de-renouvellement-urbain-npnru>

²³⁶ The *Politique de la ville* aims to reduce development disparities within cities. It seeks to restore republican equality in the poorest neighborhoods and improve the living conditions of their residents, who experience higher unemployment and school dropout rates than elsewhere, along with difficulties accessing services and healthcare, notably. The birth of urban policy is traditionally dated to the late 1970s (measures on Housing and Social Life, 1977). The context was one of public authorities becoming aware of the problems encountered within the *grands ensembles*/large housing estates. The Law on Urban Programming and Urban Cohesion of February 21, 2014 partly redefined urban policy and some of its principles, with an emphasis on resident participation, including the creation of a citizen council for each priority neighborhood. Since January 1, 2020, and in line with the General Delegation for Territorial Equality, the *Agence Nationale de la Cohésion des Territoires/* National Agency for Territorial Cohesion (ANCT), under the Ministry of Urban Affairs, has been responsible for designing and implementing urban policy.

²³⁷ B. Guillemont, B. *Rénovation urbaine et institutions culturelles : le point de vue de l'État*. Les Cahiers du Développement Social Urbain, 69, 2019, 20-20.

This acknowledgment underscores the imperative of integrating cultural dimensions within the overarching framework of urban development, echoing a longstanding principle entrenched in French urban planning discourse. Thus, it is arguable that the promotion of urban regeneration through cultural means has been championed within national public policies since the post-World War II era, alongside robust intellectual and academic discourse that has influenced policy formulation and catalyzed innovative trajectories.

Historically, the intersection of urban and cultural policies has its roots in the latter half of the 20th century, notably marked by initiatives led by the Ministry of Culture under André Malraux²³⁸ (1959-1969) and continued by Jacques Duhamel²³⁹ and Jack Lang in the 1980s²⁴⁰. According to political scientist Secchi, under the administration of Malraux, these policies evolved from a traditional focus on heritage preservation to a broader scope that included the development of cultural activities, encompassing facilities and artistic productions²⁴¹.

In fact, since the establishment of the Ministry of Culture in France in 1959, cultural policies have been guided by two overarching and intersecting objectives. Firstly, there is a focus on cultural democratization, a principle embodied by the Malraux Ministry, which seeks to ensure widespread access to a curated selection representative of high culture, heritage, and artistic excellence. This includes initiatives such as the establishment of *Maisons de la Culture* (community culture and arts centers) in the 1960s; implementation of low or free entrance fees at national cultural institutions; and efforts to broaden cultural participation.

Secondly, starting in the 1970s-1980s, the initially perceived restrictive and occasionally elitist approach gave way to a cultural democracy perspective. This newer approach broadens the range of artistic and cultural expressions and advocates for a non-hierarchical stance. It involves expanding the Ministry's scope of activities, endorsing emerging practices and creative disciplines that were previously considered *minor arts*, such as street and circus arts, comics, fashion, jazz, and contemporary or non-classical music.

Therefore, according to a national study conducted by the Ministry of Culture and Communication in 2015, known as *Plan – Guide Arts & Aménagement des Territoires / Plan – Guide Arts & Territorial Development*, the evolution of cultural-led urban regeneration has been sustained and supported by the Ministry of Culture²⁴².

In support of this assumption, other than Malraux endeavors, since the early 70s Duhamel endorsed an inter-ministerial and decentralized policy of cultural development, fostering the creation of the Cultural Intervention Fund in 1971, that further encouraged interdisciplinary and innovative cultural initiatives. Other noteworthy initiatives supported by the ministers of culture include the promotion of street arts during Jack Lang's tenure

²³⁸ André Malraux has been a French writer and politician.

²³⁹ Jacques Duhamel has been Minister of Cultural Affairs from 1971 to 1973.

²⁴⁰ Jack Lang is a French politician and former Minister of Culture under President François Mitterrand from 1981 to 1986 and again from 1988 to 1993. He is known for his advocacy for French arts and culture.

²⁴¹ G. Secchi. *Politiques Culturelles, Régimes Urbains et processus de Régénération dans deux Villes Européennes : Sassari (Italie) Et Saint-Etienne (France)*. Science politique. Università degli studi di Sassari, 2015, pp. 111-114.

²⁴² M. Le Floc'h, (*pOlau* - pôle des arts urbains), *Plan – Guide Arts & Aménagement des Territoires*, Étude Nationale pour le ministère de la Culture et de la Communication, May 2015.

Available at: https://arteplan.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/plan-guide_tome1.pdf

in the 1990s and the establishment of *Projets Culturel de Quartiers* / Neighborhood Cultural Projects (PCQ) by Jacques Toubon²⁴³, supporting efforts that combine artistic, social, and territorial dimensions²⁴⁴.

While these mechanisms have elicited both praise and criticism for their perceived top-down approach, they function as a conduit between national institutions and local territories, as underscored in reports by Latarjet and Lextrait²⁴⁵.

From 1993 to 2006, the implementation of urban policy was carried out through the realization of city contracts that legally bound the State, local authorities, and their partners. Starting in 2000, a cultural component, made mandatory by a circular from the Ministry of Culture and Communication, was integrated into these contracts through the signing of "city culture - culture for the city" agreements. This framework affirmed the cultural dimension of urban policy concerning issues such as neighborhood memory, resident participation, acceptance of diversities, and more²⁴⁶.

Over the past decade, leveraging the groundwork laid by these initiatives, the Ministry of Culture has embraced endeavors aimed at fostering social cohesion and advancing cultural promotion, often with a pronounced emphasis on public space and territorial dynamics. As an illustration, the establishment of the *Mission Nationale pour l' Art et la Culture en Espace Public* / National Mission for Art and Culture in Public Space (MNACEP) in 2014, spearheaded by Ministry of Culture Aurélie Filippetti²⁴⁷, exemplifies operational adaptability commensurate with contemporary exigencies.

Furthermore, the *Loi relative à la liberté de la création, à l'architecture et au patrimoine* / law on freedom of creation, architecture, and heritage, enacted in 2016, stands on these principles, aiming to promote artistic freedom, cultural diversity, the societal role of artists, broader cultural access, and the modernization of heritage protection in France²⁴⁸.

These initiatives prioritize individuals facing barriers to accessing cultural services due to their social status and negative perceptions of their surroundings. The Ministry's actions span diverse cultural domains, aiming to democratize access through pricing, diverse programming, and more. In this context, cultural institutions

²⁴³ Jacques Toubon has been Minister of Culture and communications from 1993 to 1995.

²⁴⁴ Conceived under the tenure of Minister Toubon and announced in May 1994, cultural neighborhood projects were initiated in early 1995 across 29 "sensitive neighborhoods" spanning 21 regions. Led by the Regional Directorates of Cultural Affairs (DRAC) in collaboration with municipalities, they were animated by cultural operators from diverse artistic disciplines and cultural institutions tasked with engaging young people and residents in high-quality cultural and artistic activities. Each project was sponsored by a prominent figure. These initiatives serve as predecessors to the "artistic and cultural projects of territory" (PACT), designed and managed in a participatory manner, embodying the evolving policy of cultural rights. Presently, this experimentation has also developed into the *Quartiers Culturels Créatifs* / Creative Cultural Districts (QCC) under the Ministry of Culture, fostering cooperation among cultural actors and facilitating the revitalization, renewal, and promotion of territories through cultural initiatives. The Ministry supports cultural third places engaged in projects aimed at nurturing the entrepreneurial dimension of residents and enhancing cultural offerings through subsidies allocation.

²⁴⁵ Cfr. B. Latarjet. *L'aménagement culturel du territoire*. Paris, La Documentation française, 1992

Cfr. F. Lextrait, *Une nouvelle époque de l' action Culturelle*, Documentation Française, Paris, 2001

²⁴⁶ In 2006, with the replacement of city contracts with the *Contrats Urbain de Cohésion Social* / Urban Contracts for Social Cohesion (CUCS) the access to culture was no longer a priority, although the concepts of cultural democratization, development of artistic and cultural practices among populations, cultural and artistic actions impacting architectural and urban living environments, etc., were still discussed.

²⁴⁷ Aurélie Filippetti has been the French Minister of Culture and Communications from 2012 to 2014.

To have further information on MNACEP, see: <https://www.culture.gouv.fr/Thematiques/Arts-plastiques/Les-Arts-plastiques-en-France/La-mission-nationale-pour-l-art-et-la-culture-dans-l-espace-public>

²⁴⁸ Loi n° 2016-925 du 7 juillet 2016 relative à la liberté de la création, à l'architecture et au patrimoine. Journal officiel de la République française n°0158 du 8 juillet 2016.

play various roles, originating and integrating actions into their policies, serving as support and training centers, and fostering new cultural practices in urban areas.

Aligned with this historical trajectory, which has increasingly codified and integrated the role of culture within territories, particularly in Priority neighborhoods (*quartiers prioritaires*)²⁴⁹ of urban settings, the concept of *Urbanisme Culturel*/ Cultural Urbanism, emerges as a framework delineating distinct practices that interweave art, culture, and urban planning. According to Le Floc'h, *Urbanisme Culturel* encompasses the integration of artistic and cultural elements into urban projects, viewing them as strategic components of urban planning²⁵⁰. This perspective regards artistic endeavors as pivotal stages in the planning process, involving preliminary studies and upstream phases²⁵¹. *Urbanisme Culturel* perceives artistic projects as integral to urban planning, complemented by landscape studies and preliminary investigations²⁵². Its establishment has prompted the emergence of a professional domain encompassing diverse stakeholders such as artists, designers, urban planning collectives, associations, citizens, users, and residents, addressing various issues including use reversibility, prefiguration, co-construction, and storytelling. Projects such as brownfield occupancy, territorial cultural engineering, and contextual interventions closely align with this approach, actively supported by the Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Territorial Cohesion.

In summary, an observation to emphasize is that recent advancements in academic discourse and administrative procedures in France have underscored and solidified the interdependence of urban planning, culture, and cultural policies within urban governance frameworks. As elucidated by research conducted by the Compendium on Cultural Policy, the French system of public action in culture demonstrates a predominantly interventionist stance, with the bulk of initiatives conducted and endorsed by public authorities across all tiers of governance²⁵³. This underscores that, notwithstanding endeavors towards cultural decentralization, the framework continues to be intricately intertwined with national policies and garners substantial support from the Ministry of Culture and the broader State apparatus.

2. Devolution and decentralization

For the purpose of understanding the complex relationship between public institutions and sociocultural organizations amid urban regeneration, it has been deemed useful to analyze the devolution of powers from the State to the regions and cities, both in terms of urban administration and cultural policies.

²⁴⁹ Priority neighborhoods" (*quartiers prioritaires*) are designated areas that are identified as facing significant social and economic challenges. These neighborhoods often experience issues such as high unemployment rates, poverty, crime, educational disparities, and inadequate access to services and opportunities.

²⁵⁰ M. Le Floc'h., *POLAU: quand l'art inspire l'aménagement du territoire*, Horizons Publics, n°4, 2018.

²⁵¹ E. Gangloff. in Bouchaudy M.P & Lextraire F. (Eds.) *Un abécédaire des friches, laboratoires, fabriques, squats, espaces intermédiaires, tiers-lieux culturels*, Sens&Tonka, 2023, p.178.

Cfr. H. Morteau, E. Gangloff, C. Ambrosino. *De la friche à la ville ou l'art de perma- cultiver les innovations urbaines : un jeu à la nantaise ?*. CIST2020 - Population, temps, territoires, Collège international des sciences territoriales (CIST), Paris-Aubervilliers, 2020, France. pp.368- 372.

²⁵² Cfr. P. Ferren. *Démarche artistique et renouvellement urbain : un mariage de raison(s) ?*, Les Cahiers du Développement Social Urbain, vol. 69, no. 1, 2019, pp. 24-26.

²⁵³ T. Perrin and J.C. Delvainquière. *Short Cultural Policy profile – France*, Compendium cultural policies and trends, October 2023. Available at: https://www.culturalpolicies.net/wp-content/uploads/pdf_short/france/France_short_10_2023.pdf

Indeed, the evolution and effectiveness of this process are closely linked to the nuanced role of Public Administration in facilitating or constraining contemporary cultural and artistic production within the respective landscapes, both at the national level and within the urban context, as will be analyzed in subsequent chapters. This section offers insights into the interplay between top-down and bottom-up logics inherent in the implementation of “New territories of the arts” initiatives in France and Italy.

2.1 Urban Policies and Decision Making in Italy: A Multi-level Governance Approach

In Italy, urban policies are shaped by a multi-level governance structure involving regions, municipalities, and various stakeholders. The devolution of power to regions has granted them increased autonomy, enabling the formulation of regional territorial plans and urban development strategies. At the local level, municipalities play a crucial role in urban policies, overseeing urban planning, public construction, and land management. Municipalities are also responsible for approving planning regulations and granting construction permits, influencing daily urban life significantly²⁵⁴.

This decentralized approach involves diverse actors, including citizen associations, private entities, cultural institutions, and businesses. Collaborative mechanisms such as public consultations, public-private partnerships, and various forms of collaboration emphasize the complexity of responsibilities across different administrative levels.

In 2001, the Italian Constitution underwent significant revisions to the second part, leading to a restructuring of the distribution of powers between the central State and the twenty regional authorities²⁵⁵. This amendment marked the incorporation of the subsidiarity principle into the Constitution²⁵⁶. The subsidiarity principle is understood in dual dimensions: vertically, it pertains to the delegation of administrative functions between the central State and local authorities, while horizontally, it governs the interactions among citizens and their peers who wish to pursue initiatives of general interest. It is expressed in Article 118 of the Italian Constitutions, requiring that “administrative functions be allocated by the legislator among different actors: the State, the Regions, and local authorities, in accordance with the principles of subsidiarity, differentiation, and adequacy.”²⁵⁷ These entities should further promote the autonomous initiatives of citizens, both as individuals and as members of associations, relating to activities of general interest.

Therefore, the concept of urban regeneration in Italy intersects with legislative competencies outlined in the distribution of powers between the State and regions, as defined by Article 117 of the Constitution²⁵⁸. In particular, the governance of the territory, the enhancement of cultural assets and the organization of cultural

²⁵⁴ This principle has been reaffirmed by the Constitutional Court with judgment No. 179/2019.

²⁵⁵ Corte Costituzionale, Legge costituzionale 18 ottobre 2001, n. 3. *Modifiche al titolo V della parte seconda della Costituzione*. pubblicata nella *Gazzetta Ufficiale* n. 248 del 24 ottobre 2001.

²⁵⁶ Costituzione della Repubblica Italiana, Parte II, Titolo V, Art. 118.

The principle of subsidiarity is a concept in political philosophy and governance that suggests that matters should be handled by the smallest, lowest, or least centralized competent authority capable of addressing them effectively. In essence, it advocates for decentralization and local autonomy, with decisions made at the most immediate or local level feasible.

²⁵⁷ Costituzione della Repubblica Italiana, Parte II, Titolo V, Art. 118.

²⁵⁸ Costituzione della Repubblica Italiana, Parte II, Titolo V, Art. 117.

activities, involves concurrent legislative authority shared between the State and regions. This means that legislative authority lies with the regions, except for the determination of fundamental principles, which is reserved for the State.

In the absence of specific state legislation, the latter have enacted laws addressing urban planning institutes, territorial planning tools, and principles related to land consumption containment and urban regeneration.

2.1.2 Cultural Policies: Decentralization and Cooperation

In Italy, the oversight and administration of cultural heritage are delegated to 43 Superintendencies of Archaeology, Fine Arts, and Landscape, dispersed across the national territory, acting as representatives of the Ministry of Culture. Integral to conservation endeavors, they engage in scholarly research, orchestrate cultural events, and execute policies pertinent to the management and conservation of cultural assets. Collaborating closely with diverse stakeholders, including local authorities, cultural institutions, scholars, and international entities, the superintendencies play a pivotal role in ensuring the perpetuation and dissemination of Italy's cultural legacy. On the other hand, these entities, which hold considerable sway even within municipal administrations – particularly in matters such as the allocation of public land under their jurisdiction– have the potential to hinder the advancement of cultural production and its contemporary valorization, adding another layer to Italy's bureaucratic challenges.

Moreover, the regionalization focused also on the delegation of administrative functions related to other cultural matters, such as the management of libraries, local museums, regional cultural development responsibilities, while the protection aspect remained within the exclusive jurisdiction of the State.

Within this framework, regions and the state have devised specific mechanisms for cooperation, notably through *Accordi di Programma Quadro/ Framework Planning Agreements* under the *Programmazione Negoziata/ National Bargaining Programming*. These agreements represent joint programming efforts between the state and regions, delineating tailored projects with allocated financial resources and assigned responsibilities for each participant. However, the implementation of these tools remains discretionary and the distribution of these projects across regions was considered by experts, uneven. Therefore, decentralization has precipitated a diverse array of approaches at the regional level, predominantly relying on individual agreements between the Ministry of Culture and stakeholders²⁵⁹. This decentralized approach may contribute to an inconsistent process at the national level, exacerbating the 'cultural gap' between different regional territories²⁶⁰.

Furthermore, the capacity of the central state to formulate cultural policies primarily revolved around authoritative functions directed towards heritage preservation. Consequently, there was a lack of

²⁵⁹ M. Cammelli, *Il Codice tra centro e periferia*. Cicala V. and M. P. Guermandi (Eds), *Regioni e ragioni nel nuovo codice dei beni culturali e del paesaggio: atti del convegno*, Bologna, 28 maggio 2004, Istituto Beni Culturali, Bologna, 2004, pp.43-57.

²⁶⁰ R. Putnam. *Making democracy work. Civic traditions in modern Italy*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ. 1993.

comprehensive competence transfer to the regions and cities²⁶¹. This observation by urban manager Santagati, Bonini Baraldi, and Zan underscores the intricacies of decentralization, which are contingent upon the preceding policy frameworks and administrative capabilities of the central state within a given domain and nation.

2.1.1 Challenges in Empowering Italian Cities: Regionalism and Governance Complexities

Despite these decentralized governance structures, recognizing cities as autonomous entities has faced challenges. The European Union's acknowledgment of cities in cohesion policies was not fully embraced by Italian Regions, particularly in granting greater roles to cities and hindering the institutionalization of metropolitan cities²⁶².

Several factors contribute to this complexity. First, Italy has a strong regionalism tradition, and Regions have historically played a central role in governance structures. The resistance to devolving power to cities may be rooted in the intention to maintain regional control and avoid the potential fragmentation of authority.

Second, the lack of a clear and streamlined framework for the empowerment of cities has contributed to the challenges. According to Pinson, unlike in some other European countries where there is a more explicit recognition and delegation of authority to cities, Italy, is considered a *failed* strong state with conflictual central-local relations²⁶³.

He argued that during the 1990s, there was a notable emergence of the city-actor concept in Italy, which initially seemed promising but eventually faced challenges. This emergence coincided with the rise of directly elected urban mayors who envisioned cities as focal points for political and policy reconstruction. However, subsequent decades witnessed a slowdown in institutional reforms and a resurgence of political party influence. The inability of the Italian State administration to pursue reforms hindered the consolidation of this urban policy revival, especially in the face of powerful regional governments that overshadowed the role of the city-actor in the political arena.

From the provided insights, several conclusions can be drawn regarding the governance structure in Italy concerning urban and cultural policies, reflecting a multi-level approach that involves regions, municipalities, and diverse stakeholders. The devolution of authority to regions has engendered a decentralized system wherein municipalities and various actors assume significant roles. Consequently, legislative authority is distributed, with regions crafting laws pertaining to urban planning, regeneration, and cultural affairs in the absence of specific state legislation. The principle of subsidiarity, enshrined in the Constitution since 2001,

²⁶¹ E. Santagati, S. Bonini Baraldi, L. Zan. *Understanding decentralization: deconcentration and devolution processes in the French and Italian cultural sectors*. International Journal of Public Sector Management, Vol. 33 No. 4, 2020, pp. 435-460.

²⁶² A. Calafati. *L'Agenda urbana delle città italiane*, 2021.

To further delve into the topic: European Parliament, *The Role of Cities in Cohesion Policies (2014-2020)* available at https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2014/529075/IPOL_STU%282014%29529075_EN.pdf

²⁶³ G. Pinson, M. Santagelo. *La planification stratégique: vecteur ou substitue à l'intégration métropolitaine: un détour par l'Italie*. Collin, Jean-Pierre; Robertson, Mélanie. Gouverner les métropoles : enjeux et portraits des expériences sur quatre continents, Presses de l'Université Laval, 2007. pp.125-150

underscores the delegation of administrative functions, underscoring collaborative efforts between the State and regions in cultural heritage management. Despite notable urban administration experiences in cities like Bologna, Naples, and Milan, the overarching influence of regions tends to overshadow the potential of cities as catalysts for urban policies²⁶⁴. Furthermore, the national legislative landscape, particularly concerning culture, predominantly focuses on safeguarding cultural heritage, with minimal guidance on broader cultural policies, a trend mirrored at the local level. Notably, the absence of a cohesive national urban and cultural agenda accentuates the significance of civil society initiatives and the role of the private sector, emerging as alternatives to municipal services, thus contributing to the urban development discourse.

2.2 Devolution, Territorialization and Metropolization in France

The devolution and decentralization of urban policies from the 1970s played a pivotal role in shaping urban cultural policies. Cities and regions emerged as key players in cultural promotion, collaborating closely with the central government.

The decentralization reforms primarily involved the creation of regional branches in 1977, known as DRACs Directions Régionales des Affaires Culturelles/ Regional Directorates for Cultural Affairs, along with the allocation of regional budgets and staffing resources (Decree 115/1977)²⁶⁵.

DRACs function as regional extensions of the Ministry and play a pivotal role in overseeing the cultural sector comprehensively, including conservation, coordination, cultural heritage, and theater. They are tasked with implementing national cultural policies at the regional level and ensuring alignment with relevant public institutions. Therefore, this decentralization process served as a progressive institutional learning in the cultural field, ensuring a general homogeneity in the policy and management capacity of regions²⁶⁶.

Furthermore, cultural sociologist Guy Saez traces the trajectory of cultural policies in cities through three distinct periods: *decentralization* (1960-1980), *territorialization* (1980-2000), and *metropolization* (2000-2020) —each aligning with shifts in devolution and globalization's impact on cultural policies²⁶⁷. He marks the initiation of cultural *decentralization* to the introduction of the above mentioned *Maisons de la Culture* by André Malraux's team, emphasizing the foundational role of planning and territorial development in the Gaullian vision of the Fifth Republic. Municipalities, beyond providing infrastructure and financial support, actively influence the cultural agenda to reflect their unique understanding of the public's cultural needs.

During this phase of cooperation among artists, local administrations, and the state, which coincided with the democratization of cultural policies, there was a recognition of the importance of cultural expression and participation in shaping local identities and social cohesion. This phase emphasized the involvement of various

²⁶⁴ Cfr. P. Michiara. *I patti di collaborazione e il regolamento per la cura e la rigenerazione dei beni comuni urbani. L'esperienza del Comune di Bologna*. Il Mulino Rivistaweb, Fascicolo 2, maggio-agosto 2016.

²⁶⁵ Décret n°77-115 du 3.02.1977 portant création des DRAC Directions Régionales des Affaires Culturelles

²⁶⁶ E. Santagati and others, 2020, *cit. p. 63*.

²⁶⁷ G. Saez. *La Gouvernance culturelle des villes, de la décentralisation à la métropolisation*. La Documentation française, 2021, p.534.

stakeholders in cultural decision-making processes, reflecting a shift towards more inclusive and participatory governance models.

The period of *territorialization* initiated with the Defferre laws of 1982²⁶⁸, reflects a period of decentralization and empowerment of local authorities. As municipalities, departments, and regions gained greater autonomy and responsibilities, cultural policies became more attuned to local contexts and needs. This phase marked a significant partnership between local governments and the state, with the recognition that cultural development is deeply intertwined with territorial dynamics and community engagement.

Lastly, the phase of *metropolization* represents a response to broader economic and global trends, where cities increasingly compete on a global stage for investment, talent, and cultural capital. The emphasis on an economic and innovative conception of culture reflects a recognition of culture's role as a driver of urban development and competitiveness. This phase is characterized by increased international collaboration and the emergence of metropolitan areas as key players in shaping cultural policies and urban strategies. The intertwining of metropolization and globalization underscores the interconnectedness of urban policies and cultural development in an increasingly interconnected world²⁶⁹.

2.2.1 Contemporary Dynamics

According to Pinson, the evolution of central-local government dynamics in France over the past decades reveals a shifting relationship²⁷⁰. Initially, decentralization processes led to a perceived weakening of the central state, with a subsequent "rescaling" process saw the rise of metropolitan and regional institutions. In recent decades, the central government, adopting neo-managerial reforms, redefined its relationship with local governments, transitioning from contractual agreements to more controlled interactions, particularly through competitive calls for projects.

In this regard, Renaud Epstein's analytical framework delineates three distinct phases within central-local relations: initially marked by centralized governance over local entities, followed by a transitional period of negotiated territorial governance during *contractualization*, and culminating in the contemporary era of *gouvernement à distance* since the early 2000s²⁷¹. Within this paradigm, the state endeavors to maintain overarching control over urban policies while concurrently fostering municipal autonomy.

Pinson's observations underscore recent scholarly discourse, indicating that the competitive allocation of resources not only functions as a governance mechanism but also serves as a conduit for the state to assimilate novel ideas and best practices from municipalities. Despite occasional challenges in delineating a cohesive policy doctrine, the state adeptly reconstructs its approach based on standardized urban methodologies,

²⁶⁸ Loi n°82-213 du 2.03.1982 relative aux droits et libertés des communes, des départements et des régions.

²⁶⁹ W., Emmanuel. *Les politiques urbaines de la culture en trois temps, trois mouvements*. Guy Saez, *La gouvernance culturelle des villes. De la décentralisation à la métropolisation*, Comité d'histoire du ministère de la Culture (coll. «Travaux et documents », n° 44), Paris, La Documentation française, 2021, 536 p., ISBN : 978-2-11-157251-5, 22 € », *L'Observatoire*, vol. 59, no. 1, 2022, pp. 85-87.

²⁷⁰ G. Pinson. *Voracious cities and obstructing states?*. In *The city as a global political actor*, Routledge, 2018, pp. 60-85.

²⁷¹ R. Epstein. *Gouverner à distance : Quand l'Etat se retire des territoires*. *Revue Esprit*, 2006, 11, pp. 96-111.

leveraging its institutional resources including legitimacy, legislative frameworks, and resource allocation mechanisms²⁷².

In conclusion, the dynamics of central-local government relations in France have undergone significant transformations, from the initial stages of decentralization to the rescaling process and the contemporary era marked by neo-managerial reforms. Renaud Epstein's framework delineates the evolution through the current era of *gouvernement à distance*. Despite the state's efforts to maintain control, municipalities have asserted their autonomy, contributing to policy innovation and shaping local agendas. This complex interplay underscores the adaptive nature of governance structures and the ongoing negotiation of power dynamics between central and local authorities in France.

Therefore, as noted by Santagati and others²⁷³, while there is a homogenous process for all regions in France, involving the cultural sector as a whole, due to a strong tradition of State policy-making in the cultural field, in Italy there is an uneven set of individual regional experiences, mainly with regard to the cultural heritage field, driven by the hegemonic view of the legal perspective make it more academic.

It is plausible to posit that while Italy exhibits a higher degree of decentralization in contrast to France, with regions wielding significant legislative powers, the transfer of competencies from the central State to local administrative entities appears to have been more efficacious in France. The consolidation of state guidelines concerning cultural policies and urban administration in France suggests that devolution aims to standardize policies rather than disperse authority.

3. New Spaces for Culture: Reuse of post-industrial spaces and wastelands

Drawing upon these foundational premises aimed at elucidating the State's role in catalyzing cultural-led urban regeneration processes and the subsequent devolution of competencies at the territorial level, it becomes apparent that the French context exhibits a more robust association between the State and cities, whereas in Italy, the nexus between the State and regions is more conspicuous. The objective of this section is to scrutinize how, in the context of the outlined scenarios, divergent instances of cultural and artistic production and promotion have unfolded within the two national landscapes, thereby contributing to urban regeneration. Urban planning has long been entrusted not only with the task of ensuring the public interest in the orderly use of land but also with safeguarding other public interests. Among these, the most immediate is the protection of the environment and of the urban landscape, leading to a tendency to reuse existing building heritage and revitalize disused areas. The goal is to avoid the wasteful consumption of a limited resource such as land.

Therefore, in exploring the nuances of urban regeneration through culture, it becomes evident that the reuse of spaces plays a pivotal role in reshaping the urban landscape. The emphasis on this aspect aligns with the

²⁷² G. Pinson. *Voracious cities and obstructing states?*, 2018, p.67.

²⁷³ E. Santagati and others, 2020, *cit.* p.63.

broader global trend towards sustainable development and responsible land use. The recognition of social, economic, and cultural dimensions in national programs underscores the multidimensional nature of contemporary urban planning.

In the case of France, the well-established roots of reusing spaces for cultural purposes, leading to the idea of “Nouveaux territoires de l’art” (New territories of the arts)²⁷⁴, reflect a historical commitment to integrating grassroots cultural initiatives into urban development. This long-standing approach has laid the groundwork for a regulatory framework, facilitating the seamless inclusion of cultural elements in regeneration projects.

Conversely, the Italian scenario presents a notable regional and municipal divergence regarding the reuse of spaces, indicating a more fragmented approach. The concern on the reuse of public and private wastelands for cultural purposes is relatively recent on the political agenda, even if informal experiences of reappropriation of abandoned land for social and cultural objectives has a long way back in the history of the Italian Republic. Indeed, Italy has a strong tradition of grassroots urban experiences, which have established an informal governance for public spaces, learning how to implement strategies of development what can be referred as “territories without government”²⁷⁵. On the other side of this narrative, the role of private entities is becoming increasingly dominant, as if the public administration were outsourcing a portion of its responsibilities to the real estate market and large private foundations. This dynamic results in a scenario where, in cities like Milan, private entities partially take on the tasks traditionally handled by the public sector.²⁷⁶

Therefore, gaining insights into the diverse strategies employed to repurpose spaces through cultural-led urban revitalization initiatives in both France and Italy becomes crucial for shaping effective policies and methodologies that contribute to sustainable and vibrant urban environments. Additionally, it emphasizes the significance of ongoing research and collaborative efforts to further enhance strategies for cultural integration within the broader context of urban development.

3.1 Transformations in Italian Cultural-Led Urban Regeneration: Dynamics, Challenges, and Alternative Practices

Based on the studies conducted thus far, it emerges that in Italy, the initiation of urban regeneration through cultural means, with a particular focus on the repurposing of spaces for cultural activities, gained significant traction in the aftermath of the 2008 economic crisis. Cultural project managers Linda Di Pietro and Roberta Franceschinelli have noted that the catalysts for this transformation, while rooted in cultural

²⁷⁴ Cfr. F. Lextrait, 2001, *cit.* p.56.

²⁷⁵ This denomination originates from a text by engineer Giancarlo Storto, titled *Territorio senza governo. Tra Stato e regioni: a cinquant'anni dall'istituzione delle regioni* of 2020, which addresses the indifference of state policies regarding unresolved issues of absolute relevance, such as containing soil consumption, funding public residential construction, coordinating landscape plans, updating urban planning laws, and regulating interventions following calamitous events.

Cfr. G.Storto (a cura di) *Territorio senza governo. Tra Stato e regioni: a cinquant'anni dall'istituzione delle regioni*. DeriveApprodi, 2020.

²⁷⁶ Cfr. L. Tozzi, *L'Invenzione di Milano. Culto della comunicazione e politiche urbane*, Cronopio, Rasoi, 2023.

motivations, were also driven by the escalating challenges individuals faced in finding conventional paths within the realms of culture, research, and communication²⁷⁷.

As a result, the proliferation of social and cultural innovation practices in Italy over the past decade can be attributed, on one hand, to the emergence of dynamic professionals championing grassroots initiatives. These individuals not only advocate for cultural revitalization but also respond to the shifting landscape of traditional career trajectories. On the other hand, in certain areas, this trend is fueled by the impetus provided by public administrations, especially at the local level, and their endeavors to rejuvenate various forms of conventional institutions²⁷⁸.

Moreover, it is noteworthy that this transformative period has not only given rise to new cultural paradigms but has also spurred a reevaluation of urban spaces as dynamic and multifunctional entities. The reappropriation of disused areas for cultural purposes has not only breathed new life into neglected corners of cities but has also fostered a sense of community engagement and shared identity.

As previously observed, the challenges arising from the absence of comprehensive guidelines regarding urban regeneration and space reuse at the national level have potentially impeded the effectiveness of decentralization processes at the regional and local levels. Within this regulatory void at the administrative level, three key actors come to the forefront:

- 1) Private entities
- 2) Informal sociocultural centers
- 3) Hybrid cultural associations

Notably, the hybrid cultural associations, with the dual synergy between grassroots initiatives, filling the administrative gap, and institutional support, underscore the complex and evolving nature of Italy's cultural and urban landscape in response to the challenges posed by the recent economic downturns. These hybrid and independent centers, strongly rooted in the local context, have given rise over the last ten years to an autonomous cultural scene that has begun to operate outside traditional artistic systems. As such, according to economist Michele Trimarchi, in the Italian institutional framework every cultural action that the public administration can undertake has to be inscribed into a strict legislative grid where prohibitions and constraints prevail due to a meta-ethic view of culture still diffused and accepted. Such a reluctance to encourage entrepreneurial projects and artistic freedom also justifies complex and long bureaucratic processes aimed at filtering projects through ex-ante formal monitoring²⁷⁹.

Furthermore, as highlighted in the previous chapter, urban policies underwent significant changes following the youth and workers' protests in 1968. The assimilation of the '68 movements' claims into government

²⁷⁷ L. Di Pietro, R. Franceschinelli, *Nuovi luoghi per nuove istituzioni culturali*; chapter in R. Franceschinelli (a cura di), *Spazi del possibile: I nuovi luoghi della cultura e le opportunità della rigenerazione*. Pubblico, Professioni e Luoghi della Cultura, FrancoAngeli, 2021.

²⁷⁸ *Ibidem*.

²⁷⁹ M. Trimarchi. *The Economics and Policy of Creativity: The Italian Perspective*, in *Creative Industries Journal*, vol. 2, n. 3, 2009, pp. 231- 246.

policies could be a crucial element in understanding how new cultural practices have developed to the present day. In Italy, in particular, various critical studies have led to the conclusion that, while in other European countries the effects of 1968 were quickly absorbed into the political system, in Italy their influence remained significant for many years²⁸⁰. These considerations become relevant when trying to understand the presence of numerous informal spaces dedicated to cultural production in Italy, such as *centri sociali*, as they embody the informal evolution of urban transformation due also to weak public policies. Additionally, it sheds light on the challenges faced by those embarking on a path of formalization and their interactions with local and national public administration. This dynamic relationship often involves navigating complexities arising from regulatory frameworks, architectural constraints, urban planning, live event regulations, intellectual property rights, and the inherent dichotomy between the more political aspects and the roles played by officials and executives who hold the final authority. The hybrid and multisectoral nature of these cultural spaces poses a challenge to entities accustomed to operating in distinct sectors, making it difficult to identify the appropriate interlocutors²⁸¹.

Starting from these premises, recent endeavors by cultural organizations to establish alternative practices, as articulated by Di Pietro and Franceschinelli, can be delineated into distinct categories: Firstly, initiatives such as Teatro Valle Occupato²⁸², Cinema Palazzo in Rome, and MACAO in Milan exemplify the occupation of spaces beyond the institutional realm. Secondly, transformations within existing institutions, as observed in MAXXI and Museo Egizio di Torino, signify efforts to effect change from within. Lastly, there are endeavors that involve entering spaces that traditional institutions have ceased to oversee, forming a network of independent yet interconnected spaces. These spaces serve as emblematic manifestations of the cultural sector's evolutionary trajectory within the urban landscape, highlighting the pressing need for change and adaptation.

3.1.1 The State attempt to Regulate the “Commons”

To grasp the emergence of a national discourse on the socio-cultural reuse of space, a pivotal juncture is discernible in the early 2000s, characterized by concerted efforts to formulate comprehensive legislation at the national level pertaining to communal assets, colloquially denoted as *commons*. These entities are perceived as *collective property*, institutions that prioritize local regulation by a community owning the land²⁸³. In the Italian context, the initiative to formulate legislation on *commons*, originated with the so-called Rodotà

²⁸⁰ R. Biorcio, M. Pucciarelli (Eds.). *Volevamo cambiare il mondo: storia di Avanguardia operaia 1968-1977*. Mimesis, 2021.

²⁸¹ R. Franceschinelli (Eds), *Spazi del possibile: I nuovi luoghi della cultura e le opportunità della rigenerazione*. Pubblico, Professioni e Luoghi della Cultura, Introduzione, FrancoAngeli, 2021.

²⁸² The Teatro Valle in Rome, among Europe's oldest theaters, ceased operations in 2011 due to government economic measures. Threatened with conversion into a luxury restaurant, theater workers occupied it to establish a self-management model of alternative cultural and artistic production. This followed a successful referendum opposing water privatization, reflecting broader social movements on “common goods”. The occupation aimed to protect the theater as a common good from commercial exploitation. The occupation was disbanded on August 10, 2014, coinciding with the integration of Teatro Valle into the Rome Theater Foundation, the city's public theater institution. The Public Administration and political institutions of the city had agreed with the occupants to involve them in shaping the new theater programming under the foundation's auspices. However, as of 2024, Teatro Valle remains inaccessible to the public, and the Teatro Valle Bene Comune Foundation, born out of the occupation experience, dissolved in 2022.

²⁸³ L. Tricarico. *Imprese di Comunità nelle Politiche di Rigenerazione Urbana: Definire ed Inquadrare il Contesto Italiano*, Euricse Working Papers, 2014, 68 | 14.

Commission. Formed in 2007 under the Ministry of Justice and led by Italian jurist, academic and politician Stefano Rodotà, the commission sought to amend the provisions of the Civil Code pertaining to public property, with the objective of categorizing properties into public, private, and commons. Despite not being enacted into law, the proposal influenced local governance structures and practices related to common goods in various Italian regions and abroad²⁸⁴.

The proposed legislation featured a crucial provision that defined *common goods* as resources fundamental for safeguarding basic rights and fostering individual development. This definition has been incorporated into Municipal Statutes, Resolutions, and Regulations in cities such as Naples²⁸⁵ and Bologna²⁸⁶, providing valuable tools for administrations and communities to navigate the challenges stemming from the duality of legality and legitimacy²⁸⁷. An essential milestone in this direction²⁸⁸ was the approval of the regulation for civic and collective use²⁸⁸ of the Ex Asilo Faligieri, space in Naples, where the community occupying the building engaged in a process to formalize its public use²⁸⁹. It is noteworthy to emphasize that the social experiments undertaken in several Italian cities, have garnered institutional attention. According to Pinson, central ministries' calls often incorporate criteria influenced by policies and strategies adopted by pioneering cities, reconstituting doctrinal elements through the survey and uniformity of best practices²⁹⁰.

3.1.2 Centri Sociali: agents of change in cultural production

The development of policies aimed at repurposing spaces, particularly those involving public assets, has been significantly influenced by the experiences and initiatives of *centri sociali*²⁹¹. These centers embody a distinct and alternative paradigm for political, social, and cultural engagement, catering especially to individuals who do not find alignment with mainstream cultural and political institutions.

²⁸⁴ A. Borchi, *Culture and economic crisis: cultural value in Italy from 2008 to the present day*, PhD in Cultural Policy Studies University of Warwick, Centre for Cultural and Media Policy Studies, 2017.

²⁸⁵ For a more in-depth exploration of the commons in Naples see Vittoria A., Mazzarella L. *La recente esperienza napoletana sui beni comuni, tra governance istituzionale e output sociali: Il caso dell'Ex Asilo Filangieri*, Rivista Impresa Sociale, Università degli Studi di Napoli "Federico II", 2021.

<https://www.rivistaimpresasociale.it/rivista/articolo/la-recente-esperienza-napoletana-sui-beni-comuni>

²⁸⁶ For a more in-depth exploration of the commons in Bologna see Michiara, P. *I patti di collaborazione e il regolamento per la cura e la rigenerazione dei beni comuni urbani. L'esperienza del Comune di Bologna*. Aedon, (2), 0-0, 2016.

²⁸⁸ Delibera di Giunta Comunale di Napoli 893/2015 del 29 dicembre 2015, *Dichiarazione d'uso civico e collettivo urbano*.

Available at: https://commonsnapoli.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/Dichiarazione_Asilo-2015.pdf

"The experimentation," as stated in the Regulation, "is configured as enhanced public ownership reinforced by popular control." The asset in question therefore falls under a "special public law regime," wherein the State is not the top manager of the structure (as with the mechanism of the public tender, for example), but, through a mechanism of horizontal subsidiarity, becomes the guarantor of the structure's functioning, recognizing the autonomy of management by the users of the space and assuming burdens and responsibilities related to the functioning of the asset itself.

²⁸⁹ E. Ostanel, *Can social innovation transform local governments? The experience of Naples*. In *Social Movements and Public Policies in Southern European Cities*, Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2020, pp. 137-149.

²⁹⁰ G. Pinson. *Voracious cities and obstructing states?*, 2018.

²⁹¹ As a uniquely Italian phenomenon, the term *centri sociali* defies direct translation.

An overview of these experiences has been deemed relevant for grasping the case studies to be explored in subsequent chapters, providing a foundational understanding of the role *centri sociali* play in shaping contemporary discourses on urban revitalization, community engagement, and cultural activism.

A core impetus propelling the emergence of *centri sociali* and analogous initiatives lies in addressing perceived deficiencies within public administration, coupled with the exigency for platforms conducive to the expression of alternative cultural paradigms. In fact, these initiatives often stem from a sense that mainstream institutions may fall short in addressing the dynamic and evolving social needs of the citizens. By taking matters into their own hands, communities and individuals involved in *centri sociali*, engage in a form of self-governance that directly responds to their unique social, cultural, and political contexts.

In the intricate tapestry of Italy's socio-political and urban evolution, *centri sociali* have emerged as dynamic agents of change, tracing their origins back to mutual aid societies and cooperatives in the 1970s. Uniquely Italian, these spaces defy easy categorization and stand apart from conventional squats, providing shelter while playing a pivotal role in fostering political discourse²⁹². Geographer and urban studies researcher Pierpaolo Mudu contextualizes their genesis within Italy's complex transition from Fordism to a flexible accumulation regime, highlighting the disappearance of traditional public spaces²⁹³. Amid the challenges faced by the traditional left-wing in the 1980s, *centri sociali* emerged as vibrant hubs for various movements, significantly contributing to the revitalization of vacant properties and offering an innovative counterpoint to property speculation. Faced with the evolving urban landscape, extreme left-wing groups strategically established Self-managed occupied Social Centers²⁹⁴.

They are further recognized as the paramount resource in the resistance against the second Berlusconi government (2001-2005) by the collective of Italian writers, Wu Ming²⁹⁵. These centers are perceived as an alternative cultural force, countering the narrative propagated by the mainstream media during that period.

Mudu underscores that a standout accomplishment of the *centri sociali* movement lies in regenerating both publicly and privately owned vacant properties, offering an alternative to property speculation²⁹⁶. This proactive approach signifies the intersection of cultural and political objectives, marking *centri sociali* as dynamic contributors to Italy's cultural tapestry.

In the event of these spaces enduring eviction attempts, they stand poised to emerge as significant landmarks within numerous cities. Their roles transcend mere platforms for political discourse, evolving into pivotal centers for alternative cultural production, thereby enriching daily experiences with distinctive dimensions.

Due to the substantial social work undertaken, some centers have pursued and attained legal recognition. This transition can be interpreted as a necessary evolution for numerous organizations; as their significance and

²⁹² A. Borchini, 2017, *cit* p.67.

²⁹³ P. Mudu, *Resisting and challenging neoliberalism: The development of Italian social centers*. Antipode, 36(5), 2004, pp. 917–941.

²⁹⁴ They adopt the acronym “CSOA” (Centro Sociale Occupato Autogestito) if they are squatters or “CSA” (Centro Sociale Autogestito) if they use premises made available by local authorities at no cost (Mudu, 2004).

²⁹⁵ C. Saviano, *Quattro Chiacchiere con i Wu Ming*, HuffPost, 13 aprile 2013.

²⁹⁶ P. Mudu, *I Centri Sociali italiani: verso tre decenni di occupazioni e di spazi autogestiti*. PARTECIPAZIONE E CONFLITTO. 2012, pp.69-92.

contribution to the cultural and social fabric of the city grew, securing public funding became imperative. Their previous illegal status precluded them from accessing any form of official financial support.

The exceptional nature of these experiences lies in their emergence within administrative lacunae, thereby potentially establishing a model and precedent conducive to fostering social innovation. They then have the potential to trigger institutional learning, as well as to scale up and/or replicate renewing themselves in other contexts. According to urban studies researcher Laura Colini, when reconsidering 'bottom-up regeneration,' it should be inquired how certain political initiatives advocated by non-institutional actors have actually materialized and can materialize in dialogue, collaboration, as an alternative, and in contrast with multiple actors in the city, including the institutional one²⁹⁷.

Therefore, the subsequent establishment and sustained operation of numerous such initiatives as enduring landmarks within their respective cities, exemplified by the continued occupancy of Forte Prenestino in Rome (since 1986) and Leoncavallo SPA (Spazio Pubblico Autogestito) in Milan (since 1975), underscore their fundamental function as counterweights to public administration and cultural industries. The protracted endurance of these experiences also reflects a level of tolerance on the part of political and administrative institutions, presumably acknowledging their role in providing civic amenities that would otherwise be incumbent upon institutional bodies to furnish.

3.2 The French Experience : From Nouveaux Territoires de l'art to Tiers-lieux culturels

According to Philippe Henry, researcher in socio-economy of culture, from 1970 in Europe in resonance with the protesting, alternative, and self-managing movements of the time, groups of artists and promoters of cultural and/or social projects reinvested abandoned buildings, often on the outskirts of urban centers. This movement touched France in the late 1980s, in connection with a growing demand for workspaces, especially for young artists, and with a desire to invent new relationships between art, society, and territories²⁹⁸.

To name these adventures, French actors have highlighted the term *friches culturelles* (cultural wastelands), but other terms have also been used, such as squats, laboratories, or artistic factories²⁹⁹. The Trans Europe Halls network (1983) long spoke of "independent cultural centers," which it now qualifies as "grassroots"³⁰⁰.

In France, the interest of the Ministry of Culture on new uses of spaces through culture can be tracked back to 2001 *Rapport Friches, laboratoires, fabriques, squats, projets pluridisciplinaires : une nouvelle époque de*

²⁹⁷ A. Ranzini, *Intervista a Laura Colini, Tesserae*. Tracce Urbane. Rivista Italiana Transdisciplinare Di Studi Urbani, 8(12), 2022.

²⁹⁸ P. Henry. *Les friches culturelles d'hier à aujourd'hui: entre fabriques d'art et démarches artistiques partagées*. La Mise en culture des friches industrielles, Presses universitaires de Rouen et du Havre, 2016, p.3

²⁹⁹ Cfr. F. Lextrait, 2001, *cit.* p.56.

³⁰⁰ P. Henry. 2016, *cit.* p. 69.

Cfr. P. Henry. *Les lieux culturels intermédiaires : une identité collective spécifique ? : Une étude comparative des sites Internet des signataires de la charte de la Coordination nationale des lieux intermédiaires et indépendants*. [Rapport de recherche] Autoédition. 2022.

Here is the link to Trans Europe Halles website: <https://www.teh.net>

l'action Culturelle, by Fabrice Lextrait³⁰¹, urban sociologist and co-founder of “La Friche La Belle de Mai” cultural center in Marseille, where this report has been presented to an international audience in 2002. This meeting at La Friche symbolized one of the inaugural strides in the progression of international policies concerning the New Territories of Art.

Commissioned by Michel Duffour³⁰² in October 2000, this report presented projects that, situated in locations reusing industrial heritage or opting for itinerancy, "originally and uniquely raise the question of the conditions of production and thus the reception of artistic acts. [...] Faced with the very diverse approaches, the objective of this mission is to understand and make more explicit the common foundations of these unique experiences, their artistic, economic, ethical, and political determinants, as well as their organizational methods. It is indeed about constructing a reasoned approach so that the services of the Ministry of Culture can better identify, listen to, and support them without institutionalizing them, confining them to categories, or creating a new label"³⁰³. With this request, Michel Duffour takes note of a profound transformation in the French artistic and cultural landscape over the past twenty years³⁰⁴. The first aspect to highlight about these spaces is their plurality and intermediary function.

The author of the report underlined that the importance of those places stands in the fact that they are intermediary spaces between institutions and citizens and promote an alternative to the model of cultural industries and the creative city promoted by globalization, with the attempt to make a critique of consumer society³⁰⁵. The richness of the evolving cultural milieu is best comprehended through its diversity in the contemporary context. He accentuates the pronounced heterogeneity characterizing these spaces, which are primarily the product of a local context that qualifies them³⁰⁶. In response to this territorial anchoring, he strongly advises against any attempt at a common designation, which "would be a standardization contrary to the spirit of these spaces"³⁰⁷.

The second aspect to emphasize pertains to the intricate role of these spaces in urban governance. As highlighted by socio-anthropologist Fabrice Raffin, these locales, often situated in vacant or disused areas, have emerged in response to the shortcomings of public policies, and at times, even in opposition to them³⁰⁸. Raffin underscores that at the core of these local utopias lies a continual negotiation of governance structures

³⁰¹The complete Rapport Lextrait is available at this link: https://www.actesif.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/rapportlextrait_volume1.pdf
<https://www.actesif.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/rapportlextraitvolume2.pdf>

³⁰² He served as the Minister of Heritage and Cultural Decentralization in France from 1995 to 1997. In this capacity, he played a significant role in cultural policies and initiatives during that period.

³⁰³ Lettre de mission à Fabrice Lextrait par Michel Duffour, secrétaire d'Etat au Patrimoine et à la décentralisation territoriale, 2000. Available in F. Lextrait *Une nouvelle époque de l'action culturelle*, rapport pour le secrétariat d'Etat au Patrimoine et à la Décentralisation (Paris, mai 2001).

Available at: https://www.actesif.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/rapportlextrait_volume1.pdf

³⁰⁴ It is remarkable to notice that in simultaneously with Michel Duffour, two other ministries embarked on the same approach within their field of activity. Guy Hascoet, Secretary of State for Solidarity Economy, commissioned Patrick Vivere in 2001 to produce a report entitled "Rethinking Wealth," while Alain Lipietz produced, at the request of Martine Aubry starting in 1998, a report for the Ministry of Employment and Solidarity titled "The Opportunity for a New Type of Society with Social Vocation," published in 2001. This phenomenon symbolizes a broader trend within the French government during that period towards a holistic reevaluation of economic and social policies.

³⁰⁵ F. Lextrait. *Les nouveaux territoires de l'art*. Culture & Musées, 4(1), 2004 p. 98.

³⁰⁶ *Ibidem*.

³⁰⁷ *Ibidem*.

³⁰⁸ Cfr. F. Raffin, *Friches industrielles. Un monde culturel européen en mutation*, Logiques sociales, Paris, L'Harmattan, 2007.

and decision-making processes. This dynamic characterizes these spaces as arenas of experimentation crucial for local cultural production, thereby presenting models that can inspire the formulation of new national public policies.

In this context, despite the intentions behind Duffour's support, the backing from the ministry encountered some limitations due to a structural issue inherent to these spaces: the delicate balance they navigate between asserting their autonomy and seeking validation and financial support for their sustained operation³⁰⁹.

Nonetheless, the importance of delineating these experiences through the development of a comprehensive report that spatially identified them and delved into their nature, assertions, and requisites, has culminated in their legal recognition as intermediate and independent spaces, as outlined in the aforementioned law of July 7, 2016, related to freedom of creation, architecture, and heritage³¹⁰.

In contemporary discourse, there exists a notable evolution within the domain of emerging art territories encapsulated by the concept of *Urbanisme Transitoire*/ Transitory Urbanism. While Lextrait's report effectively elucidated these emergent dynamics and called for more fitting public policies informed by existing experiences, the essence of *Urbanisme Transitoire* lies in its mission to create spaces for organizations and citizens involved in artistic and cultural production, who presently lack designated environments.

3.2.1 Urbanisme Transitoire

The concept of *Urbanisme Transitoire* merits attention as it stands as one of the foundational ideas that has significantly influenced contemporary urbanism in France. It provides valuable insights into the dynamic relationship between grassroots organizations and institutional strategies in engaging with them. It has led to the revitalization of numerous abandoned spaces, often through cultural initiatives embedded within projects. Originating in France after 2010, *Urbanisme Transitoire* represents a distinctive approach to urban development that sets itself apart from conventional methods. This movement is characterized by the temporary occupation of vacant buildings or sites during the latency period preceding a planned urban project. Notably, *Urbanisme Transitoire* distances itself from squats by emphasizing its legality and legitimacy as fundamental aspects of its identity³¹¹. The growth of temporary urbanism has ushered in a new cadre of professionals specializing in the temporary planning of public spaces or the occupation of vacant buildings, including collectives, businesses, and associations³¹².

Some well-known instances of *Urbanisme Transitoire* include Les Grand Voisins, Ground Control, la Cité Fertile in Paris, Coco Velten in Marseille, and l'Hotel Pasteur in Rennes. The term *transitoire* encapsulates an inherent ambivalence, a viewpoint articulated by Paul Citron, the founder of *Plateau Urbaine*—a Société

³⁰⁹ A. Gonon. *Les « nouveaux territoires de l'art » ont-ils mute*, NECTART, vol. 4, no. 1, 2017, p.111

³¹⁰ Loi n° 2016-925 du 7 juillet 2016 relative à la liberté de la création, à l'architecture et au patrimoine. Journal officiel de la République française n°0158 du 8 juillet 2016.

³¹¹ J. Tournaire, *La promesse consensuelle du commun et de l'urbanisme transitoire*. Instituto de Lingüística Materialista, Refracción, N. 6, 2022.

³¹² J. Pinard, *L'Urbanisme Transitoire, entre renouvellement des modalités de fabrique de la ville et évolution de ses acteurs : une immersion ethnographique au sein de SNCF Immobilier*, thèse de doctorat, Université Paris-Est, 2021.

Cooperative d'Interêt Collective (Cooperative Society of Collective Interest) based in Paris. The cooperative's mission was to repurpose vacant buildings, making them accessible to artists, craftsmen, associations, and individuals in need of spaces for offices or workshops to pursue their activities³¹³. According to Citron, the seemingly contradictory nature of the temporary and the permanent is reconciled within the realm of transitory occupation projects. While each individual project is approached with a short-term perspective, the overarching strategy is inherently geared towards establishing a lasting and permanent impact. Therefore, the focus on transition alludes to urban projects that are in their preliminary stages, projects whose work has yet to commence. The essence of transitional urbanism lies in its aspiration to instigate the transformation of a place awaiting change and to proactively anticipate the future uses of an urban operation by introducing new activities in advance³¹⁴.

Projects executed within this framework operate within the domain of circular economy and seek to diverge from a solely neoliberal mindset. These initiatives typically garner political validation due to the involved stakeholders, as seen in the case of *Platueau Urbaine*, where these actors function as intermediaries between the entity, be it private or public, that owns the space and the citizens intending to utilize it.

These initiatives serve as hosts for a diverse array of cultural projects, urban farming endeavors, and social and solidarity economy initiatives—all while revitalizing formerly neglected urban areas. The evolving landscape of urban planning is undergoing adaptation in response to these practices, necessitating specialized skills in project support, management, and event planning. The establishment of these spaces unfolds within a unique context: they not only address the long-term nature of development but also provide affordable alternatives for populations confronted with challenges in a real estate market under significant pressure.

Urbanisme Transitoire finds legislative recognition in the *Loi Elan*, adopted by the Senate in 2018³¹⁵, which has established that for a duration of five years from the publication of the law, until November 23, 2023, an experimental mechanism allowing for the temporary use of vacant premises³¹⁶.

In January 2022, the Ministry Of Housing - General Directorate of Development, Housing, and Nature, Directorate of Housing, Urban Planning, and Landscapes, in collaboration with the Ministry of Culture, asserted that *Urbanisme Transitorie* plays a pivotal role in uncovering opportunities in locations and among operators that may elude traditional studies. This regenerative strategy offers benefits to both property owners

³¹³ F. Campagnari. *In dialogue with Paul Citron*. *Tracce Urbane*. *Rivista Italiana Transdisciplinare Di Studi Urbani*, 8(12). 2022.

³¹⁴ J. Pinard, H. Morteau. *Professionnels de l'occupation temporaire, nouveaux acteurs de la fabrique de la ville? Du renouvellement des méthodes en urbanisme à l'émergence de nouveaux métiers*, Riuba, n°8, 2019.

³¹⁵ Loi n° 2018-1021 du 23 novembre 2018 portant évolution du logement, de l'aménagement et du numérique, *Journal officiel de la République française* n°0272 du 24 novembre 2018.

To gain insight into the dynamics of agreements regarding *Urbanisme Transitoire*, please refer to the following document:

https://www.ecologie.gouv.fr/sites/default/files/Fiche_6_transformation_bureaux_logements_urbanisme_transitoire.pdf

³¹⁶ The purpose of this mechanism is to preserve and protect these premises while incidentally reducing security costs by having them occupied by temporary residents, particularly for housing, accommodation, social integration, and support purposes. Thus, with the aim of carrying out operations for the temporary occupation of vacant premises by temporary residents, a public or private organization or an association can submit an accreditation application to the department prefect. The holder of the right of use over the vacant premises (typically the property owner) can then enter into an agreement with the accredited organization. The latter commits to protecting and preserving the premises made available to it and to return them to the owner free of any occupation at the end of the agreement or upon the occurrence of an event defined in the agreement, such as the withdrawal of accreditation, obtaining urban planning authorization, or the sale of the premises. The maximum duration of the agreement is three years and can be extended in one-year periods as long as the owner demonstrates that, at the end of the building's occupation, the initially planned change of use for the premises cannot take place.

and occupants. Property owners stand to gain by minimizing maintenance expenses and mitigating potential deterioration associated with vacant sites, ultimately enhancing the overall value of the location. Conversely, occupants benefit from these spaces as avenues for project realization, experimentation, activity facilitation, or temporary accommodation. This symbiotic rapport among stakeholders underscores the reciprocal advantages, wherein local authorities, property owners, and occupants collectively contribute to and derive benefits from the regeneration of these spaces. Thus, the non-confrontational ethos inherent in transitory urbanism distinguishes it as a collaborative and integrative strategy for spatial appropriation. Through this collaborative approach, institutional endorsement for *Urbanisme Transitoire* is strengthened, as it emphasizes the mutual benefits derived from the collective efforts of stakeholders.

3.2.2 The rise of Tier-Lieux

In concluding this analysis on the evolution of the “Nouveaux Territoires de l'art” in France, it is imperative to acknowledge a new trend emerging from 1989 Oldenburg's Third Place concept³¹⁷, which has prominently entered the national and local agendas of urban planning: the *Tiers-Lieux*.

According to the Agence Nationale de la Cohésion des Territoires/ National Agency for Territorial Cohesion, *tiers-lieux* encompass autonomous environments that delineate an alternative human, sociocultural, and ecological geography of the territory. These physical spaces are dedicated to collaborative endeavors, such as coworking, connected campuses, shared workshops, fab labs, solidarity garages, social places, makerspaces, cultural *friches*, and public service hubs. Emerging as novel venues for social connection, emancipation, and collective initiatives, they significantly contribute to the vitality and vibrancy of territories³¹⁸. Their action are directed towards regenerate interactions of influence, capillarity, edge effects, and interfaces between different environments³¹⁹. Hence, these spaces have the chance to encourage reflection, prompting a move beyond the physicality of the location in terms of territorial infrastructure and facilitating the convergence of interdisciplinary skills across various professional fields and reflection³²⁰.

Starting from this theorization, a public discourse has emerged, characterized by active engagement from government institutions, encompassing various ministries in France over recent years. Hence, there has been an evolution into a thorough investigation, subsequently leading to the formulation of legislation specifically designed to address the intricacies of these spaces. This evolution underscores an increasing acknowledgment of the significance of such spaces in shaping social and cultural dynamics. Government entities are diligently exploring avenues to integrate and bolster support for these innovative environments, indicative of a substantial shift in perception and approach towards *tiers-lieux* in France.

³¹⁷ See Chapter I, pp. 34-35.

³¹⁸ Agence Nationale de la Cohésion des Territoires, *Qu'est-ce qu'un tiers-lieu ?* République française – Agence Nationale de la Cohésion des Territoires website. Available at: <https://tierslieux.anct.gouv.fr/fr/accueil/>

³¹⁹ H. Bazin, *Les figures du tiers-espace : contre-espace, tiers-paysage, tiers-lieu, Filigrane. Musique, esthétique, sciences, société*. [En ligne], Numéros de la revue, Edifier le Commun, I, Tiers-Espaces, 2016,

³²⁰ *Ibidem*.

In particular, the establishment of the Association Nationale des Tiers-Lieux in 2018, which brings together stakeholders from various third spaces to define actions and advocate for the movement's needs on both a national and international scale, has gained increasing interest from the government. This Association has started to collaborate with the State – specifically with the Ministry of Ecological Transition and Territorial Cohesion, the Ministry of Labor, the Ministry of Higher Education and Research – and the Agence nationale de la cohésion des territoires in the context of the Groupement d'Interet Public France Tiers-Lieux³²¹. The groupement aims to support the emergence, development, and sustainability of third places in France.

The government strongly engaged in the promotion of those places, in 2021 it announced in a dossier published in the context of *France Relance* recovery program³²², that third places were considered as one of the cornerstones of the recovery. In fact, they are regarded as capable of strengthening territorial and social cohesion by responding at specific territorial needs; involving actors with different capabilities; implementing a shared and collaborative governance; proposing a wide range of activities both lucrative and of general and social interest; and developing innovation and creativity.

Concretely, several measures have been implemented by the government in order to sustain economically the development of those realities. Among these initiatives, *Fabriques de territoires*, launched in 2020, is one of the most remarkable. Through this program, the State, in collaboration with *France Tiers-Lieux* and endowed with 45 million euros, facilitated the selection of 300 projects between 2020 and 2021. These workshops are strategically distributed among priority neighborhoods under the *Politique de la Ville* (QPV) and rural areas. The specificity of *Fabriques de territoires* lies in their role as structuring *tiers-lieux*, enabling them to enhance the operational capacity of other *tiers-lieux* within their territorial domain. In essence, they serve as enabler spaces within the broader urban fabric.

The experiences delineated in these passages reflect the strategic objectives of the French government within the framework of territorial governance, particularly emphasizing the reduction of social conflict and the promotion of territorial cohesion. Transitory urbanism's capacity to mitigate conflicts in urban renewal, by satisfying the needs of all the involved stakeholders, alongside the concept of *tiers-liex* which seeks to establish inclusive spaces characterized by diverse and interdisciplinary designs, aligns with these objectives. However, as underscored by Fabrice Lextrait, there is evident in France a proclivity within government circles to categorize all alternative social and cultural experiences under specific labels³²³. While ostensibly intended to enhance regulatory oversight, such an approach risks amalgamating disparate experiences, potentially fostering models that lack universal adaptability to the diverse contexts they aim to address.

³²¹The GIP France Tiers-Lieux has five key missions. Firstly, it engages in the co-construction and facilitation of public policies, collaborating with ministries to design programs and animate established networks. Secondly, it provides engineering support to project leaders, guiding the emergence and consolidation of third places. Thirdly, the organization contributes to the structuring of the sector by offering legal assistance and supporting professional recognition. Additionally, it supports the common tools by fostering the pooling of resources. Lastly, the GIP France Tiers-Lieux operates as an observatory, analyzing ecosystem developments and producing studies and reports (France Tiers-Lieux official website, 2023). Available at: <https://francetierslieux.fr/france-tiers-lieux/>

³²² *France Relance* is an economic recovery plan initiated by the French government in response to the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. It aims to stimulate economic growth, create jobs, and support businesses affected by the crisis through measures such as investment in key sectors and support for job creation and training programs.

³²³ See the interview with Fabrice Lextrait, conducted by the author on 28 November 2023, reported in the Appendix, p. XX

3.3 Contrasting Urban Policy Approaches: Italy's Regulatory Emphasis vs. France's Operational Flexibility

The findings from this analysis underscore a notable distinction in the approaches to urban policies between Italy and France.

In Italy, urban planning hinges on regional and municipal regulatory plans, reflecting a traditional approach deeply ingrained in the country's administrative and legal structures. On the other side, in France, a more operational stance is evident. This latter involves aligning legislative frameworks with dynamic social forces, thereby shaping public policies capable of adapting to contemporary urban transformations. Consequently, this approach curtails the scope for informal groups, as public policies seek to deliver services to citizens and proactively address their needs, thereby averting the emergence of administrative voids. However, while this institutionalized method ensures efficient service delivery, it's essential to acknowledge that it may stifle initiatives that do not originate within this established framework.

In sharp contrast, Italy contends with a scenario where public administration coexists with informal and self-organized initiatives, grappling with challenges in integrating these experiences into national legislation. Nonetheless, there are emerging efforts at regional level to adopt a more proactive approach, such as integrating international examples of transitory urbanism³²⁴.

While disparities in approach are evident, the emergence of alternative spaces beyond the institutional framework reflects intersecting themes between the two nations' assertions. Across both contexts, these spaces serve as counterpoints to profit-centric paradigms, instead advocating for approaches that prioritize social and territorial cohesion. Moreover, they serve as critiques of consumerist societal norms, championing the creation of art in environments characterized by freedom and independence. In Italy, these assertions found resonance within the cultural milieu of, hybrid cultural centers, *centri sociali* and common goods experiences, reaching their pick during the wave of the 2010s. Conversely, in France, the seminal report by Lextrait in 2001 facilitated their integration and acknowledgment within the French legislative and political sphere, allowing for an evolution of urban planning strategies. This convergence underscores a broader discourse surrounding the role of alternative spaces in reshaping societal dynamics and challenging prevailing socio-economic structure.

To comprehensively grasp the implications of such approaches, the forthcoming two chapters will scrutinize four grassroots socio-cultural experiences emerged in Italy and France, contextualizing them within the urban landscapes of Rome and Marseille. This thorough analysis aims to elucidate the intricate dynamics and challenges in the interplay between public institutions and grassroots initiatives within the domains of urban and cultural planning.

³²⁴ An exemplary instance of this phenomenon is the "ex Manifattura Tabacchi" in Florence, situated within the former working-class neighborhood of Cascine. This former tobacco factory has undergone a process of urban regeneration and repurposing, serving as a pioneering example of Transitory Urbanism in Italy. Notably, following unsuccessful attempts by the city to revitalize the site, Cassa Depositi e Prestiti, acting as the State's real estate custodian, has sold the expansive property to the international fund Pw Real Estate Fund III Lp, associated with Perella, a prominent US real estate fund. Here it is possible to consult the website: <https://www.manifatturatabacchi.com/>

Chapter III - Nurturing the Context for Case Study Analysis

Before delving into the analysis of the selected case studies it is beneficial to provide a descriptive and normative overview of the cultural-urban context in Rome and Marseille. This premise will enable to understand:

- 1) the primary complexities inherent in both cities,
- 2) the existing legislation and policies governing urban regeneration and spaces reuse.

By undertaking this concise examination of the two urban and sociocultural contexts, we aim to elucidate the underlying motivations that have facilitated the evolution of the selected grassroots alternative spaces, namely La Friche la Belle de Mai (Marseille), Angelo Mai, Fondazione Piccolo America, and Spin Time Labs (Rome), which serve as focal points of our analysis. In this chapter, we delve into the dynamic urban landscapes of the cities of Rome and Marseille, probing the interplay between weak city governance, innovative urban regeneration, and the delicate equilibrium of cultural legacy and contemporary neglect. Our exploration serves as a preparatory lens for comprehending the intricacies of the cultural and social organizations to be analyzed.

In Rome, we scrutinize the ongoing journey from historical governance challenges to recent improvements, exploring the city's path towards more robust administrative structures. Simultaneously, we navigate the intricate interplay between Rome's unmatched cultural heritage and the pressing demand for forward-looking urban rejuvenation, exploring the intersection of cultural preservation and the imperative for innovation.

In Marseille, a contrasting narrative unfolds under the city leadership of former mayor Robert Vigoroux, steering the city away from traditional politics towards state-backed initiatives and local cultural endeavors.

This chapter should serve not only as a comparative lens through which we navigate the narratives of Rome and Marseille but also aims to discuss the hypothetical effects of governance and administrative strategies on the nuanced cultural and social dynamics that shape urban transformation. Through this inquiry, the aim is to delve into the potential consequences of overly detailed regulations and alignment with grand international urban regeneration projects, which may sideline numerous informal cultural and social entities in Marseille. Conversely, we aim to unravel the hypothetical outcomes in Rome, where administrative inefficiency might lead to the oversight and under-support of entities, accentuating the nuanced impact of governance and administrative strategies on the urban landscape, while simultaneously allowing territorial entities to self-organize.

1.1. The Landscape of Rome

1.1.1 Rome: between weak city governance, innovation in urban regeneration and cultural conservatism



Table 1, The 15 municipalities of Rome, highlighting Municipality I ³²⁵

Rome, a city of diverse urban landscapes, is currently administratively divided into fifteen municipalities, each with its president elected directly and a Municipality Council. This administrative structure, established by the Statute of Rome Capital with specific resolutions in 2013³²⁶, is supposed to grant the municipalities a certain degree of autonomy in management, finance, and accounting. Beyond their core responsibilities, the municipalities have been endowed with additional competencies, including oversight of economic development and local private building interests.

This decentralized administrative framework reflects the multifaceted nature of the city of Rome, even if it is not yet considered completely adequate to handle the needs of its territory, as the majority of tasks still remain in the hands of the City of Rome, and the Municipalities seem to perform more of a bureaucratic function than an initiative one. This point was also highlighted during an interview conducted by the author with the Councilor for Culture of the Municipality I in Rome, Giulia Silvia Ghia:

“(…) The 15 municipalities are, at the same time, like small cities; therefore, each time there is a new electoral campaign, there is an attempt to move towards decentralization. The goal is to provide more autonomy to the mini mayors, meaning the presidents of the municipalities. However, once one is at the helm, steering this machine, it becomes evident that it is an extremely complex and lengthy process – it's not that simple. The municipalities end up being more bureaucratic in nature. So, yes, some steps are being taken incrementally, but before reaching true autonomy, perhaps financial autonomy, there is a considerable journey ahead. Consider that this municipality is where the majority of things happen, so to speak, because it is the center of such a large and important city like Rome. It attracts investments, especially those related to

³²⁵ Roma Capitale official website, *Municipio I*, 2021

Available at: <https://www.comune.roma.it/web/it/i-numeri-di-roma-capitale-municipio-i.pag>

³²⁶ Assemblée Capitolina, Delibera n°11 dell'11 marzo 2013.

the use of public spaces, from major events to catering, for instance. To give an idea, it contributes around 40 million euros annually to the city's coffers, while the entire municipal budget is just over 20 million euros... ”³²⁷.

This excerpt highlights the actual difficulty for municipalities to autonomously manage their own resources, leading to a structural inefficiency that appears to be a significant characteristic of the governance of Rome. These autonomy challenges are further accentuated by the inadequacy of the current regulations at the City level, thus the Deputy Mayor for Culture asserted:

“(...) Today, we are suffocated by regulations that no longer correspond to the daily lives of people... So, there is an institutional theme as well, a willingness to change, modify, and face new challenges. However, it is true that there is also a discourse of a still very conservative mentality, present at the office level, of those who carry forward the practical aspect of political decisions... Here, it is important to understand the difficulties that offices face in finding ways to implement a political will that aims to move in a contemporary direction, perhaps towards the territories, when they lack the tools because the regulations are outdated”³²⁸.

The issue of outdated regulations is further exacerbated by inadequate communication regarding administrative innovations taking place at the national level. The lack of effective dissemination of guidelines hampers the understanding and implementation of new regulations, particularly in the context of co-design with third-sector entities.

This assumption has been substantiated by the studies conducted by Carlo Cellamare, engineer and urban planner who specifically focuses on the self-organized experiences of the city of Rome, in his essay *Città fai da te. Tra antagonismo e cittadinanza. Storie di autorganizzazione urbana*³²⁹.

This text is of utmost interest for the objective of this analysis and reconstructs the framework within which the alternative socio-cultural experiences deepen in this dissertation have evolved. Thus, according to Cellamare, Rome serves as a paradigmatic example within the context of informal and self-organized societal practices develop.

Firstly, the city reflects the broader trend of welfare state retrenchment that has swept through the Western world since the 1980s. Rome symbolizes a state and local administration grappling with challenges, shifting the burden onto citizens and leaving society somewhat neglected. On the other side, the involvement of private capital in urban planning and city redevelopment, often yielding speculative outcomes due to the public sector's limited direct action, exemplifies the neoliberal wave that engulfs Rome³³⁰.

Secondly, there is a notable distance between political institutions and local territories, marked by historical governance weaknesses, potential maladministration, and collusive tendencies. The *laissez-faire* approach and

³²⁷ See the complete interview with Giulia Silvia Ghia, conducted by the author on 7th November 2023, reported in the Appendix at p. 27.

³²⁸ See the complete interview with Giulia Silvia Ghia, conducted by the author on 7th November 2023, reported in the Appendix at p. 26.

³²⁹ C. Cellamare. *Città fai da te. Tra antagonismo e cittadinanza. Storie di autorganizzazione urbana*. Chapter I, paragraph 9. Donzelli Editore, Roma, 2019.

³³⁰ *Ibidem*.

a growing disconnect between politics and territories contribute to Rome's characterization as a "do-it-yourself" city, evident in the widespread phenomenon of unauthorized settlements³³¹.

Lastly, Rome showcases a pervasive presence of alternative social cultures and experiences, such as countercultures and urban conflicts expressed through initiatives like so-called *centri sociali* and the phenomenon of housing occupations. Thus, the need for a quality living environment goes beyond basic necessities, rooted in the desire to shape and qualify one's living space, rebuild a constructive relationship with the city, and participate in decisions affecting daily life. These dimensions, seemingly erased by the city's current development, underscore a collective need for urban community, that transcends social and cultural differences, focusing on individuals' essence and the shared pursuit of place appropriation and self-organization³³².

In fact, as argued by the journalist Stefania Ruggia, it is not by chance that in the last ten years new cultural centers have proliferated, numbering in the tens or hundreds today, often grafting onto pre-existing structure, from social centers to neighborhood sports facilities, support groups for foreigners, housing occupations, neighborhood museums, and eco-museums, to social agriculture, and so on. These realities invigorate areas of the city that are marginal and cut off from more efficient services or emptied of their identity and original human capital because, as is the case with downtown neighborhoods, they are contracted out to Airbnb and other short-term rental and home-sharing platforms³³³.

Therefore, what emerges is the experience of a city that continually generates social and cultural innovation, often outside traditional institutional channels. And this element, as highlighted in the interview with Cellamare, is leading Rome to become increasingly attractive to the real estate market – also the luxury one³³⁴ although it has not been so in the past as much as other major European capitals:

“(…) Rome is beginning to emerge as an attractive destination in the real estate market. Several major real estate agencies have identified Rome as a highly anticipated and attractive location. Current reports from important real estate agencies and operators also mark Rome as a place with expected attractiveness in the coming years, including the upcoming summer. For instance, a think tank has formed, supported by the administration and composed of four real estate operators who recognize Rome's high potential. They perceive Rome as having a distinctive and reactive vitality, akin to Berlin in other periods. Interestingly, despite the simultaneous relative weakness of institutions and the continued social protagonism of places like centri sociali, the real estate market has not yet gained total dominance. This curious balance of forces is maintained for now, but the market's interest remains strong”³³⁵

³³¹ *Ibidem*.

³³² *Ibidem*.

³³³ S. Ruggia. *I nuovi Centri Culturali, Infrastruttura Nevralgica per Ripensare Roma*. Scomodo Treccani, 2020.

https://www.treccani.it/magazine/atlanter/societa/I_nuovi_centri_culturali.html

³³⁴ To further delve into this topic:

The Guardian. *Global super-rich head to Italy for tax breaks and dolce vita*. 2023.

<https://www.theguardian.com/news/2023/may/09/global-super-rich-head-to-italy-for-tax-breaks-and-dolce-vita>

The New York Times. *In Rome, It's Luxury vs. Squalor*. 2023.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2023/09/14/travel/palatial-hotels-in-rome.html>

RomaToday. *Roma attira super ricchi: ecco dove comprano immobili di lusso*. 2023. <https://www.romatoday.it/economia/roma-attira-super-ricchi-immobili-lusso.html>

³³⁵ See the complete interview with Carlo Cellamare, conducted by the author on 12 december 2023, reported in the Appendix at p. 3.

The peculiarity of Rome is encapsulated in this ambivalence: on one hand, the city seems to experience the profound urban metamorphosis characteristic of major international capitals; on the other hand, the potential for a conclusive transformation appears tempered by the spontaneous responses that resist these trends and imagine new forms of development. This ambivalence is further manifested in the very political administration of Rome Capital. Mayor Gualtieri has embraced a *sviluppista*³³⁶ attitude as articulated by Cellamare in the interview. This strategy leans towards fostering the city's growth through major events, such as the upcoming Jubilee in 2025, and the previously pitched Expo 2030 project that didn't secure victory, focusing on the modernization and physical redevelopment of the city. This comprehensive strategy is complemented by a robust commitment to urban regeneration, marked by the initiation of numerous construction projects and a keen focus on public works. The overarching goal is to streamline bureaucratic processes and encourage private investments.

Conversely, a renewed emphasis on local territories appears to unfold through the initiatives of municipal and city councilors, notably at the lower echelons of public administration and the Capitol Assembly. Here, there is a renewed emphasis on engaging in dialogue with local territories, and with some of the informal and alternative experiences of the city, facilitated by the role played by the Department of Heritage and Housing Policies, led by Tobia Zevi³³⁷. Thus, one of the key points, repeatedly emphasized by Councilor Zevi, is the recovery of Rome's heritage through a detailed mapping and regulations on the subject. As we will see in the next paragraph, the resolution on the Unavailable Heritage of the Municipality of Rome, the House Plan, and the *Atlante* Project seems to embody these ambitions.

Consequently, a dual-layered approach is evident: the aspiration to transform Rome into a globally competitive city that aligns with international standards, alongside a recognition of the imperative to grapple with the intricacies of the local terrain before envisioning development that is sustainable for the entire population.

1.1.2 Regulatory Framework

To build the portrait of Rome and provide context for the upcoming case studies, it is useful to outline the legislative advancements achieved in recent years concerning urban regeneration and the reuse of abandoned public spaces in the city.

First of all, it must be specified that there is not a general plan for the reuse of abandoned or unused spaces in Rome, understood as a single programming and governance document. In fact, Resolution no. 104/2022³³⁸,

The cited think tank is Remind, the association representing the extended real estate sector to the productive forces of the country, integrating and enhancing existing realities into a single systemic vision." <https://remind.it/incontri-3/>

³³⁶ According to Treccani, *sviluppista* means "someone that has the objective of rapid and continuous development even if ephemeral and inconclusive".

<https://www.treccani.it/vocabolario/sviluppista>

³³⁷ M. Scaralino. Tobia Zevi: I miei due anni da assessore alla casa. Ora trasformiamo il patrimonio del comune in petrolio per Roma. Il voto? Sei e lode. Roma Today, 2024.

<https://www.romatoday.it/politica/intervista-tobia-zevi-ottobre-2023.html>

³³⁸ Assemblea Capitolina, Deliberazione No.104, 16 dicembre 2022.

which will be further discussed, only outlines the procedure for the reuse of public spaces (and not privately unused ones) and provide assignments through managerial measures or by resorting to public calls.

Despite this, some regulations have been introduced to shape urban development and governance, also thanks to the dialogue with spaces in the city that do not fit into the institutional context.

Ranging from the Urban Regeneration Law of the Lazio Region to the *Revised New Technical Implementation Rules of the General Master Plan*, these regulations reflect a concerted effort to address various aspects of urban planning. Noteworthy resolutions from the Capitol Assembly, such as the *Regulation on the Use of Properties for General Interest Purposes* and the *Regulation for the Shared Administration of Common Goods*, highlight the city's commitment to balanced urban development, heritage preservation, and the overall well-being of its residents. Additionally, initiatives like the *Strategic Plan for the Right to Housing* and the *Atlante Project* demonstrate a strategic and forward-looking approach to align regulatory frameworks with the evolving needs of Rome's diverse community and address the social inequalities that permeate the vast territory of the city. Together, these regulations should form a comprehensive framework aimed at promoting a well-balanced and resilient urban environment for the citizens of Rome.

Regulation Title	Enactment Authority	Date of Approval
Urban Regeneration Law of the Lazio Region	Lazio Region	18th July 2017
Revised New Technical Implementation Rules of the Piano Regolatore Generale / General Master Plan	Capitoline Board - Resolution n. 120	April 14, 2022
Regulation on the Use of Properties of Rome Capital for General Interest Purposes	Capitol Assembly - Resolution No. 104	December 16, 2022
Regulation for the Shared Administration of Material and Immaterial Common Goods of Rome Capital	Capitol Assembly - Resolution No. 102	May 23, 2023
Strategic Plan for the Right to Housing 2023/2026 of Rome Capital	Capitol Assembly	July 27, 2023
Progetto Atlante	The work carried out by the Capitol Hill Administration started in 2022 with the feasibility study conducted by the IFEL-ANCI Foundation.	May 8, 2023

Table 1 Urban Development Regulations Enacted in Rome Capital City³³⁹

The resolutions and projects outlined above signify an important legislative progression in urban regeneration, marked by innovation. What sets this approach apart is the seamless integration of residential and socio-cultural elements, a pivotal factor that could significantly influence the quality of the regeneration proposed by the Capital.

Lazio Region, where Rome is located, stands out as one of the few regions in Italy with proper legislation on Urban Regeneration, along with Puglia, Piedmont, and Liguria³⁴⁰. The proposed regulations, titled *Provisions for Urban Regeneration and Building Recovery*, entrust municipalities with a central role in the governance

³³⁹ The Table has been realized by the author.

³⁴⁰ The Law on urban regeneration, Regional Law of July 18, 2017, n°7.

C. Cellamare, *La rigenerazione senza abitanti*. In "Territorio senza governo" a cura di Gianluca Storto, Derive Approdi, 2020.

and planning of urban regeneration and the redevelopment of existing building fabric. This bill addresses existing regional legislation by introducing simplification and streamlining measures to ensure the timely implementation of interventions. It also includes regulations on the renovation and reuse of cinemas and multifunctional cultural centers. Moreover, "civic participation in urban regeneration processes is encouraged, and the use of experimental projects for urban regeneration aimed at innovation, implementing specific forms of circular economy, and promoting social inclusion is promoted"³⁴¹

Therefore, regional provisions already foresee a focus on urban regeneration, granting specific autonomy to municipalities in implementing this regulation while also emphasizing the necessity of citizen involvement. Secondly, the *New Technical Implementation Rules of the General Master Plan of the City of Rome*, deliberated in June 2023, aim to enhance administrative efficiency, harmonize with regional and national regulatory advancements, foster urban regeneration, particularly in peripheral areas, and uphold environmental sustainability. According to Cellamare³⁴² and others, the delegation of increased authority to private entities for the purpose of streamlining bureaucratic procedures should be carefully guided and safeguarded by public institutions. This precautionary measure is essential to prevent the exacerbation of disparities in state market prices and the social exclusion of lower-wage classes. Thus, the revision to the Master Plan, which manages the urban planning of Rome, appears to align more closely with the development-oriented principles of the city administration. On the other hand, the *Regulation on the Use of Properties of Rome Capital for General Interest Purposes*, approved through the Resolution of the Capitol Assembly No.104 dated December 16, 2022³⁴³, aimed, according to the words of Assessor Zevi, to mend the relationship between active citizens and institutions. It included measures such as debt installment plans, regulated rents, and recognition of works carried out over the years by space grantors³⁴⁴. The regulation governs the management of unavailable state-owned real estate assets and the unavailable heritage of Rome Capital, as well as assets confiscated from organized crime within the territory of the city of Rome concerning Rome Capital's involvement. It outlines procedures for granting third-party usage concessions and, on a transitional basis, defines positions requiring regularization³⁴⁵. It has been deliberated on the assumptions that:

³⁴¹ From the text of the Law on Urban Regeneration, Regional Law of July 18, 2017, n°7.

³⁴² See the complete interview with Carlo Cellamare, conducted by the author on 12 december 2023, reported in the Appendix at pp. 4-5.

³⁴³ Is it possible to consult the document at the following link:

https://www.comune.roma.it/web-resources/cms/documents/Deliberazione_Assemblea_Capitolina_n._104-2022.pdf

³⁴⁴ F. Grilli, *Il nuovo regolamento sulla gestione degli immobili del comune di Roma*, RomaToday, 2022.

<https://www.romatoday.it/politica/regolamento-patrimonio-capitolino-novita.html>

³⁴⁵ The Deliberation 104/2022 regulates the assignment and concession of municipal spaces to non-profit associations for social, cultural, and educational purposes through the following modalities:

1. Through a request from interested parties (Article 11) for vacant properties made available by the Municipality and Municipalities.
2. Through a co-design activity on properties owned by the Municipality with third sector entities (Article 30) and through collaboration agreements (Article 32).
3. Through a Proposal for use and an expression of interest in properties confiscated from organized crime with the support of the Citizen Forum.
4. Through a Transitional regime for properties under concession and other assignment titles (Article 42), which requires an application and appropriate documentation for those currently occupying a property with an expired or never activated concession, who remain custodians of the property until 31/12/2024 while waiting to complete the regularization procedure.

“Significant inequalities exist in living conditions and opportunities within the city of Rome. These disparities are closely tied to the uneven distribution of access to public services and quality of life across different areas. Addressing this requires collaboration between public and private entities to enhance public spaces, strengthen social bonds, promote legality, and increase opportunities for human, economic, and social development for the city's residents.

To achieve these goals, it is crucial to efficiently utilize the assets of Rome Capital's heritage, dedicating them permanently to pursuing public interests and maximizing social utility. The vibrant civic fabric of Rome is represented by various associations expressing citizens' desire to participate in collective life and care for public and common goods (...)

Reusing confiscated assets for social purposes through third-sector organizations, serving a vital social, cultural, and solidarity function, contributes significantly to the overall well-being of the city's community.”³⁴⁶

In this context, *Objective C* of the Regulation refers to a concept particularly relevant for understanding the strength of ongoing alternative experiences in the city and the inevitable dialogue that the public administration strives to give them. Indeed, this objective aims at enhancing virtuous experiences in the use of public heritage, which perform significant social functions and “represent an important bastion of legality, solidarity, and social cohesion for the respective communities”^{347 348}.

In this direction, the Regulation for the *Shared Administration of the Material and Immaterial Common Goods of Rome Capital*, approved on May 23, 2023 by the Capitol Assembly, is in line with contemporary practices embraced by other Italian municipalities in recent years. The new regulation aims to pool the city's material and immaterial heritage, unlocking creative energies and generating opportunities within a framework that promotes citizen initiatives and civic participation through so-called Collaboration Agreements³⁴⁹.

Moreover, embarking on a progressive trajectory, the resolution addressing the *Piano Casa/Housing Plan*, ratified by the Capitol Assembly on July 27, 2023, warrants notable attention. Beyond aiming to increase the number of properties allocated for public residential construction to reduce social inequalities, a particularly innovative aspect is the intention to promote mixite between housing policies and cultural and social initiatives. This reflects a commitment not only to address housing emergencies but also to enhance the quality of living. As a testament to this intention, there has been much discussion about initiating assessments for the recovery and regeneration of Spin Time Labs and MAAM – two experiences of unauthorized occupation that have integrated housing issues into independent and alternative cultural and social production. This is to be achieved through dialogue with the Prefecture, the Region, and the property owners, with the goal of evaluating ways

³⁴⁶ Deliberazione n°104 dell'Assemblea Capitolina, del 16 Dicembre 2022. *Estratto dal Verbale delle Deliberazione dell'Assemblea Capitolina.*

³⁴⁷ *Ibidem*, p.6.

³⁴⁸ Despite its good intentions, in February 2024, the resolution has yielded limited outcomes, with only one space allocated and approximately twenty applications processed.

³⁴⁹ Deliberazione dell'Assemblea Capitolina n. 102 del 23 maggio 2023. *Regolamento per l'amministrazione condivisa dei beni comuni materiali e immateriali di Roma Capitale.*

Furthermore, this Resolution also provides an interesting definition of Common Goods as “all those material and immaterial assets or resources (such as public places, squares, streets, green areas, environmental assets, facilities and services, cultural heritage, digital projects, etc.), primarily under public jurisdiction, though not exclusively, that the community deems functional to its well-being, 'the exercise of fundamental rights, and the interests of future generations. As such, they can become subjects of agreements and shared management projects between the citizens and the administration, ensuring and enhancing both individual and collective enjoyment”.

to preserve these experiences and safeguard the affected families. This aspect will be revisited in subsequent analyses when examining the Spin Time Labs encounter.³⁵⁰

Finally, it seems relevant to mention the *Atlante*, approved in May 2023, which sets the ambitious goal of conducting a detailed census of the heritage of Rome Capital. The aim is to digitize the information to "ensure an updated, interoperable, and easily accessible database, increasingly facilitating the enhancement of Capitol assets"³⁵¹. To pursue this objective, various entities have been involved, including universities that have played a significant role in the region for several years³⁵².

Nevertheless, these regulations' updates need comprehensive debate on urban regeneration operations. According to Cellamare, there is a risk that the term urban regeneration may transform into a mere slogan, serving as a *façade* for real estate ventures, akin to the potential risk embedded in the Lazio regional law³⁵³. This implies that the legislation, while creating a framework for positive development, needs to be scrutinized to prevent it from inadvertently facilitating real estate interests under the guise of urban regeneration. Thus, this argument emphasizes the critical importance of ensuring that such initiatives genuinely prioritize the well-being and needs of local communities over profit-driven motives.³⁵⁴

On the other hand, as emerged from the interview conducted by the author with Chiara Cacciotti, a researcher at the Polytechnic University of Turin and activist with Spin Time, the current administration, compared to other past administrations, has shown more willingness to plan rather than intervene in emergencies.³⁵⁵

1.1.3 Cultural Legacy and Contemporary Neglect: Finding Equilibrium in Heritage Preservation

To complete the comprehensive overview of Rome's spatial reuse landscape, we must delve into its cultural dimension. Informal, alternative, and grassroots entities have emerged as significant contributors to cultural production, demonstrating adaptability to contemporary trends. This stands in stark contrast to the limited support provided by public institutions for the promotion and production of contemporary culture³⁵⁶.

³⁵⁰ Assemblea Capitolina, *Piano strategico per il diritto all'abitare 2023-2026*, 17 maggio 2023.

³⁵¹ The work undertaken by the Capital Administration began in 2022, initiated with a feasibility study conducted by the IFEL-ANCI foundation. The project sets forth ambitious objectives, starting with the replacement of the three systems currently utilized by the Administration (SIPIC, GeoRoma, and REFto) with a unified asset, inventory, and management application. The goal is to create a system that is accessible to all, interoperable, and capable of providing certified data.

<https://www.comune.roma.it/web/it/notizia.page?contentId=NWS1044281>

³⁵² The work of universities includes activities related to mapping abandoned properties in the area and implementing urban regeneration workshops, particularly in the peripheral areas of the city.

For what concerns mapping, although often little known, the city is involved in a broad field of studies, experiments, and mappings, with a specific focus (but not exclusively) on the theme of abandoned buildings and areas. This includes projects and initiatives of reuse, which, inevitably, given their clear prevalence, frequently involve informal or even illegal experiences: Riscatti di Città, Piccolo America, C.I.R.C.O.

Cfr. L. Brignone, C. Cacciotti, *Self-Organization in Rome: a map*, in *Tracce Urbane*, n. 3, 2018, Editrice Sapienza, Roma.

³⁵³ C. Cellamare, *Mappatura critica e rigenerazione urbana a Roma*. Semestrare di Studi e Ricerche di Geografia XXXI, 1, p.113, 2020.

³⁵⁴ *Ibidem*.

³⁵⁵ See the complete interview with Chiara Cacciotti conducted by the author on 13 december 2023, reported in the Appendix at p. 12.

³⁵⁶ Rome, with a population of 2,872,800, has a per capita expenditure of €58.1 for the protection of cultural assets and activities, with a total budget allocation of €159,708,907.88 in 2021, compared to other Italian cities like Florence, with a per capita expenditure of

As indicative of the scant consideration towards artistic production and research, recent events entail the cessation of educational and residency initiatives at La Pelanda, an expansive industrial venue revitalized near the former *Mattatoio* in Rome. Additionally, closures due to structural concerns have affected the “Globe Theatre” in Rome, alongside the Teatro Valle in Rome, which remains unreclaimed by the city following the occupation of August 10, 2014³⁵⁷.

In fact, despite progress in urban regeneration administration and legislation, alternative and contemporary-inspired cultural production in Rome encounters a lack of concrete support from public institutions, with few exceptions. As a result, it tends to thrive independently within the realms of informal social and cultural centers, third-sector associations, or with assistance from external entities, notably private organizations and universities.

Historically, Rome's cultural identity has been intricately linked to its cultural heritage, directing the focus of public administration primarily towards these assets rather than fostering innovation, as outlined in the *SIAE 2022 Report on Cultural Economics*³⁵⁸.

This perspective was further emphasized during an interview with the Councilor for Culture of the Municipality I, who underscored the inhibitory role of the Capitoline Superintendence for Cultural Heritage in the region. This entity constrains contemporary cultural initiatives by imposing restrictions on the use of public spaces for such events. The interview also shed light on the challenges posed by insufficient funds and bureaucratic hurdles, both of which significantly impede the realization of desired cultural offerings³⁵⁹.

These statements were once again confirmed in a survey on the cultural offerings of Rome Capital directed at cultural operators. It conducted in September 2021 by the Agency for the Control and Quality of Local Public Services of Rome Capital (ACoS)³⁶⁰.

The study addressed the dissatisfaction of cultural operators with Rome Capital, emphasizing the need for better recognition, protection, and support, especially during the challenges posed by the Covid-19 pandemic. Despite a reasonable demand for increased economic support, the primary request was for more collaboration opportunities with the administration, additional competition notices for legitimate and active engagement, and increased access to closed public spaces for cultural activities.

150 euros for the protection of cultural assets and activities, or Milan with a per capita expenditure of 78.37, with a total budget allocation of 105792221.7 €. These data were calculated for the year 2021 by Openpolis.

It is possible to consult the complete document here: <https://ilbolive.unipd.it/it/news/tutte-spese-cultura-comuni-italiani>

³⁵⁷ To further delve into the topic, G. Alonzo. *A Roma chiude anche la Pelanda: la crisi per gli spazi di ricerca artistica*. Exibart, 6 marzo 2023.

Available at: <https://www.exibart.com/attualita/a-roma-chiude-la-pelanda-spazi-ricerca-artistica/>

³⁵⁸ SIAE & Associazione Economia per la cultura, *The Report SIAE 2022, Spettacolo, Intrattenimento e Sport*, 87 ed., 2022

Available at: https://d2aod8qfhzlk6j.cloudfront.net/SITOIS/SIAE_osservatorio_2022_d0564ae500.pdf

³⁵⁹ See the complete interview with Giulia Silvia Ghia, conducted by the author on 7th November 2023, reported in the Appendix at pp. 26-28.

³⁶⁰ Interestingly, the survey saw substantial responses from the education and training sector, indicating the influential role of schools, universities, and art academies as cultural mediators. Cultural promotion is also driven by non-profit associations, especially those operating in social promotion. In fact, a broad sector within the field of cultural promotion (made even more diverse thanks to the recent reform of the Third Sector, Legislative Decree of July 3, 2017, No. 117) is represented by cultural associations and the new types of social promotion associations. In any case, these are non-profit organizations that operate by implementing and promoting cultural and socially relevant activities, with primarily educational and didactic purposes (around the 30%).

Cfr. ACoS, *Indagine sull'offerta culturale di Roma Capitale*, settembre 2021.

Available at: https://www.agenzia.roma.it/documenti/schede/indagine_operatori_cultura_2021_finale1.pdf

Operators expressed a need for streamlined bureaucratic processes, increased involvement of the private sector to facilitate integration of diverse cultural offerings, promotion of a network of activities, including the recovery of unused urban spaces, and expanded educational and training opportunities for all operators.

Rome's cultural identity appears characterized by the film industry, archaeology, history, and traditions, as well as architectural heritage³⁶¹. The survey underscored essential principles crucial for advancing the city's cultural offerings, including the need for diversification, enhancement, decentralization, and shared experiences. Moreover, it detected key areas for further development, extending beyond the existing city identity. They include a focus on contemporary culture, innovative proposals, diverse events, active participation from associations, suburban cultural activities, and strategic urban planning initiatives.

The interviews conducted by ACoS also revealed requests and proposals for better city and sector organization, long-term planning for year-round cultural activities in Rome, increased cultural venues, especially for the youth and elderly, enhanced inclusion of young people, revitalization of the cultural offerings, and the promotion of a network of activities in the territory, also through the recovery and enhancement of unused urban spaces, currently forgotten and in a state of abandonment.

This survey is crucial for this analysis, revealing challenges in the progress and support of the cultural sector. It's noteworthy, especially considering that a significant aspect of cultural promotion involves non-profit entities such as cultural associations and emerging forms of social promotion associations. Consequently, it emerges that even in the absence of a clear strategy for cultural development, civil society and citizen networks autonomously organize themselves. However, over the long term, they face economic and organizational unsustainability due to the absence of support, as respond to social issues that the administration encounters difficult to address.

1.2. The Landscape of Marseille

1.2.1 Marseille: Replacing Informality with Economic Growth through Private and State Interests

“(...) So, what we meant to convey is that each project was unique. Every relationship with space, the community, and time was distinct and individual. In Marseille during the 1990s, this diversity gave rise to an explosion of urban music, like rap, and more. There was a surge of creators working in connection with public spaces and outdoors, artists seeking a different interaction with the public. Marseille had a remarkably high artistic density, and it was much more affordable than living in Paris, Lyon, or other major cities like Bordeaux. Thus, Marseille offered this artistic density and the opportunity to respond to these spaces, providing support for daily operations and fostering further development (...)”³⁶².

³⁶¹ Ivi, p.12.

³⁶² See the interview conducted by the author with Fabrice Lextrait, on 28 November 2023, reported in the Appendix at p. 18.

This excerpt is from an interview conducted by the author with one of the founders of La Friche La Belle de Mai, Fabrice Lextrait. When narrating the origins of La Friche³⁶³, Lextrait reflected on the Marseille spirit in the 1990s, a sentiment that proves particularly significant for the city's subsequent developments, notably in the realm of urban regeneration. According to several scholars the popular essence of Marseille and its informal culture were absorbed in the late '90s by the interests of a *private club* and the state, viewing Marseille as an opportunity for economic growth and more direct access to the Mediterranean³⁶⁴. Thus, the social scientist Maria Elena Buslacchi argued that the project of urban regeneration, headed by the implementation in 1995 of *Euroméditerranée* project, were driven by the alliance of the State with public regional and municipal institutions. In this process, legality, ecology and order were the new values, while the old ones were defined by solidarity, proximity and a sense of informality³⁶⁵.

The case of Marseille is particularly interesting for this analysis as it demonstrates how customary urban practices have been integrated into top-down urban regeneration projects. This integration aimed to create a new city image that conveyed authenticity, setting it apart from other cities and thus making it more competitive. Simultaneously, as explored by urban sociologist Nicolas Maisetti, Marseille's residents have sought to resist projects explicitly planning the displacement of poorer inhabitants from certain areas³⁶⁶. They persisted in inhabiting public spaces in manners that resonated with their identity, and public institutions found a way to accommodate it, recognizing its role in enhancing the city's allure through an authenticity that could be marketed.

In this context, initiatives multiply aimed at “selling the city” to foreign investors, tourists, and potential new resident who correspond to the vague targets that make up the creative classes. According to Maisetti, the Marseille case is exemplary of the dual nature of attractiveness policy: it serves as both a mechanism for entering the competition among territories and pursuit of self-presentation aimed at producing effects on the perceptions of these heterogeneous target audiences with often incompatible expectations³⁶⁷.

In this sense, the strongly culture-based urban regeneration of the city has always lived in ambiguity between how it was promoted and the actual realization of such a process. While Marseille's cultural vitality, especially concerning its underground scene, has been to a certain extent instrumentalized by political elites to derive economic well-being for the city, it has also been valued to create spaces for the diverse artistic scene that was in Marseille in the early '90s.

³⁶³ In the context of this dissertation, the reference to La Friche la Belle de Mai will be made using the term "La Friche," as is commonly employed in scholarly discourse.

³⁶⁴ The denomination “private club” refers to a group of local prominent entrepreneurs gathered in 2006 under the umbrella denomination, Ambition Top 20 Club, with the aim to place Marseille among the twenty most important European cities in terms of economic activities.

Cfr. M.E. Buslacchi. *Transforming Places, Changing Deities: Spatial and Symbolic Negotiation in Marseille*. Urbanities - Journal of Urban Ethnography, 7, 2018

³⁶⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 2.

³⁶⁶ N. Maisetti. *City branding et fragmentation métropolitaine: l'impossible recherche d'une marque territoriale dans le cas du territoire marseillais*. Communication & langages, 2013, pp.95 - 118.

³⁶⁷ *Ibidem.*, p.97

As came to light from the interviews conducted in Marseille, this became possible due to the influence of specific local political figures who strongly advocated for establishing cultural spaces where artists and cultural operators played a central and political role. They supported the initiatives while granting autonomy and independence to the managers of these spaces³⁶⁸.

On the other side, in Marseille, like in Rome, there has been an ambiguous management of urban territory, often sidelined due to the clientelist dynamics of the city³⁶⁹. Despite this, attention and state funding have stimulated and encouraged the regenerative process. This approach is generally in line with the guiding attitude of the French state, even at the local level. It emerges that Marseille's cultural and artistic spontaneity has been more of an intention than an initiative in its urban development.

To frame the case of La Friche, we will highlight the political and urbanistic upheavals and advancements related to urban regeneration that have influenced the transformation of Marseille.

1.2.2 Vigoroux's Leadership, State Influence, and Local Cultural Initiatives

From the interviews conducted in Marseille, it was highlighted that the first turning point in the city's urban development came with the election of Robert Vigoroux in 1986. From the words of Cesare Mattina, social scientist specialized in clientelism dynamics in Marseille and Naples, this element becomes very clear:

"The administration of Vigoroux radically breaks with the previous administrations, especially regarding clientelism: no political party affiliation, hence a personal list, and no accountability to a reference party (...) all power was concentrated in the mayor's office, and the structure was technical. The break is so strong that it is also symbolic. The mayor, who was located near the old port, moves to Parc du Faró on the south side of the old port. It is a powerful symbolic gesture. It signifies a rupture compared to before, a refusal to manage things as they were before, the mists of the port... symbolically, it's the palace of Maria Antonietta, situated higher... now it's the headquarters of the Metropole, the metropolitan area, which in France are much more active than in Italy. It's also a symbol of technocratic power in a way (...)"³⁷⁰

³⁶⁸ This approach stands in contrast to the situation in Rome, where public intervention often follows initiatives that have already originated from the grassroots, as seen in the resolution regarding the reuse of unused spaces for social purposes (Regulation n°104 of 2023).

³⁶⁹As argued by Elisabeth Dorier in *Marseille as Privatopia*, part of the book *The Marseille Mosaic* by Mark Ingram and Kathryn Kleppinger, Marseille's urban landscape in the last quarter-century reflects a complex interplay of expansion and neglect. Widespread real estate speculation and laissez-faire governance have led to an evolving city. The contrast between affluent neighborhood developments and neglected city centers epitomizes Marseille's dual urban narrative. The outskirts, shaped by informal agreements, prioritize property value over compliance, resulting in disconnected residential areas with inadequate infrastructure. This dynamic operates through entrenched comanagement practices and neglects the city center's needs while favoring suburban real estate profitability.

Cfr. M. Ingram and K. Kleppinger (Eds), *The Marseille Mosaic*, Berghahn Books, 2023.

Cfr. C. Mattina, *La Régulation clientélaire. Relations de clientèle et gouvernement urbain à Naples et à Marseille (1970-1980)*, PhD thesis in Political Sciences, Université Grenoble- II, 2003.

³⁷⁰ See the interview with Cesare Mattina, conducted by the autor on 30 november 2023, reported in the Appendix at p. 8.

Robert Vigoroux became the mayor of Marseille in 1986, replacing Gaston Defferre who passed away during his term³⁷¹. In the 1989 elections, considered the underdog and running against the official candidate of his party, he nevertheless won the municipal election against Jean-Claude Gaudin (UDF)³⁷² and Michel Pezet (PS)³⁷³. Vigouroux represents not only a new direction for Marseille's politics but also the objective of a state project.

Following significant conflicts among local Socialist Party leaders upon succeeding Defferre, the political landscape shifted to Paris for resolution. The President of the Republic appointed a secondary municipal councilor, like Vigouroux, and dispatched highly qualified personnel from Paris, signaling a departure from traditional patronage politics toward a vision of Good Governance. This shift was attributed by Mattina to Marseille's depleted administration funds, necessitating a halt to escalating municipal expenses.³⁷⁴ Moreover, with Paris dictating the choice of the new mayor, the city's policies underwent a transformation. Vigoroux's appointment symbolized a State-led effort to revitalize Marseille, gaining national attention.

Simultaneously, his administration played a pivotal role in implementing cultural policies aimed at urban development:

"Perhaps we need to take a step back to Vigoroux because it's interesting how cultural policies somehow contribute to a technicization of politics. It's clear to me. So, Vigoroux does something very important. He places the delegation to culture at the top of the hierarchy of deputies – the adjoints are ranked from first to twentieth, so there is importance in the influence they have on the mayor. He appoints the first deputy (premiere adjoint) as the culture delegate, and he appoints an incredible character named Christian Poitevin to this position. An incredible character, a great person for me... a poet. His poet's name is Julien Blaine. He is a mix because he is the son of the system, the son of the former director of the newspaper Le Provence, which was owned by the mayor (...) he has this dual role because on the one hand, he is a product of the system, and on the other hand, he has never been involved in politics and is an artist. He had practically no political experience before. In an interview, he tells me that one of the first things, as soon as artists contacted him or sometimes when he contacted them himself, he would say, 'Go, occupy this space, and then we'll help you,' one of which was the Friche."³⁷⁵

The Vigoroux administration, in essence, assumed a quasi-delegated mandate from the state to navigate Marseille away from entrenched patronage politics, directing its course towards long-anticipated developmental paradigms. However, the impetus to stimulate socio-economic advancement via cultural policies primarily originated from local quarters, notably emanating from figures such as Poitevin. This delineates Marseille's developmental trajectory as dual-fold: one delineated by the influence of state intervention, and the other propelled by local administration initiatives.

³⁷¹ Until 1989, Vigoroux was a member of the Socialist Party. However, upon becoming Mayor of Marseille, he assumed an independent stance, operating without allegiance to any political parties or movements. This underscored a significant departure from past patronage politics, affirming his break from established political affiliations.

³⁷² Union For French Democracy (UDF)

³⁷³ Socialist Party (PS)

³⁷⁴ See the interview with Cesare Mattina, conducted by the author on 30 november 2023, reported in the Appendix at 9.

³⁷⁵ *Ibidem*.

However, toward the end of Vigoroux's term, a significant shift occurred. When Vigoroux considered seeking reelection and conducted surveys to gauge public opinion, the approval ratings were strikingly low (8-9%). Consequently, he opted not to vie for reelection, having seemingly lost touch with the electorate³⁷⁶. Mayor Jean-Claude Gaudin, elected in 1995 with the Republican Party, reverted the city's trajectory, aligning it with its previous state. Throughout his tenure until 2020, Gaudin aimed to position Marseille as a globally competitive city, supporting major urban regeneration projects that involved relocating residents from neighborhoods slated for tourism development, catering to wealthier demographics, in a bid to stimulate economic growth³⁷⁷.

1.2.3 Transformative Urban Projects in Marseille : Euroméditerranée, Capital of Culture

Numerous studies have delved into the impact of major urban regeneration projects in Marseille, such as *Euroméditerranée* and *Marseille-Provence Capital Européenne de la Culture*³⁷⁸. While this dissertation does not delve into a comprehensive analysis of all related issues and benefits, recognizing the pivotal role of these initiatives in Marseille's development provides crucial context for the research objective.

According to Nicolas Maisetti, as outlined in his book *Opérations culturelles*³⁷⁹, culture has emerged as the focal point of urban policies over two decades. It has become the horizon guiding efforts to make the city more attractive and competitive. Culture is positioned as a selling point for various urban offerings, including housing, tourist destinations, and employment opportunities, primarily targeting the middle class to replace the working class in historical neighborhoods. City stakeholders strategically embed culture in their positioning, navigating inter-territorial competition dynamics.

The anthropologist Marie Beschon³⁸⁰, claimed that the Marseille envisioned by the early proponents of *Euroméditerranée* faced several challenges. The city grappled with an outdated manufacturing sector and high unemployment rates. The residents found themselves labeled as a "traditional working-class population," burdened by significant socioeconomic hardships. The economy lacked essential infrastructure and a service industry with substantial added value. Marseille was devoid of intangible assets like cultural and educational centers, tourism services, meeting spaces, and hotel amenities. The imperative was to cultivate an identity that could attract investors and infuse economic vitality into the city and the goal was to address these shortcomings and stimulate positive transformations.

Thus, *Euroméditerranée* fit in this context. It is a major urban development project in Marseille, an Urban Development Public Establishment (Établissement Public d'Aménagement, or EPA) created in 1995 with the

³⁷⁶ See the interview conducted by the author with Cesare Mattina, reported in the Appendix at pp. xx.

³⁷⁷ M.E. Buslacchi, 2018, *cit. p.87*.

L. Bonduel. *Gentrification Policies and Urban protests in Marseille*. The Urban Media Lab, 2019

³⁷⁸ To further delve into this topic: N. Maisetti. *Marseille 2013 Off: l'institutionnalisation d'une critique?* Faire-Savoirs: Sciences de l'Homme et de la Société en Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur, 2013, 10, pp.59-68. hal-01680706

³⁷⁹ N. Maisetti. *Opération culturelle et pouvoirs urbains. Instrumentalisation économique de la culture et luttes autour de Marseille-Provence Capitale européenne de la culture 2013*. L'Harmattan, 2014.

³⁸⁰ M. Beshon. *Justification of Renewal as a Long and Winding Road*, in K. Kleppinger (Eds), *The Marseille Mosaic*, Berghahn Books, 2023.

goal of revitalizing and transforming the urban landscape of Marseille, particularly the port and surrounding areas. The project aims to enhance economic, social, and cultural development, making Marseille more competitive and attractive on both national and international scales.

Euroméditerranée focuses on various aspects, including sustainable urban development, quality of life improvement, planning and urbanism, real estate development, and economic growth. The initiative involves collaboration between the State, local authorities, and various stakeholders to implement innovative solutions and create a vibrant and sustainable urban environment.

One major criticism that has come to this project is the fear of gentrification and the potential displacement of lower-income residents³⁸¹. While aiming to attract a wealthier population and business, the development project seemed to have not prioritized the integration of different social classes. Furthermore, the involvement of private corporations and investors may have prioritized profit over the needs of the local community. These ambitions may have brought a kind of cultural homogenization, erasing the unique character and diversity of Marseille's neighborhoods.

These criticisms highlight a significant challenge that surfaced after Marseille pursued the title of the European Capital of Culture. As meticulously detailed again by Maisetti, a fundamental issue arose due to the oversight of the city's genuine cultural landscape during the candidacy preparation³⁸². While Marseille's multicultural essence was portrayed as emblematic of an open and diverse city by the sea, the comprehensive spectrum of its arts, including the vibrant rap culture and dynamic world of graffiti, seemed marginalized in the 2013 project³⁸³.

However, despite these criticisms, certain alternative experiences, such as La Friche la Belle de Mai, obtained funding, enhancing the long-term viability of entities that might have otherwise faced limitations. Thus, the most collaborative alternative initiatives both engaged with and were supported by the institutional frameworks of cultural public action (e.g., Friche la Belle de Mai and Marseille2013 Off). Conversely, there existed a more radical approach embodied by collectives like the Front of the Refractories to Cultural Intoxication and the documentary *Capital of Culture*, who have received less consideration and support compared to other cultural organizations.³⁸⁴

³⁸¹ P. Cartelli. *The "Euro-Mediterranean" City: Transnational Difference and Belonging on the Marseille Waterfront*, *Ethnologie française*, vol. 50, no. 3, 2020, pp. 501-512.

³⁸² In Marseille, as noted by Maisetti (2014) the MP 2013 event also revealed several limitations. Several scholars observed that it might have exacerbated certain socio-spatial inequalities by prioritizing the Marseille city center without effectively integrating the peripheral neighborhoods, which nevertheless face significant socio-economic difficulties. For several artists, the unequal distribution of cultural events during the year 2013 was seen as consistent with the artistic choices made in the official programming, which minimally incorporated local artists, notably concerning the case of rap, a highly prevalent genre in Marseille. This legitimized the emergence of movements advocating for a new right to the creative city that would be less elitist, aligning with the (radical) theories proposed by Henri Lefebvre in the work "The Right to the City" (Lefebvre, 1968).

³⁸³ N. Maisetti, 2014, *cit. p. 90*.

³⁸⁴ See also: Maisetti N., *Marseille 2013 Off: l'institutionnalisation d'une critique?* Faire-Savoirs: Sciences de l'Homme et de la Société en Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur, 2013, 10, pp.59-68

1.2.4 Today's Investment Plan for Social, Cultural, and Urban Revitalization

Today, there appears to be a growing interest on the part of local and national administrations to heal the societal rifts that emerged, notably in the aftermath of 2013. A notable shift is observed as the City of Marseille adopts an extensive investment plan – *Plan pluriannuel d'investissement (PPI) 2024-2029* – outlining its aspirations for construction, renovation, and acquisitions over the next six years³⁸⁵. This initiative stands as an unprecedented program of reconstruction and modernization since the mid-20th century. Confronted with deficient educational facilities, stark inadequacy in public services, and a pressing housing crisis, the municipality is steadfast in its commitment to craft a city that is fairer, greener, safer, and more democratic³⁸⁶. Furthermore, the city is making significant investments in the renovation of cultural venues and in the preservation and enrichment of historical heritage, aiming to ensure widespread access to culture while supporting artistic innovation. Amidst these ambitions, approximately 300 projects are poised to address the city's longstanding neglect of public facilities. Central to this investment plan is the drive to ensure equitable access to quality public services across all neighborhoods³⁸⁷.

This ambitious investment strategy is made viable by the prudent management of public finances under the new municipal leadership³⁸⁸ and through concerted efforts to secure collaborative funding. The mayor's negotiations with the State have resulted in a substantial commitment of five billion euros as part of the *Marseille en Grand plan*³⁸⁹, presenting an unparalleled capacity for investment.

Within the mosaic of ongoing initiatives in Marseille aimed at urban rejuvenation and enhancing residents' quality of life, there exists an operational planning dimension.

This trajectory mirrors a broader realization within the city's governance that certain social challenges have been overlooked or even exacerbated by earlier projects aimed at burnishing the city's reputation. This oversight risked leaving numerous issues unresolved, potentially impeding the city's long-term economic growth. The renewed emphasis on Marseille's priority neighborhoods, including *Quartiers Nord* —previously neglected during the planning of Marseille Capital of Culture 2013— reflects a commitment to comprehensively

³⁸⁵ Here is the link to the *Plan pluriannuel d'investissement (PPI)*

<https://www.marseille.fr/mairie/actualites/plan-pluriannuel-des-investissements-de-la-ville-de-marseille>

³⁸⁶ Ville de Marseille. *Plan Pluriannuel des Investissements de la Ville de Marseille*. Published on Marseille.fr the 15th of December 2023.

<https://www.marseille.fr/mairie/actualites/plan-pluriannuel-des-investissements-de-la-ville-de-marseille>

³⁸⁷ Another important project of urban regeneration in the city is *Marseille Rénovation Urbaine (MRU)*, coordinated by the Marseille Urban Renovation Public Interest Group (GIP), a public partnership created in 2003. It fulfils the strategic management of urban renewal projects, Pooling of funds for projects supported by ANRU in Marseille, Project management and coordination of project owners, local authorities, landlords, and developers.

³⁸⁸The current Mayor of Marseille, Benoît Payan, assumed office in 2020, representing the Socialist Party and becoming the city's youngest mayor in history. His election signified a significant shift, marking the Socialist Party's return to Marseille City Hall after a quarter-century hiatus following the Gaston Defferre era and the tenure of Robert Vigouroux. Payan has demonstrated a deep commitment to addressing territorial disparities and enhancing social services and housing provisions.

³⁸⁹ As the second-largest city in France, the Head of State, Emmanuelle Macron, wanted to make Marseille a laboratory for new public policies implemented across seven priorities: security, social issues, health, education, employment, culture, and transportation, to change the lives of the people of Marseille.

Since September 2021, over 90% of the announced projects have been initiated, thanks to a fund of five billion euros mobilized by the State, generating 15 billion euros in investments.

To further delve into the topic: <https://www.elysee.fr/emmanuel-macron/marseille-en-grand>

addressing social issues, moving beyond surface-level changes to genuinely uplift the city's image³⁹⁰. Two major logics are at play within this context: the internal tension within the cultural field itself, oscillating between liberal patronage and social concern, and the external logic that instrumentalizes culture as an economic and symbolic tool³⁹¹.

In essence, Marseille's urban journey embodies a dynamic interweaving of orchestrated governmental initiatives and grassroots cultural movements, a testament to the city's intricate path of growth, evolution, and cultural vibrancy.

The comparative analysis of the two cities underscores their allure, intricately intertwined with their alternative cultural spheres, which continually challenge and diverge from conventional cultural institutions such as museums, theaters, or art galleries. Despite contending with analogous challenges stemming from territorial mismanagement, often ascribed to administrative inefficiencies and clientelist relationships within public institutions, their trajectories diverge notably regarding state patronage for cultural development and urban regeneration initiatives. Marseille stands out for receiving substantial political and economic attention from the State, fostering its attractiveness both nationally and internationally³⁹². Conversely, Rome, despite its national and international significance, has historically contended with a perceived neglect from national authorities. Nevertheless, the recent infusion of funding via the *National Recovery and Resilience Plan* (PNRR) instills optimism for prospective enhancements within Rome's cultural landscape, suggesting potential shifts in state priorities and resource allocation strategies³⁹³.

³⁹⁰ The *Quartiers Nord* in Marseille refer to the northern districts of the city, characterized by socio-economic challenges such as high unemployment and poverty. Efforts are underway to address these issues through urban renewal and community initiatives.

³⁹¹ J.L. Fabiani. *Marseille et son projet culturel: la ville, l'Europe et la Méditerranée*. L'Observatoire, 2008, p. 29.

³⁹² The state's interest in Marseille can be attributed, in part, to its strategic significance also from a foreign policy standpoint. Given its pivotal location on the Mediterranean, Marseille assumes a prominent role for France in geopolitical and diplomatic considerations within the Mediterranean region. Its adjacency to Mediterranean nations and historical status as a major commercial port endow Marseille with a centrality that the French government likely regards as indispensable for advancing its influence and interests in the broader Mediterranean context.

³⁹³ The National Recovery and Resilience Plan (PNRR) for Rome, with a total allocation of €1.15 billion spanning 279 projects, represents a comprehensive strategy addressing various aspects of recovery and resilience for the city. Here it is possible to consult the *Assemblea Capitolina Commissione Speciale PNRR, Atlante del PNRR di Roma*, Dicembre 2023: https://www.comune.roma.it/webresources/cms/documents/Atlante_del_PNRR_di_Roma_compressed.pdf

Chapter IV - Experiences of alternative and grassroots practices in Italy and France: La Friche la Belle de Mai (Marseille) and Angelo Mai, Fondazione Piccolo America, Spin Time Labs (Rome)

In the urban contexts under examination, a notable shift in cultural dynamics has materialized, brought about by the convergence of community-driven endeavors and administrative frameworks. While nuanced, this synergy has initiated a dialogue that shapes the future trajectory of cultural experiences in cities such as Rome and Marseille. At the core of this evolution is an exploration of the intersecting realms of grassroots movements and their relationship with public institutions. Examining their engagement and potential dialogue provides a critical lens to comprehend the evolving urban cultural fabric.

Rome and Marseille, both celebrated for their rich *cultural milieu*, have witnessed the emergence of alternative experiences stemming from community-driven initiatives. Rome's initiatives often take on a grassroots and informal approach, while those in Marseille deviate from traditional cultural institutions, presenting an alternative organizational structure within the established cultural landscape, but within the framework of formality. While this dynamic is shaped and supported by the operational strategies of the French administration, as discussed in previous chapters, the experiences in Rome seem to navigate the realm of administrative inertia and a lack of regulatory updates prevalent in the broader Italian context. This scenario reflects a landscape where bureaucratic processes may not be keeping pace with the evolving needs and dynamics of society.

In addition to conventional forms of civic involvement, there is a growing participatory movement dedicated to shaping a distinctive urban politics. This strategy places a strong emphasis on citizen participation and the creation of new public domains, often facilitated by network technologies. Individuals and collectives, serving as catalysts in both tangible and interconnected urban spaces, employ inventive expressions of art, cinema, and theater. They champion increasingly inclusive participatory methodologies, aiming to engage citizens not merely as observers but as active contributors to the public sphere³⁹⁴.

Understanding how the two spheres of grassroots initiatives and administrative and political institutions interact and potentially influence one another reveals an intricate interplay that goes beyond their unilateral contributions. In light of the above, this chapter aims to illustrate these intertwined relationships unveiling the underlying dialogue, collaboration, or lack thereof, and discussing its impact on the cultural, social, and policy landscapes of Rome and Marseille.

³⁹⁴ R. Andò, A.L. Farro, A. Marinelli, S. Parisi (a cura di). *Reti creative: Pratiche e Spazi di attivazione culturale a Roma*. Guerini e Associati, Roma, 2019.

Brief Methodology Review

To answer the research questions, a qualitative analysis was conducted, initially involving data collection through the examination of administrative documents, websites of the selected case studies, existing academic research on these experiences and newspapers articles. This was supplemented by a series of interviews with activists, founders of the sociocultural alternative organizations, academics and representatives of public institutions.

More specifically, for La Friche La Belle de Mai, insights were gleaned from discussions with two of its founders: Fabrice Lextraît, an urban and cultural planner and member of the *Société Coopérative d'Intérêt Collectif* (SCIC), which manages La Friche La Belle de Mai, and Philippe Folquié, the initiator of *Système Friche Théâtre*, an association integral to the Friche project. Additionally, an interview with Mathilde Gouteux, an Employee PhD student under a CIFRE contract at La Friche Belle de Mai, provided valuable perspectives. In the case of Angelo Mai, Sylvia De Fanti, the founder of Angelo Mai and affiliated with the theatrical company Blue Motion, shared her multifaceted viewpoint as an occupant of Teatro Valle and an accomplished actress. For Fondazione Piccolo America, insights were gathered from Giulia Flor, the deputy director of the Foundation and an initial occupant of Cinema America.

Furthermore, Chiara Cacciotti, an activist involved with Spin Time, anthropologist, and Ph.D. candidate specializing in Roman housing occupations, provided a comprehensive perspective.

Lastly, Giulia Silvia Ghia, the Councilor for Culture of Municipality I of Rome, which oversees all the explored experiences from a territorial perspective, was consulted. The interviews conducted were semi-structured in nature, focusing notably on the various stages of dialogue with political entities and public administration. It was also crucial to consider instances where dialogue did not occur, as they held significant value. Secondly, attention was directed towards relationships with other associations in their respective neighborhoods and stakeholders across the city (private entities, universities), aiming to highlight how the examined entities contributed to the social innovation and cultural production within the two cities, and disseminate their model across the urban landscape.

The ex-post analysis of the interviews unveiled common processes characterized by key themes across the examined entities, each manifesting in distinct ways. Primary among these was the recurrent theme of grappling with public administration conflicts. Additionally, a noteworthy emphasis emerged on openness, evident both in the dialogue and in the integration of diverse entities, ideas, and the public into the organizational fabric³⁹⁵.

The alternative nature of these spaces, rooted in cultural production and social innovation, holds the potential to transcend isolation and become integral to urban development. By stimulating a broader urban innovation process, these initiatives aspire to transform the alternative into the norm. This transformative power, coupled

³⁹⁵ The conflicts with public administration, although noteworthy, present opportunities for dialogue and mutual understanding. Openness, a key theme across these experiences, showcases a commitment to inclusivity, collaboration, and the incorporation of diverse perspectives. This emphasis on openness not only contributes to the regularization of these spaces but also fosters a dynamic and inclusive urban environment.

with a growing commitment to influencing public policies, positions these experiences as beacons of impactful change within their respective cities³⁹⁶.

To analyze the nature of the dialogue with public institutions, three analytical categories have been identified:

- The level of conflict
- The openness of the entity to the external world
- The implementation or lack thereof of a regularization process

In discussing the alternative nature of these socio-cultural centers, three areas of interest have been identified: the role of cultural production, their contribution to social innovation and the dissemination of the experience at both local and national levels^{397 398}.

Rationales of the case studies selection

The selection of case studies resulted from an in-depth exploration of the Italian and French contexts. In pursuit of a comparative analysis, emphasis was placed on experiences representative of the dynamics outlined in Chapter II:

1. Public commitment (in this chapter, through the local government) to supporting urban and cultural policies.
2. Administrative decentralization and cultural democratization.
3. Public Administration's focus on "New Territories of the Arts" and alternative forms of cultural production³⁹⁹.

Additionally, the chosen socio-cultural centers have been recognized both nationally and internationally as exemplary models. For Marseille, a single specific case was chosen due to both accessibility to information and the French experience presenting a more cohesive national landscape. This cohesion stems from the promotion of alternative cultural centers by the government and various levels of administration. The Roman context, due to its geographic and logistical accessibility, was portrayed through three particularly significant realities for the city.

³⁹⁶ Carlo Cellamare provides valuable insights into the evolution of conflict within contemporary society, particularly as it transitions from the factory setting to the complexities of "metropolitan life." He underscores that within urban environments, the participants involved in these struggles are less easily identifiable compared to those within a factory context. As conflict becomes increasingly challenging to mobilize and participatory avenues become ambiguous and frustrating, Cellamare advocates for the creation of spaces characterized by autonomy and freedom. These spaces transcend mere forms of resistance and opposition, offering alternative models for collective and urban living.

Cfr. C. Cellamare. *Autorganizzazione dei territori e funzione del conflitto*, In Città Viva. Futuri Urbani vol. III, 2022, pp. 17-19,

³⁹⁷ According to sociologist Timeus and Gascó (2018), social innovation involves including citizens and social groups by diffusing innovative practices among private and public organizations. As discussed by several scholars, examples include inclusive services for vulnerable populations, community initiative spaces, and urban laboratories for discussing territorial issues. Culture, creativity, and the arts are considered vital in engaging local communities, as demonstrated by European and national cultural initiatives (British Council, 2018; Lo stato dei Luoghi, 2020).

³⁹⁸ "Dissemination of the experience", refers to the spread or sharing of the knowledge, practices, and impact associated with a particular experience or initiative. This dissemination can occur through various means, such as the replication of successful aspects in different settings. Formal recognitions can include awards, certifications, grants, or other official endorsements that validate and support the significance of the experience in the eyes of wider stakeholders.

³⁹⁹ Cfr. F. Lextrait, 2001, *cit. p. 56*.

Defining Grassroots and alternative experience as enabling spaces

To enhance the understanding of the substantive analysis, it was deemed appropriate to provide a definition of grassroots and alternative socio-cultural organizations. The cultural economist scholars Valeria Morea and Francesca Sabatini, define grassroots practices as “urban dynamics activated from below and from outside established institutions that make a city lively thanks to the heterogenous, adaptive, and ultimately transformative initiatives of its citizens, especially when aggregated in the form of organized associations”⁴⁰⁰.

Although the terms *grassroots* and *bottom-up* are often used interchangeably in literature, a slight nuance in meaning appears to exist. While the term *grassroots* refers to a more ideological dimension, where the roots of an experience originate from the needs of the population concerned, using collective action from the local level to implement change, the term *bottom-up*, refers to the initiative of the experience, implying an upward trajectory. In this dissertation, it was deemed important to highlight this difference, as it was found through the analysis of case studies that, although all experiences have grassroots origins, the initiative that enabled their affirmation, can also come from the top – such as in the case of La Friche La Belle de Mai – still advancing alternative demands to those of the existing social, economic, and cultural system. The cultural and social centers that will be the subject of this dissertation have followed the upward trajectory, influenced the surrounding space, and disseminated their practices without imposing them.

In addition to their grassroots nature, the examined experiences align with the concept of "enabling spaces" as articulated by Francesca Cognetti, Luca Lo Re, and Adriana Goni Mazzitelli⁴⁰¹. These spaces serve as facilitators for action and participation, demanding individuals to transcend their customary frameworks and routines. They necessitate collective problem-solving to address shared challenges and fulfill common needs, interests, and expectations. The concept of enabling spaces goes beyond mere physical environments; it encompasses the reconfiguration of power dynamics and the cultivation of a novel urban governance culture. Emphasizing inclusive processes, these spaces aim to harness and strengthen existing social and institutional capabilities while fostering the emergence of new ones.

Therefore, reaching the *top* does not entail a subsequent hierarchy of their position and the imposition of a presumed virtuous model but rather a new idea of social and cultural development. This approach distances itself from urban neoliberalism and encourages significant involvement of the population in formulating and implementing public policies for the city.

⁴⁰⁰ V. Morea; F. Sabatini. *The joint contribution of grassroots artistic practices to the alternative and vital city. The case of Bologna and Venice (Italy)*. In: *Cities*. Vol. 135, 2023, pp. 1-12,

⁴⁰¹ A.G. Mazzitelli. *Searching for an “enabling” space. Dialogues and bridges between institutions and self-organization practices for a collaborative territorial planning and management*. In: *Tracce Urbane*, No. 3 June 2018, p.16.

1. La Friche La Bella de Mai

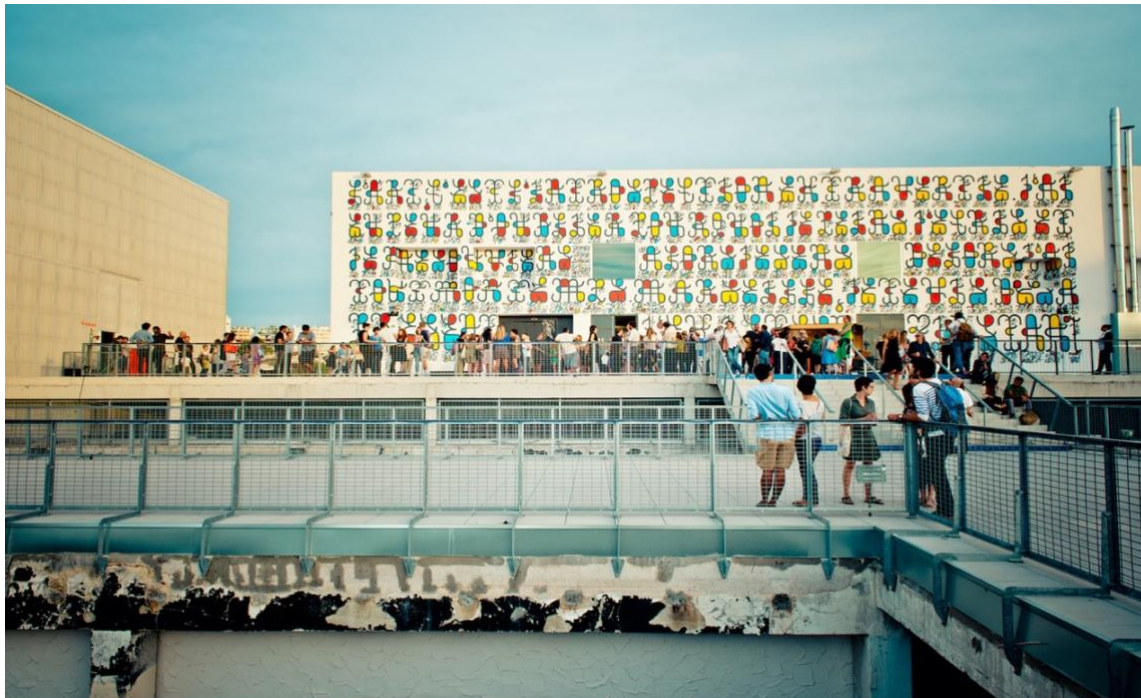


Figure 2 Terrace of La Friche La Belle de Mai⁴⁰²

Amidst the wealth of existing research on Friche La Belle de Mai, this paragraph diverges from a historical recount or programmatic analysis. Instead, it focuses on understanding the dynamics that led to its establishment and subsequent development. The goal is thus to explore how the artistic, cultural, and social objectives of La Friche have evolved over the years, consistently reshaping, and reimagining themselves within the context of Marseille. As noted by Fabrice Lextrait:

*“In essence, what started as a unique project in Marseille, initiated by a blend of political influence, artistic vision, and collaborative efforts, evolved into a model for cultural revitalization. This ongoing journey, spanning decades, highlights the adaptability and uniqueness of each project, continually shaping and reshaping Marseille’s cultural narrative”.*⁴⁰³

La Friche La Belle de Mai, a pioneering cultural and urban institution recognized for its leadership in integrating art and culture into urban territories, followed the classical pattern of cultural cluster formation⁴⁰⁴.

⁴⁰² Copyright: Caroline Dutrey, <https://matteroffact.fr/projets/la-friche-la-belle-de-mai>

⁴⁰³ See the interview conducted by the author with Fabrice Lextrait, on 29 November 2023, reported in the Appendix at p. 19

⁴⁰⁴ A cultural cluster, as discussed by Florida (2002), and Landry (1995) refers to a concentration of interconnected cultural and creative entities, such as cultural institutions, organizations, businesses, and artists, within a specific geographical area. The term is often used to describe a spatial agglomeration of cultural activities that fosters collaboration, innovation, and economic development within the cultural and creative industries. Several key factors contribute to the formation of cultural clusters such as agglomeration benefits, economic factors, urban planning and infrastructures, cultural amenities, government support.

It is built upon the initial investment of local cultural actors seeking a space that preserves the traces of an industrial identity, resulting from an initial temporary re-use in 1991. It also traces its origins to the visionary insights of Christian Poitevin.

Christian Poitevin, the cultural councilor under the Robert Vigouroux administration in Marseille, emerged as a driving force behind the initiative. Influenced by his extensive global travels and encounters with cultural revitalization projects, such as Le Confort Moderne in Poitiers, Poitevin envisioned a transformative experiment for Marseille's industrial heritage⁴⁰⁵. As accurately observed during the interview with Mathilde Gouteux:

“(...)Regarding the structure and legislation of La Friche, it appears to be unique and tied to its history. In the 1990s, a wave of closures impacted numerous fabric-related establishments, driven by an economic downturn. The crisis resulted in the abandonment of substantial spaces, leaving many large facilities vacant. Recognizing the need for intervention, Christian Poitevin, a figure at the City of Marseille, stepped forward with a visionary idea. Drawing inspiration from the ethos of squatting movements, he proposed a transformative approach: providing artists and cultural producers with access to these empty spaces. The objective was clear — to observe how these creative minds could experiment, bring life, and imbue these abandoned places with newfound value.”⁴⁰⁶

This vision gained momentum through the fortuitous collaboration with Alain Fourneau and Philippe Foulquié, cultural activists deeply engaged in promoting puppet, object, and avant-garde theater in the city.

The collaboration of these cultural stalwarts, influenced by political vision and collaborative efforts, marked the catalyst for La Friche's inception. Renowned architects, including Jean Nouvel, who assumed the role of Friche's president in 1995, significantly contributed to the transformative design standards of the project. The movement gained further improvement with the support of Dominique Wallon, the National Director of Cultural Affairs, who recognized the potential of awakening Marseille from its cultural torpor⁴⁰⁷.

The journey began in the Friche du Boulevard Magallon (15th arrondissement), with an experimental spirit that foreshadowed the potential of undefined cultural spaces.

In 1992, the installation of artists takes place within the SEITA site, an old state-owned tobacco factory that, throughout the 20th century, had been the central hub of the economic and associative life of the working-class neighborhood of La Belle de Mai. Philippe Foulquié defined this place a *île en ville* (island in the city), described the sensation of being explorers shaping a new world, emphasizing the space's potential for creation⁴⁰⁸. Benefiting from a precarious occupancy agreement with the owner,

⁴⁰⁵ "Le Confort Moderne" is a contemporary cultural center located in Poitiers, France. It is known for its diverse cultural programming, including live music performances, visual arts exhibitions, theater, and other artistic events. The center plays a significant role in promoting contemporary and avant-garde cultural expressions. Here is the link to the website: <https://www.confort-moderne.fr/fr/page/Infos-pratiques/15>.

⁴⁰⁶ See the interview conducted by the author with Mathilde Gouteux, on 29 November 2023, reported in the Appendix at p.29

⁴⁰⁷ Dominique Wallon is a French senior civil servant who held various leadership positions at the Ministry of Culture between 1981 and 2000. He served as the Director-General of the National Center of Cinematography (CNC) from January 1989 to October 1995..

⁴⁰⁸ See the interview conducted by the author with Philippe Foulquié, on 28 November 2023, reported in the Appendix at pp.

for the temporary use of 45,000 square meters, and the unity of local forces, La Friche became a hub for diverse artistic disciplines and cultural activities. During the presidency of Jean Nouvel (1995-2002), the city of Marseille acquired the Friche and a 45-year occupancy agreement was signed.

Without predefined specifications, the founders embarked on a creative journey, experimenting with models that could inspire the development of what Lextrait in aptly termed a 'third cultural neighborhood'⁴⁰⁹. This installation marked the inception of an ongoing narrative, shaping and reshaping Marseille's cultural landscape, and serving as a global model for the revitalization of urban spaces through art and culture.

The initiative's success reflected a need for cultural policies focused on production rather than consumption, challenging the neoliberal approach to city development⁴¹⁰. Thus, Foulquié's advocacy for the role of the producer as a tool for socializing artistic processes highlighted the importance of creation and dissemination. Despite obtaining space without pressuring public or private entities, the initiative highlighted the urgency of creating a dedicated cultural production space. While the '90s allowed engagement in unconventional city corners, the lack of an effective programmatic strategy for overall city development underscored the necessity of initiatives like La Friche. This connects to the concept of the *urgency of the public* developed by Folquié, emphasizing the importance of questioning artists' roles in cultural projects, and addressing their absence in major establishments⁴¹¹.

Therefore, La Friche originated from the informal and spontaneous essence of the city, seeking to formalize and universalize its discourse through institutionalization.

1.1 Dialogue with Public administration and Political institutions

The case of La Friche stands out as emblematic when considering the interplay between public administration, political institutions, and cultural organizations in urban development. As highlighted in the preceding paragraph, Friche's genesis revolves around a profound dialogue between public entities and artistic communities. The city has been defined by Lextrait as the initiator (*Ville Initiatrice*) of La Friche experience⁴¹². In fact, the decision to delegate representatives from the artistic community and civil society, including Fourenau and Folquié, to lead this project was strongly influenced by Christian Poitevin's ambition to replicate the successes of alternative cultural production observed in Northern Europe.

According to Lextrait, this decision stems from two fundamental factors: firstly, the intellectual maturity of the political and administrative actors who instigated the process, and secondly, the structural inability of the city to provide sustainable financial support for the initiative's development⁴¹³.

⁴⁰⁹ See the interview conducted by the author with Fabrice Lextrait, on 28 November 2023, reported in the Appendix at pp.

⁴¹⁰ F. Lextrait, *La Friche, terre de culture*. Sens & Tonka, 2017, p.465-466.

⁴¹¹ In this context, Folquié advocated for the role of the producer, "not merely as a means of creating and disseminating artistic works but as a tool for socializing artistic processes along with their creation and histories".

⁴¹² F. Lextrait, *La Friche, terre de culture*, 2017, p. 427.

⁴¹³ *Ibidem*.

On the other side, La Friche has been interpreted as a service, in high demand at both national and local levels, contributing significantly to the attractiveness of the city⁴¹⁴. Hence, its emergence coincided with a period marked by heightened recognition of the pivotal role cultural hubs play in fostering economic growth and urban rejuvenation worldwide⁴¹⁵.

Philippe Folquié's contributions notably encapsulate the genesis of this discourse:

“In the 80's institutionally, there wasn't much in the cultural domain. In France, in 1983, there were 17 cities with over 100,000 inhabitants. Among these 17 cities, Marseille ranked 17th in terms of the percentage of the cultural budget. The portion of the overall budget allocated to culture was meager.

Moreover, it was going in all directions with clientelism, so there was a need to restructure everything.

In essence, everyone agreed that Marseille needed revitalization and that it was crucial for this revitalization to be based on culture. The Elysée Palace agreed with this sentiment. Thus, they hired Dominique Wallon to develop this. He was a very, very important figure. He restructured cultural governance, rebuilt two theaters, and brought culture back to Marseille. One of these two theaters was mine. This is what I mentioned at the beginning of the interview: I lived in Paris, and Wallon called me to propose this theater opening project in Marseille.

Following that, a vitality suddenly emerged, and opportunities were created. And all of this was with the assistance of this high-ranking civil servant.

*In essence, at that time, they doubled the cultural budget for Marseille. Vigoroux, after that, was elected to all the important positions in the cultural development of Marseille. It was unprecedented... ”.*⁴¹⁶

Hence, it can be inferred that from the outset, there existed a substantial level of collaboration with institutions, in particular the high-ranking civil servants, resulting in La Friche being positively regarded even by the subsequent administration of Jean-Claude Gaudin, which shifted from a socialist to a right-leaning orientation.

Two pivotal factors sustained the ongoing collaboration and dialogue even after Vigoroux's defeat: firstly, on a more interpersonal element, exemplified by the fact that La Friche had arranged guided tours of the space for all municipal election candidates, had resonated positively with the new mayor, underscoring the openness and non-partisan nature of the space⁴¹⁷.

Secondly, the growing attractiveness of La Friche became evident, showcasing its significant capacity to contribute to the city's cultural and artistic development. A prominent example is the establishment of Cyb.estami.net, France's first cybercafé in 1995. Subsequently, the Friche assumed a pivotal role in shaping the Ministry's stance on *cyberculture*, later formalized as *multimedia culture*. Under Fabrice Lextrait's leadership, a close relationship flourished between Cyb.estami.net and Radio Grenouille, the radio station situated at La Friche, both striving to explore the artistic dimensions of the Internet. This collaborative effort not only expanded the Friche's international outreach but also underscored its steadfast commitment to

⁴¹⁴ N. Maisetti, 2013, *cit. p. 91*.

⁴¹⁵ Bianchini and Parkinson, 1995 *cit. p. 15*; Landry, 2000 *cit. p. 15*, Florida 2002, *cit. p. 17*.

⁴¹⁶ See the interview conducted by the author with Philippe Foulquié, on 28 November 2023, reported in the Appendix at p. 35

⁴¹⁷ See the interview conducted by the author with Philippe Folquié, on 28 November 2023, reported in the Appendix at pp. 36-37

fostering artistic exchange and innovation. This innovative trend addressed the need to assert the institutional coherence of Friche la Belle de Mai, especially as its precarious lease with Seita approached its end and ensured its integration within the broader *Euroméditerranée* urban renewal initiative⁴¹⁸.

1.1.1 Institutional consolidation

The *Euroméditerranée* urban project funding's emblematically combines the redevelopment of a degraded area with the preservation of its identity⁴¹⁹. The project envisioned transforming the Friche into a focal point capable of triggering regeneration processes in the surrounding fabric. This involved the creation of three cultural hubs connected by a system of public spaces for youth gathering and performances, characterized by terms of self-management and self-appropriation⁴²⁰.

Euroméditerranée's active involvement in 1995 laid the foundation for subsequent dialogues with national political institutions. In the evolution and solidification of this dialogue, the significance of Marseille-Provence European Capital of Culture 2013 in La Friche's development underscored its institutional centrality.

From the analysis conducted, it emerged that without the involvement of La Friche in the conception and during the event, the centrality and sustainability of the cultural experience in the long term would likely have been compromised because of budgetary issues⁴²¹.

Therefore, La Friche gained recognition as a pivotal venue in 2013, year in which Marseille was the European Capital of Culture. Substantial investments from the city and region were made to transform La Friche into a versatile space, not only for artistic experimentation but also as a public venue equipped for exhibitions, theater, dance, and diverse community activities, including social gatherings, sports, and children's events. Thus, During the period of the Capital of Culture event, approximately 5 million euros were allocated to La Friche for artistic production⁴²². Being selected as a key location for the Cultural Capital strengthened La Friche's ties with the Region and the city, resulting in continuous financial support. These subsidies, renewed annually, underscore the enduring significance of Friche in the local neighborhood and the broader context of

⁴¹⁸ F. Labarthe, *Chapitre 2 : L'accès public au regard de la nouvelle époque de l'action culturelle*. In *Démocratiser la culture multimédia ? Usages et apprentissages en milieu populaire*. Paris: Éditions de la Maison des sciences de l'homme, 2013.

⁴¹⁹ I. Poli, G. Bevilacqua. *Marsiglia. Il Programma Euroméditerranée: la strategia cultural-led per la Friche Belle de Mai*, 2020, pp. 142-153.

⁴²⁰ The redevelopment of La Friche Belle de Mai in Marseille comprises distinct blocks with varied purposes: Block 1, known as the "heritage block," spanning 24,000 m², completed its rehabilitation in 2000. It houses the municipal archives, reserves for Marseille's museums, and the Interregional Center for Conservation and Restoration of Heritage.

Block 2, a 30,000 m² structure finished in 2004, operates as a "business hotel for cultural industries in audiovisual and communication," accommodating studios for audiovisual and film production, including the filming location for the popular daily soap opera "Plus belle la vie."

Block 3, covering 45,000 m² and termed the "hub for contemporary creation," hosts the association Système Friche Théâtre and serves as the focal point for resident artists and companies, collectively constituting "la Friche Belle de Mai."

The prefigurative Block 4, initially planned as part of the former Maternity of Belle de Mai site, separated from the ensemble, is set to house social facilities and a business hotel dedicated to cultural industries (Grésillon, 2011).

⁴²¹ This was due to the fact that the economic support provided to the structure did not seem sufficient for its evolution and expansion, thus posing a real budgetary issue. As claimed by Folquié during the interview, Poitevin initially provided funding for adjustments, maintaining the same amount for five years. Subsequent financial challenges, including bankruptcy and legal condemnations due to management issues, resulted in an 18-month period of stringent financial constraints. This required careful expense management, salary adjustments, and a prohibition on incurring debt.

⁴²² Lextrait, F., *La Friche, terre de culture*, 2017, pp.432-440.

Marseille⁴²³. Gouteux argued that while this might be perceived as top-down legislative approach, the reality was more nuanced⁴²⁴. La Friche played a pivotal and instrumental role in shaping the narrative and vision for Marseille's Capital of Culture application. This wasn't a unilateral decision but rather a collaborative effort where the cultural space actively participated, contributing to the formulation and refinement of the project. This dynamic partnership underscores the symbiotic relationship between the cultural institution and the overarching European Cultural Capital initiative.

On the other hand, as argued by Maisetti, the Friche aligned with the objectives promoted by economic development and urban renewal projects: revitalizing the structures of an area previously perceived as unappealing. Thus, the establishment of a cultural cluster is accompanied by a discursive effort to replace a creative imagination with post-industrial spaces, which were once associated with poverty and insecurity⁴²⁵

From this complexity, the dual nature of La Friche emerges. On one side, it stands as a project for economic development for the city, strongly advocated by the administration and political institutions. On the other, it represents an experience capable of generating and promoting alternative methods of cultural production, aiming for social innovation both at the local and national levels. This is achieved through the artistic personalities steering the project and the resident artists who have inhabited the space since its inception⁴²⁶.

Therefore, the final phase of this analysis will specifically focus on how La Friche has been able to influence new cultural policies and social practices, institutionalizing its alternative essence in the public space.

1.2 Being alternative: cultural production and social innovation

Emphasized by Lextrait, La Friche's core objective is to further cultivate cultural democratization, extending beyond mere accessibility to encompass culture that is both by and for everyone⁴²⁷. Positioned within the diverse and predominantly working-class neighborhood of La Belle de Mai, the cultural center has endeavored to chart pathways to ensure that culture serves as a vehicle for social inclusion within this community. The objective is not only to expand cultural engagement beyond physical confines but also to permeate the entire urban landscape and community fabric.

Therefore, in the case of La Friche la Belle de Mai, the dimensions of cultural experimentation and social innovation have always been closely interconnected, starting with the concept of public accessibility strongly advocated by Folquié. A space for artists that diffuses into the surrounding social fabric necessitates a programmatic approach capable of evolving over time.

⁴²³ See the interview conducted by the author with Mathilde Gouteux, on 29 November 2023, reported in the Appendix at 29.

⁴²⁴ *Ibidem*, p.30

⁴²⁵ N. Maisetti, 2014, *cit. p.91*

⁴²⁶ According to La Friche La Belle de Mai data collection, there are 70 resident organizations (400 artists, producers, and employees work there every day). They are called “*frichistes*,” form the living artistic hub that has been an essential part of La Friche since its conception.

It is possible to find further information here: <https://www.lafriche.org/la-friche/frichistes/>

⁴²⁷ See the interview conducted by the author with Fabrice Lextrait, on 28 November 2023, reported in the Appendix at p. 20

It is precisely this transformative capacity of La Friche one of the key factors which is contributing to its resilience and significance in France, aligning with the national operational adaptability in urban design discussed earlier in this dissertation.

1.2.1 First Period: The Experimentation

The first step in this "urban diffusion" dates back to 1995, when the architect Jean Nouvel developed at La Friche a *Projet Culturel pour un Projet Urbain* aiming to no longer separate cultural and urban dimensions. The presidency of Jean Nouvel (1995-2002) establishes the concept of 'artistic permanence' as an essential agent for urban development. Lextrait argued that this concept went beyond merely constructing a building; it aimed to intricately weave cultural and urban dimensions, stressing the need for the connection with the territory of belonging in the evolution of the site. It brought to the solidification of the principle of '*l'artiste, la ville, sa ville*' emphasizing the artist's pivotal role within urban governance.

Moreover, as argued by Lextrait, while the 1990s witnessed the establishment of cultural facilities and the renovation of the Centre Pompidou, the overarching goal was to cultivate environments that harmoniously melded productivity with creativity, providing a nurturing yet experimental arena for the exploration of innovative artistic expressions⁴²⁸. However, despite the successful localization of numerous cultural activities by the national government, the aspiration for horizontal development was eclipsed by the prevailing vertical reality⁴²⁹. Thus, Lextrait has dedicated efforts to revisiting and redefine these ideas, evolving the original '95 project for an urban endeavor into the idea of a *third cultural quarter*; a broader concept for widespread dissemination. In fact, according to urban planners Bouchain, Citron and Cottet, the aim of a third-quarter cultural design is to produce urban commonality, encompassing all its economic, ecological, social, educational dimensions, and to recognize uncertainty by establishing an open program that allows for deprogramming its obsolescence and revisiting the project's establishment whenever necessary, by multiplying mixed temporary destinations⁴³⁰.

Therefore, during the initial phase (1995-2007), La Friche, initiated experimental projects aimed at community engagement and the promotion of accessible art for and of everybody.

The local masterplan *l'Air de ne pas y toucher* in 2002-2003, led by Patrik Bouchain⁴³¹, fueled a localized expansion with landmarks like the skatepark and Le Grand Tables restaurant. This localized growth aligns with the vision to position La Friche La Belle de Mai as a dynamic hub seamlessly integrated into the city's fabric. This is demonstrated by the multifaceted functions it embodies: creation, industry, and heritage, which collectively constitute the essence of the cultural project embraced by La Friche. Concurrently, as discussed

⁴²⁸ See the interview conducted by the author with Fabrice Lextrait, on 30 November 2023, reported in the Appendix at pp.

⁴²⁹ In urban planning or cultural development, "horizontal development" often refers to spreading activities or initiatives across a larger area or range, while "vertical development" implies a more concentrated or specialized approach within a specific domain.

⁴³⁰ P. Bouchain, P. Citron, F. Cottet. *Les lieux infinis comme avant-garde des nouveaux communs urbains*, Collectif Nouvelles Urbanités, 2020.

⁴³¹ French architect and former president of La Friche La Belle de Mai.

in preceding chapters, at the national level, the Ministry of Culture, represented by Michel Duffour, commissioned Lextrait to compile a report on the “New Territories of Art”. The decision to present the report at Friche La Belle de Mai in 2004, before an international audience, highlights its burgeoning significance as a cultural hub and underscores its commitment to shaping innovative cultural spaces and policies locally and nationally.

1.2.2 Second Phase: Cooperative governance and social commitment

A significant transformation in recent years is the heightened commitment to social engagement within the neighborhood, a shift that diverged from the project's original focus. The growing attention to the neighborhood is reflected also in the evolving physical structure of La Friche, which started to incorporate a range of services designed to engage an increasing number of citizens, combined with a strong educational and training commitment⁴³². Thus, the professionalizing role of culture and the arts has also been highly regarded in the neighborhood and city's involvement, as evidenced by the established in 2015 of the Centre de Formation des Apprentis des Métiers du Spectacle, under the Institut Supérieur des Techniques du Spectacle – ISTS⁴³³. In addition to providing services for the neighborhood, efforts have been made to support cultural production that reflects the demographics of the area. This included incorporating performances in Arabic, featuring actors from North Africa, into the program framework as a strategic approach to actively engage the local population⁴³⁴.

This transition is not entirely straightforward when considering that La Friche's inception in the La Belle de Mai neighborhood was motivated more by an interest in the space itself than a specific intent for substantial social impact⁴³⁵. However, as the project unfolded artistically, it acknowledged the value and necessity of actively involving the local community, fostering networks of coexistence, and embracing collaborative development.

This transformative phase commenced around 2007 with its transition into a *Société Coopérative d'Intérêt Collectif* (SCIC), a type of private but non-profit, general interest cooperative company. The SCIC, uniquely governed by three groups (residents/proximity/contributors), brings together users, cultural operators, and

⁴³² La Friche underwent several significant construction phases, transforming the site into workspaces, exhibition spaces, a restaurant, daycare, and more.

Between 2004 and 2006, the Cartonnerie and restaurant were established; 2009-2012 brought changes to the restaurant, skatepark, and daycare. In 2013, during Marseille's European Capital of Culture year, major upgrades were made, including improved accessibility, new workspaces, the Panorama exhibition space, and two concert venues.

The addition of a playground in 2015 further enhanced the site's appeal to the local community, especially young residents. In 2017, the Plateforme was inaugurated, focusing on youth activities. The construction of *La Place des Quais*, an open-access recreation area, increased accessibility, making La Friche more welcoming to Marseille's residents. Furthermore, 2018 was the starting point for consideration of a pedagogically-innovative public element, by building a school for neighbourhood children at La Friche.

<https://www.lafriche.org/la-friche-in-english/our-story/>

⁴³³ *Ists - Cfa des Métiers du Spectacle*, Friche la Belle de Mai, 2022. Available at: <https://www.lafriche.org/la-friche/frichistes/ists-cfa-des-metiers-du-spectacle/>

⁴³⁴ The Belle de Mai neighborhood, initially predominantly Italian and later also home to Polish, Spanish, and Armenian communities, now has a significant number of residents originally from the Maghreb or the Comoros.

Présentation de la Belle de Mai, Etude du territoire.

<https://baladebelledemai.wordpress.com/presentation-de-la-belle-de-mai/>

⁴³⁵ See the interview conducted by the author with Mathilde Gouteux, on 29 November 2023, reported in the Appendix at p. 30

public institutions on its board of directors—a collaborative management model distinctive in France, especially for a project of this magnitude.

Since 2014, there has been a pronounced focus on social involvement and a proactive stance in promoting environmental awareness. During this period, a cultural district was established in La Belle de Mai, accompanied by the emergence of additional venues (such as the cinema Le Gyptis, l'Institut Méditerranéen des Métiers du Spectacle, the Playground...) and experiments in cooperative governance within the neighborhood. As exemplified, collaborative cohorts comprising cultural producers and community members have been convened to deliberate upon the thematic aspects of forthcoming exhibitions. This concerted endeavor serves as a pivotal mechanism in sculpting the programming and substantive content of these exhibitions, thereby guaranteeing substantive community participation and involvement in the decision-making processes⁴³⁶.

As a result of these efforts, in 2020, the SCIC obtained the status of *Tiers Lieux*, and the following year, it further solidified its dedication to social initiatives as it transitioned from being included in *Fabrique du Territoire* project, this has been marked by a growing dedication to social initiatives, confirming this space dedicated to supporting creation, production, and artistic dissemination as a vector of social connection, where culture is written in the plural.

As highlighted by Gouteaux, this heightened focus on the neighborhood and society at large may also be attributed to changes in funding dynamics⁴³⁷. National funding sources increasingly stem from the Ministry of Territorial Cohesion, diverging from the traditional reliance on the Ministry of Culture. Notably, funds for projects like *Fabrique du Territoire* now originate from this source, influencing the project's shifting emphasis towards societal cohesion and sustainable local development⁴³⁸.

1.2.3 Diffusion

La Friche La Belle de Mai, as a representative example, showcases how abandoned spaces are fertile grounds for alternative practices, fostering not only differentiated forms of urbanity but also enabling the formation of diverse communities, including artists and small traders. These actors challenge conventional urban development approaches, bringing a creative sensibility to the transformation of these spaces. Their assertive efforts, seeking to sustain their presence on the site, and their strategic use of communication and

⁴³⁶ See the interview conducted by the author with Mathilde Gouteux, on 29 November 2023, reported in the Appendix at pp. 30-31

⁴³⁷ *Ibidem*.

⁴³⁸ As an example, la Friche actively confronts challenges arising from its aging infrastructure and the growing impact of climate change, particularly noticeable during the sweltering summer months. The absence of greenery intensifies heat-related issues, prompting a thorough reassessment and adaptation of activities and spatial utilization within the venue. In response, strategic initiatives are being explored, including the potential rescheduling of activities to cooler months and the consideration of hosting events later at night to enhance participant comfort. Additionally, there is a focus on investigating physical transformations of the venue to bolster climate resilience.

With this purpose, La Friche is initiating an ecological project centered around rainwater utilization to effectively address climate concerns. This project involves collecting rainwater from the expansive rooftop and using it to irrigate a new garden within the venue. Not only does this approach contribute to biodiversity, but it also emphasizes the crucial importance of water conservation. These multifaceted initiatives underscore La Friche's commitment to proactive environmental stewardship, aligning with its overarching mission to positively impact both the local community and the broader ecological landscape.

collaboration networks worldwide, such as the Trans Europe Halles network for cultural abandoned spaces, resonate across various contexts⁴³⁹. Furthermore, it has inaugurated the formation of *centre culturel disperse*, within La Belle de Mai quarter⁴⁴⁰.

While the precise quantification of La Friche's social impact at the territorial level presents a challenge, its central role in reshaping cultural and urban policies appears to be formally acknowledged both nationally and internationally. Nevertheless, a rigorous investigation into the perceptual dynamics among the inhabitants of the locality may be instrumental in attaining a more nuanced understanding of the substantive implications of its influence.

La Friche's project undertakes the examination of two pivotal dimensions that may have eluded the attention of the French state: the assurance of cultural accessibility and representation for a diverse demographic, conscientiously accounting for cultural pluralities, and emphasizing the societal import of artists. The experience of La Friche serves as a paradigmatic illustration wherein local cultural producers actively contest and reformulate the traditionally centralized framework of French cultural policies. Concurrently, it underscores the societal significance of artists through the implementation of cooperative governance, actively engaging artists in decision-making processes and often situating them in prominent leadership roles. This structural approach not only recognizes the pivotal role of artists but also establishes a framework wherein their influence extends beyond creative pursuits to encompass strategic and administrative dimensions within the cultural milieu.

Additionally, it successfully decentralizes cultural production from Paris and fosters international networks for Marseille, acting as a vital link between the Mediterranean and Europe⁴⁴¹.

Despite commendable efforts in social and cultural innovation, La Friche faces criticism for potentially exacerbating neighborhood gentrification. This concern is underscored among others, by the apparent discontinuation of support for Marseille's indigenous arts, notably rap, which initially played a pivotal role in the artistic experimentation within La Friche. This suggests a shift in the cultural production of La Friche, seemingly aligning with broader global trends, but potentially disconnecting from the local cultural fabric and identity. Lextrait acknowledges areas for improvement but stresses the undertaken actions aim at promoting development and neighborhood integration. Remarkably, he underscored the imperative to contextualize the

⁴³⁹ Trans Europe Halles (TEH) is a Europe-based network of independent cultural centers that was established in 1983. It brings together a diverse range of cultural organizations, including art centers, cultural initiatives, and multidisciplinary spaces, with the aim of fostering collaboration, exchange, and mutual support. TEH provides a platform for cultural centers to share experiences, resources, and expertise, promoting cultural engagement and innovation.
<https://www.teh.net>

⁴⁴⁰ In the context of the project *Quartiers Libres*, launched in 2016 by the city of Marseille, aimed at transforming the entire sector around the Saint-Charles train station and the Belle de Mai barracks (3rd arrondissement), new hybrid cultural and social centers have been inaugurated in the neighborhood, such as Le Couvent. It is a year-round open hybrid cultural space to the public. It is both an artists' community - with its research and exhibition spaces - an annual program of events and workshops, projects carried out with residents, and nearly 2 hectares of preserved gardens open to everyone.

⁴⁴¹ The Friche has thus benefited from and contributed to a national economic revalorization of Marseille and has been integrated within the major EU project of urban development in Marseille. Being aligned with Euromed provides the Friche with a counterweight to municipal politics other than the state Ministry of Culture, while simultaneously defining an important cultural policy role for itself with regard to the municipality's European and Mediterranean aspirations.

concept of gentrification, particularly in certain impoverished areas where its effects may not always be negative, emphasizing the need to consider local dynamics and socio-economic factors when evaluating its impact⁴⁴². While La Belle de Mai has evolved into a cultural district with diverse entities, addressing economic and social challenges in this priority neighborhood may necessitate not only the endeavors of cultural associations but also comprehensive state intervention⁴⁴³.

2. *Angelo Mai, Altrove Occupato*



Figure 4 Angelo Mai Altrove, dancing workshop in the Theatre Hall⁴⁴⁴



Figure 5 Angelo Mai Altrove, ex "bocciofila" inside Parco di San Sebastiano⁴⁴⁵

The case study of Angelo Mai exemplifies a paradigmatic example within the scope of this research, elucidating the intricate dynamics whereby an informal cultural center, acknowledged as a valuable initiative by diverse public, private institutions and stakeholders, has encountered impediments in securing formal recognition by the public institutions and political administration of the city.

The Angelo Mai in Rome stands as a laboratory for artistic experimentation and political activism, emerging in 2004 through the occupation of the former Angelo Mai Institute in the Monti district. As discussions on making the space usable yielded no tangible results, the site became a refuge for homeless individuals, evolving into a hub for families in need, and a group of young visionaries keen on fostering culture, performance, and art (reunited in the Non-Profit Organization of Social Utility (ONLUS) Probasis)⁴⁴⁶. Thus, in 2004, the Centro Sociale Angelo Mai Social was established, hosting distinguished artists like Vinicio Capossela⁴⁴⁷. The

⁴⁴² See the interview conducted by the author with Fabrice Lextrait, on 28 November 2023, reported in the Appendix at p. 22.

⁴⁴³ *Ibidem*. pp. 20-21.

⁴⁴⁴ *Angelo Mai*, Spazi Sociali, Zero.eu, available at: <https://zero.eu/it/luoghi/2818-angelo-mai,roma/>

⁴⁴⁵ *Angelo Mai*, Facebook official page, available at: <https://www.facebook.com/angelomai/>

⁴⁴⁶ M. Taddei, S. Ruggia. *Angelo Mai, Nasce, si occupa, si sgombera*. Scomodo, 2020.

⁴⁴⁷ Vinicio Capossela is an Italian singer-songwriter, multi-instrumentalist, and writer.

collective faced eviction in 2006 due to municipal pressure but found a new home in 2009, securing a former *bocciofila* at Viale delle Terme di Caracalla 55a, and transforming its name in “Angelo Mai Altrove”⁴⁴⁸.

Despite the complex relationship with public administration and political institutions, the Angelo Mai remains steadfast. Sylvia de Fanti, a pioneering occupant of the space and founder of the Angelo Mai collective, contextualized the occupation of Angelo Mai within the broader framework of the 1990s occupation movement in Rome. This movement shed light on the issue of repurposing and regenerating abandoned urban spaces, drawing attention to the imperative of revitalizing neglected areas⁴⁴⁹.

However, what sets it apart from numerous other occupation endeavors is its position within the urban fabric. It originated in Monti, a district within the historic heart of Rome (I District), experiencing a profound transformation in 2004. This period witnessed a significant overhaul characterized by requalification, gentrification, and a shift towards tourism⁴⁵⁰. These processes contributed to the affluent transformation of its residents.

The Angelo Mai initiative unfolded against the backdrop of this evolving scenario, unsettling the equilibrium of a neighborhood in flux.

“(...) The occupation took place within this context, with a core of families, 25 to be precise, along with a committee dealing with housing occupations. In this incredible space, we discovered a small theater, a deconsecrated church, and classrooms, all obviously unused. We, young artists, musicians, actresses, directors, theater scholars, found ourselves in an environment where we opened up to the city, not with a specific project but politically with an element of spontaneity stemming from being in a space clearly associated with struggle. This space evolved over time, engaging in a genuine process of struggle concerning the cultural element of the city. Our aim was to open up spaces freely to all artists who needed them, within a context of complete self-organization and self-management, not just from the grassroots but truly by the workers in the performing arts. We were missing the terminology; in other words, we didn't immediately define ourselves in a certain way.”

This excerpt from the conducted interview effectively encapsulates the core claims that underlie the Angelo Mai project: the repurposing of spaces for social and cultural objectives, the advocacy for autonomous and self-organizing cultural production, and the promotion of enhanced rights for workers in the performing arts sector constitute significant dimensions of this initiative⁴⁵¹.

⁴⁴⁸ The Angelo Mai occupied centro sociale was cleared by the Veltroni administration to create the new headquarters for "Il Viscontino," a local middle school. Today the project for the regeneration of the former Angelo Mai institute is not completed.

⁴⁴⁹ The occupied spaces in Rome experienced years of struggle for their recognition throughout the first half of the 1990s, culminating in the well-known Rutelli decree of '95 (Resolution n°26). While not acknowledged as an outright victory—hence, in the subsequent years, there were various initiatives and street parades advocating for expediting the process and expanding both the protections and the list of recognized entities—the Rutelli decree did acknowledge the existence of the "CSOA world," somewhat attesting to its right to exist.

See also: R. Galdini. *Emergenza abitativa e Pratiche informali: il caso di Roma*, in "Sociologia urbana e rurale: XXXIX, 112, 2017, Milano: Franco Angeli, 2017, 1971-8403 - 18-28

⁴⁵⁰ C. Cellamare. *Ricerca di senso nella trasformazione. Il rione Monti a Roma*. in Archivio di Studi Urbani e Regionali, vol. 90, pp. 163-170.

⁴⁵¹ The rights for performing art workers paved the way for a wave of struggles and occupations in 2013-14, including the noteworthy case of the Teatro Valle Occupato in Rome.

Since 2018, the Angelo Mai operates as an ARCI club, allowing individuals to become members of the cultural association Probasis, the legal entity behind Angelo Mai⁴⁵².

The narrative of Angelo Mai encapsulates the challenges encountered to a certain extent by cultural organizations in Italy, including those characterized by cultural and artistic merit and international acclaim. It serves as an emblematic illustration that mirrors the complex landscape of Rome, encompassing its challenges, the partial inconsistencies within the Public Administration, and the absence of a cohesive trajectory for urban development and cultural production. Paradoxically, despite limited support from public entities, such informal initiatives adeptly embed themselves locally, contributing to socio-cultural development. This phenomenon, primarily ascribed to administrative deficiencies identified in the dissertation's analysis, is also rooted in a pursuit to establish an alternative to the city's institutional cultural offerings and to innovate participatory approaches for space revitalization.

2.1 Administrative Stagnation and Legal Entanglements

The activists of Angelo Mai ironically sum up their interaction with Rome's public institutions by stating, "We've encountered more of the Police, than the political representatives of this city".

This highlights a perception of heightened involvement by security authorities compared to engagement or dialogue with elected city officials, reflecting frustration in their efforts to establish meaningful communication with local political institutions. To prove this, numerous determinations pertaining to the trajectory of such endeavors have been adjudicated by the judiciary rather than the administrative apparatus, notwithstanding that these matters ideally warrant governance through dedicated public policies. This sentiment appears to be grounded in reality, evident even two decades after the occupation of the former Angelo Mai Institute in Monti, where the administrative status of the socio-cultural center remains ambiguous and undefined.

Moreover, legal complexities have significantly impeded the regularization process for Angelo Mai. Despite these, a pivotal moment occurred in the summer of 2023 when the second civil section of the Rome court intervened following years of legal proceedings⁴⁵³. The court supported the opposition against Rome Capital's injunction, recognizing the cultural nature of Angelo Mai's activities. This legal stance affirms Angelo Mai as a cultural entity rather than merely a commercial or residential space. Thus, the court acknowledged the cultural significance of the center's activities, leading to the rejection of Rome Capital's injunction. This decision provides a legal foundation for Angelo Mai's continued existence as a socio-cultural center, imparting a sense of legitimacy to its role.

Before reaching this decision and partially legitimizing the experience, Angelo Mai faced three evictions, a legal process, and numerous attempts at dialogue with institutions to have its rights recognized as a cultural

⁴⁵² It's essential to note that due to an ongoing precarious legal and bureaucratic situation, Angelo Mai cannot be officially recognized as a cultural association at a legal level, thus to integrate into the local and national associative network, the Probasis association was established.

⁴⁵³ Tribunal of Rome, sect. II, 25 July 2023, *Probasis ONLUS vs. Roma Capitale*

association. The inertia of the administration, as highlighted in the court's judgment on August 29, 2023, has been a defining aspect of this relationship. Despite intermittent dialogue and attempted compromises, a definitive solution has remained elusive.

The administrative and political trajectory of Angelo Mai unfolds across five distinct epochs spanning from 2006 to 2023, delineated cyclically as compromise, optimism, and repression.

First, in 2006, prompted by the consequential impact on the Monti neighborhood, particularly the auditory perturbations emanating from events orchestrated by the Angelo Mai collective, Walter Veltroni, the then Mayor of Rome, conducted a site visit and urgently advocated for eviction⁴⁵⁴. This pronouncement was underpinned by the imminent reassignment of the occupied space to serve as a school expeditiously⁴⁵⁵.

Recognizing the cultural significance of Angelo Mai's initiatives and influenced by the endorsement of prominent figures in the entertainment sphere, such as Fiorella Mannoia⁴⁵⁶ and Vinicio Capossela, the Municipality of Rome made a pivotal decision⁴⁵⁷.

They elected to allocate a novel space to the cultural association, constituting a salient juncture. This decision was substantiated by Deliberation number 26 of 1995, under Rutelli's city administration, delineating the regularization and allocation framework for municipally owned spaces designated for social, welfare, cultural, recreational, and sports purposes within available and unavailable assets⁴⁵⁸.

As recounted in testimonials, the initial administrative overture sought to proffer a space in the periphery of the city, which would have somehow altered the objective of the experience. However, under the pressure of the Collective, the Municipality ultimately acceded to the allotment of space at the former *bocciofila* in Parco di San Sebastiano, in the I District of Rome. This venue, characterized by architectural intricacies, was further compounded by the park falling within the jurisdictional ambit of the Sovrintendenza Capitolina, which halted the renovation works due to the presence of a Roman ruin in front of the Baths of Caracalla. In total, the renovation project lasted three years as the space was not usable, leading to an actual resumption of work only in 2009⁴⁵⁹. In the meantime, the artistic activity of the Collective remained alive in other socio-cultural centres of the city.

⁴⁵⁴ See the interview conducted by the author with Sylvia De Fanti, on 10 January 2023, reported in the Appendix at p.39

⁴⁵⁵ Several proposals for urban regeneration of the space have been put forward since 2002. After the 9 million euros spent on renovations in 2006 to restore the complex to its original appearance for educational use, in 2017, the original solution is revisited: 4 million euros are allocated to complete the restoration of the third section and convert the building into a school. The tender for the contract is published by the Campidoglio on December 28, 2017, for the last phase of the works, funded through the release of funds frozen since 2013 for the Stability Pact. At the end of these works, the Angelo Mai is expected to finally become the location for the Visconti middle school. However, it is likely that the size of the middle school would be too large to be accommodated within the structure, and many argue that the place deserves a better use. Today, the space remains unused.

⁴⁵⁶ Fiorella Mannoia is an acclaimed Italian singer. Her career, spanning several decades, has seen success across various genres, making her a prominent and influential figure in the Italian music scene.

⁴⁵⁷ This aspect also warrants attention within the context of the examined cases in Rome. Frequently, determinations concerning the fate of these locations are influenced by the influence exerted by prominent public figures. However, it is noteworthy that such decisions remain entirely discretionary, thereby accentuating the inherent fragility in decision-making processes within the political and administrative spheres.

⁴⁵⁸ Assemblea Capitolina, *Deliberazione n°26*, 2 febbraio 1995.

⁴⁵⁹ The design of the project, in harmony with the surroundings, was crafted by the architect Romolo Ottaviano.

In 2014, the collective's activities faced an interruption, and the space was seized and evacuated. This occurred as part of the broader investigation into the Comitato Popolare di Lotta per la Casa (People's Committee for the Struggle for Housing), which was charged with criminal association in the extensive *Mafia Capitale* probe⁴⁶⁰. This event holds particular significance for our dissertation because, during this period, the Marino administration, then in office, was not informed of the eviction. This is noteworthy, considering the cultural association's location within the municipal heritage, bringing attention to a vulnerability in the oversight of the city by public institutions.

The deficiency in coordination between law enforcement entities and municipal administration becomes salient once more during the Virginia Raggi administration (2016-2020). In this temporal span, a constructive dialogue unfolds, orchestrated through the mediating role of Culture Councilor Luca Bergamo. This discourse establishes avenues of communication with the collective, instigating forums for deliberation wherein the cultural center actively participates in the formulation of new regulations governing the utilization of public spaces for social and cultural objectives.

Conversely, notwithstanding these efforts, the space experiences a second forced evacuation in 2018, unbeknownst to the municipal administration and without prior notification to the collective. This occurrence ostensibly stems from bureaucratic intricacies associated with outstanding payments, originating from the 140-resolution promulgated during the Marino administration⁴⁶¹. The official *communiqué* issued by the Angelo Mai collective on this occasion serves as both a legal appeal and a passionate assertion of the importance of cultural and social spaces within the urban fabric:

"We request to defer the execution of the provision pending an urgent ruling from the Administrative Court – it is further stated. We request not to interrupt our activities not just for a short time but for years and years because the equation between art and illegality partially fails and cannot find any political legitimization here or elsewhere. We ask that once and for all, cultural and social spaces in this city be recognized the right to exist and not just to resist. In this torn and

⁴⁶⁰ The "Mafia Capitale" investigation in Rome was a high-profile legal case that unfolded in Italy, revealing widespread corruption and organized crime infiltration into various sectors of the city's public administration. The investigation, which began in 2014, focused on the criminal activities of organizations operating in Rome, with ties to local politicians, bureaucrats, and members of criminal networks.

⁴⁶¹ The issue of Resolution 140 deserves some considerations: under the city administration of Francesco Rutelli Resolution 26 was passed, legitimizing the social and cultural importance of these spaces and granting agreed-upon rents: recognitory fees, as they are called in technical terms, acknowledging the social value of the experience.

Under the city administration of Ignazio Marino, another resolution was passed, *Resolution 140*, which aimed to reclaim, put out for bid, and charge for spaces that had been granted concessions by the municipality for years with an agreed-upon fee or were in arrears and were instead "currently used for numerous purposes, including commercial or residential purposes." Therefore, even evictions that occurred during the Raggi era for these associations are the result of procedures initiated under Resolution 140/2014, approved during the Marino administration, and are coming to fruition. Resolution 140 outlined a timeline for the municipality to repossess the properties: essentially, those who were speculating on those assets as if they were private first, and then cultural and social experiences. In the meantime, the Municipality of Rome was supposed to establish regulations for its heritage, not only from a judicial perspective. What actually happened is that neither Marino nor Commissioner Tronca issued regulations or transitional provisions, while the documents quickly reached the prosecutor of the Court of Auditors, which conducted investigations (observing who occupied what without concerning themselves with the why and how) and ordered the municipality to proceed with the evictions.

To further delve into the topic: C. Raimo, *Gli sgomberi a Roma sono il frutto di una politica inefficace e debole*, 2017. Retrieved from <https://www.internazionale.it/opinione/christian-raimo/2017/03/09/sgomberi-roma-politica-debole>

offended city, a symbol of a dying and suicidal country, Angelo Mai is an indispensable and irreplaceable place. We will NEVER close, be clear.⁴⁶²"

Moreover, the 2019 integration of Angelo Mai into the Arci network marked a notable milestone in its developmental trajectory and integration within the Italian associative cultural framework. Affiliation with ARCI potentially offered Angelo Mai access to collective resources, enhanced collaborative opportunities, and heightened national visibility for its cultural endeavors.

In the summer of 2023, a substantive development transpires as the aforementioned verdict rendered by the second section of the City of Rome Tribunal appears to align favorably with Angelo Mai's position. A discernible reduction in the quantum of overdue payments is noted, a determination informed by the extensive renovation and maintenance initiatives undertaken within the space. Notably, this judicial decision explicitly acknowledges the social and cultural import attributed to Angelo Mai's artistic productions.

The ensuing expectation revolves around the imminent application of the recently introduced *Resolution 104*⁴⁶³, which would lead to the reassignment of the space and the cessation of the occupation, as expounded upon in the antecedent chapter. The prospective enactment of this resolution in the case of Angelo Mai assumes particular significance, envisaging the denouement of a protracted administrative and legal odyssey. This potential denouement carries with it the latent prospect of resource reallocation – a redirection of previously expended resources, both temporal and financial, towards the veritable *raison d'être* of the organization: the facilitation of alternative cultural production.

2.2 Between Resilient Evolution and Cultural Significance: Advocating for Recognition

The research analysis has revealed that the resilient evolution of the Angelo Mai Collective, spanning over 20 years of overcoming bureaucratic challenges and maintaining a dynamic presence as an alternative cultural space, encompasses diverse programming, adaptability, inclusivity, and contributions to urban development. This expression of commitment to the essence of its practices comes amid concerns about potential regularization, with a steadfast belief in the necessity of public funding for the arts.

Despite the 20 years of history of the Angelo Mai Collective being subjected to numerous bureaucratic and legal events, the cultural production of the space, an alternative to that proposed by official institutions, has been what has significantly contributed to the survival of this experience. Furthermore, its adaptability and capacity for transforming during complex period have been instrumental in shaping its own narrative and extending its cultural influence across Rome. As articulated in the preceding chapter, cultural experimentation in Rome encounters difficulties in manifesting within institutional environments, ostensibly attributed to a deficiency in both contemporary creative awareness and adaptability.

⁴⁶² *Chi Siamo*. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://www.angelomai.org/chi-siamo/>

⁴⁶³ See Chapter III, pp.81-83.

Cultural production and community involvement to experiment with innovative forms of societal construction are defining aspects of Angelo Mai's programming.

The main areas of Angelo Mai's production include performing arts, music, and civic activation workshops. In this context, it witnessed the emergence of the theatrical training initiative Bluemotion, a prominent player in the contemporary scene and instrumental in contributing to the dissemination of new works in dramaturgy in Italy.⁴⁶⁴ In 2016, Angelo Mai received a prestigious accolade, the Franco Quadri Ubu Award⁴⁶⁵, with the following justification:

"Angelo Mai, a laboratory for artistic experimentation and political activism, driven by the intention to position culture – in its broadest sense – among primary assets. Leveraging a renewed narrative of struggle, in its twelve years of activity, filled with encounters, collaborations, theatrical and musical creations, and unconventional projects, Angelo Mai has presented itself to the city of Rome and the Italian theater as a reality capable of activating a process of reclaiming spaces alternative to privatization and market liberalization, building a network of relationships that extend from bodies to the exchange of practices and knowledge, demonstrating new forms of inhabitation, production, and management for the theater. Realizing projects with strong ethical density interwoven into the city's fabric, Angelo Mai has showcased the possibility of politicizing the aesthetic under the banner of imagination and linguistic invention, through collaborations with artists of different generations and nationalities, and the creations of the theatrical collective Bluemotion and the homonymous small orchestra. Simultaneously, paying attention to the pedagogical realm, as well as actively collaborating with associations and non-profit organizations dedicated to civil rights."⁴⁶⁶

This acknowledgment succinctly encapsulates the creative and artistic endeavors of the space, extending beyond its informal setting, and illustrates how these experiences, although not formally acknowledged, are situated within the framework of the national contemporary artistic landscape.

In recent years, Angelo Mai has established itself as a focal point for transfeminist and queer expression within the Roman cultural landscape. Particularly following its affiliation with the ARCI network, the space has actively advocated for civil rights through various initiatives and events.

The cultural program at Angelo Mai encompasses approximately 100 events annually, along with numerous experimental workshops held weekly and initiatives aimed at engaging neighboring communities, including schools⁴⁶⁷. These events span a diverse range, encompassing theatrical performances, musical events, workshops, and residencies. Moreover, the organization ventures into the creation of original musical events

⁴⁶⁴ In March 2014, the artists of Bluemotion faced serious accusations attempting to portray their political commitment as criminal acts. After more than a year, they were acquitted of all charges, bringing an end to a contentious investigation that sought to restrict their freedom and undermine the intense and decades-long activities of Angelo Mai. <https://www.bluemotiontheatre.com/chi-siamo/>

⁴⁶⁵ The Franco Quadri Ubu Award, also known simply as the Ubu Award, is an important recognition in the field of Italian theater. The award is named after Franco Quadri, an influential Italian theater critic and scholar. He was known for his contributions to the promotion and analysis of contemporary theater. It is presented annually to outstanding achievements in the Italian theater scene.

⁴⁶⁶ *Chi Siamo*. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://www.angelomai.org/chi-siamo/>

⁴⁶⁷ An interesting example of Angelo Mai's social innovation engagement and inclusivity is the initiation of the "Fotoromanza" workshop in 2023 represents a significant stride for Angelo Mai, signaling its commitment to inclusivity by reaching out to women over 65—an often-marginalized demographic in such cultural initiatives. This workshop holds paramount importance as it addresses the tendency of such spaces to overlook the needs and interests of this age group. By specifically targeting women over 65, Angelo Mai not only acknowledges the cultural richness and life experiences within this demographic but also actively seeks to provide a platform for their creative expression.

such as *Merende*, *Elettriche*, and *la Grooverya*, attracting a significant number of participants, although precise figures remain unavailable. Additionally, Angelo Mai serves as a venue for various festivals, including the Artesettima Festival and selected events of the Short Theatre Festival. This concise overview underscores the multifaceted nature of cultural production associated with Angelo Mai, which plays a pivotal role in the broader context of the performing arts scene.

Furthermore, it is noteworthy that all initiatives hosted within the space either offer free admission or have a maximum ticket price capped at 10 euros. This pricing structure significantly enhances accessibility compared to performances presented elsewhere in the city, such as those at the Teatro di Roma / Theatre of Rome, the public theatre of the city. This approach underscores Angelo Mai's commitment to making cultural experiences accessible to a wider audience, irrespective of economic constraints.

The conducted analysis reveals that a regularization process is essential for acknowledging the two decades' worth of work accomplished by independent and politically engaged spaces, ensuring their integration into the formal tapestry of Roman cultural experiences. This integration would facilitate economic and project sustainability in the long term, safeguarding against fluctuations associated with changes in administration. Sylvia De Fanti's perspective on the evolution of their cultural initiative further underscores the importance of broader debates surrounding the role of public funding in sustaining cultural initiatives and the tension between artistic integrity and administrative imperatives:

“In my opinion, our history has always been a story of transformation. It's normal for it to be so. It's a tale of evolution and growth, not aging, but certainly, it will mark the opening of a new phase. However, it won't affect the essence of our practices, okay? Maybe administratively, yes, but I don't know, we should understand it administratively, in terms of budgets, situations, well, it scares me a bit in terms of some steps, let's say, in the regulation, this aspect of commodifying culture. I am a convinced believer that culture should be publicly funded, funded by the public, absolutely⁴⁶⁸”.

⁴⁶⁸ See the interview conducted by the author with Sylvia De Fanti, on 10 January 2023, reported in the Appendix at p.43

3. *Cinema America Occupato / Fondazione Piccolo America*



Figure 6 The Day of Cinema America Occupation, 13 November 2012⁴⁶⁹

Establishing itself as one of the most successful grassroots initiatives at the local, national, and international levels, the Piccolo America Foundation has its roots in 2012. It began when a group of students from the peripheral area of the city, attending schools in the historic center, initiated the Occupation of Cinema America in Trastevere⁴⁷⁰. Their objective was to address the city's lack of socio-cultural gathering spaces. Throughout the occupation, diverse activities and cultural events were organized to repurpose the cinema into a platform for community engagement and artistic expression, particularly within the realm of cinema. This grassroots movement represented a collective endeavor aimed at cultural and social transformation. It is pertinent to underscore that the occupation of Cinema America unfolded during a particularly turbulent period for Rome. Notably, in 2011, the occupation of both the Teatro Valle and the Cinema Palazzo occurred, subsequently transforming them into pivotal hubs of the independent cultural milieu within the city. This juncture signifies a distinct epoch for the city, catalyzing a discourse on communal assets and the inherent significance of culture and art in civic participation.

⁴⁶⁹ Danilo Pozzi (Ed.), *Piccolo America 2011-2021: il libro per raccontare i nostri primi 10 anni di storia*. <https://cinematroisi.it/il-progetto/chi-siamo/libro-piccolo-america-2011-2021/>

⁴⁷⁰ This clarification is significant, as the students' demands arise precisely from the need to have a communal space near the schools they attend, allowing them to continue being part of and contributing to the neighborhood.

Cinema America, according to the former occupiers, holds significance as a representation of Rome's history and culture, with cinema being an integral part. Beyond its artistic value, the cinema stood as a symbol of "urban discontinuity" in a district grappling with gentrification and territorial exploitation. It served as a cultural gateway accessible to a wide audience, offering a space for socialization free from profit-driven motives⁴⁷¹.

Giulia Flor, the vice president of the association, explained in an interview that the occupation arose from a plea to authorities for space allocation for youth associations⁴⁷². Unfortunately, this request remained unmet, exacerbated by the lack of a comprehensive municipal heritage map. Former Minister of Education Mariastella Gelmini's decision to close schools in the afternoon, brought attention to the issue of where students could seek refuge when returning home was not feasible. This catalyzed discourse surrounding the potential utilization of unused public spaces, prompting systematic efforts to map these sites throughout the city. This mapping initiative was facilitated through the web service *romabbandonata.org*, which, although inactive today, represented one of the first cartographic analysis of the city's underutilized heritage unveiled the prevalence of military barracks and cinemas among the sites exhibiting disuse.

These claims regarding the need to regenerate the city's unused spaces pertain to both the local context and a broader, more universal assertion. On the local front, the appropriation of Cinema America and its defense emanate from the imperative to circumscribe its utilization by the private proprietor, given its cultural heritage significance. Furthermore, the Cinema America paradigm aspires to *disseminate* the experience within the Trastevere neighborhood⁴⁷³, seeking to reinstate cinema to its communal and societal role.

At the universal level, the aspiration is to reclaim the city's abandoned spaces for youth-driven socio-cultural activities, returning these areas to residents and communities as a counterbalance to gentrification and the commodification of tourism. Furthermore, the Cinema America initiative aims to serve as a model of active civic engagement within the dynamic cultural landscape.

The eviction of Cinema America took place on September 3, 2014. However, this event witnessed substantial support from the local community, the residents of Rome, and the film community toward the occupants, setting the stage for the subsequent evolution of the initiative to the present day.

⁴⁷¹ V. Curcio, *Il Cinema America Occupato STA per Essere Demolito: Assemblea Pubblica Il 17 Febbraio*, Fondazione Piccolo America, 5 May 2020. Available at: <https://piccoloamerica.it/2014/02/17/il-cinema-america-occupato-sta-per-essere-demolito-assemblea-pubblica-il-17-febbraio/>

⁴⁷³ Trastevere is a district located in the First Municipality of Rome, in the historic heart of the city. Over the years, Trastevere has witnessed a rise in tourism, resulting in the establishment of numerous tourist-oriented enterprises, including souvenir shops, restaurants, and accommodations. This influx of tourist-focused establishments can occasionally bring about changes to the neighborhood's original character, sparking tensions between the local community and the burgeoning tourist industry.

3.1 Evolution and Institutionalization: The Multi-Faceted Journey of Cinema America

From its inception, Cinema America has embarked on three distinctive paths.

The first, characterized as the *original* initiative, sought to oppose the demolition and transformation of the esteemed Cinema America into housing units and parking spaces.

The second initiative, known as *Cinema in Piazza* (Cinema in the Square), unfolded primarily as an administrative battleground, revolving around funding allocations and permits for utilizing public spaces. The third trajectory involves the management of Cinema Troisi since 2021, an unparalleled European venue operational around the clock⁴⁷⁴, serving as a perpetual cultural hub with a study space accessible to the community, conceived as a replicable model throughout the district.

These efforts aim to transform Trastevere into a “distributed Multiscreen cinema⁴⁷⁵”, redefining the cultural landscape to meet the needs of city residents and create a space conducive to independent and alternative cultural production.

Since its establishment, this experience has evolved from initial confrontations characterized by heightened conflict against political institutions and the public administration of Rome to a state of collaboration and sustained dialogue, albeit with some moments of rupture.

The unconventionality of the occupation of Cinema America becomes apparent from the outset, as the occupants were able to cover the property's utility bills⁴⁷⁶. After the eviction, despite initial discussions by the Marino administration for a temporary assignment of municipal spaces in Trastevere, this plan did not materialize. Consequently, the occupiers refrained from seizing a new space, suspecting an attempt to push them into illegality⁴⁷⁷. Opting for compromise over conflict, they committed to participating in a future public-call for managing Sala Troisi, aiming to uphold architectural and anthropological protection for socio-cultural spaces.

Post-occupation, the *Ragazzi del Cinema America* (the Cinema America guys), established a cultural association, launching the Cinema in Piazza initiative, endorsed by the President of the Republic for its role in spreading cultural activity in historic city neighborhoods⁴⁷⁸.

In April 2014, the former Ministry of Cultural Heritage Dario Franceschini expressed to the Municipality of Rome, the Lazio Region, the Superintendence for Architectural and Landscape Heritage of Rome, and the

⁴⁷⁴ C. Del Zanno, R. Antonaci and others, *Che Poi al Cinema in Piazza Magari Finisce Pure Che Ti Innamori...*, Rolling Stone Italia, 23 July 2022. Available at: <https://www.rollingstone.it/cinema-tv/che-poi-al-cinema-in-piazza-magari-finisce-pure-che-ti-innamori/652842/>

⁴⁷⁵ See the interview conducted by the author with Giulia Flor, on 10 December 2023, reported in the Appendix at p. 26.

⁴⁷⁶ The provisions outlined in Article 5 of Law No. 80/2014, commonly known as the Renzi-Lupi Housing Plan, was not yet in effect. It has been in effect since 2014, dictates that individuals occupying a property no longer have the right to register their residence at the location where they live, connect to public services (water, electricity, gas), or enter the waiting list for public housing.

⁴⁷⁷ Fondazione Piccolo America, *Chiude il Piccolo America il Sindaco Marino Abbandona i giovani*, Piccolo America website, 2015. Available at: <https://piccoloamerica.it/2015/03/07/chiude-il-piccolo-cinema-america-il-sindaco-marino-abbandona-i-giovani/>

⁴⁷⁸ Repubblica.it, Roma, *Il Caso Del Cinema America: Lettera Del Capo Dello Stato, “Vostro Impulso Positivo”*, la Repubblica, 25 September 2014.

Available at: https://www.repubblica.it/cultura/2014/09/25/news/roma_il_caso_del_cinema_america_lettera_del_capo_dello_stato_vostro_impulso_positivo-96678891/

Directorate for Cultural Heritage of Lazio, its support for the petition to designate the Cinema America structure under historical-artistic constraints. This recognition was based on the significance of the mid-20th-century decorative mosaics, acknowledging them as possessing both historical and artistic value, and as being of cultural interest.

Despite reported plans by the property owner Progetto Uno Srl to develop residential apartments, the Council of State's ruling on March 15, 2023, definitely halted speculation on Cinema America, acknowledging its status as a cultural asset of interest. The responsibility for restoration and conservation costs was then assigned to the property owner⁴⁷⁹.

Regarding the Cinema in Piazza initiative, which has engaged hundreds of thousands of spectators since 2015, the administrative saga merits particular attention. The genesis of this initiative can be traced back to the eviction of Cinema America, prompting a response that sought to underscore the importance of cultural activities in public spaces, epitomized by the concept of the *pirate screen*. In 2015, as part of the Trastevere Rione del Cinema Festival, the association inaugurated the inaugural edition of what would evolve into Cinema in Piazza. This involved the lawful occupation of the public space in Piazza San Cosimato in Trastevere. Subsequently, the concession for the square during the summer arena season was awarded to the Cinema America team each year until a complex situation unfolded in 2018, involving the Raggi administration. Notably, this dispute implicated Cultural Assessor Bergamo and Vice Chair of the Committee on Culture Gemma Guerrini.

The crux of the matter revolved around administrative intricacies pertaining to the management of the Roman territory and its cultural activities. On one front, the administration insisted on restoring legality through the allocation of space via public tenders, a process open to all parties – especially in the context of Estate Romana season. Conversely, the Association argued against the infringement of their established right to conduct cultural activities, a right they had enjoyed for years, without navigating the bureaucratic impediments that often are considered to impede and slow down initiatives⁴⁸⁰.

Notwithstanding this administrative setback, Cinema in Piazza extended its reach to the periphery of the city, including areas such as Tor Sapienza, Cervelletta, and Monte Ciocchi. Despite the absence of a dedicated

⁴⁷⁹ ANSA R, *Cinema America, Consiglio Di Stato Respinge Ricorso Proprietà* - Notizie Agenzia ANSA, 15 March 2023 Available at: https://www.ansa.it/lazio/notizie/2023/03/15/cinema-america-consiglio-di-stato-respinge-ricorso-proprietà_cc277233-d153-46bd-aeb8-15bc222070e2.html

⁴⁸⁰ Additionally, the decision by the Raggi administration to ban, within the broader context of the Roman Summer, a square that had been hosting events for years and had been revitalized by the Piccolo America Association was deemed inappropriate. It was perceived as a form of appropriation of a project not conceived by the administration.

The issue regarding the funding of Cinema in Piazza resurfaced this summer following an extraordinary resolution by the city council, which allocated 250,000 euros, without a public tender, to the Cinema America team. This decision was made due to various delays in the disbursement of funds from the Lazio Region tenders, which had the potential to jeopardize the execution of the event. The episode not only drew criticism from political figures across various parties, notably Fabrizio Santori, a councilor from the League who filed a complaint with the anti-corruption tribunal, but also elicited disapproval from other cultural organizations and movements in the city. These entities interpreted the allocation of funds without a competitive bidding process as a form of preferential treatment, subject to “media coercion”, adding fuel to the controversy. The concerns raised by political representatives and cultural entities reflect a broader debate on transparency, fairness, and accountability in the allocation of public funds for cultural initiatives.

See also: <https://www.romatoday.it/politica/cinema-america-fondi-senza-bando-esposto-anac.html>

<https://www.romatoday.it/politica/fondi-cinema-america-senza-bando-proteste.html>

physical space, the Association successfully maintained its activities until 2021. Throughout this period, the Piccolo America Association adeptly cultivated a robust network of relationships, showcasing resilience amidst administrative adversities.

From winning the tender for Cinema Troisi to its 2021 opening, the focus shifted to renovating the space, previously deemed unusable by the Municipality. The subsequent signing of a 12-year contract in 2018, with reduced rent and primary funding for restoration from the Ministry of Culture, amounted to approximately 1,500,000.00 euros⁴⁸¹. Through securing 1,041,554 euros via a public tender, the association affirmed its commitment to the enduring cultural revitalization of Cinema Troisi.

The completion of the institutionalization of Cinema America occurred with the transformation of Piccolo America into a non-profit Foundation in December 2022, ensuring alignment with the evolution of its activities, not only from a local but also a national perspective.

“As a Third Sector Foundation, we will continue working towards the preservation and redevelopment of cultural spaces, the enhancement of cinematic heritage, and the implementation of socio-cultural initiatives, with a focus on reducing economic and social inequalities. If the choice to establish ourselves as an Association in 2014 allowed us not only to endure but also to leverage bureaucracy for many of the undertaken battles, the new structure will now provide additional credibility with every stakeholder”⁴⁸².

3.2 Cultural Production, Social Innovation, and National Recognition



Figure 7 The Troisi Cinema seen from the outside⁴⁸³

In the domain of cultural production and social innovation, as discerned from the experiential context, their primary expertise lies in the promotion and valorization of cinema, serving both as an artistic

⁴⁸¹ This information are available on the Cinema Troisi website at: <https://cinematroisi.it/il-progetto/la-storia-del-troisi/>

⁴⁸² Fondazione Piccolo America, *Il Piccolo America diventa una Fondazione*, Piccolo America website, 12 dicembre 2022. Available at: <https://piccoloamerica.it/2022/12/12/il-piccolo-america-diventa-una-fondazione/>

⁴⁸³ Danilo Pozzi (Ed.), *Piccolo America 2011-2021: il libro per raccontare i nostri primi 10 anni di storia*. <https://cinematroisi.it/il-progetto/chi-siamo/libro-piccolo-america-2011-2021>

manifestation and an educational tool. The distinctiveness of this experiential paradigm is marked by the direct engagement of filmmakers and domain experts who curate events, offering multifaceted perspectives and catalyzing discussions that extend beyond conventional film consumption. Expanding beyond the cinematic milieu, their approach encompasses the transformation of cinema into a catalyst for engendering active civic participation and the establishment of alternative communal spaces.

The Cinema Troisi auditorium transcends the mere presentation of cinematic content; it additionally furnishes a complimentary 24/7 study area and a bar that commercially showcases products sourced from local enterprises within the neighborhood⁴⁸⁴. This multifaceted initiative endeavors to cultivate collaboration among local commercial entities, thereby cultivating an amalgamated approach to cultural propagation, educational outreach, and social sustainability. Furthermore, the initiative of Cinema in Piazza, by providing free access and decentralizing into other areas of the city, is actively working towards making cultural events and experiences accessible to a broad and diverse audience, fostering inclusivity and community engagement.

Lastly, Cinema America has garnered significant national recognition, received special awards and mentions for its profound commitment to cinema and socio-cultural endeavors⁴⁸⁵. It has garnered frequent acknowledgment as an exemplary initiative by numerous international journalistic entities, including El Pais, The New York Times, The Guardian, and Le Nouvel Observateur.

The extensive manifestations of solidarity and support, marked by endorsements from diverse figures across the film industry, regional and city's representatives of the Partito Democratico (Democratic Party), and governmental and administrative officials, affirmations from esteemed institutions such as the Cineteca of Bologna, have significantly contributed to the augmentation of its prestige and overall stability.

Finally, the initial concrete step towards the dissemination of the "Cinema Troisi model" was taken by the Foundation, through the proposal to purchase, in collaboration with other partners, Cinema America, offering €2.5 million to the cinema owner. The fate of this proposal remains uncertain. However, even in the event of non-acceptance, the Cinema America team still proposes to collaborate on a potential redefinition of the cinema's programming.

⁴⁸⁴ See the interview conducted by the author with Giulia Flor, on 10 December 2023, reported in the Appendix at p. 25.

⁴⁸⁵ Notably, during the Nastri d'Argento 2015, the association Piccolo America was honored for its exceptional dedication to cinema in theaters. The Globi d'Oro 2015 acknowledged Piccolo America's remarkable cultural contributions within Rome, with director Mario Martone and cinematographer Luca Bigazzi also receiving awards. Furthermore, the association received the "Premio alla Cultura Cinematografica" at the Premio Amidei 2017 for its role in inspiring a youth movement aimed at revitalizing historic neighborhood cinemas. Other accolades include the "Gino Agostini. Cinema e democrazia" prize in 2015 and recognition from Articolo 21 in 2019, praising Cinema America's cultural impact and its resilience against fascist movements.

4. Spin Time Labs



Figure 8 Street view of The Spin Time Labs building ⁴⁸⁶

The Spin Time Labs experience, originating in the Esquilino neighborhood holds significance as it sheds light on a facet of Rome that, while not extensively explored in this dissertation, warrants acknowledgment: the housing crisis^{487 488}. Within the realm of housing advocacy, the Spin Time experience stands out as both significant and unconventional, evolving from a housing occupation to a hub for urban regeneration. This sets it apart from previously discussed instances as it does not stem from the need to reclaim spaces for social aggregation, independent cultural production, and the recognition of the rights of cultural operators and artists. Rather, it emerges from the urgent necessity to provide housing for those excluded from what has become a perceived privilege⁴⁸⁹.

Despite its immediate urgency, what distinguishes Spin Time's experience is the intentional integration of the socio-cultural component into its framework. This integration becomes instrumental in the regeneration process, not only for the single specific space but also for the overall housing experience. Through the proactive

⁴⁸⁶ N. Gerundino, *Viaggio al centro dello Spin Time Labs*, Zero.eu, 2019, Available at: <https://zero.eu/it/luoghi/62726-spin-time-labs,roma/>

⁴⁸⁷ Caused by a gap composed of liberalization and the rise in prices of rentals and mortgages in the private real estate market, coupled with a lack of strategy and efficiency in public housing policies. Indeed, Rome suffers from a severe imbalance between the demand and supply of housing.

⁴⁸⁸ The Esquilino Quarter (Quartiere Esquilino) is a historic neighborhood in Rome, Italy. It is situated near the Termini railway station and is known for its cultural diversity and multicultural atmosphere. The neighborhood has been shaped by waves of immigration, resulting in a rich tapestry of various ethnic communities. The intriguing characteristic of Esquilino is that, despite its central location within the city, it is often academically regarded as a center-periphery, given that the neighborhood is affected by dynamics of decay typical of peripheries.

⁴⁸⁹ C. Cacciotti, *Abitare liminale permanente Pratiche di lotta e negoziazione quotidiana degli spazi in un'occupazione abitativa romana*. *Antropologia Pubblica*, 9 (2), 2023, p.152.

promotion and production of culture, coupled with the deliberate emphasis on civic participation, the act of inhabiting a space transcends mere occupancy—it transforms into a genuine and enriched living experience⁴⁹⁰. As a matter of fact, Spin Time has become a reference point for many student, university, environmentalist, and other associations that operate regularly within it.

Moreover, this integration of artistic culture into Spin Time's project also results from another factor. As highlighted by Cacciotti, the chronicization of a political-institutional stalemate has translated into a disruption of the occupants' practice of claiming and securing housing through new occupations. This has resulted in a state of permanent liminality, where individuals temporarily reside for extended periods, attempting to domesticate the occupied space over time⁴⁹¹.

Consequently, it is plausible to assert that this experiential trajectory has undergone an adaptive evolution in response to administrative and legislative deficiencies. It has transmuted into a holistic experimental paradigm, emerging organically from these lacunae, thereby instigating the establishment of a novel governance and regenerative framework. The current state of this nascent structure is presently undergoing rigorous examination within the purview of political and administrative institutions.

In this context, the research conducted by Open Impact⁴⁹² highlights the significance of Spin Time as a pertinent model. It is delineated as a hybrid structure where residential facilities address the needs of individuals facing socio-economic vulnerabilities, a welfare hub extending services to both the building's residents and the broader community, and a cultural nexus curating programming that enriches the city's cultural landscape.

4.1 The actors, the space the claims

In October 2013, amidst the zenith of the Tsunami Tour⁴⁹³, the edifice situated at Via Santa Croce in Gerusalemme 55, within the first municipality and Esquilino district, became the subject of occupation by the Action Movement for the Right to Housing. Historically, until 2010, this establishment served as the headquarters for Istituto Nazionale di Previdenza per i Dipendenti dell'Amministrazione Pubblica (INPDAP)⁴⁹⁴. Subsequent to its abandonment and undergoing a process of securitization, the property was acquired by a closed-end real estate investment fund known as Investire SGR⁴⁹⁵. Today, the architectural

⁴⁹⁰ This insight stems from an interview conducted with Chiara Cacciotti, an activist affiliated with Spin Time and a researcher in urban studies, with a specific focus on housing issues. The comprehensive interview can be found in the Appendix on page xx.

⁴⁹¹ C. Cacciotti, 2023, *cit. p. 122*.

⁴⁹² "Open Impact" is an innovative start-up and accredited research spin-off of the University of Milano-Bicocca. It provides consultancy services and digital tools for the measurement, valorization, and management of impact.

<https://www.openimpact.it/chi-siamo/>

⁴⁹³ The Tsunami Tour was a campaign promoted by housing rights movements advocating for a generalized moratorium on evictions, foreclosures, and displacements, as well as the implementation of an extraordinary plan for public housing. The tour had two significant dates: December 6, 2012, and April 6, 2013, when thousands of people occupied dozens of buildings in the capital. The occupations aimed to demonstrate to the municipal administration that these spaces should be used consistently. These demands were also a consequence of the real estate market crisis that was felt in Rome after 2006. In 2012, there were at least 51 thousand vacant housing units, in addition to the 250 thousand already empty. Meanwhile, property transactions remained stagnant.

<https://ilmanifesto.it/lo-tsunami-tour-nella-capitale-degli-sfratti-e-della-poverta>

⁴⁹⁴ In English it is translated as National Institute of Social Security for Public Administration Employees.

⁴⁹⁵ The closure of the public offices began in 2003, and the definitive abandonment occurred in 2010 after the building became the subject of a securitization process initiated by the then Minister of Economy and Finance, Tremonti. The sale resulted in its

complex, spanning across 16,000 square meters, delineates two discernible domains: the residential sector, spanning the first through seventh floors, and the cultural and social nexus situated on floors 0, -1, and -2. Several interventions were carried out to convert the spaces into residences, while it is evident that structural refurbishments would be necessary to optimize living conditions⁴⁹⁶.

Originally, approximately 150 families found refuge in the space, and as of 2022, there are around 362 residents in the building, from 28 nationalities⁴⁹⁷. Additionally, there are 24 collectives, both formal and informal, engaged in socio-cultural activities⁴⁹⁸. Following the year of focusing activities on the building to establish the requisite infrastructural and organizational conditions for residential occupation, the initial experiments commence to transform Spin Time into a "site for urban regeneration and social innovation"⁴⁹⁹.

Derived from the assertion of the right to housing, the insight of the promoters, as expressed by Chiara Cacciotti⁵⁰⁰, was not to isolate the resident population, as often occurs in residential occupations, but rather to integrate it with the neighborhood. This involves establishing connections with other associations and services in the city, thereby enabling cultural programming and service offerings to be accessible to all. This openness will be a determining factor in the evolution of Spin Time, especially concerning dialogue with public institutions and the active involvement of numerous entities, which have made Spin Time an increasingly resilient initiative. In 2020, a significant transformation in the building's utilization, emblematic of its openness, unfolded as individuals under 25 affiliated with the Scomodo magazine converted the disregarded -2 level into the Redazione cultural and social center. Termed by Chiara Cacciotti as the '*centro sociale within the centro sociale*', this conversion was achieved through a successful crowdfunding campaign, drawing a monthly attendance of over 1000 participants, thus symbolizing a concrete opening to the city, especially for younger generations (mainly under 25).

4.2 Navigating the Legal and Social Dynamics of Property Occupation

In the context of an illicit residential occupation, the subject building has recurrently been identified as a potential target for eviction by law enforcement entities, a designation formalized in the Prefecture of Rome's 2019 intervention plan for the removal of arbitrarily occupied premises⁵⁰¹. The heightened jeopardy faced by the occupants emerged notably in October 2023, when Minister of the Interior Piantedosi, during the committee for order and security, announced the intention to proceed with the eviction of the Spin Time

acquisition by the real estate investment fund Investire SGR, tasked with managing the national public and private assets in conjunction with the banking group Finnat. However, the building remained unused as an asset, with the offices left vacant.

⁴⁹⁶ Being an illegal occupation, Spin Time cannot receive funding from public grants, and the renovation works were made possible through the intervention of private entities.

⁴⁹⁷ L. Corvo, L. Pastore, M. Biazzo, M. Tegegne, A. Tufexis. *Valutazione d'impatto sociale per un futuro dell'abitare. Spin time Labs. Open Impact*, 2023, p. 10

⁴⁹⁸ *Ibidem*.

⁴⁹⁹ In 2014, the year following the occupation of this building, Pachamama, a rural regeneration initiative located approximately in the Laurentina area, was evicted. Subsequently, activists from Pachamama took over here, giving rise to Spin Time, specifically the socio-cultural component.

⁵⁰⁰ See the interview conducted by the author with Chiara Cacciotti, on 11 December 2023, reported in the Appendix at p.13

⁵⁰¹ Prefetto della Provincia di Roma. Prot. N.280617 / Gab del 18.07.2019

https://www.prefettura.it/FILES/allegatinews/1199/Programma_interventi_sgomberi.pdf

premises by Christmas, citing the owner's plan to repurpose it into a hotel for the Jubilee⁵⁰². Despite these declarations, the envisaged eviction has yet to materialize, and the planning for that action remains dormant. Furthermore, this statement by the Minister of the Interior led to a solidarity demonstration in the square through a procession, engaging approximately 80 different entities, including the Democratic Party, to which the mayor of Rome belongs. Additionally, on October 25, an urgent parliamentary inquiry was submitted by the Democratic Party group to the Minister of the Interior Piantedosi, the Minister of Labor and Social Policies Marina Caledrone, and the Minister of Economy and Finance Giorgetti⁵⁰³.

The protracted conflictuality surrounding the occupation persists, notwithstanding the increasing receptivity to external engagement and the pursuit of dialogue and collaboration with housing movements, cultural associations, *centri sociali*, as well as political institutions and public administration.

Therefore, after the Tsunami Tour, the ensuing administrative inertia, marked by a lack of movement in housing situations, led to a prolonged state of liminality for the occupants, necessitating adaptive strategies for long-term occupation⁵⁰⁴.

This *inertia* was exemplified in May 2019 when the then Minister of the Interior, Matteo Salvini, disconnected utilities due to outstanding debts (amounting to 300,000 euros) that the private entity had ceased to settle. Article 5 of the so-called *Lupi Law* on housing⁵⁰⁵, further exacerbated the occupants' predicament, preventing them from registering utility bills in their names and perpetuating their status as permanent illegals⁵⁰⁶. The deadlock was ultimately broken by an external actor of significant influence: the Church, as Cardinal Konrad Krajewsky, the Pope's almoner, personally intervened to restore power to the occupied space⁵⁰⁷.

Subsequently, the occupants of Spin Time actively sought recognition of their entitlement to settle utility bills, aiming to enhance self-sufficiency and stewardship over the facility. Notably, municipal authorities, including Mayor Raggi and Deputy Mayor Bergamo, have remained conspicuously silent on this matter, while President of the I Municipality, Sabrina Alfonsi, demonstrated a proactive stance by advocating for a collaborative forum involving the Region, the Municipality, and the property proprietor⁵⁰⁸.

Starting from these claims, in November 2022, Mayor Roberto Gualtieri endorsed the directive facilitating the derogation of Article 5 within the Lupi decree.

⁵⁰² G. De Monte, *Piantedosi vuole sgomberare "Spin time" per farne un hotel: sarebbe la fine di un progetto sociale strategico*, Editoriale Domani, 26 ottobre 2023.

Available at: <https://www.editorialedomani.it/fatti/piantedosi-vuole-sgomberare-spin-time-per-farne-un-hotel-sarebbe-la-fine-di-un-progetto-sociale-strategico-ovlrho3c>

⁵⁰³ V. Valeri, *Spin Time arriva in Parlamento. Il Pd chiede a Piantedosi e Giorgetti di salvare l'occupazione*, RomaToday, 26 febbraio 2023. Available at: <https://www.romatoday.it/politica/spin-time-interrogazione-parlamento-pd.html>

⁵⁰⁴ C. Cacciotti, *Abitare liminale permanente Pratiche di lotta e negoziazione quotidiana degli spazi in un'occupazione abitativa romana*. *Antropologia Pubblica*, 9 (2), 2023.

⁵⁰⁵ The provisions outlined in Article 5 of Law No. 80/2014, commonly known as the Renzi-Lupi Housing Plan, entails the prohibition of residency and access to public services for individuals unlawfully occupying a property, alongside a five-year impediment from participating in social housing allocation procedures in cases involving ERP (Public Housing) units.

⁵⁰⁶ Cacciotti, *Abitare liminale permanente Pratiche di lotta e negoziazione quotidiana degli spazi in un'occupazione abitativa romana*, 2023, pp 151-154.

⁵⁰⁷ As outlined by Cacciotti, this relationship with the Church actually began some time earlier, facilitated by the intervention of Sister Adriana, who had been visiting the building for several years, providing food and hygiene supplies to the occupants.

⁵⁰⁸ Y.Sina, *Spin Time arriva in Parlamento. Il Pd chiede a Piantedosi e Giorgetti di salvare l'occupazione*. RomaToday, 14 maggio 2019.

Available at: <https://www.romatoday.it/politica/petizione-occupazione-spin-time-labs-bollette.html>

After the events of 2019, the denizens of the edifice reasserted their commitment to undertake a process of regularization, cognizant of its dual import in the preservation of lives and the proposition of a socio-cultural alternative to extant urban development paradigms. The ingress of Scomodo into the premises, along with the production of Sabina Guzzanti's cinematic work *Spin Time! Che fatica la democrazia* released in 2021 and showcased at the Venice Film Festival, has seemingly intensified scrutiny on Spin Time.

As elucidated by Cacciotti, within the Gualtieri administration, attempts have been made to engender a dialogue transcending immediate emergency response⁵⁰⁹.

This proactive attitude is motivated by the political strategy employed by the occupants which involves keeping the main gate open 24/7, offering cultural activities and basic welfare services to a broader audience, extending support networks beyond traditional affiliations, and engaging entities such as the Catholic Church. This broadened outreach aims not only to fortify the social base against potential eviction but also to foster a broader intersectional process that collectively addresses housing and social precarity, defining itself as an urban regeneration laboratory.

While the possibility of eviction currently appears impractical due to the complexities involved in enumerating all occupants, the acquisition of the property by the Municipality of Rome faces an impasse. Despite its inclusion in the *Strategic Plan for the Right to Housing* within the Department of Heritage and Housing Policies, the owners have consistently rejected the municipality's proposal to purchase the building for approximately 24 million euros. Heritage Commissioner Tobia Zevi exerts pressure to resume negotiations, highlighting the administration's willingness, particularly following the presentation of the Open Impact study at Campidoglio on 14 november 2022, to recognize the potential implications of Santa Croce/Spin Time Labs experience as a model for experimenting with housing policies and a best practice for the development of recovery interventions. In fact, the study conducted by Open Impact, delineated that formalizing the undertaking, facilitated by Rome Capital's acquisition of the property, would entail an almost twofold amplification in the investment's societal and economic worth.

In the scenario where the proprietor opts against the sale of the real estate, the option of co-design and co-programming could be considered, as advocated by the Culture Councilor of the First Municipality, Giulia Silvia Ghia⁵¹⁰.

“(...) So, returning to Spin Time, a form of collaboration could indeed be co-design. This involves maintaining the structure of a property and allocating it to a group of organizations that come together and co-design with the property owner. The idea is not to lease or issue a public call for the management of the space, but to leverage this incredible reality that has emerged, full of energy from young people, ideas.... The goal is to ensure that it can continue its path,

⁵⁰⁹ Notably, this inclination is partly attributed to the presence of two municipal councilors and some commissioner, exemplified by councilors from Sinistra Civica Ecologista Alessandro Luparelli and Michela Cicculi, and Democratic Party affiliate Riccardo Corbucci, all emanating from grassroots movement experiences. For instance, Councilor Cicculi's antecedents trace back to Luche y Siesta and the historical tapestry of Strada a Garbatella. Consequently, a discernible rift has materialized within the institutional fabric. The ongoing discourse has yielded tangible outcomes, notably the formulation of the Housing Plan, Deliberation 104, and the Residency Deliberation.

⁵¹⁰ See the interview conducted by the author with Giulia Silvia Ghia, on 7 November 2023, reported in the Appendix at p. 26.

perhaps by structuring co-design in a way that gives it a legal framework, not only in theory but also on paper. This would allow it to establish an existence that can participate in European public calls, seek donations, raise funds through crowdfunding, and potentially attract sponsorships”⁵¹¹.

The resolute commitment to co-design in conjunction with the third sector has recently been reaffirmed through the endorsement, in July 2023, of a proposal by the Municipal Government pertaining to the *Regulation on the Relationship between Rome Capital and Third Sector Organizations*.⁵¹² This regulatory initiative, complemented by operational guidelines, underscores an earnest dedication to cultivating synergistic collaborations between the public administration and entities within the third sector.

Such a perspective appears desirable, especially considering the potential regularization scenario where there is a plan to establish Spin Time as a Third Sector Entity (ETS). Currently, it is a social promotion association but not officially recognized. By constituting itself as an ETS, it could then participate in funding opportunities, and in co-projects and co-design with public institutions.

“In essence, the goal is to be well-prepared for the potential moment of regularization. It’s a somewhat unique request that we are making, requiring more than just political goodwill.”⁵¹³.

4.3 The social impact of Spin Time: A Vision for Regularization



Figure 9 Children playing at Spin Time Labs⁵¹⁴

⁵¹¹ The co-programming and co-design process is carried out in accordance with the provisions of Law 241/1990 and the guidelines approved by Ministerial Decree (DM) 72 dated March 31, 2021.

⁵¹² Comune di Roma, *Schema di Regolamento sui rapporti tra Roma Capitale e gli Enti del Terzo Settore*, 21 luglio 2023. <https://www.comune.roma.it/web/it/notizia.page?contentId=NWS1072749>

⁵¹³ See the interview conducted by the author with Chiara Cacciotti, on 11 December 2023, reported in the Appendix at p.15

⁵¹⁴ N. Gerundino, *Viaggio al centro dello Spin Time Labs*, Zero.eu, 2019, Available at: <https://zero.eu/it/luoghi/62726-spin-time-labs,roma/>

As previously emphasized, the uniqueness of Spin Time lies in the fact that, in addition to being a housing initiative, it serves as a significant provider of local welfare and a socio-cultural hub within the neighborhood and the city, labeling itself as “*cantiere di rigenerazione urbana*” (urban regeneration site).

Open Impact, in its analysis, has outlined a detailed framework of the space's cultural offerings, promoting a variety of events ranging from performing arts, theater, music, cinema, circular economy, debate, and scientific dissemination, as well as fostering community and socialization⁵¹⁵. The cultural and social value of the experience has been acknowledged by various reputable secular and religious organizations that have supported Spin Time in various ways over time, including academic research conducted by universities, financial support from entities such as the Charlemagne Foundation, and engagement in public discourse and journalism with *Mediterranea*, *Gli Invisibili*, and Black Lives Matter⁵¹⁶.

Open Impact has categorized Spin Time Labs' cultural activities into five groups: Active Citizenship, Theater, Publishing, Art, and Music, involving over 2500 people per month, including residents of the building, the local population, and young individuals aged 18 to 30. In the context of social innovation and the promotion of active citizenship, several experiences are involved, including Re-work, Spin Time Labs APS⁵¹⁷, POLEIS (Civic Hub of Esquilino), Scomodo, and the Network of High School Students.

POLEIS is of particular interest to this thesis as it represents a virtuous experience of active citizenship and participation initiated within Spin Time, which has become a model, along with the Quarticciolo experience, for a new form of co-design for the creation of a participatory territorial ecosystem. The civic hub / poli civici is a tool provided by the Regional Law 11/2016 of Lazio, where it is defined as an "integrated civic hub for social mutualism"⁵¹⁸ and is conceived as an organizational form created in collaboration between local institutions (Municipalities) and third sector entities to address the dispersion and divergence of activities and services promoted by local entities.

According to a study conducted by LabSU - Laboratory of Urban Studies "Territories of Living" (DICEA - Sapienza University of Rome), in collaboration with the Fairwatch Association, the project initiates by coordinating social entities in housing, education, welfare, and urban regeneration. Working groups address themes like housing, education, and community welfare, fostering collaboration and addressing societal challenges. Systemic actions involve continuous dialogue with institutions, aiming for co-programming and

⁵¹⁵ L. Corvo, and others, *Valutazione d'impatto sociale per un futuro dell'abitare. Spin time Labs*. Open Impact, 2023, pp. 39-47.

⁵¹⁶ "Mediterranea Saving Humans" is a Social Promotion Association (APS), a "platform of civil society reality" and "non-governmental action." It was founded to monitor the situation in the Mediterranean and to rescue people facing difficulties in the region.

"The Invisibles" is dedicated to providing support, assistance, cultural, social, scientific, and legal awareness and prevention to all those experiencing a state of profound distress.

<https://gli-invisibili.it>

"Black Lives Matter (BLM)" is a movement that advocates for the rights and equality of Black individuals, particularly in the context of combating racial injustice and police brutality. It originated in the United States and gained significant momentum in response to incidents of violence and systemic racism against Black people, including police killings.

⁵¹⁷ The Association for Social Promotion (APS) lacks legal recognition.

⁵¹⁸ Regional Law 10 August 2016, n. 11, *Sistema Integrato degli interventi e dei servizi sociali della Regione Lazio*, article 33, paragraph w.

co-design adoption. Citizen involvement seeks to enhance local relations, promote social cohesion, and encourage active participation⁵¹⁹.

POLEIS activates concrete collaborative efforts, including a service desk, thematic working groups, and support for project planning. The project propose an a holistic approach, intertwining welfare policies with urban regeneration and local development, The evolution of this experience, originating from Spin Time, underscores the space's ability to be discerned by local associations and its capacity to seamlessly incorporate diverse requirements. The objective of the civic hub underscores the main commitment of the Spin Time experience, with a function to reclaim currently unused spaces in the neighborhood and return them to the residents with social, cultural, and economic-productive functions⁵²⁰.

From the standpoint of cultural production, the facility at Santa Croce in Gerusalemme manifests a versatile character, encompassing an auditorium/theater, a serigraphy, a recording studio, and several space for workshops. Weekly reunions of the Tavolo Cultura / Cultural Table, consisting of those involved in cultural programming, convene to meticulously plan forthcoming activities, accommodating input from both regular participants and external contributors, guided by principles of active engagement rather than rigid hierarchical structures⁵²¹. Noteworthy entities have flourished within this space, housing two theatrical collectives – Loco Teatro and Women Crossing – and three music-oriented entities: an informal choir, the Orchestra Notturna Clandestina, and a recording studio.

Several groups seek Spin Time's premises for rehearsals or workshops, attracted by the prospect of reduced or absent expenses and the opportunity for independent, often politically alternative productions relative to institutional contexts. Spin Time's cultural decisions align coherently with their strategic framework of experimentation and urban regeneration, underpinned by an ethos of openness. Initiatives supported by the Cultural Table are crafted to encourage the active engagement of building residents, acknowledging, however, that automatic participation is not an assured outcome. Exemplifying this paradigm, Women Crossing, under the direction of Alessandra Cutolo, a distinguished Italian filmmaker, comprises eleven exclusively female members, including seven Nigerian mothers residing on-site. Beyond showcasing African cultures through performances rooted in narratives and folktales, the ensemble's mission centers on utilizing theater to empower these resident women both personally and economically. Another noteworthy experimentation has been proposed by the Greek actress Christina Zoniou, concerning the *Theater of the Oppressed*, a form of theater that seeks to empower marginalized people to explore and challenge their situations through performance and dialogue⁵²².

⁵¹⁹ C. Cellamare (Responsabile Scientifico), LabSU - Laboratory of Urban Studies "Territories of Living" (DICEA - Sapienza University of Rome) and Associazione Fairwatch (Eds.) *Reti di mutualismo e poli civici a Roma*, Comune-info, 2022.

⁵²⁰ *Ibidem*. p.102

⁵²¹ For the organization of the cultural programming, a weekly meeting is convened, attended by both activists and representatives from associations or private citizens seeking to submit proposals. Subsequently, a collective vote is undertaken by all present at the table, culminating in the integration of approved proposals into the seasonal calendar. This meticulous process not only exemplifies democratic engagement but also epitomizes the harmonious convergence of diverse perspectives shaping the cultural landscape. It is clear that proposals must adhere to the objectives of inclusion and respect for the minorities within the experience.

⁵²² A. Catacchio, *Il Teatro degli oppressi in Spin Time*, di Sabina Guzzanti, Il Manifesto, 16 settembre 2021.

Available at: <https://ilmanifesto.it/il-teatro-degli-oppressi-in-spin-time-di-sabina-guzzanti>

Lastly, a significant milestone occurred in November 2023, when Alessandra Cutolo's film *Mama Merci* premiered at the Torino Film Festival. Produced at Spin Time and featuring the mother-actresses from Women Crossing, the film played a crucial role in nationally disseminating this empowering and culturally rich narrative⁵²³.

Presenting all the work undertaken by Spin Time in this endeavor is complex, but some clarifications can guide the understanding of the phenomenon.

Spin Time responded to institutional inertia through a process of awareness and reaction, becoming the constituting community of a new practice. This new practice involved a transition from a housing occupation born out of collective struggle to an urban regeneration laboratory proposing something unprecedented legally: Public Residential Construction in the city center, with daily cultural programming and the provision of local welfare services. It was understood that the goal was not only to reclaim a disused, abandoned public asset for the city but also to make it available to the broader community. This trend was further highlighted by the willingness to address the potential eviction through the creation of an urban regeneration workshop. This initiative involves setting up various working groups dedicated to promoting initiatives and projects to be presented to the local administration, as well as playing an informative role for others sociocultural organizations, through a desk dedicated to updates in regulations implemented by the Municipality.

“It has been acknowledged that the endeavor extends beyond the restitution of a disused and abandoned public asset to the city, reflecting a commitment not only to inhabit the space but also to make it available to the broader citizenry. Thus, while there is undoubtedly a project underpinning this initiative, there is also an underlying principle emphasizing that collective strength enhances our defense capabilities. This is evident in the current Municipal Housing Plan, where the only two experiences cited for consideration in regularization are Spin Time and Metropolitiz – the two occupations that, more than others, have opened up and hybridized with diverse realities.

Certainly, I cannot definitively predict the efficacy of this stance concerning eviction, as other influential factors come into play. I firmly believe that if Spin Time had remained solely a housing occupation, albeit legitimate, it would not have sufficed for inclusion in the Housing Plan. The administration has acknowledged that, beyond providing shelter, a broader undertaking has unfolded. Various services and activities, accessible not only to residents but to the entire community, have been established. This openness has transformed the space into a living entity within the neighborhood, solidifying its status as a tangible reference point”⁵²⁴.

Therefore, activists hope that the desired regularization process will encompass, on one hand, the regularization of the structure as Public Residential Building, maintaining the experience at Via Santa Croce in Gerusalemme 55, and on the other hand, ensuring the continuity of the socio-cultural essence that has characterized the experience.

⁵²³ Periferia Capitale- Fondazione Charlemagne, “*Mama Mercy*” di Alessandra Cutolo al Torino Film Festival, 29 novembre 2023. Available at: <https://www.perferiacapitale.org/mama-mercy-di-alessandra-cutolo-oggi/>

⁵²⁴ See the interview conducted by the author with Chiara Cacciotti, on 11 December 2023, reported in the Appendix at p. 13

5. Institutive Imaginations: A comparative discussion of the case studies

To discuss the aforementioned experiences, drawing from the scholarly legacy of Cornelius Castoriadis provides valuable insights. Castoriadis introduced the concept of the "institutional imagination" to elucidate humanity's capacity for creating and transforming social institutions. Within this framework, Castoriadis identified two key aspects of the imaginary: the instituting imaginary and the instituted imaginary⁵²⁵. The instituting imaginary encompasses collective human efforts to envision new meanings that surpass existing historical forms, while the instituted imaginary represents the tangible outcomes of this creative endeavor. Therefore, it becomes evident that the alternative socio-cultural centers under analysis are both products of and responses to the instituting imaginary. They are shaped by specific governance structures, historical contexts, or deficiencies, yet they also serve as generative forces, reacting to their own existence. Consequently, all four experiences fall within the domain of instituting and enabling spaces, establishing novel political and organizational frameworks within their respective societies. They contribute to the creation of new spaces and forms of participation that reflect their activities and aspirations.

In the French case, specifically in Marseille, this process has been orchestrated by national and local governments, contributing to the emergence of an alternative cultural scene that is regulated and integrated into the system through an assimilation of forms that were previously centrifugal.

In Italy, the situation appears markedly different, and the analyzed case studies illustrate these divergences. Firstly, political conflict, while present in the French experience as opposition to neoliberal governmentality and the aspiration to establish a new role for artists in the governance of the city, in the Italian context manifests as contestation due to a lack of public services in the realm of contemporary culture and housing, combined with the will to offer an alternative to cultural conservatism, as delineated in the preceding chapter. Therefore, the demands of the Roman experiences arise from specific needs: acquiring a space for habitation, creating independent art, forming an alternative space to those proposed (an unwitting third place), providing proximity welfare services, etc. These claims, in the absence of updated and effective regulations, lead to acts of force, such as the occupation of abandoned public and private buildings that facilitate the evolution of alternative experiences and overcome bureaucratic constraints.

5.1 Dialogue with Public Institutions

The dialogue with public administration has been delineated through three fundamental stages: firstly, the intensity of conflict, denoting the tension between the assertions and demands advocated by the initiative's proponents and the receptivity of the city's public institutions to heed and accommodate them. Secondly, the act of opening the space to the external world, thereby emancipating it from its erstwhile status as an isolated

⁵²⁵ C. Castoriadis, *The imaginary institution of society*. Mit Press, 1987.

experience within its alterity. Lastly, the legitimization of a regularization process, that requires the consideration of various stakeholders, including jurisprudence, which has elevated the issue to a level of significant relevance and influential recognition.

5.1.1 Intensity of the Conflict

The intensity of conflict connotes the magnitude or severity of discord, opposition, or contention inherent within a given scenario or matter under consideration. This parameter exhibits considerable variability contingent upon diverse determinants, including but not limited to the character of the conflict itself, the vested interests and stakes of the involved parties, the strategic approaches and maneuvers employed, and the envisaged ramifications or repercussions associated with the conflictual dynamics. The form of the conflict noted ranges from legal battles, administrative inertia accusations, and derailing attempts to regulate living conditions, media campaigns, public protests, reflecting diverse trajectories in the engagements with public institutions.

The intensity of conflicts with public institutions varies significantly among La Friche la Belle de Mai, Angelo Mai, Fondazione Piccolo America, and Spin Time Labs.

La Friche, originating from the will of municipal and national political institutions, experiences low conflict intensity, primarily centered on a universal resistance to the neoliberal governance of the city, French state centralization, and against the exploitation of culture for city's branding purposes. However, it also serves as an instrumental force in the city's economic development, this is also underscored by the amicable relations maintained with the Marseille administration, transcending political affiliations.

Angelo Mai, on the other hand, faces high conflict intensity, rooted in a steadfast claim to unused city spaces, challenging the Monti district, and positioning itself as an alternative to institutional culture. The lack of dialogue and support from political institutions and public administration is evident, marked by repeated occupations and clearance without notice.

In contrast, Fondazione Piccolo America initially encountered significant conflict, emphasizing the reclamation of underutilized urban spaces and the establishment of new communal venues. Following the eviction, the collective opted to abandon illicit methods of space appropriation, instead deciding to participate in a public call in 2015 and garnering substantial political backing. Despite persisting challenges, particularly in navigating administrative hurdles concerning the *Cinema in Piazza* initiative, contemporary interactions reflect a robust collaboration and a shared inclination towards compromise, even with private entities overseeing Cinema America. This marks a strategic transition from conflictual dynamics to a more diplomatic political strategy.

Lastly, Spin Time Labs navigates from high initial conflict intensity to a current focus on seeking support from public administration and public institutions, with constructive dialogues and claims related to the right to housing. Noteworthy in this narrative is the engagement with lower echelons of Public Administration, who have consistently exerted pressure to ensure that the matter of Spin Time receives the recognition and due

attention it deserves. Subsequent dialogues with the Gualtieri Administration culminate in the formulation of *Delibera 104* and the *Housing Plan*, underscoring a transformative trajectory from conflict to collaboration. Therefore, the inherent conflictuality evident in the examined experiences within the Roman context has demonstrated to be a catalyzing force, sustaining a tension that has progressively facilitated advancements in the administrative and legal governance of urban spaces by the municipality over time.

5.1.2 Degree of Space's openness to the external world

The degree of openness denotes the extent to which these endeavors have enabled public access to the rejuvenated spaces, facilitated by cultural and social initiatives.

In comprehending the emblematic significance of these endeavors, openness has emerged as a key factor, affording the capacity to shape the cultural evolution of the city and foster harmonious integration within the surrounding district.

Notably, in the Italian cases, openness has proven pivotal in establishing *safety nets* that facilitate, above all, garnering support from local residents and the artistic community. Furthermore, opening up has entailed exposing the experience to an external audience, thereby enhancing tolerance and trust in these alternative models of urban regeneration.

The degree of openness of these cultural centers varies across La Friche la Belle de Mai, Angelo Mai, Fondazione Piccolo America, and Spin Time Labs. La Friche initially appeared as an isolated entity in a highly populated neighborhood, emphasizing artistic experimentation over community engagement. However, post-2007, there was a shift towards a *Société Cooperative d'Interet Collective* (SCIC), strengthening social commitment and attempts to engage the neighborhood through collaborative governance and initiatives from city residents.

Angelo Mai exhibits openness within the bounds of political commitment and support for foundational principles. Its current location, more of a crossroads than a specific neighborhood, sees multifunctionality primarily within the artistic realm. Despite its location, it serves as a prominent hub in the city for queer and transfeminist-related events, distinguishing itself as the second-largest ARCI club in Rome based on membership statistics.

Fondazione Piccolo America has demonstrated openness from its inception, particularly engaging with the Trastevere neighborhood and maintaining accessibility, including the provision of a study room opened 24/7. The foundation extends its openness to local businesses and social initiatives. Significantly, there exists an engagement with a heterogeneous demographic, notably the youth, underscoring a commitment to inclusivity through endeavors such as *Cinema in Piazza*. However, there appears to be a lesser emphasis on active involvement in film programming, a facet that could potentially serve as a strategic response to community demands.

Spin Time Labs exhibits openness through the strength of its resistance. Engaging with the local community and diverse associative entities stemming from both external and internal institutional frameworks, the advocacy for such broad inclusivity has often sparked contentious debates among the residents of the locale.

This interpretation has been fueled by a misapprehension, erroneously viewing it as a challenge to their interests, when in reality, it serves as a fundamental mechanism crafted to ensure their protection in the long term.

5.1.3 Pathways of Regularization

The trajectory towards regularization has brought to light notable distinctions between the French and Italian contexts. Through qualitative inquiry, a spectrum of potential risks inherent to the regularization processes has surfaced emphasizing the necessity of targeted dialogue with public administration. These risks encompass concerns such as the potential loss of autonomy and identity for informal initiatives when conforming to formal rules and requirements, which often conflict with their flexible and self-organizational nature. Moreover, inadequate management of the regularization process could exacerbate social and economic exclusion among marginalized communities, fostering gentrification or displacement. Addressing these risks requires a comprehensive approach involving active engagement from all stakeholders, including initiative leaders, public administration, and other urban actors.

In France, La Friche has conformed to legal stipulations, prompting a discourse more appropriately framed by institutionalization rather than mere regularization. This has facilitated its integration into the urban milieu, fostering urban development, and establishing conceptual underpinnings for the institutionalization of “New Territories of the Art”, with support from public institutions. In contrast, within the Italian context, regularization has represented at the same time a pivotal and unpredictable juncture for these initiatives, originating within the realm of informality. This trajectory, propelled not solely by legal obligations but also by the facilitation of alternative development paradigms replicable within urban landscape. Notably, despite their common genesis, the outcomes of these Roman experiences markedly diverge.

Piccolo America, for instance, opted for a negotiated approach to evolve as an entity, electing to relocate within a new spatial domain (albeit proximate to its antecedent) and undergoing a transformation from an association to a Third-Sector Foundation, thereby accruing heightened institutive authority.

In contrast, both Angelo Mai and Spin Time Labs exhibit distinctive features. Following the eviction of Angelo Mai in Monti (2006) and the subsequent provision of an alternative space at Via delle Terme di Caracalla 55, encapsulated within *Delibera 26* of 1995, formal regularization of the cultural center has yet to materialize. Encouragingly, the August 2023 legal triumph against the Municipality of Rome, recognizing the cultural merit of the association and attributing the protracted procedural delays to administrative inertia, imbues optimism. The collective has duly submitted requisite documentation in accordance with *Delibera 104*, prescriptive of the regularization process.

Conversely, the case of Spin Time Labs delineates a nuanced trajectory, where the abandonment of the current location does not seem contractual, although the same tools used to limit the lease of space for Cinema America cannot be applied, contemplation of a formal acknowledgment of Spin Time as a communal asset may pave

the way for collaborative design initiatives between the Municipality and the nascent Third-sector entity (ETS) engendered by the Spin Time Labs collective.

This experience, despite having a strong network of solidarity and being open to the local community, introduces a unique complexity not found in the other two experiences. This complexity arises from the residential aspect, especially in a central area. Consequently, the process of securing regularization requires careful consideration, as it may entail a compromise in the core purpose of the ongoing struggle. This struggle is defined by the aspiration to present a new model of Public Housing, one that is not situated on the outskirts of the city and include housing with socio-cultural services.

Regardless of the specific context, it is noteworthy to observe that the backing from political figures, individuals within the entertainment sphere, or other institutions such as the Church, has exerted a discernible influence on the evolution and resilience of these entities. Therefore, the establishment of a network, both in terms of solidarity and interpersonal relationships, has played a rather decisive role.

Furthermore, the repeatedly emerged intervention of the judiciary contributed through its judgments to the development or lack thereof of such initiatives, creating precedents and influencing changes in public policies. These aspects are of primary importance when highlighting the decision-making weakness of the administrative and political public actor of the city.

Henceforth, Public Administration and political institutions, cognizant of their inherent limitations, have demonstrated a preference for dialogue rather than resorting to outright suppression. Nevertheless, the absence of an integrated and, significantly, updated regulatory framework concerning the repurposing of public and private spaces intrinsic to Rome's heritage consigns them to a realm of intangible worth and perpetual susceptibility to repression. This predicament impedes sustainable and efficacious development, particularly when considering the economic sustainability of those realities.

5.2 What role for culture?

The quotation "L'art sert à interpréter l'espace" (The art serves to interpret space) attributed to Henry Lefebvre, proves particularly apt for describing the role that it has played in these social experiments⁵²⁶.

Within the framework of this dissertation, the nexus between culture/art and urban development stands as a focal point. Consequently, delving into the multifaceted role that culture, particularly in its artistic production aspect, has undertaken becomes imperative for comprehending the processes of recognition and stabilization within the scrutinized contexts. These cultural centers prioritize cultural production over passive consumption, positioning it at the core of their experiential framework.

La Friche la Belle de Mai aspires to integrate artists into the decision-making process, promoting openness to the public and advocating for a culture that is inclusive and not just accessible. The use of culture as a catalyst for the regeneration of the city and the neighborhood, both at the national and international levels, positions it as a distinct cultural hub compared to Paris. In this context, art becomes a tool of emancipation for both artists

⁵²⁶ H. Lefebvre, *Les Droit à la ville, suivi de l'Espace et politique*, Anthropos, 1972.

and from the centralization that characterizes France, serving as a fundamental means for urban development. Angelo Mai, in its pursuit of being an alternative, seeks to offer an independent cultural and artistic narrative disconnected from institutional norms. It links cultural resistance with the broader struggle for civil and human rights, manifesting in original productions such as Bluemotion and unique musical formats. Similarly, to the cultural production of Fondazione Piccolo America, it is driven by a resistance to the *touristification* and gentrification of the Monti district, aiming to restore city centers to their inhabitants.

In the case of Cinema America, there is a deliberate intent to restore the pivotal role of cinema in community development, transforming cinemas into lived spaces rather than mere passageways. The cultural production becomes a tool for reclaiming spaces for communal purposes rather than profit-driven endeavors, as evident from the battle conducted to secure the recognition of Cinema America as a cultural asset and to restrict its usage. Thus, the role of art becomes apparent not only in cultural preservation but also in shaping the parameters of its utilization.

Spin Time Labs, through its independent cultural production and promotion, has embraced an open engagement with the neighborhood, establishing networks and providing a platform for artists within its spaces. The slogan "the personal is political" underscores its commitment to sociocultural programming, reflecting a deliberate effort to resist mainstream narratives.

In essence, cultural production serves as a means of opening up these spaces to diverse audiences, fostering awareness, and aligning with the broader social and cultural struggles, epitomizing the centrality of culture as a transformative force within these alternative entities in Rome and Marseille.

It is imperative to emphasize that, within the Roman context, the focus on cultural production has evolved into a tool for react against not updated institutional frameworks, concurrently serving as a conduit for advocating the unfettered utilization of public spaces. Conversely, in Marseille, the instrumentalization of culture by political institutions has been pronounced, strategically harnessed to propel the economic development and attractiveness of the city. Despite La Friche la Belle de Mai's inception coinciding with a period of urban metamorphosis, the current trajectory underscores its endeavor to delicately negotiate a symbiotic equilibrium between economic advancement and social innovation. This strategic approach is driven by a commitment to addressing enduring socio-economic disparities within the immediate neighborhood and the broader Marseille milieu. In essence, La Friche, born amid urban transitions, is actively engaged in a nuanced pursuit of compromise, seeking to harmonize economic prosperity with social innovation, thereby tackling persistent issues of social justice at the local and broader urban levels. The *Projet Culturel pour un Projet Urbain* embedded within La Friche's urban initiative thus converges as a shared aspiration for entities in Rome, strategically leveraging the potent political capital inherent in cultural endeavors.

5.3 Grassroots socio-cultural organizations as Enablers of Social Innovation

The establishment of these spaces as public venues within the city has transformed them into agents of social innovation, fostering new development projects for urban advancement.

In the case of La Friche, the primary imperative has consistently been to confer a political role upon artists within society, enabling them to be active participants in policies directed towards them rather than mere recipients. Moreover, it is from La Friche that the concept of “New Territories of Art” originates, subsequently instigating a series of policies for space reuse for cultural purposes, encompassing practices of transient urbanism and the notion of third places. The transition to a SCIC has further fortified its social commitment, contributing to a design ethos that, especially in recent years, seeks new strategies to effectively engage the neighborhood by enhancing cooperative dynamics within La Friche.

Conversely, Angelo Mai advances the cause of transfeminist and queer culture, fostering the construction of an inclusive community that addresses these themes even among demographic segments typically not involved, such as individuals over the age of 60. The Piccolo America Foundation operates within a framework of democratizing access to cinema, exemplified by initiatives like Cinema in Piazza and collaborations with various neighborhood entities, both commercial and non-commercial. This reflects the pursuit of the concept of a "Multisala Diffuso" (Distributed Multiplex) as a means to restore the lost identity of Trastevere.

Similarly, Spin Time Labs, functioning as an urban regeneration laboratory, promotes the dissemination of its model throughout the city, establishing robust relationships and networks of mutualism with other neighborhood entities. An illustrative example of this commitment is the creation of POLEIS, the civic hub in Esquilino (the only one within District I). Its inclusion in the House Plan seems to signal a prospective shift by the administration towards a new future for dwelling in the city.

Henceforth, La Friche has become an integral part of the French cultural scene, influencing the enactment of legislation and regulations for allocating spaces for socio-cultural purposes. In the case of Roman entities, the complex interactions with public institutions and the response to administrative inertia have fostered a dialogue conducive to generating ideas for space reuse. Despite the existence and enabler role of grassroots social-cultural centers, there is a noticeable lack of comprehensive and operational integration of such practices into public policy thinking. Achieving a compromise that benefits both parties involves a delicate balancing act, aiming at mitigating the potential risks associated with a regularization process.

“Indeed, these are not challenges to be confronted or opposed; rather, in my view, they are phenomena that demand attentive consideration—realities with which we can bravely explore novel avenues. Therefore, proactive engagement with the relevant offices is crucial. While such an endeavor may be unprecedented, it should not dissuade us from attempting it. The crux lies in navigating uncharted territory. The stumbling block often resides in the reluctance of public administration to assume responsibility. Why? Because, at a certain juncture, the entire process prompts one to ponder; “Why should I endorse the risk associated with something new and untested, with uncertain outcomes, particularly when legal challenges, possibly from the Council of State, may arise?” Nevertheless, public administration is fundamentally composed of individuals. Hence, fostering dialogue, presenting cogent arguments, and recognizing that their tenure extends beyond one’s own are indispensable measures. Ultimately, even though our current tenure may span five years, the future remains uncertain⁵²⁷.

⁵²⁷ See the complete interview conducted by the author with Giulia Silvia Ghia, on xx November 2023, reported in the Appendix at p. 27.

Conclusion

Through the analysis of scholarly sources on the role of culture and art in urban development, facilitated by in-depth discussions with experts and professionals in the field from Italy and France, this dissertation aimed to contribute to the critical discourse surrounding urban development and cultural policy by examining grassroots sociocultural experiences and their intricate interplay with institutional public entities in both Italy and France. Beginning in the latter half of the previous century, the urban landscape has assumed a progressively central role in global dynamics. This centrality arguably peaked with the advent of the neoliberal urban model, marked by growing resistance against the contradictions arising from increased deregulation of public policy and the commercialization of urban areas.

Through a comprehensive examination of case studies located in Rome and Marseille, this study unveiled the transformative capacity inherent in cultural revitalization initiatives. These endeavors aim not only to regenerate abandoned urban areas but also to foster innovative social interactions and alternative cultural expressions, distinct from conventional institutional frameworks. By contextualizing these findings within the broader socio-political landscape of the two countries, this research underscored the nuanced complexities and inherent challenges entailed in advocating for alternative societal structures and cultural paradigms within contemporary urban environments.

To ascertain the intersection and engagement between grassroots sociocultural initiatives and institutional public entities, a structured approach has been undertaken.

The dissertation comprehensively reviewed the historical evolution and scholarly discourse on culture and urban regeneration, examines the transition from top-down to participatory approaches in cultural planning, analyzes national urban regeneration policies in Italy and France, and culminates in an in-depth exploration of local case studies in Rome and Marseille, providing insights into the dynamic interactions between grassroots initiatives and public institutions.

The comparison between Italy and France underscored disparities in how public institutions engage with grassroots sociocultural organizations, revealing contrasting approaches in both national contexts urban governance. These differences are rooted in divergent conceptions of culture, modes of operation within public administration, and the level of central government control over territorial affairs.

In France, a noticeable devolution of powers to cities and regions has occurred, primarily stemming from explicit governmental directives, especially within the domains of urban regeneration and cultural policymaking. Conversely, in Italy, there exists a significant administrative decentralization with certain powers solely under regional competence. However, this decentralized framework lacks a cohesive starting point, leading to varied impacts on territorial administration and management.

This difference in territorial governance significantly influences how the two countries have addressed the claims advanced by grassroots movements and eventually integrated, such experiences into the national system and cultural policy framework.

Indeed, in France, the State's influence over the territory has been more pronounced, particularly during the presidencies of François Mitterrand (1981-1995) and Jacques Chirac (1995-2007), during which the state

upheld its dirigiste approach in contrast to the *laissez-faire* policies adopted by governments elsewhere in Europe. It is noteworthy that in 2000, the then Minister of Culture, Michel Duffour, commissioned Fabrice Lextrait to compile a report on the “New Territories of Art”. This initiative aimed to identify and delineate the locations of artistic squats, *friche culturelle*, and hybrid spaces. The objective was to comprehend the reasons behind their emergence and to formulate a strategy for implementing public policies designed to address their needs. Furthermore, the intention was to draw insights from such initiatives to outline a new paradigm for cultural development. The proposed policy represents a departure from traditional approaches, emphasizing experimentation and broad involvement of all stakeholders within the framework of state reform and decentralization.

The intersection between alternative socio-cultural centers and public institutions unveils a process reminiscent of *Assimilation*, akin to the strategy employed by the French government to address immigration. This comparison offers valuable insights into the evolving relationship’s dynamics over time. In the context of our dissertation, France's Assimilation model endeavors to incorporate *otherness* into the systemic fabric. This strategy presents certain benefits, such as granting rights, providing financial support, and formally recognizing these initiatives within institutional structures. However, it also carries inherent risks. For instance, there's a possibility that the initial aim of these initiatives may become distorted, as their activities are assimilated into top-down economic development agendas. These dynamic highlights a potential tension between preserving the authenticity of grassroots cultural movements and aligning them with broader development objectives. In addition, this approach also poses the potential exclusion of socio-cultural organizations advocating for more contentious and radical agendas, functioning outside the institutional realm.

Understanding this dynamic is exemplified by the case of La Friche La Belle de Mai in Marseille. The integration of the city's informal practices into La Friche's initial project signifies a dual role within the city and the national context. La Friche serves as a platform for advancing alternative and independent cultural production, with artists playing a central role not only in artistic output but also in governance structures. It has become established as a site for social experimentation within the urban milieu, particularly evident through *Un Projet Culturel pour un Projet Urbain* experimentation. Concurrently, La Friche has been extensively engaged in top-down urban regeneration projects aimed at enhancing the socio-economic development of Marseille, both for national and local objectives. This strategic endeavor contributes to Marseille's attractiveness and competitiveness on the international stage, exemplified by its pivotal role in realizing Marseille's designation as the European Capital of Culture in 2013. Despite its historical perception as an enclave – *île en ville* – within the Belle de Mai neighborhood, recent developments indicate a shift towards initiatives fostering community engagement, both participatively and programmatically. This trend can be partially attributed to the growing financial support from the Ministry of Territorial Cohesion, through initiatives such as the Fabrique du Territoire project, reverting to the logic of *gouvernement à distance* discussed by Epstein.

In Italy, a divergent trajectory has unfolded, wherein the central government, characterized by a lack of cognizance and strategic foresight regarding political cultures and urban regeneration, has faced challenges in effectively assimilating such experiences into the national framework. Consequently, the onus has fallen upon regional and municipal authorities to engage with these grassroots cultural phenomena.

This trajectory within the Italian context can be traced back to a systemic impediment in reconciling bottom-up demands with state-driven public policies. The partial failure to accommodate the socio-cultural and political demands articulated by the student and workers movements of 1968 at the national level, followed by a period of heightened social and political conflict culminating in State repression, serves as a foundational narrative underpinning this phenomenon. Notably, rather than dissipating, the 68's movements' aspirations could have become entrenched within grassroots initiatives such as *centri sociali*, hybrid cultural spaces, and third-sector endeavors, thereby constituting a substrate of socio-cultural experimentation resonant with the ethos of self-production and self-organization, prominently observed within the Roman milieu.

Furthermore, since the early 2000s, dissatisfaction with austerity measures and political instability in Italy has led to increased political activism, notably in the cultural sector. State funding cuts, particularly severe during the Silvio Berlusconi era (1994-1995, 2001-2005, 2005-2006, 2008-2011), prompted cultural workers to develop new production strategies and take independent control of cultural experiences. This led to high-profile protests in 2011 by arts professionals, such as the Teatro Valle experience, adopting practices influenced by theories on the commons, to resist neoliberal policies.

Therefore, compared to the French case, the analyzed experiences in Rome are characterized by overt political demands, evident in their confrontation with public administration to secure concession of the city's abandoned spaces and in their critique of a stagnant cultural proposition. Moreover, their grassroots nature, existing on the margins of formal structures, results in a lack of effective alignment with the national-level cultural production and offerings. Instead, these transformations are fragmented and dispersed within the local urban context. Thus, the idea of the “do-it-yourself” city⁵²⁸ can better preserve the authenticity of these experiences but poses a risk to their long-term sustainability due to economic viability concerns and the persistent threat of eviction.

In examining the observed experiences in Rome, it becomes evident that the initiation of regularization processes is not merely a procedural endeavor but rather a multifaceted challenge intricately linked to the broader socio-political landscape. The absence of a coherent and unified strategy at both the national and local echelons accentuates the complexity of these efforts, rendering their success contingent upon a confluence of factors. These include historical contingencies, shifts in administrative governance, external stakeholder support mechanisms, and judicial interpretations, all of which contribute to the nuanced tapestry of urban governance dynamics. This reveals a fundamental vulnerability within the city's public institutions, where the lack of a cohesive approach undermines the efficacy of regulatory measures aimed at grassroots socio-cultural initiatives. Hence, while it may be argued that certain public instances exhibit a degree of tolerance and

⁵²⁸ Cfr. C. Cellamare. *Città fai da te. Tra antagonismo e cittadinanza. Storie di autorganizzazione urbana*, 2019.

interaction with initiatives emerging outside formal frameworks, their success remains tenuous, lacking a cohesive, long-term strategy for addressing the multifaceted issues encapsulated within their claims.

These spaces serve as microcosms reflecting the myriad of challenges prevalent in contemporary urban environments, yet the absence of sustained, comprehensive approaches limits their transformative potential and perpetuates their precarious existence.

What is the then role for culture in these complex scenarios? The analysis conducted reveals that in France, the permeation of neoliberal doctrine within urban governance potentially led to a selective instrumentalization of culture for economic advancement. Conversely, in Italy, neoliberal influences have precipitated policies aimed at curtailing public expenditure, notably within the cultural sphere.

Starting from these assumptions, within the French assimilationist strategy, cultural production has enjoyed robust support from the public sector. This support is attributable to both an administrative and political approach focused on projects and a broad interpretation of culture, rooted in an anthropological understanding of the term. Consequently, culture has been perceived as a potent tool for fostering development, particularly in the realms of social cohesion and economic advancement within urban areas.

Conversely, in Italy, a bifurcated approach has emerged, wherein alternative cultural production serves as a mechanism of resistance against administrative shortcomings and stagnant cultural policies, while simultaneously acting as a catalyst for urban regeneration through self-management initiatives. This dichotomy has led to persistent conflicts but has also spurred the conceptualization of innovative social experiments such as the case of *beni comuni*, which have garnered national attention and efforts towards integration within urban governance frameworks, despite encountering limited results at the national legislative level.

Hence, the imperative for regularization of the informal initiatives scrutinized in Rome transcends mere recognition-seeking or conflict mitigation; it underscores a broader universal necessity. Specifically, the recognition and institutionalization of these initiatives harbor the potential for replication and, consequently, for influencing broader political structures.

As Lefebvre reminds us, "Putting art at the service of the urban does not mean at all softening urban space with art objects. Such a parody of possibility is denounced as a caricature. Instead, time-spaces must become works of art, and the art of the past must be reconsidered as a source and way of reappropriating space and time".⁵²⁹

In light of these findings, several considerations arise. Firstly, it is imperative to scrutinize the manner in which regularization processes unfold, discerning whether they engender denaturalization and standardization of the experiential landscape or instead preserve the organic evolution of these initiatives while facilitating their integration into a framework of sustainable urban development.

⁵²⁹ H. Lefebvre, *Il diritto alla città*, Verona: ombrecorte, 2014, p.129

Secondly, the practices recounted throughout this thesis underscore the importance of involving in urban planning those most in need of the lacking or inadequate services. The goal that municipal and national administrations should strive for is to actively engage representatives from the socio-cultural grassroots initiatives, leaving artists, cultural operators and activists the opportunity to bring their envisioned alternatives to fruition. Rather than resorting to co-optation, a nuanced approach of providing space for these initiatives to thrive is imperative. Moreover, rather than envisioning assimilation, a paradigm shift towards fostering environments conducive to learning and collaboration is advocated, wherein social development transcends mere economic well-being.

This discourse extends to a broader contemplation regarding the cultural assets and experiences nations opt to incorporate within their cultural framework. It prompts inquiry into whether, alongside the preservation of cultural heritage, there exists an inclination to integrate these ventures in alternative experimentation within the national cultural milieu, notably in the Italian case.

In the confluence of societal dynamics, where grassroots movements intersect with institutional structures, a fundamental inquiry emerges: to what extent do governmental entities perceive the suppression of such grassroots uprisings as expedient? The allure of suppression, rooted in its apparent simplicity, presents a tempting recourse to circumvent grappling with the transformative potential inherent in these initiatives. Embedded within the fabric of grassroots endeavors lies a compelling impetus for the cultivation of novel paradigms, the integration of nonconformist thematic elements, and the interrogation of deeply entrenched societal traditions. This dialectic engenders a clash between innovative impulses and the inertia of established norms, epitomizing a contestation between the prevailing status quo and the catalytic forces of change. In navigating this dynamic terrain, the ramifications of decisions made are profound, exerting enduring influences not only upon the contemporary sociopolitical landscape but also upon the trajectory of our collective future.

At the conclusion of our exploratory research, we offer observations regarding the limitations of the conducted study. One aspect concerns the limited number of case studies, which may have curtailed a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon. Exploring diverse realities dispersed across the French and Italian territories would have provided richer insights into the nuanced effects of administrative decentralization on the evolution of urban development trajectories. Moreover, an additional constraint lies in the absence of robust methodologies to quantitatively assess the societal impact engendered by these initiatives, with the notable exception of the Spin Time Labs case, where the social enterprise Open Impact effectively measured such value. Hence, the availability of empirical data pertaining to social ramifications has the power not only to augment comprehension of these initiatives' influence within their respective neighborhoods but also facilitates the envisioning of novel avenues for collaboration with municipal governance bodies and political institutions. The strategies enacted by the municipal administration of Rome appear to indicate a shift towards valorizing these experiences and facilitating the development of replicable models within the urban landscape. However, the extent to which these initiatives materialize in a timely manner to forestall their suppression remains subject to empirical observation.

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Appendix

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