



UNIVERSITÀ
DEGLI STUDI
DI PADOVA

Università degli Studi di Padova

Dipartimento di Scienze Storiche, Geografiche e dell'Antichità

Corso di Laurea Magistrale in Local Development

From Theoretical Models to Territorial Realities:
An Empirical Investigation of Cultural Districts in Italy

Supervisor: Prof. Giorgio Osti

Candidate: Antonia Schiavone

Registr. number: 2097052

ACADEMIC YEAR 2024/25

Il candidato dichiara che il presente lavoro è originale e non è già stato sottoposto, in tutto o in parte, per il conseguimento di un titolo accademico in altre Università italiane o straniere.

Il candidato dichiara altresì che tutti i materiali utilizzati durante la preparazione dell'elaborato sono stati indicati nel testo e nella sezione "Riferimenti bibliografici" e che le eventuali citazioni testuali sono individuabili attraverso l'esplicito richiamo alla pubblicazione originale.

The candidate declares that the present work is original and has not already been submitted, totally or in part, for the purposes of attaining an academic degree in other Italian or foreign universities.

The candidate also declares that all the materials used during the preparation of the thesis have been explicitly indicated in the text and in the section "Bibliographical references" and that any textual citations can be identified through an explicit reference to the original publication.

Student's signature

Antonio Schiavone

Index

| | |
|---|----|
| Abstract..... | 7 |
| Extended Summary | 8 |
| Introduction | 10 |
| Research Questions | 12 |
| 1. Literature Review..... | 13 |
| 1.1 The Italian Perspective on Cultural Districts (CDs)..... | 13 |
| 1.1.1 Valentino’s Contribution: CDs as Relational Systems | 13 |
| 1.1.2 Santagata’s Taxonomy: CDs’ Ideal Types | 15 |
| 1.1.3 Sacco’s Contribution: From Advanced CDs to System-wide CDs..... | 17 |
| 1.2 The International Literature on CDs | 19 |
| 1.3 From Industrial Districts to CDs: A Comparison..... | 21 |
| 1.3.1 An Overview of Industrial District Theory | 21 |
| 1.3.2 Analogies and Differences between Industrial Districts and CDs..... | 23 |
| 1.4 Summary of the Literature Review | 24 |
| 2. Research Design..... | 26 |
| 3. Delimitations, Limitations, Assumptions..... | 32 |
| 4. Presentation of the Research Context and Case Studies..... | 34 |
| 4.1 The reality of CDs within the Italian territory..... | 34 |
| 4.2 An Overview of the Funding Bodies of Italian CDs | 37 |
| 4.2.1 The “Distretti Culturali” project by Fondazione Cariplo | 39 |
| 4.2.2 “Sviluppo Sud” by ACRI (Associazione di Fondazioni e di Casse di Risparmio Spa)..... | 41 |
| 4.2.3 “Distretti culturali”: The Territorial Governance Project of the Province of Bologna..... | 42 |
| 4.3 Presentation of Case Studies | 43 |
| 4.3.1 Distretto Culturale della Valle Camonica..... | 43 |
| 4.3.2 Distretto Culturale Le Regge dei Gonzaga..... | 45 |

| | |
|--|-----|
| 4.3.3 Distretto Culturale dell’Habitat Rupestre della Basilicata | 47 |
| 4.3.4 Distretto Culturale Pianura Est | 48 |
| 5. Results and Findings | 50 |
| 5.1 Specific Traits of the Selected CDs..... | 50 |
| 5.1.1 Case Study Profile: Distretto Culturale della Valle Camonica..... | 51 |
| 5.1.2 Case Study Profile: Distretto Culturale Le Regge dei Gonzaga..... | 53 |
| 5.1.3 Case Study Profile: Distretto Culturale dell’Habitat Rupestre della Basilicata...56 | |
| 5.1.4 Case Study Profile: Distretto Culturale Pianura Est | 57 |
| 5.2 Potential Correspondence with Formal Elements | 59 |
| 6. Discussion | 63 |
| 6.1 Differentiation and Convergence in Italian CDs | 63 |
| 6.1.1 Administrative Scale and Territorial Cohesion: From Provincial to Regional Networks | 63 |
| 6.1.2 Governance Models and Stakeholders Dynamics: Formal and Informal Management Approaches..... | 64 |
| 6.1.3 Residents Engagement and Territorial Identity: Strengthening Social Cohesion | 66 |
| 6.2 Theory-Practice Alignment: Formal Elements across Selected CD Experiences..... | 68 |
| 7. Conclusions and Recommendations for Future Research | 72 |
| Bibliography..... | 75 |
| Webliography..... | 79 |
| Annexes | 81 |
| Annex A..... | 81 |
| Annex B..... | 90 |
| Annex C..... | 97 |
| Annex D..... | 100 |

Abstract

This thesis investigates Cultural Districts (CDs) in Italy as mechanisms enhancing sustainable local development through cultural heritage preservation. Despite abundant theoretical literature from key Italian scholars — including Valentino’s relational system approach, Santagata’s taxonomy, and Sacco’s advanced CD concept — there remains an evident imbalance between conceptual progress and empirical research. The present thesis aims to bridge this gap through a comparative analysis of four case studies, examining their specific characteristics, identifying common elements, and analysing which theoretical elements these experiences most closely reflect. The study begins by tracing the concept’s evolution, paying particular attention to the comparison between Italian perspectives and international approaches, namely Anglo-Saxon ones. The literature review reveals two main theoretical directions: CDs as planned policy phenomena versus spontaneous clusters resembling industrial districts. Additionally, it emerges that Italian and Anglo-Saxon approaches differ regarding scale — whilst international definitions focus on urban areas, Italian frameworks encompass multiple territorial levels. Findings show significant convergence despite territorial diversity: all cases demonstrate intentional top-down development rather than spontaneous emergence, strong community engagement at municipal levels, collaborative stakeholder relationships as critical success factors, and explicit orientation towards territorial development beyond cultural preservation with integration across multiple economic sectors. However, remarkable diversity exists in organisational forms and governance approaches, varying between formal associations and informal institutional agreements, with territorial scale affecting collaboration dynamics. By providing empirical evidence from these experiences, this research enriches the literature, unveiling culture as a driver for broader socio-economic development. It offers insights into practical implementation of these territorial development models, supporting more informed cultural sector policymaking.

Extended Summary

La presente tesi si concentra sullo studio dei Distretti Culturali (DC) in Italia quali meccanismi di promozione di una strategia di sviluppo territoriale sostenibile attraverso la conservazione e valorizzazione del patrimonio culturale (tangibile e intangibile). Numerosi sono i contributi teorici elaborati su questi modelli territoriali da parte di diversi studiosi italiani. Per citarne alcuni, basti pensare al lavoro di Pietro Antonio Valentino e al suo approccio sistemico-relazionale, alla tassonomia definita da Walter Santagata, il quale ha identificato quattro idealtipi di DC, fino ad arrivare al lavoro di Pierluigi Sacco, a cui si deve il concetto di Distretto Culturale Evoluto. Nonostante la copiosa letteratura sul tema, permane un evidente squilibrio tra avanzamenti teorici e ricerca empirica. Il presente lavoro di tesi si propone proprio di colmare tale lacuna mediante un'analisi comparativa di quattro casi studio, esaminandone le caratteristiche specifiche, identificando possibili elementi comuni e analizzando quali nozioni teoriche queste esperienze riflettano maggiormente. Il presente studio prende avvio dalla ricostruzione dell'evoluzione del concetto di DC, prestando particolare attenzione al confronto tra prospettive italiane e approcci internazionali, specialmente quelli sviluppati in contesti anglosassoni. La rassegna della letteratura rivela due principali direzioni teoriche: i DC quali fenomeni di politica territoriale pianificata versus aggregazioni spontanee assimilabili ai distretti industriali. Inoltre, emerge come gli approcci italiani e anglosassoni differiscano riguardo alla scala territoriale: mentre le definizioni internazionali si concentrano su contesti urbani e sub-urbani, i contributi italiani contemplano molteplici livelli territoriali. I risultati evidenziano una significativa convergenza nonostante le diversità territoriali: tutti i casi dimostrano uno sviluppo intenzionale di tipo-down anziché un'emergenza spontanea, un forte coinvolgimento delle comunità locali a livello dei singoli comuni interessati, relazioni collaborative tra i diversi stakeholder quale fattore critico di successo, e un orientamento evidente verso una strategia di sviluppo territoriale che trascende la mera preservazione del capitale culturale, integrando molteplici settori economici. Tuttavia, sussiste una notevole diversità nelle forme organizzative e negli approcci di governance, che variano tra l'esistenza di associazioni formali e la stipula di accordi informali, evidenziando al contempo come la scala territoriale di riferimento possa costituire un fattore condizionante delle dinamiche collaborative. Fornendo evidenze empiriche tratte da tali esperienze, la presente tesi ambisce così ad arricchire la produzione teorica sul tema, sottolineando come la cultura possa rappresentare un driver per strategie di sviluppo socioeconomico più ampie. Inoltre, il presente lavoro mira a fornire contributi sull'implementazione pratica di questi modelli di sviluppo territoriale, in modo da favorire e supportare l'elaborazione di politiche più consapevoli nel settore culturale.

Introduction

Over the last few decades, increasing attention has been paid to culture as a resource of extreme interest for the development strategies of a territory. More precisely, it was in the 1980s that the relationship between culture, development, and territory commenced to capture attention and made its way into the academic and policymaking debates (Calcagno, Lusiani, and Panozzo, 2012, pp. 1-8). After being neglected for a long time, cultural capital, together with other forms of capital, such as human and social capital, started to be considered capable of promoting sustainable socio-economic development processes in contexts such as local territories (particularly at the regional and urban level), thus leading to a significant proliferation of culture-driven urban and regional strategies in Europe and beyond (Ferilli and Capiello, 2013).

This “cultural turn” has occurred within a broader context. It is in the wake of the transition from what is defined as an industrial society to a post-industrial one that this dynamic is situated. With the decline of industrial society, based on a strong manufacturing sector, the service sector has increasingly grown, not only in production but also in consumption. As Fanzini and Rotaru (2012, pp. 1-4) note, the phenomenon of dematerialisation of goods coincides with and is simultaneously strengthened by the growing consideration given to intangible elements, such as identity, sociability, shared values, and meanings. There is a shift in the way of conceiving the cultural sector, which manages to acquire increasing importance in shaping a development strategy for specific territories.

It is within the above-described context that various forms of spatial organisation related to the culture and creative economy are constituted. The current thesis will focus on one of these: the so-called cultural district (CD). The theme of CDs begins to enter local agendas at the same time as this period of momentum in the cultural sector. However, as also pointed out by Le Blanc (2010), the concept of CDs “*designates a variety of organizational structures according to different theorists*” (p. 907). This means that this phenomenon is characterised by a high degree of heterogeneity and incorporates various meanings that change according to the context of analysis.

The first studies on the topic were carried out in the 1990s in England, in the wake of the experience of the Greater London Council, and in the United States, another fertile context in the field. Subsequently, the debate also expanded to other contexts, including Italy, which will represent the context of reference for this thesis, where there have been different academic contributions on the subject, giving rise to distinct positions on the topic.

Scholars from disparate academic domains, such as urban and economic geography, urban planning, and regional studies, have examined the topic of CDs, generating abundant theoretical literature. The theoretical production on this subject has been noticeably prosperous over the years. Different theorists have shed light on various key elements of these agglomeration forms that often display distinct characteristics when observed across different contexts. However, despite this robust and well-developed academic premises, there remains a noticeable imbalance in the literature. In fact, the conceptual advancements have not been adequately compensated by sufficient empirical research examining actual practices. As remarked by some authors (Calcagno, Lusiani, and Panozzo, 2012, pp. 1-8), the existence of a rich body of literature on the topic is not sufficient to give a complete picture. There is still a lack of substantial empirical research analysing real-world practices and processes. Consequently, many questions remain ambivalent and have not been answered yet because of this discrepancy between theoretical production and empirical research.

Considering the above-described gap between theory and empirical research, the present thesis aims to provide a contribution in this direction by exploring the reality of CDs in a specific territory, which as mentioned before is that of Italy. Therefore, the objective is precisely to investigate the application of this model in the Italian territory. For clarity's sake, it is important to highlight that the contribution of this work is to analyse in more detail selected cases belonging to the Italian context. This choice of concentrating solely on the Italian experiences, thus not carrying out a comparative analysis between experiences located in diverse national contexts, is due to the fact that the concept of CD is distinguished by significant polysemy. As it will be specified later, the local context to which CDs refer varies depending on whether it is the Italian case or the Anglo-Saxon one.

This thesis will focus, as already stated, on the Italian experiences of CDs. It is noteworthy to highlight that although Italy has been the cradle of CDs since the early 2000s, the first attempt at nationwide analysis of CD policy is represented by a survey conducted by Nuccio and Ponzini, only published in 2017. This helps to emphasise once again and bring to light the significant gap existing in terms of empirical research on the subject. The absence and limited presence of comprehensive data-driven studies in this field represent a notable limitation, thus impacting negatively also on policy decisions on the theme. Therefore, to summarise, considering what has been introduced and anticipated, this thesis intends to contribute to the topic by working specifically on the existing gap in the field. Although not exhaustively, the work that is intended to be conducted has the aim of enriching the literature on CDs, considering a limited number of selected concrete CDs in Italy.

Research Questions

The scope of this research is to investigate the reality of CDs in Italy. By selecting a limited number of cases, this work has the purpose to gain more information and data on the theme, focusing on various aspects that encompass a diversified variety of sectors, thus attempting to delineate a sort of biographical scheme of the CDs of interest.

However, the literature on the topic is characterised by high variability. For this reason, the starting hypothesis of the present work certainly considers this aspect. In addition to this, to further account for this high rate of differentiation, the very nature of cultural capital must also be regarded. As stated by Santagata (2004), one of the main researchers in the field, cultural capital, which can be identified as both tangible and intangible, is strongly bound by two key factors: time and space, which respond to logic of mutability. Therefore, the starting hypothesis of this work is the following one: the high variability characterising the theoretical-literary production on the subject will also be reflected in a strong differentiation of experiences implemented in the territory. To this end, this research, in investigating the reality of CDs in Italy, intends to explore *how different the experiences under the label of CDs are*.

Taking into consideration the issues of differentiation and variety, the question intended to be answered is the following:

- *What are the specific characteristics of the selected CDs in Italy?*

Secondly, however, it is assumed that there are still some elements that would unite the different realities. For this reason, the question to which it will be provided an answer is:

- *Although these realities are characterised by factors of differentiation, is it possible to identify common elements among the various selected CD experiences in Italy?*

A final element to consider regards the continuity between theory and empirical practices. Specifically, the question that will be attempted to answer is:

- *Which formal elements do the selected CD experiences most closely respond to/reflect?*

1. Literature Review

This chapter summarises and presents the main theoretical contributions on CDs by carrying out a literature review. Specifically, the chapter is organised into four distinct sections. The first one focuses exclusively on studies taking as their object of analysis CDs within the Italian territory. The second section of the present chapter briefly presents some of the content on the subject obtained at the international level, namely the Anglo-Saxon theories. The third section makes a comparison between CDs and their predecessors - industrial districts, by recalling briefly the key elements of industrial districts theory. The fourth and closing section recalls in a few words the main aspects emerging from this work of literature revision.

1.1 The Italian Perspective on Cultural Districts (CDs)

As previously mentioned, starting from the 1970s the topic of CDs becomes progressively the object of discussion both at the academic and policy-making level. Nevertheless, only a couple of years later, namely in the 1990s, this model starts to be structured on theoretical backgrounds. Even though its origins can be traced back to the UK with the initiative of the Greater London Council (a municipal agency), which will be presented subsequently in section 1.2, this model begins to have relative success in Italy, thus leading to the production and publication of different studies, each of them proposing a specific position on the topic. The period of the early 2000s represents a moment of richness in terms of theoretical production within the Italian territory that sees the activity of many scholars who are regarded as the main references to consult when analysing the concept of CDs. The presentation of some of the main theories elaborated in Italy follows in the subsequent subsections.

1.1.1 Valentino's Contribution: CDs as Relational Systems

One of the first academics of CDs in Italy is Pietro Antonio Valentino, Professor of Economics at the University of La Sapienza in Rome, who defines the CD as a system of relations. According to him, the creation of a CD should target at two types of objectives:

1. To make the process of cultural production more efficient and effective.
2. To optimize its economic and social impacts in the reference area.

Therefore, the district, whose model is established around the cultural endowment (asset) of greater value present in the territory, has the purpose of ensuring a competitive advantage not only to the cultural sector but also to the entire region on which it exercises effects (Valentino, 2003).

In Valentino's perspective, two elements are considered as pivotal for a CD: the nodes – representing the resources of the territory – and the relations linking these nodes (Valentino, 2001, cited in Porreca, 2024, pp. 21-22). Specifically, there is a central node consisting of the valorisation process of the territorial asset - represented by the cultural heritage - and other nodes that are:

- The node related to the valorisation process of other territorial resources (e.g., environmental assets, etc.).
- The node of human resources (e.g., professional skills, etc.) and social resources (e.g., cohesion, identity, values, etc.).
- The node of territorial infrastructures (e.g., transportation services, accessibility, etc.).
- The node of hospitality services.
- The node of other businesses belonging to different sectors, encompassing both those furnishing inputs to the valorisation process and those employing its outputs.

Each single node of the district must be directly connected to the central node – the valorisation of cultural heritage. However, these can also be interconnected among them. The higher the level of interconnections, the greater the potential economic impacts. The connections between the central node and the others consists of flows, which can take distinct forms. These exchanges can involve information, values, raw materials, labour services, etc. Following the theory of Valentino, these nodes are nothing more than the sub-systems forming the integrated system of relations that establishes a CD (Valentino, 2003).

Figure 1 below represents graphically the connections between these nodes/sub-systems. In the illustration, the more marked lines indicate the founding relationships of the system. This image helps with understanding the idea of Valentino on CDs, seen as a territorial organization existing because there is an asset (tangible and intangible cultural heritage), on which a “cultural chain” is implanted. A cultural chain that is made up of a system of companies which provide inputs to the process of enhancement of cultural assets and activities and/or participate in it (Hinna, 2015).

the development process of a territory. However, he places a greater emphasis on cultural capital's relevance within a territory. In his opinion, culture matters not only because it represents a people but also because it is a fundamental resource for a sustainable economic growth (Santagata, 2002).

His ground-breaking study in the early 2000s is responsible for the elaboration of the first taxonomy in the field of CDs. He identifies four ideal types of CDs:

1. Industrial CD.
2. Institutional CD.
3. Museum CD.
4. Metropolitan CD.

The last two types of CDs presented above are defined by the author as quasi-cultural district, thus marking a line with the other two categories, considered as 'pure' forms of CDs. The table below (table 1) summarises the main traits of these four ideal types (Santagata, 2004).

Table 1. Key features of the four ideal types of CDs identified by W. Santagata.

| Typology | Key-features |
|-------------------------|--|
| Industrial CD | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Convergence with the Marshallian industrial district model with a differentiation given by the nature of the products (culture-based goods). • Low level of standardization of outputs. • Cohesive local community. • Strong openness towards international markets. • Conceived as the result of a long-term spontaneous process. |
| Institutional CD | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong grounding in institutions and acknowledgment of their relevant role. • Theorised as outcome of the assignments of property rights and trademarks to a limited production area, which are done by the institutional actors. |
| Museum CD | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Configured as the result of an accurate public policy, aiming to increase the demand for visitors and consequently of related economic activities. • Usually located in historic city centres. |

- Developed as a form of inter-institutional cooperation with the purpose of exploit possible economies of scale.
- This model of district, whose cases are mainly found in the US, is founded on two institutional requirements:
 1. The existence of an area in which there are buildings and land that can be used for cultural use.
 2. The creation of a body responsible for developing the project.
- Key role attributed to the participation of the actors who take part in the district within the boundaries of a common city space.

Metropolitan CD

Source 1. Author's elaboration on Santagata (2002, 2004).

Although elaborating these four ideal-types, which are seen as complementary and compatible with each other, Santagata believes that the definition of CD should remain open. Moreover, even though not all the categories that he identifies are seen as the result of an intentional planning or decision-making (referring here to the first categorisation – the industrial CDs which are described as spontaneous agglomeration), he fully recognises the decisive role of institutions in initiating and developing these forms of districts (Alberti and Giusti, 2009, pp.7-13).

1.1.3 Sacco's Contribution: From Advanced CDs to System-wide CDs

Another scholar who addresses the topic of CDs as a possible new model for the development of a territory is Pierluigi Sacco, who goes a step further with respect to the other researchers by delineating and introducing the concept of advanced CD (*distretto culturale evoluto*). The first and most basic formulation of the district model in the cultural sector is assumed as a transposition of the district model developed by Becattini, with the difference represented by the type of leading supply chain, which in this case is the cultural one (Sacco and Tavano Blessi, 2005). The various configurations of CDs mentioned so far perceive, albeit to different degrees, the contribution that territorial institutions have in playing a role in activating and/or evolving these models. In contrast with these, and in accordance with the conceptual elaboration of the Marshallian industrial district, Sacco and Pedrini (2003) identify as a fundamental prerequisite for the development of a CD the existence of an appropriate socio-economic context. In other words, the two authors believe that such a model cannot be generated on order and that it is not possible to establish a CD wherever cultural attraction

resources are present. The conceptualised advanced CD finds its qualifying element in its capacity for self-organization and evolution.

Overall, according to this conceptualisation, an advanced CD is a specific form of territorial cooperation characterised by distinct features. As in the classical district conception and in Santagata's industrial CD type, the processes of establishment, consolidation, and development are natural and voluntary with a great support given by the society and the territory in which the district takes shape. Furthermore, consistent with both classical district theory and Santagata's industrial CD, it is not possible to set a specific starting point or a single enabling factor in the districtualisation process, which is specific and non-replicable (Sacco and Ferilli, 2006). The advanced CD encompasses forms of horizontal integration among different sectors, often remote but compatible at the production level. Indeed, CD is considered to be integrated and based on the presence of strategic complementarities between distinct supply chains both internal and external to cultural production (Sacco and Tavano Blessi, 2005). This model adopts an even more marked systemic vision, considering the complexity characterising the integration process among numerous public, private, and non-profit actors. In this systemic context, culture is seen, produced, and managed as an instrument to revitalize and enrich the territory (Hinna and Minnuti, 2009, cited in Hinna, 2015, p. 49).

Sacco is also credited with a further step forward in the theorisation of CDs thanks to the introduction of the so-called system-wide cultural district (SWCD) paradigm. SWCDs are understood as *“local systems in which culture has become the key engine of a local strategic developmental vision and the key local coordination platform among stakeholders”* (Sacco et al., 2013, p. 556).

The defining characteristic of this paradigm is not merely the agglomeration of cultural activities or facilities, but rather how cultural production interconnects with non-cultural value chains in a socially networked context (Sacco et al., 2013). The SWCD falls back on a new approach to local development that takes into account the synergies between cultural activities and other sectors. Within this context, culture guides the gathering process of intangible assets, like human, social and cultural capital, which in turn promote economic growth and environmental sustainability. Within the SWCD framework, culture functions as a mechanism to strengthen the local system's capacity to produce, circulate, and get access to knowledge and meaningful content, thus generating a competitive benefit for its members across diverse production chains and sectors (Colavitti and Usai, 2020). When evaluating SWCD, researchers go beyond the mere presence of excellent cultural institutions or high concentration of cultural actors, in contrast with the logic followed by traditional CD models. Instead, what proves to be

crucial is the coordination level among stakeholders working toward strategically defined developmental goals.

The literature on this advanced form of CDs is quite recent. It does not exist a single agreed definition of SWCD. However, the logic behind this paradigm is clear. The idea is that this consists of a new entrepreneurial ecosystem/network composed of small and medium enterprises and cultural institutes, diverse in specialisation but belonging to the same territory, that operate in the cultural heritage chain and are interconnected to other production chains, public and private actors, financial and academic institutions at different levels and scales (Colavitti and Usai, 2020). Although being a recent and little-investigated concept, the SWCD approach aspires to establish the foundation for developing new generations of policy approaches that recognize the complex interrelationships between culture and economic development with culture capable of activating positive feedback dynamics that enhance local system (Sacco et al., 2013).

1.2 The International Literature on CDs

As already indicated above, the history of CDs can be dated back to some experiences that arose in the Anglo-Saxon context during the 1970s. More precisely, one of these, which is taken as a model of reference and as a starting point, is the strategy set up and implemented by a municipal agency, the Greater London Council. This body was responsible for the adoption of a strategy, albeit innovative, but which was part of the broader background of that period, marked by the “discovery” of the role of culture in the development process, as it is considered a productive sector capable of generating wealth and employment. The Greater London Council’s strategy is believed by many to be a pioneering approach that has set an exemplar. It was a strategy meant for integrating activities in the cultural sector, conceived in a very broad sense (encompassing everything from cultural heritage to visual arts, photography, and live performances), with activities in related sectors, such as tourism. The promotion of this integrated vision, however, assumed a model of spatial proximity and required territorial specialisation, seen as strategic for achieving two specific objectives:

1. Furthering intersectoral integration processes.
2. Encouraging the recuperation and renewal of urban areas in a state of decline or deterioration.

It was precisely in this situation and with reference to these urban areas, where the concentration of new cultural activities and structures occurred, that the concept of CDs was firstly used (Sacco and Pedrini, 2003, pp. 19-21).

Nevertheless, as noted by Sacco and Tavano Blessi (2005, pp. 189-190), this initial version of the CD concept acquires an important role in the context of a policy aimed at improving abandoned or degraded urban areas. Therefore, the CDs here should be regarded as a public policy tool having as objective the activation of processes of social, economic, and environmental regeneration of specific urban areas.

Following the London experience, and in accordance with the Anglo-Saxon significance of the CD concept, other similar cases have been realised over the years. To illustrate, one of these is represented by the city of Glasgow, in Scotland, during the 1980s. Namely, the strategy adopted in this setting, which was subsidised both by public and private funding, achieved the goal of increasing the city's attractiveness through strong integration between cultural sector and tourism industries. It was on this occasion that a CD was created within a central urban area necessitating a requalification (Alberti and Giusti, 2009, pp. 1-2).

Considering a wider context beyond the European boundaries, this phenomenon is also observed in the American territory. During the 1970s, some American cities experienced the rise of CDs, accompanying the transition from industrial to post-industrial economies. Even in this case, the notion of CDs applied and accounted responds to the definition developed within the UK. CDs are theorised as urban areas with a great accumulation of artistic activities that are seen as an incentive of economic and social development. The logic behind is that of mitigating the effects of this transition, which has led to the disuse and emptiness of many industrial facilities in urban areas, by providing those spaces with new purposes (Redaelli, 2019). In this way, one of the main American theorists, Hilary Anne Frost-Kumpf, interprets CDs. She describes them as "*well-recognized, labelled, mixed-use area of a city in which a high concentration of cultural facilities serves as the anchor of attraction*" (1998, p. 7). Therefore, CDs are used as strategic instruments for the renovation of declining urban areas.

The American literature on the topic is rich and has produced various contributions on the topic, such as the elaboration of a categorisation of CDs. This academic vitality is due to distinct motivations. One of these is given by the fact that CDs are part of specific state-designated programs, thus making their analysis rich also in terms of concrete applications (Redaelli, 2019). It suffices to consider how before the attempt of a first systematic survey of CDs in Italy, which has been made possible through a study conducted by two Italian authors

(Nuccio and Ponzini, 2017), the empirical research on this phenomenon has not been exhaustive. The only exception is represented by the significant reporting work conducted in 2015 by the National Assembly of State Artes Agencies (NASAA), in the US. The NASAA evaluation represents the only predecessor to the Italian authors' work, even though the context of study differs since it focuses on American states. More in detail, this 2015 report recognises the role of fifteen states in the creation of CDs through the formulation and implementation of statewide programs, leading to the creation of hundreds of CDs across the whole country (Redaelli, 2019).

Overall, when referring to the international literature on the theme, and specifically the Anglo-Saxon contributions, there first emerges a specific scale of CDs: urban areas and/or quarters. In this respect, it is noteworthy to outline how when dealing with such urban areas, most of the international literature uses the labels of CDs, cultural clusters or cultural quarters in an interchangeable way (Redaelli, 2019). Moreover, CDs are conceived as a tool which is part of a specific public policy aiming at regenerating declining urban areas. Thus, CDs are seen as the result of a planned project.

1.3 From Industrial Districts to CDs: A Comparison

The origin and development of the notion of CD inevitably allude to the industrial district theory. Indeed, some authors consider CDs as “*the post-industrial transformation of the classical district, placing greater emphasis on intangible qualities connected to creativity and to the cultural dimension*” (Felicetti, 2016, p. 615). More specifically, the rationale behind this type of argument is that if the industrial district is interpreted in some way as a reaction to the crisis and dismantling of the large Fordist factories, the CD can be understood similarly as an answer to the phase of dematerialisation of production and affirmation of culture as strategic resource for sustainable economic growth (Giambalvo, 2007). These types of statement bring out clearly this position of continuity with respect to the theory of industrial districts, on which the debate of CDs has been developed.

For this reason, it appears necessary to briefly recall the most important elements of industrial district theory and then point out similarities and divergences between the two models.

1.3.1 An Overview of Industrial District Theory

The concept of industrial district can find its theoretical foundations in Alfred Marshall's work, namely in the chapter titled “The Concentration of Specialized Industries in Particular

Localities” of its *Principle of Economics*, book IV, at the turn of the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century. In this case, he defines industrial districts as areas of concentration of firms, but more than simply localised industries. Indeed, the mere presence of small and medium-sized enterprises does not in itself constitute a district. Industrial districts are characterised by specific features. One of the most distinctive traits is the interdependency of its firms that gives rise to what he calls industrial atmosphere, which generates several advantages to the firms belonging to the district. This “*atmosphere cannot be moved*” (p. 284, Marshall, 1919, cited in Belussi and Caldari, 2009) and must be seen as the result of a long-term process. In addition to this, other key characteristics are identified. For instance, other features include what Marshall indicates as hereditary skills, meaning that knowledge and skills are transmitted across generations, high specialisation and high division of labour, the growth of subsidiary firms in the neighbourhood of the district, the innovation character of the production process, and the continuous transactions favouring the exchange of information (Belussi and Caldari, 2009).

After a long period of stasis, the interest towards industrial districts springs up again at the end of the 1970s, given the context of that period witnessing the crisis of the Fordist mass production model. Great relevance is acknowledged to the work conducted by Giacomo Becattini, one of the founders of the Italian School. Starting from Marshall’s contribution, he shapes the industrial district as a socio-territorial entity, distinguished by the active presence of a local community and of a concentration of firms within a specific area.

Becattini catalogues the main characteristics of these districts. First, the local community of the district is brought together through a cohesive system of values and views, which emerges over time and is vital for the district’s development and sustainability. Indeed, these values must ensure innovation, thus not representing a hindrance in this sense which can contrarily lead to a situation of social stagnation. Various institutions – encompassing markets, families, religious organisations, schools, etc. – have a pivotal role in transmitting these values over time and across different generations. Within the district, each firm specialises in specific phases of the production process but still belongs to the same industrial branch (intended in a broader sense – in this regard, Marshall talks about main industry and auxiliary industry). The industries best suited for this type of model are those producing good with a high degree of variability and differentiation rather than standardised ones. Moreover, the unit of production, which is adapt to the district’s production process distinguished by a multiplicity of phases, is the small one. However, this does not exclude large firms as part of a district. As for its human resources, the district shows a tendency to reallocate them internally. When workers move

between firms, their specialised skills – whether firm-specific or district-specific – remain within the district as part of that industrial atmosphere defined by Marshall. Alongside workers, another important agent identified is the so-called pure entrepreneur who is recognised as having the function of transforming the latent capabilities embedded in the district’s historical heritage into marketable products. These products must be distinguishable though specific characteristics. Overall, according to Becattini, an industrial district emerges from dynamic interaction between labour division within the district, market expansion for its products, and the formation of stable relations connecting the district to external markets. Furthermore, the district is characterised by a balance between the existence of competition and cooperation (Becattini, 2017).

1.3.2 Analogies and Differences between Industrial Districts and CDs

Once the main aspects of what are considered the precursors of CDs have been clarified, it is now time to outline the reasons why the district model has been applied to the cultural sector. As Lavanga and Trimarchi (2009, p.1-10) point out, there is a tendency to reason in terms of districts in the cultural field, because there are many district elements in the cultural sector. For instance, the cultural sector is mainly composed of small and medium enterprises, working in geographically delimited areas. The goods produced have a high informational content and strong territorial specialisation, thus being identifiable in the market. Informality and experimentation (learning by doing) characterise the processes of human capital formation. Furthermore, obviously, given the very definition of the concept of culture (intended here not as a product, but as a process), there is a strong basis represented by the local community that shares certain values and symbols, which represent the result of a temporal and spatial process.

On the other side, differences between traditional industrial districts and CDs exist. First, the specialisation of products in CDs is considerably higher than that of industrial districts’ goods. Indeed, what is observed in the cultural sphere is the presence of productions with a shorter life cycle that leads to a continuous transformation of the cultural offer and to an excessive diversification of goods. Moreover, in contrast with the industrial districts, it is highlighted how in the cultural field, competition is more likely to override cooperation, thus reversing that balance which distinguishes industrial districts. Among the reasons behind this high competition, one can include, for instance, the low volume of resources which places agents in a more competitive arena (Lavanga and Trimarchi, 2009, pp.1-10). Additionally, CDs exhibit a horizontal integration in contrast with industrial districts, whose model is focused on vertical integration. In the CD model, coordination and complementarities are established

among firms belonging to different value chains, while in industrial districts they are established within the same value chain (Sacco et al., 2013).

On the whole, what emerges is that even though CDs cannot be considered in the strict sense as specific forms of industrial districts, they definitely inherit some essential elements typical of traditional districts. Despite this, the existence of local cultural systems with features typical of a district model does not necessarily and automatically imply their transformation into CDs (Giambalvo, 2007).

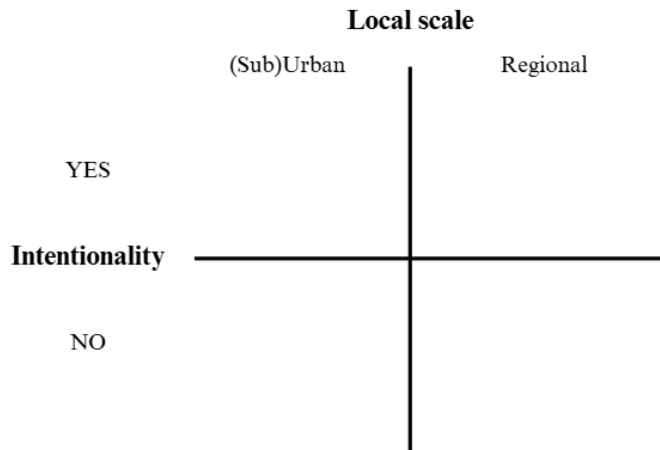
1.4 Summary of the Literature Review

To recapitulate, the literature on CDs is rich in contributions which have given rise to distinct positions on the topic. When focusing solely on the Italian contributions on the topic, it clearly emerges that the research lines follow two main directions related to the spontaneity/intentionality rationale behind the development of this model. On the one hand, there is a part of the literature that considers CDs a planned phenomenon, deriving from a precise policy. With respect to this first position, as pointed out by another scholar - Preite (1998, cited in Alberti and Giusti, 2009, pp. 13-14), CDs can be described as the voluntary and intentional construction of political agents who identify cultural heritage as the strategic axis of a development model. On the other hand, CDs are understood as clusters of activities with a meaning closer to that of traditional industrial districts, where the establishment of these models is associated with a long-term process, deeply rooted in the territory of reference and in its history, thus not being able to be set up on command (Alberti and Giusti, 2009, pp. 16-17). Apart from this type of differentiation, all the contributions presented above (within the Italian context) are united by a shared vision. Namely, they all have in common an idea of local development that is based on endogenous factors (Hinna, 2015, p. 50).

The second element emerging from the literature review regards the difference in the unit of analysis, whether one considers the Italian theories or the international ones (specifically, the Anglo-Saxon proposals). While international definitions strictly refer to CD as an area of a city, or a neighbourhood, the Italian definitions articulate themselves at different scales, encompassing levels that go beyond the sub-urban area and may also include sub-regional zones (Ponzini, Gugu and Oppio, 2014, pp. 75-76). However, regarding the spontaneity/intentionality ratio, the international literature is closer to that part of the Italian literature which conceives CDs as the result of intentional planned projects, as a tool of a specific public policy.

The figure below (figure 2) helps to identify the main issues emerging from the literature review conducted for the purpose of this thesis.

Figure 2. Emerging elements from the literature review.



Source: Author's elaboration.

In general, despite being quite recent, the richness characterising the literature on the topic has led to a multitude of meanings of CDs. The main issue emerging regards the fuzziness of the concept itself. For this reason, scholars claim greater conceptual clarity. In this regard, a first attempt could be made, by stating that Italian definitions emphasize more the relational aspect of CDs. By focusing more on this aspect, it is therefore possible to adopt a more specific conceptualisation of CDs. CDs are more than an organised set of institutions, associative networks and companies that produce an integrated offer of quality cultural goods and services, linked to a defined territory, characterised by a well-defined identity, a high density of valuable environmental and cultural resources, and inhabited by a cohesive local community, as described by Giambalvo (2007). Indeed, in Italy, “*CDs are an example of local collaborative cultural governance, often supported by policy initiatives taking the form of territorial cooperation, initiated by the State, which bring together local policy networks and cultural institutions*” (Hinna and Seddio, 2013, cited in Gugu and Dal Molin, 2016, p. 240).

2. Research Design

The research presented in this dissertation was conducted between March and June 2025 on a sample of four case studies, all belonging to the Italian territory. The choice of the study's geographical focus responds to different needs. First, as emphasised from the very beginning, the present study intends to bridge the existing gap between, on the one hand, a substantial and rich theoretical-literary production, and on the other hand, less prolific empirical field research. Indeed, despite being considered the cradle of CDs since the early 2000s, the Italian context was the object of a mapping exercise concerning CDs only a few years ago. It is thanks to the survey conducted by Nuccio and Ponzini (2017) that it was first possible to have a general overview of Italian CDs' state of the art. This work, which represents a milestone in this field at the national level, centres around sixty-eight experimentations officially labelled as CDs that had been developed since the first 2000s.

Notwithstanding the significant contribution made in this research area, this study now dates back to about ten years ago and some changes may have occurred in real-world Italian CDs. Therefore, this thesis represents an attempt to revise what was presented in previous years, without carrying out a sort of census of CDs in Italy. Through the careful selection of the four case studies – chosen following the logic of specific criteria, the objective is to analyse these district realities in greater depth and extrapolate – where possible – common patterns among the various experiences, while taking into consideration the differentiation characterising these territorial development models.

To examine these themes, a qualitative approach was chosen, since the focus is on observing and describing experiences, modalities of operation and relationships. Specifically, a comparative analysis was employed to examine patterns, similarities, and differences across the four case studies. The choice of the comparative method for this thesis' purposes was made for several specific reasons. First, it appeared the most suitable analytical tool capable of highlighting potential analogies and distinctions among the selected cases. This method allows one to answer directly the first two research questions concerning the specific traits of CDs and possible congruences among the various contexts, thus consequently contributing to understanding *how different the experiences under the label of CDs are*. In addition to this, as pointed out by Collier (1993), this method, which facilitates the formulation of new hypotheses through inductive reasoning, can support the development of new positions on the topic, enabling a comparison between the existing theory and practical experiences. This means that by conducting this type of analysis, it is also possible to verify whether formal elements can be found in real-world applications of these theorised models. Moreover, this method was chosen

because, through the analysis of a small number of cases, it allows a response to specific limitations due to scarce resources. However, besides these positive aspects, comparison as a tool of analysis also has some weaknesses, which will be presented shortly in the following section, that were taken into account while choosing the cases constituting the sample of the present research.

The identification of the possible case studies was done according to a specific logic while considering the research hypothesis regarding the possible differentiation distinguishing the empirical application of these models of territorial development. It is assumed that the high variety of theories is somehow reflected in differentiated practical experiences. Starting from this assumption, to include as many distinctive empirical cases as possible, the approach used for selecting the four CDs to examine was that of the purposive sampling¹ method. As explained by Patton (2015, pp. 230-244), purposive sampling is one of the most used non-probability sampling strategies applied in qualitative research. The power of this approach lies in its intentional selection of informative cases for in-depth study. Unlike random sampling methods aiming for statistical representativeness, purposive sampling focuses on selecting cases specifically because they offer a deep understanding of the phenomenon investigated. Far from being a methodological weakness, the deliberate bias in selection becomes a strategic strength in qualitative research, thus focusing limited resources on the most enlightening cases for the research purpose (Patton, 2015, pp. 230-244).

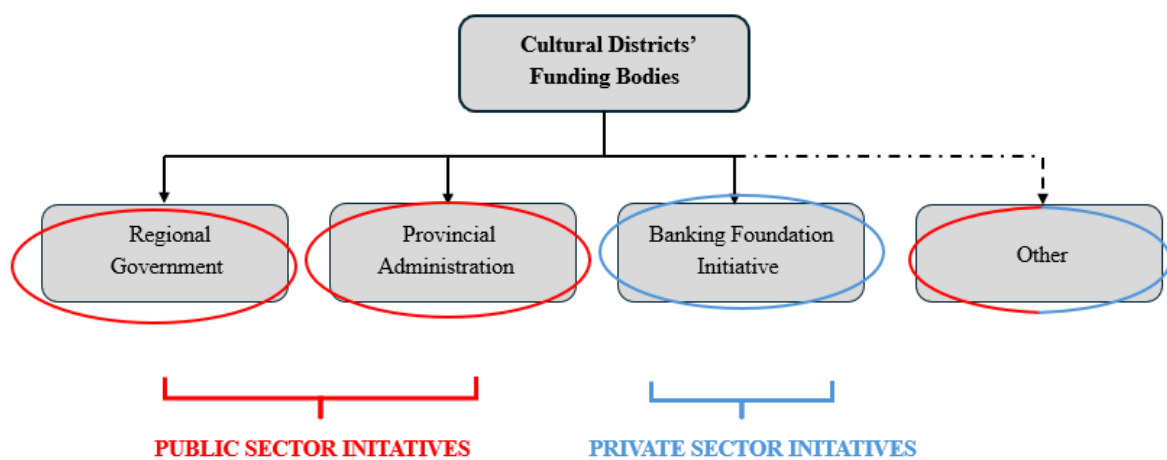
Therefore, considering the overall framework of the present research, a purposive sampling strategy was adopted. More in detail, a specific purposeful sampling technique was applied: the so-called criterion sampling technique. Criterion sampling requires researchers to set clear eligibility requirements for study participation (Nyimbili, F. & Nyimbili, L., 2024). For this study, the selection criterion considered regards the type of funding bodies. As emerges from previous research on the topic, when considering the funding entities of these models, the experiences launched in the field of CDs can be traced back to three main types of pathways, which are presented in Figure 3: regional government's initiative, provincial administration's initiative, and pathways initiated by banking foundations². In addition to these three major groups, a fourth one – labelled “other” – is identified, where other kinds of experiences that do

¹ Purposive sampling is also known as purposeful sampling, or judgmental sampling.

² Banking foundations are non-profit, private and autonomous organisations whose purpose is social utility and the promotion of economic development and emerged in the early 1990s from the reform of the credit system. They contribute to generating welfare through the provision of grants, but also through direct contribution of knowledge, skills, and know-how that support the development of innovative projects and methods to address territorial needs. Each banking foundation operates within the territory where it based, but there are also national and international initiatives, implemented with the coordination of ACRI (Associazione di Fondazioni e di Casse di Risparmio Spa), which represents them collectively (ACRI and Italia non profit, no date).

not belong to the other three types are gathered (Cerquetti and Ferrara, 2015). In other words, the first two categories refer to funding entities of a public nature, while the last category includes entities belonging to the private sector. It follows that the criterion used for selecting the cases to be studied concerns precisely the nature of the funding entity. Besides this, the plan was also to elaborate a sample that could geographically represent as much as possible of the entire Italian territory, attempting to include practices from northern and southern Italy, where possible.

Figure 3. Types of funding bodies of CDs in Italy.



Source: Author's elaboration on Cerquetti and Ferrara (2015).

Nevertheless, it is important to emphasize that while the selected criteria may have some effects on the development of CDs themselves, focusing the present research only on the Italian context allows for an analysis based on a common underlying background. Indeed, as highlighted previously, the very concept of CD varies depending on the territorial context of reference. CDs in Italy have a different meaning compared to the Anglo-Saxon definition. This means that by taking only the Italian territory as the context of reference, it is then possible to trace any differentiation due not only to the type of path initiated but also to the intrinsic characteristics of the territory to which these districts belong. In other words, this differentiation can prove to respond to what is the very nature of cultural heritage and the overall territorial assets.

Following the definition of the sampling criteria, the selection of case studies advanced through a two-step process after the literature review. The first stage drew upon some existing mapping exercises carried out by other researchers, specifically the works of Cerquetti and

Ferrara (2015), and Nuccio and Ponzini (2017). Although these scholars used different concepts and criteria in their mapping analyses of CDs in Italy, a cross-examination of these contributions proved pivotal, constituting a preliminary list of potential case studies aligning with the criteria established for this research. Based on this initial list, a first assessment was done, consisting of evaluating their availability of contacts online, which led to the exclusion of some potential cases. The second phase consisted of the auto-selection of the cases after an email was sent to various CDs, in which it was asked for their availability for an interview. Approximately a dozen districts with accessible contact information were approached. As a result, four responded affirmatively and were subsequently chosen and incorporated into the research sample. The four CDs included in the sample are displayed in Table 2.

Table 2. CDs included in this thesis' sample.

| Name of the CD | Region | Funding entity | Status |
|--|----------------|-----------------------|---------------|
| Distretto Culturale della Valle Camonica | Lombardy | Private | Ongoing |
| Distretto Culturale Le Regge dei Gonzaga | Lombardy | Private | Ongoing |
| Distretto Culturale dell'Habitat Rupestre della Basilicata | Basilicata | Private | Closed |
| Distretto Culturale Pianura Est | Emilia-Romagna | Public | Ongoing |

Source: Author's elaboration.

As observable from the table, three of the four selected CDs were initiatives promoted by the private sector, specifically baking foundations. However, while the first two are part of the same initiative, promoted by Fondazione Cariplo, the third one is part of another private sector initiative. It is noteworthy to outline that even though the *Distretto Culturale della Valle Camonica* and the *Distretto Culturale Le Regge dei Gonzaga* are part of the same project, they possess distinct characteristics given not only by the specificity of the territory involved and the consequent uniqueness of their cultural heritage but also by their organisational structures. It stands out among all that the *Distretto Culturale dell'Habitat Rupestre della Basilicata* represents the only case of a ceased project, allowing for an understanding of the reasons behind this cessation. As for public sector initiatives, only one case is included in the sample and is represented by the *Distretto Culturale Pianura Est*, promoted by the provincial administration of Bologna.

This qualitative research follows an inductive approach, meaning that, after a thorough literature review, data were collected, codified and then linked to theory, trying to identify patterns and draw conclusions based on the information available. This approach allows analytical dimensions to emerge spontaneously from patterns observed in data, enabling the exploration of possible interconnections among them without depending on predetermined assumptions. In line with this approach, this research first includes a comprehensive documentation of individual cases, each studied independently. Only after completing these individual analyses, a cross-investigation commences, pinpointing recurring themes and patterns that go beyond specific contexts and reveal shared traits (Patton, 2015, pp. 55-58). The choice of this approach also affects the data collection techniques used for this study, which are: document analysis and semi-structured interviews. Regarding the first method, the document analysis consists of examining different kinds of documents (e.g. books, newspaper articles, academic journal articles, institutional reports, etc.). As with other analytical methods, its data must be studied and interpreted to derive meanings and gain understanding (Bowen, 2009). For this thesis' purpose, the documents examined ranged from other researchers' studies on the four cases selected (where available) to specific institutional documents, belonging to both funding entities (e.g. call for bids/proposals, etc.) and to the organisations involved in the projects (e.g. project proposal dossiers, etc.). Some of these papers were found online, while others were made available by those organisations contacted and involved in the interviews. In this regard, this research used semi-structured interviews to supplement the findings from the document analysis.

Specifically, pre-determined open-ended questions were asked. This type of interview enabled the researcher to explore some themes and answers in depth, unlike a structured format that could have hindered the depth of the responses (Alsaawi, 2014). Three interviews out of four were conducted online, via Google Meet. The only interview done in presence was the one with the *Distretto Culturale dell'Habitat Rupestre della Basilicata*, which took place in the office of the lead partner of the district – Fondazione Zétema, in Matera. In this specific case, there were two visits: a first meeting with the President of the foundation, who was interviewed, and a second visit where some paper documents were made available to be reviewed. Before each interview, each person involved in this process could have the template of the questions in advance, making it clear that some modifications could occur during the interview process itself. Overall, all the interviews followed the same pattern, in line with the five phases proposed by Robson (2011, cited in Alsaawi, p.153). They all started with an introductory presentation of the researcher and the research aims. This was followed by a 'warm-up' phase with easy questions to set a relationship with the interviewees, a main body stage focused on the main

research topics, a “cool-off” phase with simple questions to conclude the process, and ultimately a closure step to acknowledge participants’ contribution. All the interviews, which were conducted in Italian, are reported in English and all translations have been done by the author. The extended Italian transcription of the interviews can be found in the annexes section of this thesis. All the interviews, although with some adaptations given by the specific features of the districts, revolved around some key topics: Background and Foundation, Governance and Partnership, Characteristics and Activities, and Challenges and Future Goals.

Regarding the principles driving this research, it is important to highlight that all participants engaged voluntarily. They were informed about the research aim and it was guaranteed that all data collected would be used solely for academic purposes. In addition, all actors were asked whether to maintain their anonymity. All participants could refuse to answer inconvenient questions and not include sensitive answers. Moreover, if desired, they could receive, before the submission of the thesis, the transcripts of the interviews to check for potential mistakes. Findings will be disseminated to all those participants who expressed their willingness to be updated regarding the evolution of the present work.

3. Delimitations, Limitations, Assumptions

In carrying out this research, several factors were within the author's control, while others were not, limiting the generalisation and reliability of the results.

First, concerning the comparative method, as mentioned above, it is not exempt from some weaknesses, despite still representing the most suitable analytical tool for the present research. As pointed out by Lijphart (1971, cited in Collier, 1993, p.106), this method faces a fundamental challenge: it deals with numerous variables but only a limited number of cases. Despite this constraint, it guarantees systematic comparison and represents a strategic tool for research with limited resources. In this way, it potentially serves as a preliminary step leading to a more comprehensive statistical analysis. Once its flaws are recognised, possible solutions can be adopted to address the "many variables, small N" issue. Therefore, in line with what was formulated by Lijphart (1971, cited in Collier, 1993, pp.106-107), the present thesis considered these possible strategies to respond to the comparative method's limits. Specifically, it followed the recommendation of selecting comparable cases that share similarities across non-essential variables while differing in key variables under examination. Hence, the geographical focus on the Italian context can be interpreted with this in mind.

Related to the selection of the cases forming the sample of this thesis, other factors were not within the author's control. As presented above, the sample includes three initiatives belonging to the private sector and just one to the public, thus creating an imbalance. In addition, including just one CD, located in southern Italy, conflicts with the idea of a geographically balanced sample of the Italian territory. This factor could not be controlled since the auto-selection phase of the cases depended on the replies and availability of the cases contacted. Nevertheless, despite these disparities, all criteria were considered and reflected in the final sample composition.

Further constraints regarded the data collection techniques adopted for this study. Concerning the document analysis, and specifically the analysis of those documents made available by the organizations themselves, it is relevant to consider some of the potential weaknesses of this type of method. One of these is what Yin (1994, cited in Bowen, 2005, pp.31-32) labels "biased selectivity", meaning that in organizational settings, available documents often align with official policies and agendas. Moreover, in certain cases the documents made available can represent just one part of the entire documentation, thus making document access intentionally restricted. Lastly, since documents are typically produced for purposes unrelated to research, detailed information needed to address specific research issues may be lacking (Bowen, 2005). However, given the scarcity of information available online,

especially for some of the cases in the sample, the opportunity to analyse some paper documents made available by the organizations involved in this study proved pivotal.

Similarly, semi-structured interviews had some drawbacks. For instance, it is important to consider that information gained through this technique is conveyed by rational actors - the interviewees - who can decide deliberately what to communicate and what not to. In other words, data may be somehow biased and incomplete. Moreover, especially for long-lasting projects, people involved can change over time, so the information can be partial. Finally, as emphasised by Seidman (2012, cited in Alsaawi, 2014, p. 152), it is then up to the researcher to transcribe and categorize the information collected through this method, thus also providing a way to develop future theoretical insights during the reflection process. Given all these constraints characterising both techniques, it was decided to combine them to compensate for each other's weaknesses.

In summary, while this combination can provide valuable insights into the topic, the highlighted limitations should be considered when interpreting the findings and drawing conclusions. It is hoped that deeper analyses based on quantitative data will be pursued in the future, trying to include more cases in the sample and guarantee a better representation of the varied reality characterising these models of territorial development within the Italian context.

4. Presentation of the Research Context and Case Studies

This chapter offers a brief overview of CDs' empirical application in Italy, outlining possible common patterns between some existing contributions, considered for the present research. More specifically, the chapter is organised into three main sections. The first one briefly presents the reality of CDs within the Italian territory, primarily referring to two existing empirical studies conducted by some Italian scholars. Specifically, these two contributions offer numerical data on Italian CDs, since they represent a mapping attempt of these models across Italy. The second section describes the initiatives within which the four case studies are situated, focusing on a specific analytical dimension: the funding entity. The third and closing part provides a description of the four CDs composing the sample of this thesis.

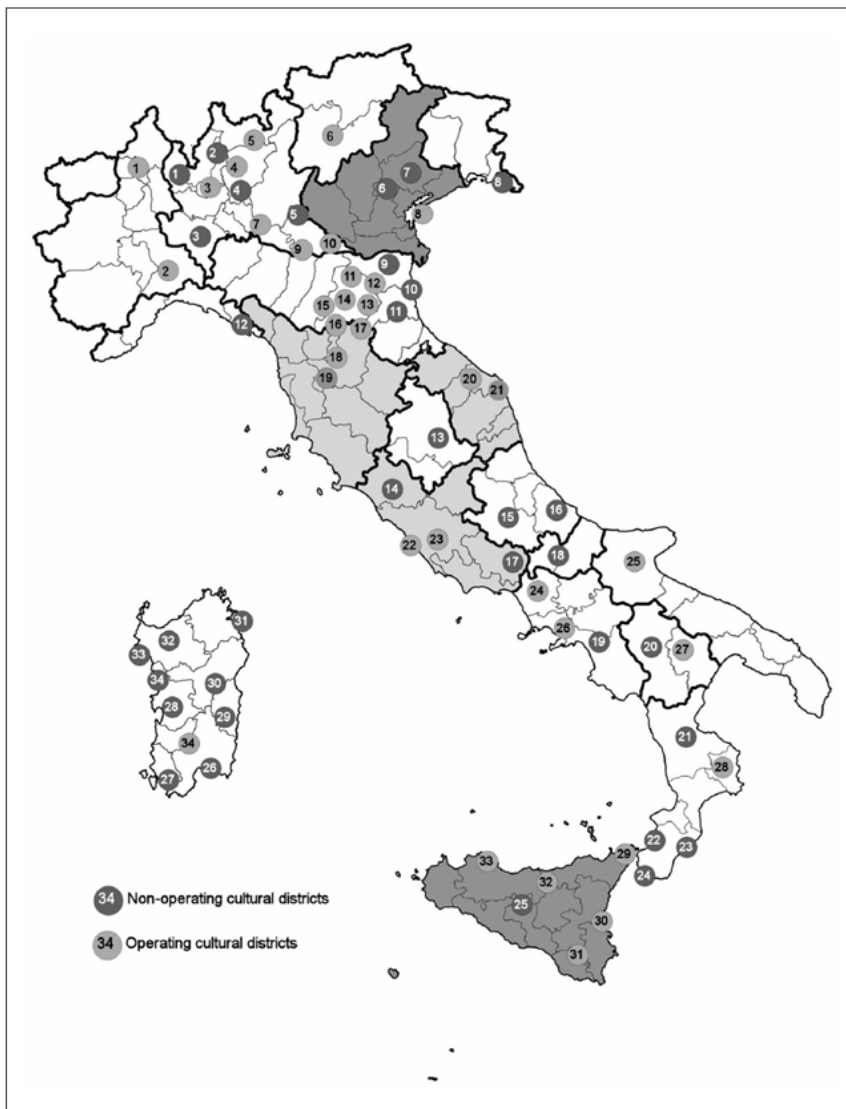
4.1 The reality of CDs within the Italian territory

The theory of CDs in Italy is characterised by a richness of contributions and points of view. Despite this great diversity, the various existing contributions have some points in common that delineate an Italian theory of CDs, which is distinguishable from an international one. Indeed, this contrast between Italian and international theories on CDs mainly depends on the local reference scale adopted by the two approaches. More in detail, on the one hand, there is the (sub)urban scale of international theories. On the other hand, a broader territorial dimension characterises the Italian cases, which mainly refer to territorial contexts ranging from the provincial to the regional scale. However, despite this contrast between Italian and international theories, it is important to outline that ultimately, they all aim at improving and enhancing the development of the territories affected by these models, through the promotion and valorisation of cultural heritage (in its broader sense).

Given this great Italian theoretical diversification, a potential corresponding differentiation in practical Italian CDs' initiatives is assumed. Nevertheless, empirical research on this topic has not been as fully developed as the theoretical one since the emergence of the first CDs, which date back to the beginning of the 2000s. This is mainly due to the lack of a standard definition of CDs, from which to establish a comparative analysis. As underlined by Cerquetti and Ferrara (2015), the pathways initiated with district-based approaches in the cultural sector present an ample and disparate panorama. This is primarily attributable to the absence of a singular legal framework, which makes it difficult to analyse the potential social, economic, and cultural impacts linked to CDs. This polysemy of interpretations and implementations of the concept may generate analytical challenges for researchers and policymakers, hindering comparative assessments. Despite that, the empirical analysis of Italian CDs includes some important contributions, considered for this thesis.

One of these is represented by the first attempt of a national survey of CDs, carried out by Nuccio and Ponzini (2017). These two researchers focused their study on those policy initiatives officially claimed to be CDs, acknowledging that some functionally similar experiences could be excluded from the research, as they were not officially accredited as CDs. The researchers examined 68 self-declared CDs spanning 15 years (2000-2014). The figure below represents a reliable map of operating and non-operating³ CDs in Italy, according to the two authors.

Figure 4. A map of Italian operating and non-operating CDs.



Source: Nuccio and Ponzini (2017, p. 415).

³ According to the two authors, those CDs, for which there existed any proof of any activity related to them, were defined as operating. CDs classified as non-operating were inactive at the time of the survey, either because their project had been abandoned or failed (Nuccio and Ponzini, 2017).

In carrying out their research, the main descriptive dimensions considered were:

- The type of activities and services offered.
- The institutional and organisational structure of the managing organization and the main funding body.
- Their communication strategies.

Further empirical research on Italian CDs is attributable to the work of Cerquetti and Ferrara (2015). Considering the issue of a lack of uniform legal definition, which may hinder an analysis of the effects deriving from a concrete application of CDs, these two authors decided to proceed with the analysis of district-based initiatives launched across Italy, by systematically investigating five analytical dimensions, which are presented in the table below.

Table 3. Analytical dimensions considered for the analysis of CDs across Italy by Cerquetti and Ferrara (2015).

| Analytical Dimensions | Explanation |
|--|--|
| Type of path followed (based on the funding entity) | This dimension examines the institutional origin of CDs. It follows a classification of CDs based on the type of funding institutions that launched and developed the district. |
| CD terminology and formal definition adopted | This aspect investigates the specific nomenclature chosen to identify the district and the conceptual framework established in official documents to define what constitutes such a district. |
| Core resource(s)/asset(s) | This dimension explores the primary resource(s) or asset(s) driving the district's specialisation and shaping its development strategy. As a result, CDs are classified based on whether they primarily leverage tangible and intangible cultural heritage, focus on cultural and creative activities, or capitalise on technical skills and knowledge related to cultural heritage. |
| Strategic tools adopted | This aspect examines the policy mechanisms and institutional arrangements used to establish and operationalise the district concept. There is a distinction between approaches focusing primarily on legal recognition and legitimization of CDs, and more comprehensive |

approaches that foresee the concrete establishment and implementation of one or more CD(s) through dedicated programs and measures.

Operational mechanisms adopted

This dimension investigates the concrete operational tools used to establish, finance, and manage CDs. It distinguishes whether implementation occurs through administrative acts, framework program agreements, or funding allocation processes.

Source: Author's elaboration on Cerquetti and Ferrara (2015).

Based on this multi-layered analysis, from which emerges a scenario of multifaceted perspectives and experiences, the two authors make a further “quantitative” step, by attempting to identify the total number of CDs established in Italy. Focusing on those entities where CDs were formally established, the two researchers identified at least 80 documented CDs, all launched between 2000-2004 and 2014. It is important to outline that this census considered those CDs for which formal documentation of establishment existed and/or which were instituted after the granting of funding (both directly or through competitive grant processes) (Cerquetti and Ferrara, 2015).

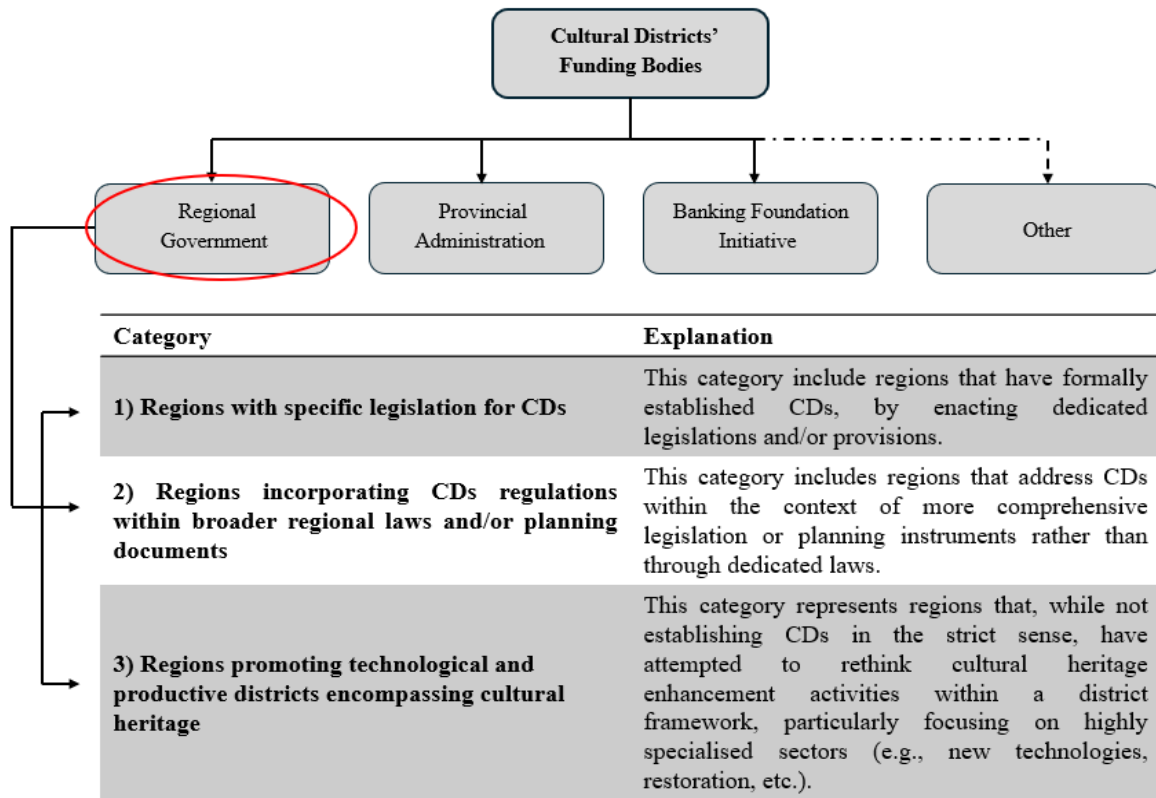
4.2 An Overview of the Funding Bodies of Italian CDs

The starting analytical dimension considered for this thesis regards the type of funding entity of CDs. Indeed, the selection of the four case studies of this research was mainly driven by reflection on the type of funding bodies. According to the analysis carried out by Cerquetti and Ferrara (2015) and their analytical dimension about the type of pathway followed, CDs can be grouped into four main types (visually presented in Figure 3 above):

- 1) CDs originating from regional initiatives.
- 2) CDs developing from initiatives at the provincial administrative level.
- 3) CDs stemming from banking foundations initiatives.
- 4) CDs launched by other types of initiatives that are not part of the former three.

It emerges that most commonly, the establishment and legitimisation of CDs seem to be situated at the regional administrative level but following different methods that can be distinguished into three distinct categories, presented in the figure below.

Figure 5. *CDs' funding bodies: A focus on regional governments' initiatives.*



Source: Author's elaboration on Cerquetti and Ferrara (2015).

Overall, when concentrating on initiatives promoted by public entities, Italian CDs' experiences are attributable to a specific local government agency: the regional body. Nevertheless, in only one case was it possible to identify a CD experience born from the initiative of a public entity other than the regional agency. This is the case of the Province of Bologna, which, with the support of the municipal administrations in the territory, created a district system for culture (Cerquetti and Ferrara, 2015). More details will follow about this initiative, since one of the case studies of the present research regards precisely one of the CDs launched previously by the Province of Bologna and now managed by the Metropolitan City of Bologna.

In addition to this, the other major group of CDs mainly corresponds to those initiatives launched by private organisations and specifically banking foundations. This type of approach was conducted through calls for proposals in order to allocate funding aimed at the creation of CDs. As outlined by Nuccio and Ponzini (2017), banking foundations have a central role in CD support. To illustrate, almost half of the surveyed CDs present this type of foundation as their principal funding body. Specifically, when dealing with CD initiatives launched by banking foundations in Italy, the two main projects known within this field are:

- *Distretti Culturali*, developed by Fondazione Cariplo within the Lombardy region.
- *Sviluppo Sud*, promoted by ACRI (Associazione Casse di Risparmio d'Italia).

Regarding the last type of initiatives originating CDs, other approaches initiated by entities different from those described before are included, such as universities, research institutes, which have participated in European projects, and consulting firms, which have carried out, often commissioned by public administrations, feasibility studies for the implementation of CDs.

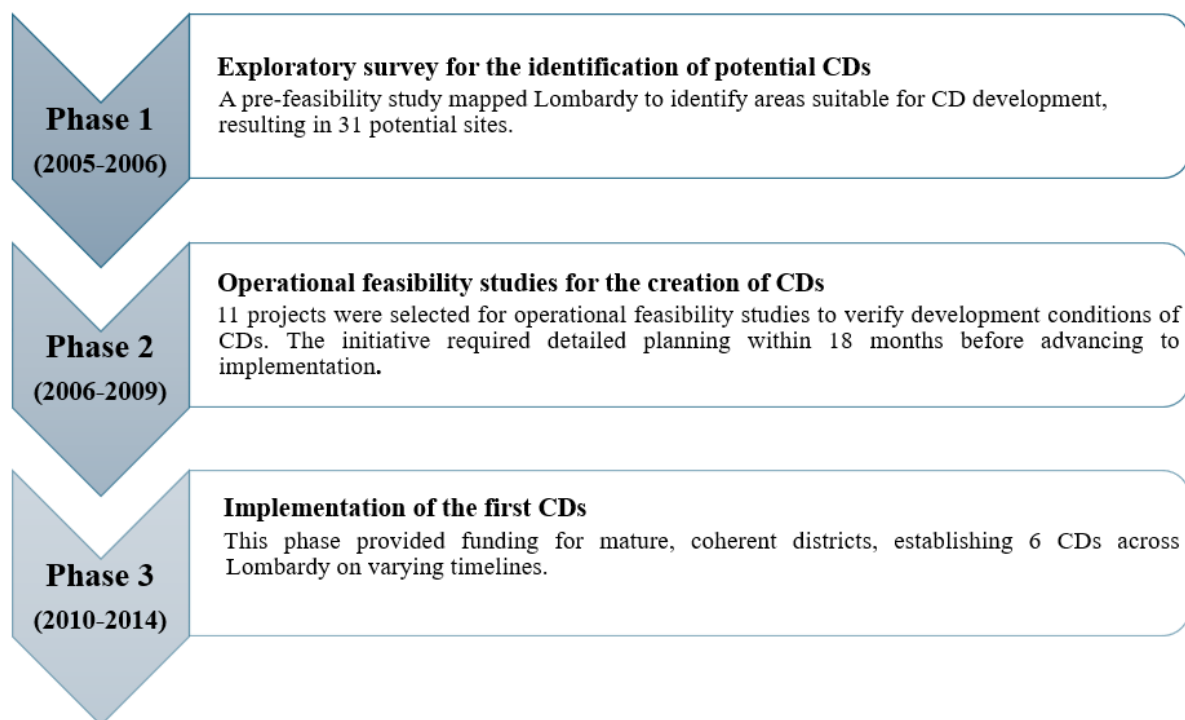
4.2.1 The “*Distretti Culturali*” project by Fondazione Cariplo

The “*Distretti Culturali*” project was first launched by Fondazione Cariplo in 2005, aiming to identify, promote and finance the institution and development of CDs within the Lombardy region (Barbetta, Cammelli and Della Torre, 2013). This initiative was mainly conceived to address some specific weaknesses characterising the valorisation of cultural heritage as a driver of economic growth and innovation. Indeed, as outlined in the call for the launch of the project (Fondazione Cariplo, no date a), once having acknowledged the role of culture in orienting the development strategies of territories, the main challenge was to move from a fragmented approach to an integrated one, where cultural resources together with other territorial resources are able to impact on local development. Therefore, the idea was to establish some relational systems capable of integrating the valorisation of the cultural heritage of a specific territory with its infrastructures and productive sectors (Fondazione Cariplo, no date a). Specifically, the project’s objective was to trigger, or in some cases accelerate, innovative processes aimed at:

1. Planning the enhancement of cultural heritage in the medium-long term.
2. Integrating cultural sectors with other economic sectors of the territory.
3. Creating a management and development system for activities shared with the main territorial stakeholders (Barbetta, Cammelli and Della Torre, 2013).

The approach given to the project, which was planned to end by 2014, led to a progressive selection of the territories through various phases, which are presented in Figure 6.

Figure 6. The phases of the project " Distretti Culturali" promoted by Fondazione Cariplo.



Source: Author's elaboration on Fondazione Cariplo (no date b).

To summarise, as visible in the figure above, the first stage consisted of a general pre-feasibility study to determine whether there were areas in which contextual conditions were suitable for the creation of CDs. In other words, this research aimed at: 1) identifying potentially favourable areas; 2) identifying stakeholders capable of driving the necessary activities for the planning and implementation of the districts; and 3) providing insights to explore in depth for the following phases. As a result, 31 potential CDs were mapped. However, it emerged that there were significant differences among these potential sites in terms of maturity levels. Therefore, it was decided to launch a call for proposals to co-finance some operational feasibility studies to verify development conditions before proceeding with the implementation. The objective was to 1) evaluate the response of local stakeholders and their capacity; 2) support quality planning; and 3) identify alignments with specific requirements. This led to the selection of 11 proposals which conducted operational feasibility studies. After this, Fondazione Cariplo assessed the quality and actual feasibility of district operations, with the identification of positively evaluated cases advancing to the third phase. This consisted of providing funding and implementing those CDs, considered mature and coherent, that were in total six. Two of these are part of the sample of this thesis (*Distretto Culturale della Valle Camonica* and *Distretto Culturale Le Regge dei Gonzaga*). The other four were: *Distretto dell'Oltrepò*

Mantovano, Distretto della Provincia di Cremona, Distretto della Provincia di Monza e Brianza, and Distretto della Valtellina (Barbetta, Cammelli and Della Torre, 2013).

4.2.2 “Sviluppo Sud” by ACRI (*Associazione di Fondazioni e di Casse di Risparmio Spa*)

The “Sviluppo Sud” initiative was promoted by ACRI (*Associazione di Fondazioni e di Casse di Risparmio Spa*), which is an organisation that collectively represents foundations of banking origins and savings banks. The primary objective of ACRI’s *Sviluppo Sud* project was to promote a more equal allocation of resources granted by banking foundations to enhance southern Italian regions – Basilicata, Calabria, Campania, Molise, Puglia, Sicily, and Sardinia. This issue of a more balanced distribution of funds towards southern regions emerged during the Foundation Congress in Turin in 2000. It was during that occasion that foundations committed to addressing the imbalance in their funding, by focusing on promoting CDs to enhance the economic value of cultural and environmental heritage in southern regions. The project had two editions, in 2003 and 2005 (Biocca, 2020).

The first edition saw the participation of 45 foundations contributing a total budget of €26 million. Resources were consigned primarily through open calls and completed by direct assignments. From over 270 proposals received, 41 projects were funded, with 21 selected through calls for proposals and 20 through direct assignment. Although all projects aimed at developing CDs, they focused on different areas. To illustrate, 10 projects involved archaeological assets, particularly excavations, sites, parks or archaeological museums. 19 projects focused on the restoration and enhancement of architectural and monumental heritage. 6 projects centred on historical-artistic properties, while 5 addressed contemporary artistic productions. Only 1 project was dedicated to performing arts activities. In terms of regional distribution, 13 projects were implemented in Campania (3 through calls and 10 through direct assignments), 6 in Calabria, 4 in Puglia, and 8 in Sicily (all through open calls), while 7 in Molise, 1 in Basilicata, and 2 in Sardinia were assigned directly. All selected projects went through an evaluation to guarantee they met the established criteria, conceived to combine the preservation of local artistic heritage with concrete economic development objectives for the areas where the assets were located. This first edition prioritised:

- Bottom-up projects based on partnerships at the local level.
- Integration with regional planning.
- Production of significant economic effects on the territory.
- Ability to network.

Selected projects proved the capacity to generate measurable economic impacts in the territory and an ability to network by fostering intersectoral integration processes (ACRI, 2004).

After the success of the first edition, a second edition was launched in 2005, extending beyond CDs, and involved 51 foundations. Nevertheless, this programme was later incorporated into another ACRI initiative, leading to the establishment of *Fondazione per il Sud* (Cerquetti and Ferrara, 2015).

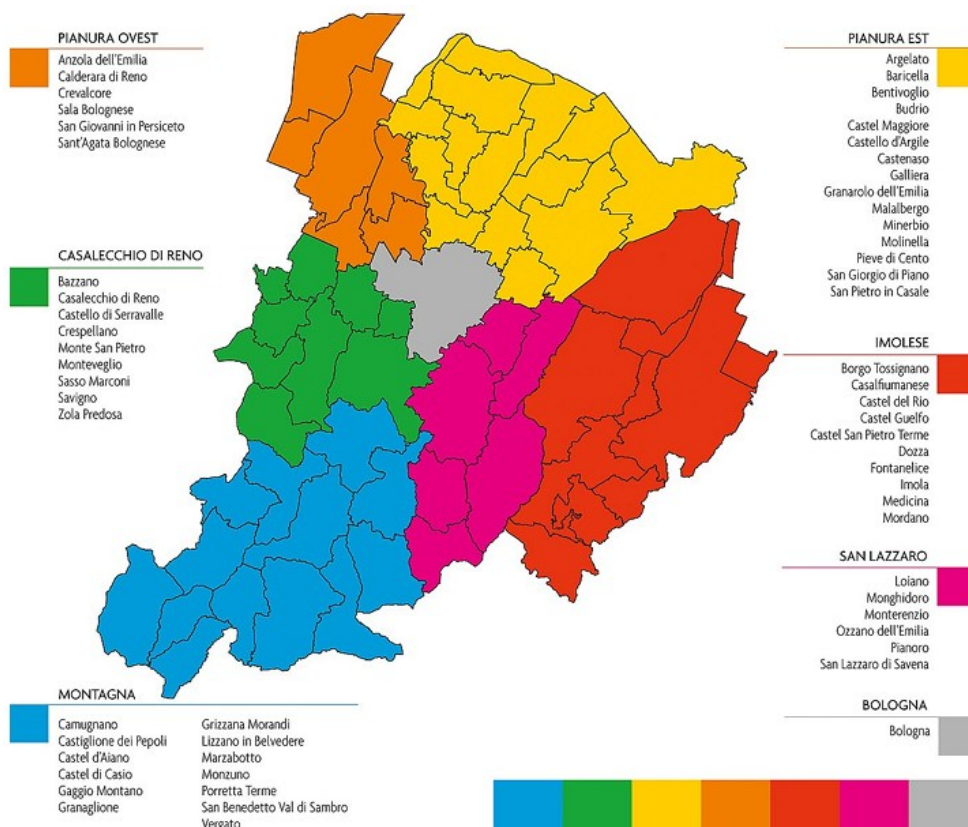
4.2.3 “*Distretti culturali*”: *The Territorial Governance Project of the Province of Bologna*

The only example of CDs originating from the initiative of a public entity other than a regional agency is expressed by the proposal launched by the Province of Bologna, which was officially formalised in 2012 with the approval of a specific memorandum of understanding. The province presented to the various municipal administrations of the territory this project of CDs as an innovative territorial cultural governance model. According to the Province’s conception, CDs must be intended as a context of debate and planning among the City of Bologna, the individual municipalities, and unions of municipalities on the topic of culture, understood as a means for strategic territorial development and a driving force for economic and social policies (Città Metropolitana di Bologna, no date c). The project aims to promote coordination across macro territorial areas between multiple entities, with the goal of:

- Determining a territorial network of cultural systems capable of creating synergies between urban and extra-urban areas in a metropolitan governance perspective.
- Enhancing areas of excellence in the territory, by supporting the growth of innovative and high-quality projects.
- Implementing actions to rationalise services dedicated to culture, strengthening economies of scale for greater economic sustainability and more rational distribution of available financial resources.
- Creating concerted table for project, technical, and political exchange for the development of shared cultural projects even on a supra-district scale.

The strategy supporting, promoting, and enhancing culture through district structures springs from awareness of the region’s rich, diversified cultural landscape and the subsequent need for strategic rationalisation. Across the territory of the 60 provincial municipalities, the district framework serves not to divide but to define clear reference points and methodologies enabling greater awareness and cross-pollination of cultural projects. This intellectual, technical, and political exchange enhances the visibility of regional offerings while preserving local character (Provincia di Bologna, 2012). This model is based on the identification of seven CDs, which are presented in Figure 7.

Figure 7. The seven CDs of the Province of Bologna.



Source: Provincia di Bologna (2012).

4.3 Presentation of Case Studies

For the purpose of this research, four case studies were selected with different characteristics and features. All CDs are located in Italy. Two of them are part of the project “*Distretti Culturali*”, promoted by Fondazione Cariplo. One is part of the project *Sviluppo Sud*, while the remaining one is one of the seven CDs of the Province of Bologna.

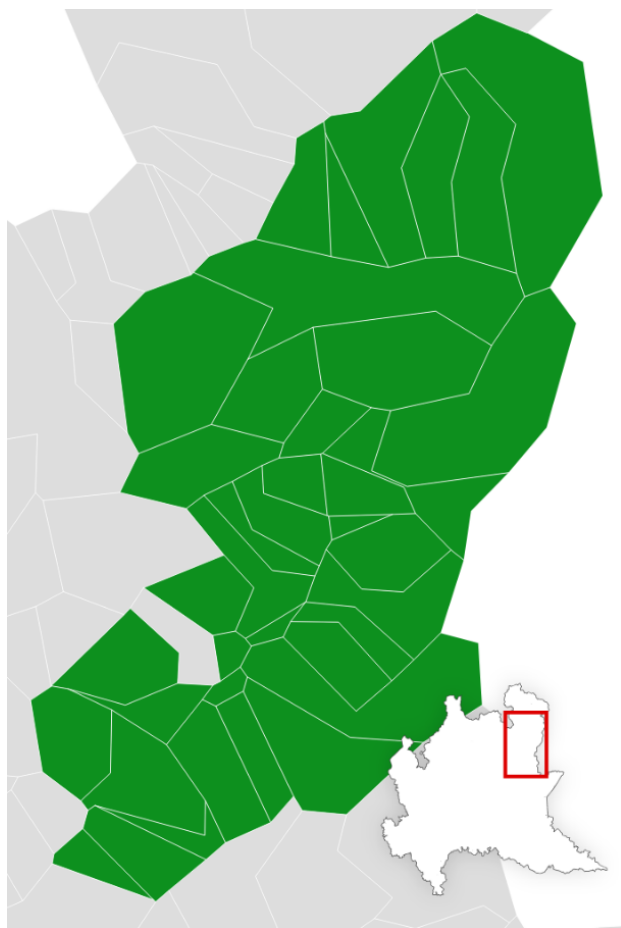
4.3.1 Distretto Culturale della Valle Camonica

The *Distretto Culturale della Valle Camonica*, the first CD approved and co-financed by Fondazione Cariplo, was officially launched in 2009. Designed and implemented by the local Mountain Community – *Comunità Montana di Valle Camonica*, this project gathers a widespread and varied partnership across the territory. The administration of the municipalities involved and the BIM Consortium⁴ participate in the project, with the collaboration of other entities, such as the Province of Brescia, the Chamber of Commerce, and other foundations and cultural associations in the area (Fondazione Cariplo, no date c). The figure below presents a

⁴ Consorzio del Bacino Imbrifero Montano del Lago di Como e Fiumi Brembo e Serio.

map of Valle Camonica CD, highlighting in green the municipalities that are part of this project. Specifically, the municipalities taking part in this project are currently 40⁵.

Figure 8. Map of the municipalities of Valle Camonica CD.



Source: Author's elaboration.

Despite the variety characterising the actors involved in this project, with interests of disparate nature, they all aim at supporting the economic and social development of Valle Camonica, starting from the enhancement of its great heritage of culture, art and history (Fondazione Cariplo, no date c). The territory of Valle Camonica possesses great cultural heritage. The most typical element consists of innumerable prehistoric rock carvings, which were worthy of the title of Italy's first UNESCO site in 1979. Given the significant potential of this patrimony, tourism has become, along with industry, the valley's major economic resource.

⁵ Angolo Terme, Artogne, Berzo Demo, Berzo Inferiore, Bienno, Borno, Braone, Breno, Capo di Ponte, Cedegolo, Cerveno, Ceto, Cevo, Cimbergo, Cividate Camuno, Cortegno Golgi, Darfo Boario Terme, Edolo, Esine, Gianico, Incudine, Losine, Lozio, Malegno, Malonno, Monno, Niardo, Ono San Pietro, Ossimo, Paisco Loveno, Paspardo, Pian Camuno, Piancogno, Ponte di Legno, Saviore dell'Adamello, Sellero, Sonico, Temù, Vezza d'Oglio, Vione.

However, this has not been accompanied by the development of a systematic project, thus allowing a vision of culture as a static heritage to prevail. The cultural richness of Valle Camonica has long remained a largely unexpressed potential. With the institution of the CD, the intention was precisely to change course in this regard and make culture a lever for integrated development. The objective was to promote the local development of Valle Camonica through the renewal of artistic languages and the creation of new businesses, thus responding to a need for modernization of the narrative of cultural heritage by intertwining it with more contemporary languages of art and communication (Dalle Nogare, 2013). .

Since 2009, the Valle Camonica CD has been actively operational, thus having continuity even after the period of financial support from Fondazione Cariplo ended⁶.

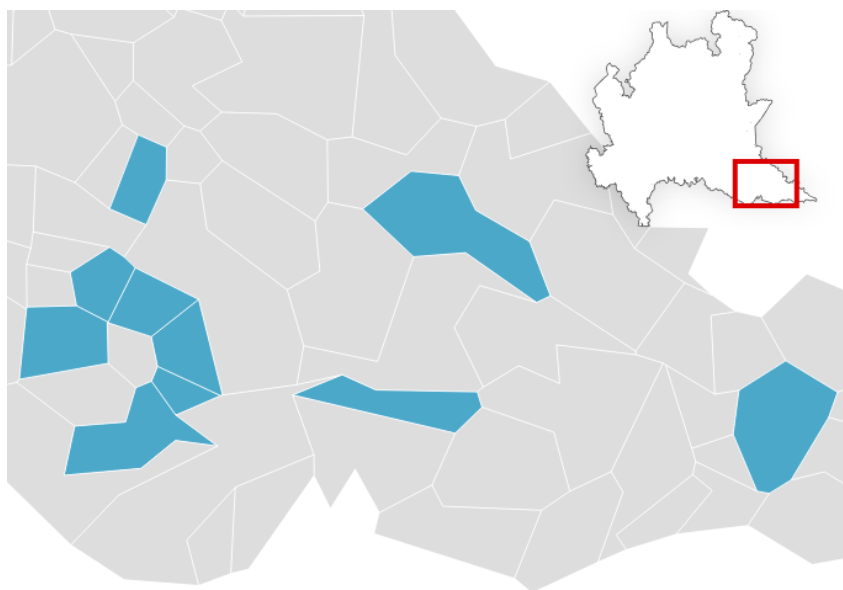
4.3.2 *Distretto Culturale Le Regge dei Gonzaga*

The *Distretto Culturale Le Regge dei Gonzaga* is another CD financed by Fondazione Cariplo's project *Distretti Culturali*. It was officially initiated in 2011. It was promoted by a partnership formed by the Municipality of Mantua, the lead entity, the Province of Mantua, and other municipalities. The district covers the entire provincial territory of Mantua and presents a network structure: a networked districts, where the theme of Gonzaga heritage is a common thread connecting municipalities not necessarily contiguous from a territorial perspective, as visible in the figure below where the involved municipalities are highlighted in blue⁷. Nevertheless, these territories are linked by strong similarities in terms of cultural identity, sense of belonging, heritage characteristics, and socio-economic conditions (Fondazione Cariplo, no date d).

⁶ When the CD was established, the initiative began with a three-year financial plan, in accordance with the duration of intervention that Fondazione Cariplo intended to give to this type of project. Indeed, Fondazione Cariplo clarified in different documents that the idea was to initiate projects with characteristics of future financial self-sustainability, implicitly expecting that the districts would not close with the end of the funding.

⁷ The municipalities currently involved in this CD are: Bozzolo, Borgo Mantovano, Commesaggio, Gazzuolo, Mantova, Motteggiana, Redondesco, Rivarolo Mantovano, Sabbioneta, San Martino dell'Argine.

Figure 9. Map of the municipalities of *Le Regge dei Gonzaga* CD.



Source: Author's elaboration.

The main objectives of this CD can be summarised in the following points:

- Conservation and enhancement of the Gonzaga cultural heritage consisting of villas, palaces, courts, mansions, and cultural testimonies.
- Economic development.
- Integration and innovation of cultural management and offerings.

Starting from these objectives, the three major themes of the district, included in the plan of action elaborated, are:

1. Promotion of a cultural offering system rooted in the Gonzaga dynasty, which combines tradition with innovation.
2. Qualification of the conservation system, by diffusing innovative tools and procedures and involving universities, territorial entities, expertise and companies in the sector.
3. Development of a network of taste and agri-food production and excellence in dining as a distinctive element of local identity. (*Le Regge dei Gonzaga*, no date).

As Valle Camonica CD, *Le Regge dei Gonzaga* CD has been working since its foundation in 2011, thus going beyond the period of Fondazione Cariplo's funding support.

4.3.3 *Distretto Culturale dell'Habitat Rupestre della Basilicata*

The *Distretto Culturale dell'Habitat Rupestre della Basilicata* was one of the projects selected by the “*Sviluppo Sud*” initiative (in its first edition). The logic behind this project was to support and valorise the homonymous regional district, officially instituted in 2003. The project aimed at preserving and enhancing the territorial specificity represented by the cave settlements. The idea was to reverse the condition of underutilisation of this historical-environmental system, which was recognised to be an important accelerating driver of the local economic system. Therefore, the recovery and accessibility of this extraordinary cave heritage was seen within a broader framework, in which significant relevance was given to these settlements, as a strategic asset for the sustainable economic development of their territory (Fondazione Zétema, no date a).

The project's plan was to intervene in and valorise the six locations included in the district. More specifically, the goal was to rescue from abandonment and destruction cultural assets of absolute value (including the Mesolithic wall paintings, the Lombard frescoes of the 8th and 9th centuries, the Swabian-Carolingian pictorial cycles), which were in specific municipal areas, highlighted in green in the following figure. Indeed, the interest was not focused solely on the area of the Sassi of Matera, but also on a multifaceted offering extending from Vulture to the Matera area, to include specific sites located in Filiano, Melfi and Oppido Lucano, thus covering a territorial area of regional scope (Fondazione Zétema, no date b).

Figure 10. Map of municipalities of the CD dell'Habitat Rupestre della Basilicata.



Source: Author's elaboration.

The main interventions planned to be included in the project regarded various aspects. The recovery of such historical evidence was intended to serve to relaunch a work of knowledge

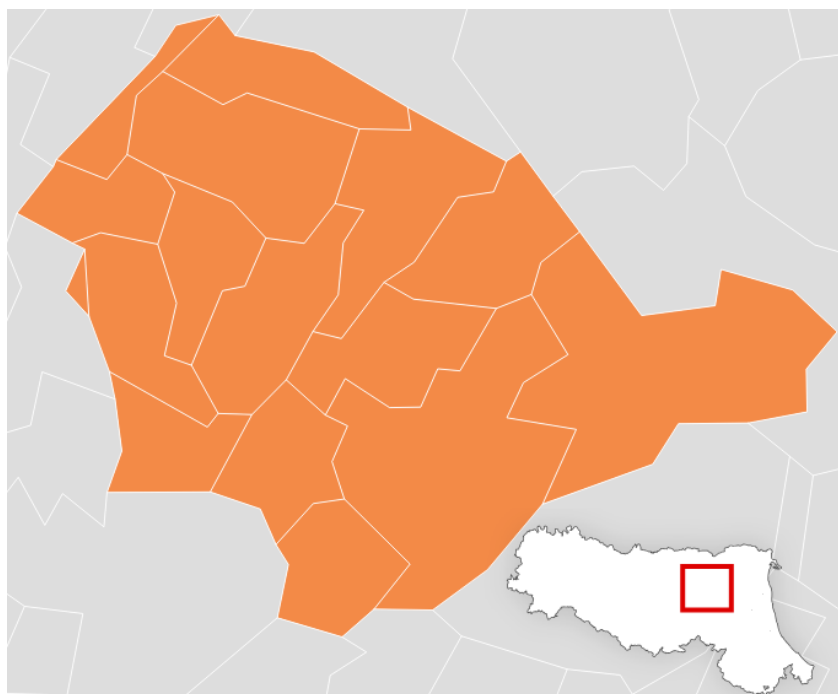
and valorisation, going beyond the city of Matera, worldwide known for its Sassi. Indeed, one of the expected results was the construction of a territorial quality brand identifying the district in its entirety. Furthermore, the project planned to work on two sides. On the one hand, it included the export of a high scientific level code of practice in restoration interventions of the vast southern and worldwide rock-cut heritage. On the other one, it was also expected to reach an exponential increase in the flow of attentive and informed visitors (Fondazione Zétema, no date a).

Contrarily to the previous two CDs, this CD is currently not working and ceased to operate.

4.3.4 Distretto Culturale Pianura Est

The *Distretto Culturale Pianura Est* is one of the seven CDs instituted by the Province of Bologna and officially started in 2012. It represents the CD with the largest number of municipalities involved. As visible in the image below, this CD foresees the participation of 15 municipalities⁸, which are highlighted in orange.

Figure 11. Map of municipalities of the Pianura Est CD.



Source: Author's elaboration.

⁸ The municipalities involved are: Argelato, Baricella, Bentivoglio, Budrio, Castel Maggiore, Castello d'Argile, Castenaso, Galliera, Granarolo dell'Emilia, Minerbio, Malalbergo, Molinella, Pieve di Cento, San Giorgio di Piano, San Pietro in Casale.

As for the other six CDs of the Province of Bologna, it is characterised by a governance structure, which includes a political committee and a technical one. Despite some establishment conditions, which are common to all the seven CDs, *Pianura Est CD* possesses some peculiarities compared to the other districts. Namely, its cultural offering comprises: 11 museums, 15 municipal libraries, 17 historical archives, 10 theatres, more than 40 cultural associations, and 6 major choirs (Città Metropolitana di Bologna, no date b).

This CD, as for the others of the Province of Bologna, is still operational. The major change affecting these districts regarded the Law of April 7, 2014, no. 56 ‘Provisions on Metropolitan Cities, Provinces, Unions and Mergers of Municipalities’, which basically led to a change at the supra district level, with the newly instituted Metropolitan City of Bologna assuming the role of coordination instead of the province.

5. Results and Findings

As stated at the beginning, this thesis addresses a critical gap in CD research. Indeed, while academic literature on the topic has flourished, an evident discrepancy remains between empirical investigation and existing knowledge, leaving many questions unresolved. To contribute in this direction, this research aims to examine the concrete manifestations of CDs across Italy through a carefully selected sample of cases.

Once acknowledging the variability characterising CD literature, it follows that this richness and diversification of literary contributions can then be found in the practical experiences of CDs. Therefore, the main objective is to understand *how different the experiences under the label of CDs are*. The investigation centres on gaining insights into the distinctive features of the selected cases, attempting to explore whether common denominators exist among seemingly disparate CD experiences, thus identifying shared patterns. Additionally, this thesis intends to study the potential correspondence between empirical applications and formal theoretical constructs.

This empirical investigation specifically targets the imbalance between theoretical production and empirical research in CD studies. The scarcity of comprehensive, data-driven analyses has created significant gaps negatively affecting both academic understanding and policy formulation, thereby hindering the potential of this type of territorial development model. By focusing on Italian CDs, this thesis contributes to filling this empirical void through a systematic examination of selected cases. While not claiming exhaustive coverage, the research intends to enrich the existing literature by providing concrete insights into how CD models translate into practice within the Italian territory.

To answer this thesis' research questions, a comparative analysis of four case studies has been conducted through document analysis and semi-structured interviews, adopting a qualitative approach. In this section, the data collected will be presented.

5.1 Specific Traits of the Selected CDs

To gain insights into *how different the experiences under the label of CDs are*, the investigation focused on two main questions, which are interrelated:

- *What are the specific characteristics of the selected CDs in Italy?*
- *Is it possible to identify common elements among the various selected CD experiences in Italy?*

In this section, the focus will be on presenting the specific features of each CD selected, thus opening room for discussion on possible points in common in the next chapter. The

following pages will show the results of the data collection process, by developing biographical profiles for each of the four case studies. These biographies, which will be presented using tables, will mainly shed light on those common key topics, presented in Chapter 2, by analysing dimensions such as the CD's historical development, objectives, governance structure and partnership, activities, challenges and plans.

5.1.1 Case Study Profile: Distretto Culturale della Valle Camonica

The Valle Camonica CD was officially initiated in 2009, thus being the first district to be launched under Fondazione Cariplo's CDs programme. This was mainly due to the level of maturity of the territory, previously involved in another cultural project. Indeed, the director of the CD - Sergio Cotti Piccinelli, points out that:

"The district was established in 2009 and inherited a previous cultural system project aiming to create cultural networks, also funded by Fondazione Cariplo, which allowed us to start a process of systematizing some territorial services (particularly libraries and museums). (...) This enabled us to organise networks and cultural reference centres throughout the territory, that later became very important for managing all the district's activities. This represents the background of our work. The cultural system also gave rise to the communication component, which later transitioned into the district. (...) It was the first to start because it was somewhat more advanced, thanks also to the cultural system experience we had behind us."

Valle Camonica CD has been actively working for more than 15 years now, going through various phases, which have been consequently marked by different strategic objectives, all however aimed at the development of the territory involved. Over the years, there have been slight changes in the governance structure, too. While still not foreseeing a formal *ad hoc*-created legal entity with the authority to manage and govern the district, the existing governance structure has been the subject of a simplification process with some bodies no longer included (e.g., the Assembly of the district and the Executive Committee). Recently a new multi-year agreement on the CD has been signed. A novelty is represented by the *Fondazione Valle dei Segni* that, even though it is not part of the district, is strictly linked to its activity. Its main objective is to enhance an integrated cultural heritage management system, which represents the basis from which to foster tourism-related activities in the district, thus orienting towards a more international perspective.

Regarding the participation of local communities in CD activities, Valle Camonica CD has not developed a district-wide participatory approach. On the contrary, the district is used to working with the municipalities, within which engagement strategies are then developed. This also responds to dimensional issues, since the district extends over an area of more than 1.200 km². With respect to this:

"Our project is closely connected to local administrations. (...) This connection with administrations is fundamental for us. The theme of participation then develops within individual municipalities. We have never developed a participatory action at a general district level; we have never positioned ourselves as a superior entity that should build its own model of participation or cultural production without dialogue with communities. This approach is fundamental for us, because the territory is very diversified and extensive. (...) there are projects that have given great satisfaction due to the important level of involvement achieved. (...) For example, our street art initiative, unlike other experiences and contexts, involved the historic centres of towns rather than peripheral or industrial areas. The artist involved in this initiative worked in the small municipality of Malegno, in front of the Church, and through his work created a square. The town previously had no square, no gathering space, and after this intervention, that square, which took the artist's name, became the town's square, where festivals and events are organised, effectively creating a place for public participation (Sergio Cotti Piccinelli, director of Valle Camonica CD)."

Numerous are the activities implemented, ranging from contemporary art's integration in traditional historical centres to the development of digital platforms. With respect to the latter, it is worth mentioning the so-called "Maraea" (a dialect word standing for marvel) portal, whose purpose is to collect and preserve signs and traces of the Valle Camonica for future generations, thus representing a sort of memory archive. Innovation has been a pivotal priority for the district. Indeed, different experimentations have been done, offering Valle Camonica residents innovative and alternative services, aiming at pushing communities out of their "comfort zone". From this perspective it is also possible to interpret the development of digital platforms, since they represent a way to transform communication strategies to approach a younger audience, which is difficult to reach if some efforts towards innovation are not made.

The table below presents some of the key findings related to Valle Camonica CD.

Table 4. Distretto Culturale della Valle Camonica's Biographical profile.

| DISTRETTO CULTURALE della VALLE CAMONICA | | | |
|---|--|---------------|--------|
| <i>General Information</i> | | | |
| Establishment year | 2009 | Status | Active |
| District area (km²) | 1.272,18 (2024) ⁹ | | |
| Total population | 90.309 (2024) ¹⁰ | | |
| <i>Historical development & Objectives</i> | | | |
| Pre-District foundation (pre-2009) | Cultural system project with a focus on creation of cultural networks. | | |
| Initial phase (2009-2014/15) | Focus on internal cultural organisation, communication innovation, valorisation of the UNESCO site of rock art, and business incubator for cultural enterprises. | | |

⁹ ISTAT, *Atlante Statistico del territorio*, available at: <https://aster.istat.it/> (access date: 14 June 2025).

¹⁰ Ibid.

| | |
|--|---|
| Post-Cariplo programme phase (2015-present) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transition towards a focus on tourism/touristic organisation of the territory. • COVID-19 disruption. • Focus on tourism development, international projection, enhancement of the museum sector. |
| <i>Governance structure</i> | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Institutional agreement with Mountain Community as lead partner. • Bodies: Associated Office, Technical-Scientific Committee. | |
| <i>Stakeholders network & Community participation</i> | |
| <p><i>Stakeholders' dynamics</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cooperation in the field of cultural valorisation. • Recognised role of the district by all partners – based on a competence-based approach characterising the district way of working. <p><i>Participation model</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Municipality-centred approach: participation develops within individual municipalities. • No comprehensive territorial participation: never developed district-wide participatory actions. • Non-hierarchical positioning: district does not act as a superior entity imposing participation models. | |
| <i>Type of activities implemented</i> | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experimentation with new communication forms inspired by rock art heritage. • Promotion of contemporary art in historic contexts. • Enhancement of local craftsmanship (Segno Artigiano project). • Development of digital tools: the Maraea portal (an historical archive for territorial imagination and heritage preservation). | |
| <i>Challenges & Prospects</i> | |
| Challenges | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fragmented Heritage Management. • Geographic Isolation. • COVID-19 impact on tourism activities. • Difficulty in reaching new audiences, especially young people. |
| Prospects | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integrated Heritage Management. • Systematisation and organisation of extensive research and documentation work. • Innovation and adaption of content delivery to new communication tools and diverse target audiences. • Explore connections between cultural activities and metallurgical industrial tradition. • Enhancement of tourism-related actions. |

Source: Author's elaboration.

5.1.2 Case Study Profile: Distretto Culturale Le Regge dei Gonzaga

Le Regge dei Gonzaga CD, instituted through Fondazione Cariplo's programme, has been actively working across the Mantuan territory for almost 15 years now. It has as its identity matrix the legacy of the Gonzaga dynasty, which dominated that area between the 14th and 18th

centuries, which includes palaces, villas, theatres, walls, towers. The district's thematic unity - the Gonzaga heritage - serves as a glue among all participating municipalities. After a first phase of experimentation, the district restructured through a self-sustaining model, encompassing membership fees from associate municipalities, with the Municipality of Mantua contributing the largest share, reflecting its commitment to maintaining an active provincial network focused on cultural heritage valorisation. This financial model is then integrated with additional resources resulting from participation in various calls for proposals.

As for its governance model, a formal association, which is responsible for the realisation and management of the district, is foreseen with specific governing bodies. Regarding community participation, the CD designs its cultural offerings to serve primarily (but not exclusively) local communities, recognising that engaged local citizens become the best ambassadors for their territory. This results in a high rate of community participation and positive feedback regarding initiatives organised by the district. In this regard, the president of the Association – Alessandra Riccadonna – highlights that:

"The fundamental objective remains to make the territory, and the assets linked to history and Gonzaga heritage known, both to tourists and residents. Often, in fact, it is precisely the inhabitants of our municipalities who remain surprised by the beauty of the places where they live and amazed to realise that they do not know in depth the cultural heritage that is just a few steps from home. Community involvement is fundamental to first raise awareness among citizens about their own heritage. When people live with pride and awareness in the place where they live, this attitude is naturally perceived by visitors as well. The concept that emerged strongly after the pandemic – Live like a Local – reflects precisely what many tourists are looking for today: an authentic experience, rooted in the daily life of the territory. Our initiatives are aimed at both the local population and visitors, with proposals capable of speaking to both audiences."

The dynamics linking the various members of the district are also positive, which is partly due to the efforts made by the association in order to valorise each single municipality, through the organisation of exhibitions, events and assistance services for applying to potential calls for proposals. This mutually beneficial relationship (characterising the relation between individual member municipalities and the association, but also between individual municipalities) depends on belonging to a network, which contributes to maintaining a well-balanced and harmonious context.

The CD's activities span multiple areas, with some of these now consolidated over the years, such as the two annual exhibitions "Il Gusto del Bello" and "Cammina Mantova". The former, which focuses on proximity tourism, is a programme of small-group experiences successfully combining post-pandemic needs with accessibility requirements for the venues where activities are held. The latter has a focus on slow tourism and alternative ways of exploration. Regardless of the type of activity, the primary target remains the local population, without however closing itself off to external visitors.

The table below presents some of the key findings related to Le Regge dei Gonzaga CD.

Table 5. *Distretto Culturale Le Regge dei Gonzaga's Biographic profile.*

| DISTRETTO CULTURALE LE REGGE DEI GONZAGA | | | |
|---|---|---|--------|
| <i>General Information</i> | | | |
| Establishment year | 2011 | Status | Active |
| District area (km²) | 281,57 km ² (2024) ¹¹ | | |
| Total population | 73.801 (2024) ¹² | | |
| <i>Historical development & Objectives</i> | | | |
| First phase (2011-2014) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fondazione Cariplo's financing. • Conservation and valorisation of the Gonzaga cultural heritage. • Integration and innovation of cultural offerings based on the Gonzaga cultural assets. | | |
| Second phase (2014-present) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shift to a self-sustaining model with membership fees and external sources. • COVID-19 disruption. • Focus on tourism initiatives (proximity and slow tourism). • Focus on gastronomic heritage promotion. | | |
| <i>Governance structure</i> | | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formally organised as an Association. • Governing bodies: President, Board of Directors, Assembly of Members. • Flexible governance allowing additional bodies creation (Technical-scientific committee and the director). | | | |
| <i>Stakeholders network & Community participation</i> | | | |
| <i>Stakeholders' dynamics</i> | | <i>Participation model</i> | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Membership logic. • Network-based cooperation. • Collaborative approach. | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Residents-based service offer. • Broad community engagement. | |
| <i>Type of activities implemented</i> | | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two annual exhibitions: "Cammina Mantova" (focus on slow tourism and alternative territorial exploration) and "Il Gusto del Bello" (focus on proximity tourism idea). • Library Network Programmes: reading promotion. • Assistance and support to municipalities in applying to calls for proposals. | | | |
| <i>Challenges & Prospects</i> | | | |
| Challenges | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • COVID-19 impact. | | |
| Prospects | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flexibility for opportunities: readiness to expand activities. • Focus on the added value provided by having a UNESCO site within the district. | | |

Source: Author's elaboration.

¹¹ ISTAT, *Atlante Statistico del territorio*. Available at: <https://aster.istat.it/> (access date: 14 June 2025).

¹² Ibid.

5.1.3 Case Study Profile: Distretto Culturale dell’Habitat Rupestre della Basilicata

The Distretto Culturale dell’Habitat Rupestre della Basilicata was one of those projects financed through the ACRI – Sviluppo Sud programme. After almost a decade of functioning, it officially closed in 2012. The project’s conceptual strength laid in its ambitious temporal narrative spanning 8.000 years of human presence in rupestrian environments, from prehistoric rock paintings to contemporary art installations. Specifically, as specified in the project presentation dossier:

"The current condition of underutilisation of such a rich historical-environmental heritage represents a serious limit for the acceleration of the local economic system in its complexity, including the internationalisation process, even more necessary for the enhancement of local cultural heritage. (...) Rupestrian heritage thus becomes an "asset" for sustainable economic development of one's own territory. It was this particular "cultural endowment" of the Region that inspired the design choice of the district institution, aimed at transforming this cultural armature of the territory into a matrix of authenticity and an instrument of local development. (Project’s submission form – Description section)."

However, this ambition revealed some complexities deriving from this attempt at multi-site cultural management with a regional scope. Its weaknesses, which led to the ending of the CD, will offer some points of discussion about potential risk factors threatening the district’s existence. The emergence of diverging local interests among the various municipalities involved took over from the project’s objective which was:

"to create a promotional circuit system of cultural visits in this area. During the peak development of Melfi's industry, with Fiat, and of the so-called Bradanic industrial line (...) the idea was to create cultural pathways for quality and conscious tourism. We were in a position to implement it, both through the district and with other reference points along the Bradanic ridge. The project envisioned a Bradanic Cultural Line (...). (Raffaello de Ruggieri, president of Fondazione Zétema – leading partner of the CD)"

The table below presents some of the key findings of this CD.

Table 6. Distretto Culturale dell’Habitat Rupestre della Basilicata’s Biographical profile.

| DISTRETTO CULTURALE dell’HABITAT RUPESTRE della BASILICATA | | | |
|---|---|---------------|---------------|
| <i>General Information</i> | | | |
| Establishment year | 2004 | Status | Closed (2012) |
| District area (km²) | 724,98 km ² (2012) ¹³ | | |
| Total population | 224.475 (2011) ¹⁴ | | |
| <i>Historical development & Objectives</i> | | | |

¹³ ISTAT, *Atlante Statistico del territorio*. Available at: <https://aster.istat.it/> (access date: 14 June 2025).

¹⁴ ISTAT, *Censimento PopolazioneAbitazioni*. Available at: <http://dati-censimentopopolazione.istat.it/Index.aspx> (accessed date: 14 June 2025).

| | |
|--|--|
| Conceptual Genesis (late 1990s-early 2000s) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Basilicata cultural system project with a focus on the Renaissance period in the region. • Focus shift to cave heritage. • Attempt of an interregional cave habitat CD between Basilicata and Puglia. • Vision refinement objective: from generic regional culture to specific cave habitat focus with temporal continuity narrative. |
| Inception phase (2003-2004) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Institution of the CD based on rupestrian cultural heritage. • Presentation and approval of the project. • Objective: Create a promotional circuit system for cultural visits in this area. |
| Implementation phase (2005-2012) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Site-specific interventions, each representing different historical periods. • Restoration and valorisation work of the rupestrian heritage. |
| Formal closure (2012) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dissolution of the district. • Continuation of successful sites independently. |
| <i>Governance structure</i> | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Managed through Fondazione Zétema (recognised as Lead Partner). • Formal governance bodies not included. | |
| <i>Stakeholders network & Community participation</i> | |
| <p><i>Stakeholders' dynamics</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Localism and personal conflicts. <p><i>Participation model</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Citizen participation planned but not implemented. | |
| <i>Type of activities implemented</i> | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recovery and restoration activities of rupestrian sites. • Protection of prehistoric cave paintings. • Technological functionalisation of sites. | |
| <i>Challenges</i> | |
| Challenges | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Localism and personal conflicts overriding regional project vision. |

Source: Author's elaboration.

5.1.4 Case Study Profile: Distretto Culturale Pianura Est

The Pianura Est CD was established in 2011 as part of a broader provincial (now metropolitan) cultural governance strategy. It essentially arose from the institutional need to create a coordinated cultural governance system across the vast metropolitan area.

A distinctive characteristic is its numerical strength – being the richest in terms of participating municipalities (15 in total) – which historically enabled significant collaborative capacity. However, this strength has also presented some challenges, particularly following the creation of the Reno Galliera Union, a local public body including 8 of the 15 municipalities

belonging to the district that has assumed cultural management responsibilities for its member municipalities. This discrepancy between the composition of the CD and the Reno Galliera Union has somehow impacted the way of working of the CD. Therefore, it is intended to face this complexity. In this regard:

"The composition of our district has also changed, because the Reno Galliera Union was created, a union of eight municipalities that has also taken on cultural management. Eight of the fifteen municipalities in the district manage culture together. (...) However, the Reno Galliera Union, having conferred culture [to the union level], is already considered by the Region as a network of eight municipalities and presents specificities in participating in regional calls, not being able to network with the rest of the district. Recognising this situation, one of our aims is to open a constructive dialogue with the regional government about this difficulty we are experiencing (Giorgia Govoni, technical contact for Pianura Est CD)."

The district operates through a specific governance structure, encompassing both a political and a technical level. Regarding community participation, it adopts a municipality-centred approach rather than developing district-wide participatory strategies. Local community engagement occurs primarily at the municipal level through collaborations with local associations, as exemplified by the *Festival Narrativo del Paesaggio*, where 13 out of 15 municipalities participated, many in collaboration with local ANPI (National Association of Italian Partisans) sections.

The district's strategic priorities focus on consolidating collaborative working methods and recovering the strong inter-municipal cooperation that characterised earlier phases.

The table below presents some of the key findings related to Pianura Est CD.

Table 7. Distretto Culturale Pianura Est's Biographical profile.

| DISTRETTO CULTURALE PIANURA EST | | | |
|--|---|---------------|--------|
| <i>General Information</i> | | | |
| Establishment year | 2011 | Status | Active |
| District area (km²) | 756,05 km ² (2024) ¹⁵ | | |
| Total population | 165.561 (2024) ¹⁶ | | |
| <i>Historical development & Objectives</i> | | | |
| Phase 1 (2011-2014/15) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • District establishment: approval and formalization of the CDs. • Objective: creation of a system of cultural governance at the provincial level. | | |
| Phase 2 (2015-present) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Institutional Changes: coordination role from Province to Metropolitan City of Bologna. • Direct relationships with the regional administration. | | |

¹⁵ ISTAT, *Atlante Statistico del territorio*. Available at: <https://aster.istat.it/> (access date: 14 June 2025).

¹⁶ Ibid.

| | |
|---|---|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Change in the composition of the district with the institution of the Reno Galliera Union, a local public entity of 8 municipalities (belonging to the district). • Objective: Recover and consolidate a way of working together. |
| <i>Governance structure</i> | |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multi-level governance: 1) Supra-district level and 2) District level. • District level governance: inter-municipality coordination. • District-level bodies: political committee and technical committee. • Possibility of including technical working groups at the district level. |
| <i>Stakeholders network & Community participation</i> | |
| <i>Stakeholders' dynamics</i> | |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presence of Reno Galliera Union with cultural competencies creating dual governance complexity. • Direct relationship with Emilia-Romagna Region (post-2014 legislative reform) replacing previous provincial mediation. • Cross-sectoral partnerships. • Technical cooperation: specialised inter-municipal protocols (e.g., Associated Libraries). |
| <i>Participation model</i> | |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community engagement through municipal-level projects. • No district-wide participatory mechanisms. |
| <i>Type of activities implemented</i> | |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Festival Narrativo del Paesaggio: project articulating through nature and culture with walks and bicycle itineraries, book reviews and theatrical performances. • Collaboration with tourism sector. • Inter-library services and reading promotion. |
| <i>Challenges & Prospects</i> | |
| Challenges | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Institutional changes occurring within and outside the district. • Governance complexity due to Reno Galliera Union partial overlap. • Presence of limited resources. • Need for enhanced peripheral-to-centre initiative capacity. |
| Prospects | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consolidation of collaborative working method. • Strengthened peripheral proposition capacity toward metropolitan centre. • Enhanced awareness of territorial value. |

Source: Author's elaboration.

5.2 Potential Correspondence with Formal Elements

With the scope of bridging the existing gap between literature and empirical research in the field of CDs, this thesis sought to find potential correspondences between formal elements and notions and real applications of such models. Specifically, the question aimed to be answered is:

- *Which formal elements do the selected CD experiences most closely respond to/reflect?*

The table below shows the results obtained through a careful documentary analysis focusing on the very definition of the concept of CD adopted within the different case studies.

The main documental references were:

- for Fondazione Cariplo's CDs: the call for the launch of the project "Cultural Districts"¹⁷,
- for the CD located in Basilicata: the ACRI call for the Sviluppo Sud initiative¹⁸.
- For the last case, the document reference source was the Agreement Protocol for the Implementation of a Cultural District System¹⁹.

¹⁷ Fondazione Cariplo (no date a). *Bando per l'avvio del progetto di Fondazione Cariplo "Distretti Culturali sul territorio lombardo"*. Available at: <https://www.fondazionecariplo.it/static/upload/ban/bando-definitivo.pdf>. (Access date: 5 June 2025).

¹⁸ ACRI. *Progetto Sviluppo Sud. Bando: Basilicata* (document consulted in person).

¹⁹ *Protocollo d'intesa per la realizzazione di un sistema distrettuale per la cultura*. Available at: https://www.cittametropolitana.bo.it/cultura/Engine/RAServeFile.php/f/DistrettiProgetto/Protocollo_d_intesa_DI-STRETTI_CULTURALI_-_presentazione_bozza.pdf (Access date: 8 June 2025).

Table 8. CD concept definition (within case studies' programmes).

| Case | Concept definition ²⁰ | Key elements |
|---|---|---|
| DC della Valle Camonica | <p>“A territorially defined system, coinciding with an area of high density of valuable cultural resources, both material and immaterial, and environmental assets, characterised by a high level of articulation, quality and integration of cultural services aimed at users and by a marked development of connected production chains.”</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Central role of cultural resources (landscape, monumental and artistic heritage) in development trajectories. • Territorial delimitation (not necessarily corresponding to administrative boundaries). • Territorial coherence. • Local community identity and territorial awareness. • Community engagement. |
| DC Le Regge dei Gonzaga | | |
| DC dell'Habitat Rupestre della Basilicata | <p>“A territorially defined system, coinciding with an area of high density of valuable cultural resources, both material and immaterial, and environmental assets, characterised by a high level of articulation, quality and integration of cultural services aimed at users and by a marked development of connected production chains. For a district to emerge, it is therefore necessary to</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Existence and participation of educational institutions at different levels. • Integrated systemic approach. • Existence of economic activities linked to the valorisation process. • Openness to cultural innovations. • Institutional support from a local administrative system. |

²⁰ All definitions, which were reported in Italian, were translated in English by the author.

| | | |
|----------------|--|---|
| | evolve the tourist-cultural attractors of a territory into an integrated supply system capable of attracting and retaining demand.” | |
| DC Pianura Est | “Systems of relationship and integration between the municipalities of the territory and the province, that are configured as places of action to coordinate, at the territorial level, projects and priorities, in order to promote the rationalisation and optimisation of cultural, professional and economic resources, both public and private, of the reference territory and the development of cultural services.” | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inter-municipal coordination and governance system. • Resource optimisation and rationalisation mechanisms. • Programme and planning functions. • Local culture and excellence valorisation. • Institutional network development. • Multi-stakeholder collaboration. |

Source: Author’s elaboration.

6. Discussion

6.1 Differentiation and Convergence in Italian CDs

The methodology chosen for this study, namely comparative analysis, has made it possible to bring to light the common points and main differences between the sample cases. The guiding themes that have been focused on revolve around specific aspects, which were the object of investigation for this thesis' purposes.

6.1.1 Administrative Scale and Territorial Cohesion: From Provincial to Regional Networks

The first element of analysis concerns the territorial scale of CDs. Previous studies on the topic reveal a diverse range of territorial scales, from local neighbourhoods to provincial and regional levels. This contrasts with international CD experiences, which typically exhibit a more uniform territorial scope, that of the urban level. Examining the four case studies of this thesis, three of them operate at the provincial level (Distretto Culturale della Valle Camonica, Distretto Culturale Le Regge dei Gonzaga, Distretto Culturale Pianura Est). Whilst not encompassing every municipality within their respective provinces, they remain within provincial administrative borders. In contrast, the DC dell'Habitat Rupestre della Basilicata is the sole example operating at a regional scale. This aspect indeed opens several significant discussion points.

Firstly, the CD in the Basilicata region, which is the only one of the four to be officially concluded, offers insights into the complexities of managing regional-scale initiatives. A preliminary observation suggests that it may be less complex to make various interests converge when they share a common territorial reference base (such as the provincial one). In more detail, whilst Fondazione Cariplo (no date a) states that CD territorial delimitation does not necessarily have to coincide with administrative boundaries or with other delimitations constructed for systems with other purposes, shared territorial objectives can significantly drive stakeholder collaboration, especially when managing varied interests. To better understand, as highlighted for the CD located in the Basilicata region, the project's completion was ultimately hindered by the emergence of localisms among entities from different provinces, which did not have a strong history of collaboration, but on the contrary, had found themselves for years in mere competition. In other words, this case aligns with those theories that conceive CDs as being characterised by volatile networks. These networks are dependent on shifting local stakeholder coalitions and unstable personal alliances, making it difficult to pursue a consistent political agenda (Mommaas, 2004, cited in Gugu and Dal Molin, 2016, p. 240).

Concerning the other cases, it is noteworthy to stress how, for instance, in Fondazione Cariplo's CDs programme, territorial cohesion is of fundamental importance, so much so as to be a criterion considered for the selection of potential participating areas. Specifically, in fact, in the first phase of the Cariplo programme, some geographical constraints linked to previous working communities (such as Mountain Communities, GAL, etc.) were still respected, in the belief that a progressive habit of collaboration and cooperation was a valuable element for sharing the district project (Barbetta, Cammelli and Della Torre, 2013).

Regarding the Pianura Est CD, some reflections can be made about the territorial scale of reference, which is the provincial one, as the district is part of the broader Cultural Districts project launched by the Province of Bologna. However, despite what was highlighted earlier about the non-necessity of coincidence with administrative boundaries and/or other delimitations constructed, some institutional changes within the district have necessitated a re-evaluation of this stance. In fact, with the establishment of the Reno Galliera Union, a territorial body including 8 municipalities out of the 15 in the district, some internal dynamics have changed, leading to operational problems in carrying out collaborative and concerted work. This is mainly due to the lack of direct correspondence between the union and the district municipalities, which causes impasses that limit the district's participation in regional projects.

6.1.2 Governance Models and Stakeholders Dynamics: Formal and Informal Management Approaches

Considering the great variety of stakeholders participating in a CD, which can include a mix of private, non-profit and public sector entities, some conflicts may emerge regarding the objectives and priorities intended to be set (Ellis, 2024). The multitude of actors involved, which may result in numerous distinct agendas not always aligned with a coherent and single set of interests and goals, emphasises the importance of the governance structure of each CD. This managerial perspective was also addressed in CD literature, which identifies two types of managerial style: formal and informal, leading to different dynamics (Hitters & Richards, 2002, cited in Gugu and Dal Molin, 2016, p. 241). The national survey by Nuccio and Ponzini (2017) revealed that some CDs have a formalised institutional dimension, whilst others (the majority) operate through informal agreements. In these latter cases, the local authority or the organisation promoting the CD usually takes the role of managing institution.

The configuration of this thesis' sample incorporates both scenarios. Namely, the CD Le Regge dei Gonzaga is structured as a formal association with its own Statute, according to which:

- "1. The Association operates within the territorial scope of the Lombardy Region. It is aimed at promoting the realisation and development of the Cultural District 'Le Regge dei Gonzaga,' coordinating it and managing it.
2. The Association, in particular, carries out coordination and governance actions of the adhering Entities, with functions of assistance to regional, national or European funding practices aimed at the recovery of architectural and/or historical-artistic assets owned by the Associates, the tourist promotion of the territory, the organisation of cultural events in a district logic and for the benefit of the territory. (Article 3, Statute – translated by the author)."

The Pianura Est CD features a multi-level governance structure composed of a supra-district and a district level. Regarding the latter, it is further segmented into two distinct layers: a political layer and a technical layer.

The literature on more formal approaches outlines how these are considered less likely to promote collaboration among actors involved or to bring a sense of ownership. Regarding these theoretical positions, the two cases follow an opposite direction. On the one side, there is the CD Le Regge dei Gonzaga that, despite its formal governance structure, is distinguished by strong collaborative relationships among its stakeholders. By conceiving its services primarily (not exclusively) for its communities and actors, this model also cultivates a sense of ownership and awareness. Moreover, in line with the literature on the topic, the district's collaborative environment is maintained also thanks to the development of consensus-based decision-making process, mutual consultation, and information sharing (Arnaboldi & Spiller, 2011; Mizzau & Montanari, 2008, cited in Gugu and Dal Molin, 2016, p. 241). With respect to possible competition and dynamics hindering the collaborative spirit of this CD, the president of the Association states:

"I must say that there has never been a real competition perceived between the municipalities. Our approach is to offer everyone the same opportunities, treating each member with equity. Naturally, some initiatives may involve one municipality in one year and another the following year: it is not possible to reach all territories simultaneously, but this aspect is generally understood and has never generated particular criticalities. This is also thanks to the support that, as an association, we provide to individual municipalities and to the fact that, at the beginning of the year, the actions to be undertaken are shared in a clear and transparent manner with all members."

On the other side, there is the Pianura Est CD, where the same positive condition is acknowledged. Indeed, as highlighted by the technical contact of the district:

"There have been no significant tensions. All the projects that are implemented are shared proposals. They are experienced as a value for everyone, even when the project does not directly involve all members but concerns individual realities. If the project is of quality, it still produces value for everyone and generates a positive effect on the entire district."

However, in the case of the Pianura Est CD, some challenges can be attributed to its governance structure. Specifically, some coordination issues at the supra-district level regarding the relationship between the centre (the Metropolitan City of Bologna) and the periphery

(Pianura Est CD) are witnessed. The district needs to strengthen its capacity to propose initiatives to the centre, rather than solely receiving stimuli.

For the other two CDs, as outlined in the literature, other institutions often take the lead, such as local associations or agencies working in the field of local development. For the Valle Camonica CD, an important role is recognised by its leading organisation - the Comunità Montana della Valle Camonica²¹. Although it does not foresee a formal ad-hoc established organisation responsible for managing the district, its role is defined and acknowledged through an institutional agreement and established governing bodies.

For the Distretto Culturale dell'Habitat Rupestre della Basilicata, the Fondazione Zétema held the leading role.

In these cases, an important role is played by the leadership. According to the literature, the presence of strong leadership is also expected to influence CDs' success (Brooks & Kushner, 2001, cited in Gugu and Dal Molin, 2016, p. 241). Under this lens, it can be interpreted that the success of the Valle Camonica CD:

"Our strength has been to consolidate ourselves as a competent and reliable subject. The fact that we have made significant progress on the front of cultural production has allowed us to be recognised as a qualified interlocutor. When we address an issue, all actors recognise our specific competence. Furthermore, by availing ourselves of specialised consultants and technical support, we always guarantee technical oversight of issues, which facilitates dialogue on the merit of content when working with a structure that relies on clear and recognised competencies. This approach has enabled recognition of all of the roles and values of the activities we carry out in the territory. The entities identify with the initiatives we promote and collaborate actively with us (Sergio Cotti Piccinelli, director of DC della Valle Camonica)."

6.1.3 Residents Engagement and Territorial Identity: Strengthening Social Cohesion

The role that local communities have within CDs is of fundamental importance. As outlined by Fondazione Cariplo (2005), their active role serves not only to facilitate cohesion and participation but also to align the activities planned to be implemented with territorial demands. However, despite the role given to the resident communities by the literature, what emerges from previous studies is in contrast to this aspect. Namely, Nuccio and Ponzini (2017) identify as one of the major problems with Italian CDs a low degree of engagement and participation of local communities. They stress how in most cases the CD was designed as a marketing device for remote areas or marginal territories, which are not part of the traditional tourist itineraries, solely with the objective of attracting external visitors.

²¹ A local entity, established by regional law among mountain and foothill municipalities for the purpose of promoting the enhancement of mountain areas, and facilitating the associated exercise of municipal functions.

This study, however, reveals a different picture with all four examined cases either demonstrating strong community participation or planning for resident involvement (this latter refers to the DC dell'Habitat Rupestre della Basilicata).

The two CDs of the Fondazione Cariplo's programme show a relevant community-participation component within their realities. As for the Valle Camonica CD, the intention is to somehow reverse the condition of isolation of local communities, caused by geographical and demographic factors. This is attempted by bringing residents in an area out of their comfort zone and by placing them at the centre of innovative and alternative initiatives that also challenge their perception of the territory. A stimulus towards social cohesion is given through initiatives and projects specifically designed for the local community, which impact the spaces of public participation of citizens (e.g., the creation of the public square in the municipality of Malegno). Instead, regarding the Le Regge dei Gonzaga CD, it can be stated that the local community is at the centre of this process, identified as the main recipient of its cultural offer. The perspective is that only a community conscious of its own heritage and territory can then transmit its intrinsic value to external visitors.

As for the Pianura Est CD, the local community is recognised as making an important participatory contribution. In this regard, the technical contact of the district states:

"According to my experience, this participation exists. Taking as an example the Festival Narrativo del Paesaggio, where this year 13 out of 15 municipalities in the district participated, most municipalities developed a project in collaboration with local associations. This year the theme of the festival was the 80th Anniversary of the Liberation of Bologna and we collaborated with all the ANPI [National Association of Italian Partisans] in the territory. (...) In general, I observe that most of us work in collaboration with associations, with different intensities depending on the circumstance. On the other hand, it emerges that the associative movement desires to be involved more. (Giorgia Govoni, technical contact of Pianura Est CD)"

It is important to note that district-level engagement strategies were not mentioned in any of the three aforementioned cases. Local population involvement largely remains a matter internal to the municipalities belonging to the districts. Regarding this position:

" However, co-design is implemented by the different municipalities, not at the district level. (Giorgia Govoni, technical contact of Pianura Est CD)"

"The theme of participation then develops within individual municipalities. We have never developed a participatory action at a general district level (Sergio Cotti Piccinelli, director of Valle Camonica CD)."

The CD of the Basilicata region was the sole case where activities involving the local community were not found. However, it is emphasised that local population involvement in the project was planned, but unfortunately did not then see a follow-up (because of its closure). Nevertheless, it is important to note how this participatory legacy of the DC dell'Habitat

Rupestre della Basilicata then played a fundamental role in the path leading to Matera being designated as the European Capital of Culture (ECOC) 2019. The president of the Fondazione Zétema, who was also mayor of the city and a key figure in the designation of Matera as ECOC, states that:

"Involvement was planned for the participatory part, for co-creativity within the context. However, it was necessary to first consolidate the operational nucleus. In the project and in the main idea, citizen involvement was contemplated. This approach was subsequently developed in the Matera project, European Capital of Culture. In the March 2019 dossier, we wanted to demonstrate that culture (...) becomes an instrument (...) that transforms the citizen into a cultural inhabitant. It means consciously inhabiting one's city, being familiar with it, recognising oneself in the territory and actively engaging in building the future of a city that is perceived as unique and distinctive. Culture as an instrument of social transformation allows the passage from a society of extras to a protagonist society, in which citizens finally recognise themselves in their *polis* and take responsibility for building the future of the territory with which they identify."

6.2 Theory-Practice Alignment: Formal Elements across Selected CD Experiences

This study aims to bridge the gap between literature and empirical research in the field of Cultural Districts. Therefore, one of its focuses was on identifying possible alignments between theory and practice.

A primary point of discussion concerns the spontaneity/intentionality rationale behind the development of CDs. As highlighted in Chapter 1, the literature on the topic has identified two distinct approaches: 1) top-down, and 2) bottom-up. In the former, the district is activated by a public institution and interventions are planned and made operational in the local reality. The latter foresees a spontaneous aggregation of actors at the territorial level. All four cases in this study align with the intentionality concept, meaning that "*a district is something that is conceived by some entity – a public agency, a local government or in some cases a private developer – with a purpose in mind*" (Ellis, 2024, p. 17). Indeed, as detailed in Chapters 3 and 4, the four CDs of the sample belong to broader programs and projects, launched both by banking foundations – this is the case of Fondazione Cariplo *Distretti Culturali* and ACRI *Sviluppo Sud* - and by a local government – as in the case of Pianura Est CD. This differentiates CDs from industrial districts, with the latter having risen in a spontaneous way from a favourable socio-institutional base. The four cases in this study, conversely, did not emerge spontaneously.

Overall, the thesis' findings seem to be aligned with the position of Valentino, who, as presented in Chapter 1, conceptualises the CD as a system which is planned. According to him, CDs result from specific strategies, thus not being a spontaneous phenomenon. This contrasts with other researchers' theories, namely Sacco and Pedrini's contribution to the topic (2003), whose idea is that such a model cannot be generated on order and that it is not possible to

establish a CD wherever cultural attraction resources are present. Additionally, the intentionality logic characterising the four case studies partially conflicts with Santagata's positions, too, since he identifies some categories of CDs as the result of intentional planning or decision-making.

However, it is also important to note how these districts did not arise from a contextual void. On the contrary, often they build upon previous projects and cultural systems. This is explicitly found in the DC della Valle Camonica, which, due to its territory's maturity and prior involvement in another cultural system project, was the first among Cariplo's CDs to be launched. Similarly, the DC dell'Habitat Rupestre della Basilicata underwent a significant preparatory phase prior to the district's realisation, from the Basilicata cultural system project to an attempt to establish a cultural district with Puglia focused on rupestrian art. On this preparatory phase, Fondazione Zétema's president - Raffaello de Ruggieri - explains:

"We had started from another project: the cultural system of Basilicata. (...) Starting from this initiative, we gradually developed an operation more coherent with the work we were doing for the Sassi. Our idea was to present the Sassi as a symbol of continuity capable of telling the story of man from origins to the present day. (...) From this project trajectory was born a reflection that led us to consider a regional-scale operation. In that period there was talk of industrial districts (...) In this context, we proposed the establishment of a cultural district of the Apulian-Lucanian rupestrian habitat, aggregating all the rupestrian heritage that characterises our territory."

Likewise, the Pianura Est CD, and more broadly, the establishment of this new cultural territorial governance model within the Province of Bologna, benefited from twenty years of collaborative experience in cultural production and promotion involving the province, local authorities, associations, and private entities. Furthermore, as previously mentioned, especially for the Cariplo CDs, territories with previous collaborations were considered during the initial identification phase of possible CDs.

Another key discussion point regards the integrated approach adopted by these models towards local development strategies. As presented in Chapter 1, when dealing with CDs, there emerges the concept of horizontal integration among different sectors, distinguishing them from traditional industrial districts. Indeed, CDs are envisioned as integrated systems relying on strategic complementarities between different supply chains, including both those within cultural production and those external to it (Sacco and Tavano Blessi, 2005). Therefore, the study investigated whether the cultural production sector in each sample case was integrated with other sectors, and if so, which ones. The table below illustrates the findings from the four CDs.

Table 9. Integrated supply chains in the four case studies.

| Case | Integrated sector |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| Valle Camonica CD | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Craft sector: Wool supply chain - Stone supply chain • Tourism sector • Steel industry (future goal) |
| Le Regge dei Gonzaga CD | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tourism sector • Taste supply chain |
| CD Habitat Rupestre della Basilicata | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tourism sector • Agro-industrial sector • Craft sector |
| Pianura Est CD | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tourism sector • Youth policy |

Source: Author's elaboration.

As visible from the table, all four CDs expect to include diverse value chains. As for the Valle Camonica CD, it is noteworthy to mention that there exists a willingness to integrate sectors beyond traditional crafts. The idea is indeed to connect with the industrial world, given the valley's strong steel industrial tradition, which has marked the history of its territory. The Le Regge dei Gonzaga CD, on the other hand, has focused on both the tourism sector, promoting and launching initiatives related to slow tourism and proximity tourism, and the restaurant sector, enhancing local food and wine traditions. A key initiative is the so-called exhibition "Il Gusto del Bello", involving operators and restaurateurs from partner municipalities within the Ea(s)t Lombardy network. To illustrate, the president of the district provides the following example:

"In Revere we organised a beautiful tour with an aperitif on the floating mill with wines from a local winery, a truffle tasting from an operator involved in the Ea(s)t Lombardy area, and lunch at one of the Ea(s)t Lombardy restaurants in the municipality of Borgo Mantovano."

Regarding the Pianura Est CD, it is defined in the implementation agreement²² in article 2, that in relation to their territorial scope, districts collaborate in the valorisation of culture as an economic driver, strengthening collaborative relationships with the tourism sector, the

²² *Accordo attuativo della Convenzione Quadro per la collaborazione istituzionale fra Città Metropolitana, unioni e singoli comuni dell'area metropolitana bolognese in materia di cultura (2022)*. Available at: https://www.cittametropolitana.bo.it/portale/Engine/RAServeFile.php/f/Accordo_Cultura_proroga_firmato_PG2_3297_2022.pdf (Accessed: 8 June 2025).

productive system, particularly creative industries, the metropolitan welfare system, youth policies, education and training. Specifically, the Pianura Est CD primarily exhibits complementarity with the tourism sector and youth policies.

Finally, regarding the DC dell'Habitat Rupestre della Basilicata, it is highlighted a possible positive integration with the agro-industrial sector along with that of crafts (particularly, ceramics, tuff, wood).

Lastly, some considerations must be made regarding potential connections between the districts and external markets, meaning in this case external users/visitors. The analysis reveals that, for the active CDs in the sample, there is generally no defined strategy to expand their catchment area beyond provincial/regional boundaries. Whilst no dedicated tools have been developed in this direction, some CDs express a willingness to pursue this objective. In contrast to this, for others it is not a priority. For instance, for the Valle Camonica CD, its director states:

"The issue of long networks represents a significant challenge, because there is a relational question. We are a valley with particular geographical characteristics, and we have not yet fully developed the capacity to relate at an institutional level to international realities. On the other hand, there is a need for greater support, without which it is complex for a territory like ours, with its specificities and internal characteristics, to succeed in expanding beyond local boundaries. (Sergio Cotti Piccinelli)"

7. Conclusions and Recommendations for Future Research

The increasing academic focus on culture-based spatial clustering formations – CDs – goes along with the expanding conception of culture as a driving force for local development processes. Starting from the initial experiments in urban planning, such as the initiatives implemented by the Greater London Council from the 1970s, there has been a progressive consolidation of extensive literature on this topic. The academic literature has established theoretical frameworks and typologies for CDs and considerable research exists on particular case studies. Nevertheless, this has resulted in such fragmented and diversified theoretical development.

The primary distinguishing factor considered for this research relates precisely to what Mommaas (2004, cited in Sacco and Nuccio, 2008, p. 49) emphasises: that the cultural district designation has frequently been applied to vastly different spatial contexts and dimensions – sometimes referring to urban neighbourhoods, but also to cities and networks of towns. Recognising this proliferation of content on the subject, the geographical focus chosen for this research fell on the Italian context, where various CD experiences appear to distinguish themselves from international examples particularly through their territorial scale of operation, which can range from provincial to regional levels (with few experiences in exclusively urban and/or suburban settings). Furthermore, the decision to concentrate on the Italian context was made also due to its significance in terms of cultural heritage enhancement and the contributions developed regarding industrial districts. Indeed, many scholars consider CDs as an adaptation of traditional industrial districts, resulting from the transformation process of contemporary society into a post-industrial society.

This study aimed to explore the reality of Italian CDs, examining *how different the experiences under the label of CDs are*. The overall objective of the proposed dissertation was to provide a significant contribution to bridging the existing gap between theories and empirical field research, shedding light on the specific characteristics of these models within the Italian territory, but also on possible shared patterns which make it possible to define an Italian model of CDs distinguishable from international ones. In order to carry out this comparison, the following research questions were considered: “*What are the specific characteristics of the selected CDs in Italy? Although these realities are characterised by factors of differentiation, is it possible to identify common elements among the various selected CD experiences in Italy?*”. Furthermore, the present thesis tried to assess and examine a possible continuity between theory and empirical practices, by answering the following research question: “*Which formal elements do the selected CD experiences most closely respond to/reflect?*”. These

objectives have been pursued by conducting comparative research of four case studies, using semi-structured interviews and document analysis.

The empirical analysis reveals that Italian CDs demonstrate remarkable diversity in their organisational forms and governance structure, confirming the initial hypothesis about high variability in CD experiences. Some operate through formal institutional frameworks with clearly defined legal structures, board compositions, and operational protocols. Others function as informal networks of cultural actors who collaborate through flexible partnerships. Despite this major differentiation, several common elements unifying Italian CDs experiences are identified. All four cases exhibit a strong connection to territorial identity. Each CD uses the unique features of its territory, encompassing both tangible cultural heritage (archaeological sites, monuments) and intangible cultural assets, as the basis for its cultural offering. All CDs, regardless of their formal structure, involve collaboration among diverse stakeholders. These collaborative relationships emerge as a critical success factor. Indeed, the only case with diverging interests undermining a harmonious collaborative environment is represented by the DC dell'Habitat Rupestre della Basilicata, which after one first phase of activity, had to face some issues due to the emergence of localisms which brought about the conclusion of the project before implementing all the planned activities.

All four CDs demonstrate an explicit orientation towards territorial development that goes beyond cultural preservation or promotion. Culture is seen as a driver of wider socio-economic development, with the goal of generating impacts related to employment, income, tourism attraction, and territorial attractiveness. This is in line with what is stated by Della Torre (2015), who highlights how the protection of a good/asset does not necessarily mean the exclusion of that good/asset from economic processes. Adaptive management practices, essential for sustainability, are evident across all CDs, excluding the one officially closed. These practices demonstrate the ability to adjust their strategies and operations in response to evolving circumstances and challenges.

Examining the selected cases against established theoretical frameworks reveals both convergences and divergences that contribute to a deeper comprehension of CD phenomena. Empirical evidence strongly supports Valentino's conceptualisation of CDs as relational systems. The observed interconnectedness of actors, resources, and activities in these cases aligns with his nodes-and-relations model. The critical role of cultural heritage as the central organising principle around which other territorial resources are mobilised validates this systemic approach. Santagata's taxonomy is also empirically supported, with cases demonstrating characteristics of his ideal types, especially the institutional CD model. The role of institutions in creating and maintaining CDs appears across all analysed cases, despite

considerable variations in specific institutional arrangements. The research also highlights the importance of temporal dynamics, with CDs evolving through different phases that require different organisational responses.

While this research has provided a contribution to the empirical research in the field of Italian CDs, several areas require further investigation, thus facilitating analytical and policy evaluations.

First, it would be interesting to carry out field research concerning CDs beyond the Italian territory to have an overall framework of experiences located in international contexts, which, as outlined several times, possess distinctive characteristics from Italian ones (e.g., the territorial operational scale). To further explore the application of the concept in real distinguishable contexts, a cross-comparative analysis among practical CDs experiences would provide insights into the common patterns and specificities. The aim would be to systematize the literary contributions on the topic, attempting to organise them under a less fragmented theory, thus allowing researchers to conduct comparative assessments and opening up a discussion on the impact of these models at the policy-making level.

In addition to this, an important effort is suggested to be made as regards evaluating the impact of these models in quantitative terms. The impact of CDs has attracted significant attention from researchers, especially in the U.S. Indeed, Redaelli (2019) highlights how *“recently, the literature has also looked at the impact of cultural districts through statistical analyses focusing on the impact of the cultural district on the economic health of the neighbourhood.”* (p. 138). It would be desirable to align with international researchers on this and employ quantitative methods to evaluate Italian CDs’ impact on society, which could be obtained through surveys or statistical analysis of data. Understanding these impacts in measurable terms would also make CDs contributions more visible both at the research and policy levels.

By addressing these areas, future research could contribute to a deeper and more comprehensive understanding of CDs in their capabilities and possibilities for driving development strategies within territories. It would respond to the emerging need to combine both large statistical comparisons and in-depth case studies (Redaelli, 2019) so as to have a complete overview of these models.

Bibliography

- Alberti, F. G. and Giusti, J. D. (2009). 'Alla ricerca dei distretti culturali. Un'analisi critica della letteratura', *Liuc Papers*, n.229, pp. 1-17. Available at: <https://biblio.liuc.it/liucpap/pdf/229.pdf>.
- Alsaawi, A. (2014). 'A Critical Review of Qualitative Interviews', *European Journal of Business and Social Sciences*, 3(4), pp. 149-156. <https://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.2819536>.
- Barbetta, G. P., Cammelli, M. and Della Torre, S. (2013). 'I distretti culturali di Fondazione Cariplo', in *Distretti Culturali: dalla teoria alla pratica*. Bologna: Il Mulino.
- Becattini, G. (2017). 'The Marshallian industrial district as a socio-economic notion', *Revue d'économie industrielle*, 157, pp.13-32. <https://doi.org/10.4000/rei.6507>
- Belussi, F. and Caldari, K. (2009). 'At the origin of the industrial district: Alfred Marshall and the Cambridge school', *Cambridge Journal of Economics*, 33(2), pp. 335-355. <https://doi.org/10.1093/cje/ben041>.
- Biocca, L. (2020). *Cosa significa oggi "distretto culturale"? Una mappatura dei casi italiani e una riflessione sulle realtà emergenti*. Tesi di Laurea Magistrale. Università Ca' Foscari Venezia. Available at: <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.14247/14433>.
- Bowen, G. (2009). 'Document Analysis as a Qualitative Research Method', *Qualitative Research Journal*, 9, pp- 27-40. doi: 10.3316/QRJ0902027.
- Calcagno, M., Lusiani, M. and Panozzo, F. (2012). *Rhetoric and Practice of Cultural Districts as a Model of Governance: Empirical Evidence from the Veneto Region*. Department of Management, Università Ca' Foscari Venezia Working Paper No. 19/2012, pp.1-8. Available at: <https://ssrn.com/abstract=2170985>.
- Cerquetti, M. and Ferrara, C. (2015). 'Distretti culturali: percorsi evolutivi e azioni di *policy* a confronto', *Il capitale culturale*, (3), pp. 137-163. <https://doi.org/10.13138/2039-2362/1320>.
- Colavitti, A. M. and Usai, A. (2020). 'Inside the system-wide cultural district: a new relational and organisational taxonomy of cultural districts based on the sector policies by Italian Regions (2000-2015)', *City, Territory and Architecture*, 7(4), pp.1-26. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40410-020-0112-1>

- Collier, D. (1993). 'The Comparative Method' in W. Finifter, A. (ed.) *Political Science: The State of the Discipline II*. American Political Science Association, pp. 105-119. Available at: <https://ssrn.com/abstract=1540884>.
- Dalle Nogare, C. (2013). 'Valorizzazione del patrimonio culturale e crescita del capitale creativo: il distretto culturale della Valle Camonica.', Marzatico, F. and Nuccio, M. (eds) *APSAT 7. Conoscenza e valorizzazione dei paesaggi trentini*, SAP Società Archeologica, pp. 189-200. Available at: <https://iris.unibs.it/handle/11379/160863>.
- Della Torre, S. (2015). 'Lezioni imparate sul campo dei distretti culturali'. *Il capitale culturale*, (3), pp. 61-73. doi: [10.13138/2039-2362/1175](https://doi.org/10.13138/2039-2362/1175).
- Ellis, A. (2024). 'Cultural and creative districts in a changing Europe' in Carras, C. (ed.), *The Handbook of Cultural Work*. 1, Bloomsbury Publishing, pp. 17-23. doi: 10.5040/9781350359499.
- Fanzini, D. and Rotaru, I. (2012). 'The Italian Cultural Districts as a Model for Sustainable Tourism and Territorial Development', *Journal of Tourism Challenges and Trends*, 5(2), pp. 1-18.
- Felicetti, M. (2016). 'Cultural Innovation and Local Development: Matera as a Cultural District', *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 223, p. 615. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2016.05.366>.
- Ferilli, G. and Cappiello, G.A. (2013). 'Distretto Culturale e capitale culturale: aspetti socioeconomici' in Grossi, E., Ravagnan, A. (eds) *Cultura e salute*. Milano, Springer, pp. 47-58.
- Fondazione Zétema. (no date a). *Distretto culturale dell'Habitat Rupestre. Modulo di presentazione*. Internal document. Unpublished.
- Frost-Kumpf, H. A. (1998). 'Cultural Districts: Arts Management and Urban Redevelopment', *American for the Arts*, Washington, DC, p.7. Available at: https://www.americansforthearts.org/sites/default/files/Cultural%20Districts_0.pdf.
- Giambalvo, M. (2007). 'Distretto Culturale', *Rivista AS*, 6, pp. 469-472. Available at: <https://emeroteca.bibliotecasanfedele.it/Base/DownloadFile?dw=AS&path=IwNDLXrLT+d86fddjq1guwjYICFZZAqw9/8JjPuB8lj7FkYdLCS4qQJuHBEKd3GY>.

- Gugu, S. and Dal Molin, M. (2016). 'Collaborative Local Cultural Governance: What Works? The Case of Cultural Districts in Italy', *Administrations & Society*, 48(2), p. 240. doi: 10.1177/0095399715581037.
- Hinna, A. (2015). 'Tipologie di distretti culturali a confronto: politiche, governo e gestione', *Il capitale culturale*, (3), pp. 43-59. doi: 10.13138/2039-2362/1237.
- Lavanga, M. and Trimarchi, M. (2009). 'Distretti industriali e distretti culturali: analogie, limiti, indirizzi di politica del territorio (Industrial districts and cultural districts: similarities, limits and directions of regional policies)', *Le Pagine di Risposta Turismo*, 6, pp. 1-10. Available at: https://pure.uva.nl/ws/files/843669/73290_lavanga2.pdf.
- Le Blanc, A. (2010) 'Cultural Districts, A New Strategy for Regional Development? The South-East Cultural District in Sicily', *Regional Studies*, 44(7), pp. 905-917. doi: 10.1080/00343400903427936.
- Nuccio, M. and Ponzini, D. (2017). 'What does a cultural district actually do? Critically reappraising 15 years of cultural district policy in Italy', *European Urban and Regional Studies*, 24(4), pp. 405-424. doi: 10.1177/0969776416643749.
- Nyimbili, F. and Nyimbili, L. (2024) 'Types of Purposive Sampling Techniques with Their Examples and Application in Qualitative Research Studies', *British Journal of Multidisciplinary and Advanced Studies*, 5(1), pp. 90-99. doi: 10.37745/bjmas.2022.0419.
- Patton, M. Q. (ed.) (2015). *Qualitative Research & Evaluation Methods*. 3. Sage Publications, Inc.
- Ponzini, D., Gugu, S. and Oppio, A. (2014). 'Is the concept of cultural district appropriate for both analysis and policymaking? Two cases in Northern Italy', *City, Culture and Society*, 5(2), pp. 75-76. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ccs.2014.05.008>
- Porreca, F. (2024). *I distretti culturali: modelli di governance per lo sviluppo del territorio*, Quaderno Romagnosi 3/2024, pp. 21-22. Available at: https://www.fondazioneromagnosi.it/sites/default/files/quaderno_romagnosi_2024-3.pdf.
- Redaelli, E. (2019). *Connecting Arts and Place*. Palgrave Macmillan, Cham, pp. 127-152. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-05339-0_5

- Sacco, P. L. and Ferilli, G. (2006). 'Il distretto culturale evoluto nell'economia post-industriale', in Provincia di Roma (ed.) *Il territorio soggetto culturale. La provincia di Roma disegna il suo distretto: tracce, suggestioni, forme, contenuti*. Franco Angeli, 1, pp. 194-213.
- Sacco, P. L. and Pedrini, S. (2003). *Il distretto culturale: mito o opportunità?*, EBLA Center, Università di Torino Working Paper Series No. 05/2003. Available at: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/23696864_Distretto_culturale_mito_o_opportunita.
- Sacco, P. L. and Tavano Blessi, G. (2005). 'Verso un nuovo modello di sviluppo sostenibile', *Meridiana*, 54, pp. 187-209. doi: 10.1400/78440.
- Sacco, P. L., Ferilli, G., Tavano Blessi, G., and Nuccio, M. (2013). 'Culture as an Engine of Local Development Processes: System-Wide Cultural Districts I: Theory', *Growth and Change*, 44(4), pp. 555-570. <https://doi.org/10.1111/grow.12020>
- Santagata, W. (2002). *Cultural district, property rights and sustainable economic growth*, EBLA Center, University of Turin Working Paper Series No. 01/2002. Available at: https://www.fondazioneasantagata.it/wp-content/uploads/1_WP_Ebla.pdf.
- Santagata, W. (2004). *Cultural districts and economic development*, EBLA Center, University of Turin Working Paper Series No. 01/2004. Available at: https://www.fondazioneasantagata.it/wp-content/uploads/1_WP_Ebla-2.pdf.
- Valentino, P. (2003). *Le trame del territorio. Politiche di sviluppo dei sistemi territoriali e distretti culturali*. Milano, Sperling & Kupfer.

Webliography

ACRI. (2004). *Sviluppo Sud: selezionati 41 progetti*. (Press release). Available at: https://www.acri.it/upload/pressReleases/com_stampa_200773_101746_cs20040623.pdf (Access date: 5 May 2025).

ACRI. (no date). *Fondazioni di origine bancaria*. Available at: <https://www.acri.it/fondazioni/> (Access date: 11 June 2025).

Città Metropolitana di Bologna (2022). *Accordo attuativo della Convenzione Quadro per la collaborazione istituzionale fra Città Metropolitana, unioni e singoli comuni dell'area metropolitana bolognese in materia di cultura*. Available at: https://www.cittametropolitana.bo.it/portale/Engine/RAServeFile.php/f/Accordo_Cultura_proroga_firmato_PG23297_2022.pdf (Access date: 8 June 2025).

Città Metropolitana di Bologna (no date a). *Protocollo d'intesa per la realizzazione di un sistema distrettuale per la cultura*. Available at: https://www.cittametropolitana.bo.it/cultura/Engine/RAServeFile.php/f/DistrettiProgetto/Protocollo_d_intesa_DISTRETTI_CULTURALI_-_presentazione_bozza.pdf (Access date: 8 June 2025).

Città Metropolitana di Bologna (no date b). *Distretti Culturali. Pianura Est*. Available at: https://www.cittametropolitana.bo.it/portale/Distretti_culturali/d_Pianura_Est (Access date: 8 June 2025).

Città Metropolitana di Bologna. (no date c). *Distretti Culturali*. Available at: https://www.cittametropolitana.bo.it/cultura/Distretti_culturali (Access date: 8 June 2025).

Fondazione Cariplo (no date a). *Bando per l'avvio del progetto di Fondazione Cariplo "Distretti Culturali sul territorio lombardo"*. Available at: <https://www.fondazionecariplo.it/static/upload/ban/bando-definitivo.pdf> (Access date: 15 June 2025)

Fondazione Cariplo (no date b). *Come realizzare uno studio di fattibilità operativa per la progettazione di un distretto culturale. Linee guida*. Available at: https://www.fondazionecariplo.it/static/upload/fc_/fc_distrettilinee_web.pdf (Access date: 15 June 2025).

- Fondazione Cariplo. (no date c). *Sei distretti culturali in Lombardia*. Available at: <https://www.fondazionecariplo.it/static/upload/6-s/6-sei-distretti.pdf> (Access date: 26 May 2025).
- Fondazione Cariplo. (no date d). *Distretto Culturale Le Regge dei Gonzaga*. Available at: <https://www.fondazionecariplo.it/static/upload/le-/le-regge-dei-gonzaga.pdf> (Access date: 29 April 2025).
- Fondazione Zétema. (no date b). *Distretto Culturale dell'Habitat Rupestre della Basilicata (2004 – 2012)*. Available at: <https://www.zetema.org/attivita/progetti-di-recupero-e-valorizzazione/distretto-culturale-dellhabitat-rupestre-della-basilicata-2004-2012/> (Access date: 10 May 2025).
- ISTAT, *Atlante Statistico del territorio*, available at: <https://aster.istat.it/> (Access date: 14 June 2025).
- ISTAT, *Atlante Statistico del territorio*, available at: <https://aster.istat.it/> (Access date: 14 June 2025).
- ISTAT, *Censimento PopolazioneAbitazioni*, available at: <http://dati-censimentopopolazione.istat.it/Index.aspx> (Access date: 14 June 2025).
- Italia non profit. (no date). *Le Fondazioni di Origine Bancaria*. Available at: <https://italianonprofit.it/risorse/definizioni/fondazioni-origine-bancaria/> (Access date: 11 June 2025).
- Le Regge dei Gonzaga. (no date). *Associazione Distretto Culturale Le Regge dei Gonzaga – CHI SIAMO*. Available at: <https://reggedeigonzaga.it/chi-siamo/> (Access date: 29 April 2025).
- Provincia di Bologna. (2012). *I distretti Culturali. Il nuovo progetto di governance territoriale della Provincia di Bologna*. Available at: https://www.cittametropolitana.bo.it/portale/Engine/RAServeFile.php/f/allegati_generi/ci/2012.09.25_presentazione_Distretti_Culturali.pdf (Access date: 23 May 2025).

Annexes

Annex A

Transcription of the interview with Sergio Cotti Piccinelli, director of the “Distretto Culturale della Valle Camonica”

Antonia Schiavone

Il DC della Valle Camonica è stato il primo distretto del progetto “Distretti Culturali” della Fondazione Cariplo ad essere partito. È da marzo 2009 che il DC della Valle Camonica è pienamente attivo, riuscendo così ad avere una continuità operativa che è andata oltre il periodo di sostegno della Fondazione Cariplo. Considerando questo lungo percorso che ormai va avanti da più di 15 anni, Le chiedo di descrivere lo sviluppo storico del DC della Valle Camonica, ripercorrendo le fasi principali del distretto dalla sua istituzione fino ad oggi.

Sergio Cotti Piccinelli

Il distretto nasce nel 2009 ed eredita un precedente progetto di sistema culturale della Valle Camonica, anch'esso finanziato da Fondazione Cariplo, che ci ha permesso di avviare un percorso di messa a sistema di alcuni servizi territoriali, in particolare biblioteche e musei. Si trattava di un progetto che finanziava reti culturali. Questo è stato il primo approccio che ci ha permesso di organizzare sul territorio reti e poli culturali di riferimento (nello specifico, uno di questi poli risulterà di fondamentale importanza per la gestione di tutte le attività del distretto). Questo rappresenta il background del nostro lavoro. Dal sistema culturale è nata anche la parte relativa alla comunicazione, che poi è transitata nel distretto. Una delle caratteristiche del nostro progetto è quello di valorizzare i progetti precedenti su cui abbiamo lavorato, apportando ovviamente modifiche a seconda delle necessità e delle varie emergenze che si susseguono. Nel 2009 abbiamo partecipato all'elaborazione dello studio di fattibilità, sulla base del bando pubblicato da Fondazione Cariplo. Abbiamo poi presentato lo studio, che è stato finanziato per primo. È stato il primo a partire perché era un po' più avanzato, anche grazie all'esperienza del sistema culturale che ci portavamo dietro.

Il tema sostanziale era da una parte rafforzare l'organizzazione interna del mondo della cultura, e dall'altra sviluppare il rapporto con le imprese. A tal proposito, era previsto lo sviluppo di un incubatore di imprese innovative culturali all'interno distretto. Inoltre, c'era un filone molto importante per noi relativo all'innovazione sul fronte della comunicazione. Il tema dei linguaggi e della contaminazione dei linguaggi è in linea con il nostro patrimonio storico-culturale, vista la presenza sul nostro territorio di un sito UNESCO di arte rupestre. Si tratta di un patrimonio ricchissimo di incisioni rupestri che rappresentano modalità di linguaggio e di

comunicazione, di rappresentazione della realtà. Questo patrimonio è stato usato come opportunità per lavorare su percorsi innovativi di comunicazione, anche per raggiungere un pubblico nuovo, cercando di intercettare nuovi fruitori del territorio.

Le tappe fondamentali comprendono la fase della nascita del distretto, durante la quale il progetto si è sviluppato nei suoi aspetti tecnici e organizzativi rispetto al progetto e al finanziamento Cariplo, durata fino al 2014/2015. Poi, a partire dal 2015, che è stato anche l'anno dell'Expo di Milano, abbiamo cominciato a lavorare sul fronte turistico. Dal tema puramente culturale e organizzativo interno, di comunicazione e sviluppo di progetti culturali, abbiamo spostato l'attenzione sull'organizzazione turistica, sulla definizione di un brand turistico e sullo sviluppo di una DMO (Destination Management Organization). Ci siamo quindi orientati verso una organizzazione turistica del territorio, che era precedentemente assente, utilizzando tutto il lavoro fatto sul mondo culturale come base per ragionare su un'organizzazione più turistica. Questo approccio ha funzionato molto bene i primi anni, fino al 2020 circa; poi si è interrotto col Covid e adesso stiamo lavorando per recuperare una dimensione organizzativa su questo fronte. Così può essere sintetizzato il percorso. Il 2014/2015 segna la conclusione del finanziamento Cariplo e la necessità di organizzarci con risorse proprie, oltre allo sviluppo sul fronte turistico. Il 2020 ha rappresentato un momento di transizione per tutti. Sul fronte culturale non abbiamo mai perso i contatti, neanche durante la pandemia: abbiamo fatto molte iniziative anche a favore delle associazioni per rafforzare l'organizzazione culturale del territorio nonostante il periodo di lockdown, mentre sul fronte turistico abbiamo dovuto affrontare maggiori difficoltà e stiamo lavorando per recuperare in questi ultimi anni.

Antonia Schiavone

Quali sono oggi gli obiettivi del distretto? Se nella prima fase gli obiettivi vertevano maggiormente sull'innovazione della comunicazione e sulla messa a rete delle varie realtà culturali del distretto, con questa nuova fase – più turistica – quali sono gli obiettivi?

Sergio Cotti Piccinelli

Gli obiettivi principali sono legati al tema della gestione del patrimonio. Abbiamo una situazione articolata dal punto di vista gestionale, in quanto sono presenti una varietà di parchi, aree archeologiche, beni monumentali e beni ecclesiastici, con modalità gestionali diverse l'una dall'altra. Alcuni parchi sono gestiti dai comuni, altri dalla Regione, alcuni dal ministero. Ognuno di questi gestori ha proprie regole, modalità gestionali, propria capacità finanziarie; quindi, si sono create all'interno del territorio situazioni molto diversificate, soprattutto per quanto riguarda l'arte rupestre. Questa frammentazione rende complesso delineare un'azione organizzativa coordinata, che avrebbe particolare valore sul fronte turistico. Questa situazione

rappresenta uno dei fattori che ha influenzato lo sviluppo del tema turistico, poiché come distretto non abbiamo accesso diretto alla gestione del patrimonio. Esiste una necessità di messa a sistema della gestione del patrimonio. A tal proposito, abbiamo creato una fondazione - Fondazione Valle dei Segni - con l'obiettivo di affrontare questa sfida. L'obiettivo principale è riuscire a trovare una soluzione a questo tema. Si tratta di una situazione complessa, che coinvolge enti diversi. Questa diversificazione organizzativa rappresenta una sfida che influisce sulla possibilità di sviluppare pienamente questo asset come elemento portante dell'offerta turistica e culturale del territorio. Mentre sul fronte culturale, continuiamo a realizzare iniziative e a mantenere un rapporto attivo con le associazioni, le organizzazioni e gli istituti culturali del territorio.

Antonia Schiavone

Come è organizzato il vostro Distretto Culturale in termini di governance? Esiste un modello formale di governance?

Sergio Cotti Piccinelli

Dal punto di vista della governance, il distretto è organizzato attraverso un accordo istituzionale che riconosce alla Comunità Montana il ruolo di capofila e istituisce un Ufficio Associato per la gestione delle azioni di progetto, che fa riferimento alla Comunità Montana. Abbiamo recentemente rinnovato un nuovo accordo pluriennale del distretto culturale e dal punto di vista formale-giuridico c'è una continuità.

Si affianca al distretto la Fondazione Valle dei Segni, che ha un duplice compito: 1) sviluppare, soprattutto nella media Valle Camonica, un progetto culturale avanzato che preveda un percorso di fruizione immersiva e innovativa, andando oltre le modalità tradizionali in una proiezione internazionale. 2) Accanto a questa attività, c'è il tema della gestione integrata del patrimonio. Questi sono i due obiettivi della Fondazione, che non sostituisce ma affianca il distretto, il quale persegue la sua attività nell'ambito della politica culturale generale. Tra le azioni che ci siamo prefissati c'è il rafforzamento di tutto il settore museale e la riorganizzazione dei servizi culturali sul territorio. Il distretto continua quindi nell'attività di promozione e organizzazione culturale, mentre la Fondazione si orienta più sul tema della infrastrutturazione e della gestione integrata. La Fondazione è nata dal distretto, ma le è stata data autonomia rispetto agli obiettivi da perseguire.

Rispetto al sistema di governance inizialmente previsto per il nostro distretto, abbiamo snellito la struttura, non prevedendo più l'Assemblea del distretto, perché c'è la Fondazione, dove partecipano quasi tutti i comuni del territorio. Non c'è più la giunta esecutiva, ma sono rimasti l'ufficio associato e il comitato tecnico-scientifico.

Antonia Schiavone

Non esistendo più determinati organi (Assemblea del distretto e il Comitato esecutivo), come vengono prese le decisioni all'interno del distretto?

Sergio Cotti Piccinelli

La Comunità Montana di Valle Camonica è un ente che attualmente raggruppa tutti i 40 comuni del territorio. L'elemento di condivisione complessiva della politica generale del territorio è all'interno dell'organo di governo della Comunità Montana. Il distretto è diventato più uno strumento operativo, non ha più compiti di coinvolgimento delle amministrazioni in una linea culturale specifica. Questo ruolo è consolidato e quindi c'è maggiore autonomia della Comunità Montana anche rispetto ai comuni per orientare scelte e indirizzi. Regolarmente organizziamo incontri con i vari comuni. Abbiamo numerosi organi di consultazione di vario tipo: ad esempio, per l'arte rupestre abbiamo un gruppo di coordinamento di tutti i comuni che lavorano sull'arte rupestre. La Comunità Montana ha la sua Assemblea dei sindaci. Ci sono quindi diversi momenti di condivisione e confronto.

Antonia Schiavone

Gli attori coinvolti in questo progetto sono numerosi e di diversa natura. Oltre al capofila del progetto, la Comunità Montana, e ai 40 Comuni della Valle Camonica, vengono coinvolti altri stakeholders, quali il Consorzio Comuni BIM, la Provincia di Brescia, la CCIAA di Brescia e il MiC – Soprintendenza Archeologia per la Lombardia. Il coinvolgimento di tutti questi attori comporta delle complessità organizzative. A tal proposito, Le chiedo quali strategie avete adottato per coordinare interessi potenzialmente diversi e prevenire l'emergere di localismi? Come gestite il delicato equilibrio tra cooperazione e competizione?

Sergio Cotti Piccinelli

Questo rappresenta sicuramente un elemento di complessità organizzativa. Quando gli interlocutori sono numerosi e diversificati, è sempre impegnativo farli convergere verso obiettivi comuni. Il tema della gestione integrata del patrimonio, ad esempio, richiede un delicato equilibrio tra vari attori di diversa natura. Sul fronte della promozione culturale, abbiamo sviluppato strategie efficaci di coordinamento. La nostra forza è stata quella di consolidarci come soggetto competente e affidabile. Il fatto di aver realizzato progressi significativi sul fronte della produzione culturale ci ha permesso di essere riconosciuti come interlocutore qualificato. Quando affrontiamo una questione, tutti gli attori riconoscono la nostra competenza specifica. Inoltre, avvalendoci di consulenti e supporti tecnici specializzati, garantiamo sempre un presidio tecnico delle questioni, il che facilita il dialogo nel merito dei

contenuti quando si lavora con una struttura che si affida a competenze chiare e riconosciute. Questo approccio ha permesso un riconoscimento da parte di tutti del ruolo e del valore delle attività che realizziamo sul territorio. Gli enti si identificano nelle iniziative che promuoviamo e collaborano attivamente con noi.

Antonia Schiavone

Da un'analisi della letteratura sul tema, tra i potenziali punti deboli dei DC viene annoverato un tasso di partecipazione della comunità locale molto basso, a volte inesistente/ininfluente. Nel caso del DC della Valle Camonica, in che misura la comunità locale è stata coinvolta nello sviluppo del distretto? Quali strumenti avete utilizzato per promuovere la partecipazione attiva dei cittadini?

Sergio Cotti Piccinelli

Il nostro progetto è strettamente collegato alle amministrazioni locali. Abbiamo realizzato una serie di progetti su alcune comunità che sono partiti da un dialogo con l'amministrazione comunale, vista anche la nostra caratteristica di essere un ente associativo di amministrazioni. Per noi è fondamentale questo collegamento con le amministrazioni. Il tema della partecipazione si sviluppa poi all'interno dei singoli comuni. Non abbiamo mai sviluppato un'azione partecipativa di comprensorio generale, non ci siamo mai posti come ente superiore che dovesse costruire un proprio modello di partecipazione o di produzione culturale, senza il dialogo con le comunità. Questo approccio è fondamentale per noi, perché il territorio è molto diversificato ed esteso. È fondamentale un'azione di trasferimento alle comunità degli aspetti più organizzativi della partecipazione. In alcuni casi questo ha funzionato molto bene e ci sono progetti che hanno dato grande soddisfazione l'importante livello di coinvolgimento raggiunto. Nella gran parte delle azioni che abbiamo sviluppato questo è stato un percorso positivo. Le azioni che abbiamo implementato sull'arte contemporanea, nello specifico sulla street art e i laboratori di comunicazione, hanno interessato lo spazio pubblico. Ad esempio, questa iniziativa sulla street art, diversamente da altre esperienze e contesti, ha interessato i centri storici dei paesi anziché aree periferiche o industriali. L'artista coinvolto in questa iniziativa ha lavorato nel piccolo comune di Malegno, davanti alla Chiesa, e attraverso il suo lavoro ha creato una piazza. Il paese prima non aveva una piazza, uno spazio di aggregazione, e dopo questo intervento, quella piazza, che ha preso il nome dell'artista, è diventata la piazza del comune, dove vengono organizzate feste ed eventi, creando di fatto un luogo di partecipazione pubblica. Nel comune di Malonno stiamo sviluppando percorsi sul tema della filiera specifica della lana. Questa è la modalità con cui coinvolgiamo le comunità: non costruire modelli partecipativi astratti, ma proporre azioni concrete e stimolanti che invitino le comunità

a uscire dalla loro routine e a rimettersi in gioco. L'obiettivo di questi progetti è anche quello di portare nuove energie e stimoli nelle nostre comunità, che a volte possono risultare isolate.

Antonia Schiavone

Oltre al settore culturale, quali altre filiere economiche sono state integrate nel vostro distretto? Mi ha citato la filiera della lana. Ce ne sono altre?

Sergio Cotti Piccinelli

Oltre alla filiera del legno e della lana, abbiamo realizzato lavori molto significativi sulla pietra. Ci concentriamo quindi sugli elementi materici che intercettano la necessità di lavorare sulle forme artigianali tradizionali, alcune delle quali rischiano di scomparire. Tuttavia, ritengo che ci sia spazio per ampliare questa visione. Da una parte c'è questa attenzione a un'idea della cultura che si rapporta con l'artigianato, che ha comunque spesso una natura artistica. La vera opportunità, soprattutto per un territorio come il nostro, è sviluppare rapporti più stretti con il mondo dell'industria. Qui esiste una consolidata tradizione industriale siderurgica. La sfida interessante è rappresentata da questo settore che negli anni '60-'70 ha segnato una transizione importante dal mondo rurale, portando le persone a lavorare in fabbrica e alla trasformazione del rapporto con il territorio. È come se questo mondo dell'industria rappresentasse una fase di cambiamento rispetto a una ruralità intatta precedente. Sarebbe importante sviluppare un lavoro anche all'interno del mondo industriale, portando in questo ambiente parte delle suggestioni, delle produzioni e del contatto con il mondo della cultura che spesso manca. Questa è una sfida che nei prossimi anni dovremmo affrontare, perché altrimenti rischiamo di non considerare un'intera epoca, quella dello sviluppo dell'industria siderurgica dal dopoguerra fino agli anni '70-'80. Nonostante un periodo di difficoltà, rimane questa importante tradizione industriale che dà lavoro a tantissime persone ed è una realtà economica importante che però raramente viene integrata nei percorsi culturali.

Antonia Schiavone

Prima mi parlava di riuscire in qualche modo a raggiungere un bacino di utenza che vada oltre il territorio stesso, di carattere internazionale. Le chiedo: il distretto ha una strategia specifica per ampliare il proprio bacino di utenza oltre i confini della valle? Quali iniziative avete intrapreso per attrarre un pubblico che vada oltre quello della valle stessa?

Sergio Cotti Piccinelli

Abbiamo realizzato diversi tentativi in questa direzione e alcuni hanno avuto successo. Abbiamo sviluppato progetti internazionali, soprattutto attraverso la Regione Lombardia, sui temi del cibo e della lana. Tuttavia, il tema delle reti lunghe rappresenta per noi una sfida

significativa, perché sussiste una questione di tipo relazionale. Siamo una valle con caratteristiche geografiche particolari e non abbiamo ancora sviluppato completamente la capacità di relazionarci a livello istituzionale con realtà internazionali. Dall'altro lato, c'è la necessità di un maggior supporto, senza il quale è complesso per un territorio come il nostro, con le sue specificità e caratteristiche interne, riuscire a espandersi oltre i confini locali. Abbiamo vinto dei bandi e ottenuto finanziamenti, però non sono mai diventati una strategia consolidata di internazionalizzazione. È una sfida che sentiamo molto, perché rappresenta anche un certo isolamento di questi territori montani.

Antonia Schiavone

Ci sono stati degli scambi con altri distretti culturali in questi anni?

Sergio Cotti Piccinelli

Sì, Cariplo stessa ha organizzato per alcuni anni degli incontri tra i vari distretti finanziati dal progetto e spesso ci siamo trovati a confrontarci e a condividere modelli ed esperienze. Questa attività si è sviluppata finché Cariplo ha mantenuto un ruolo attivo nel distretto (2014/15). Successivamente questo dialogo si è interrotto.

Antonia Schiavone

Quali sono state le sfide principali che il distretto ha dovuto affrontare? Sicuramente il Covid, come per tutte le realtà, ha impattato sulle attività distrettuali. Ce ne sono altre, oltre la questione della gestione congiunta del patrimonio?

Sergio Cotti Piccinelli

Una delle più interessanti è quella dell'innovazione. Abbiamo fatto un lavoro molto impegnativo anche per le comunità, spingendo significativamente oltre i livelli tradizionali dell'offerta culturale, creando anche alcune sfide di adattamento e comprensione. Tuttavia, il nostro lavoro sull'arte contemporanea è stato molto utile. Ci ha permesso di comprendere come modificare la prospettiva e il linguaggio, introducendo elementi di innovazione all'interno delle comunità. Oggi la valle, a mio avviso, è uno dei territori più ricchi dal punto di vista della dell'offerta culturale nell'area alpina. Non esistono territori così vivaci dove l'associazionismo è così sviluppato e dove sono presenti operatori culturali che realizzano proposte di altissimo livello, indipendentemente dal nostro ruolo diretto.

Antonia Schiavone

Rispetto a quanto fatto fino ad ora, quali sono degli impatti economici e sociali che ha generato il vostro dispetto culturale per il territorio? Avete sviluppato degli indicatori, un sistema di monitoraggio per misurare appunto la propria efficacia?

Sergio Cotti Piccinelli

Con Fondazione Cariplo era stato sviluppato un lavoro di analisi e di monitoraggio dei progetti, ma i risultati sono stati limitati in termini di misurazione quantitativa. Devo riconoscere che alla fine prevale una valutazione qualitativa, che però appare comunque significativa.

Antonia Schiavone

Tra le varie attività implementate, quali ritiene che possano essere delle best practices replicabili?

Sergio Cotti Piccinelli

Sono numerose. Sono particolarmente legato a un progetto sull'artigianato che ha portato alla nascita di una piattaforma – Segno Artigiano - che raggruppa degli artigiani di qualità del territorio. In questi anni ha prodotto numerosi percorsi e azioni di innovazione, mostre, esposizioni, installazioni. Anche attualmente, sul tema dell'artigianato del legno, stiamo continuando a sviluppare operazioni interessanti. Si tratta di un dialogo non solo con l'artigianato tradizionale (produzione di cestini, i pezzotti - tappeti in tessuto), ma anche con artigiani che fanno innovazione (lavori con il cemento). È diventata una rete molto proattiva e dinamica.

Un altro progetto molto interessante è rappresentato dal portale che abbiamo realizzato - il portale Maraea (in dialetto significa meraviglia). Si tratta di un portale dell'immaginario più recente della valle. Abbiamo acquisito archivi televisivi che ci hanno permesso di gestire questi materiali ed estrarre contenuti da queste documentazioni che risalgono agli anni '80-'90. Successivamente è partito un lavoro di ricerca anche sul tema dell'immaginario, del video e delle documentazioni visuali. Questa piattaforma è molto seguita e le persone scaricano documenti di famiglia e video storici. Questo rappresenta un altro progetto, focalizzato sul tema del digitale e l'utilizzo di Internet, che ha acquisito centralità, considerando il contesto in cui viviamo.

Antonia Schiavone

Quali sono gli sviluppi futuri, le direzioni strategiche che si intende perseguire con il distretto culturale della Valle Camonica?

Sergio Cotti Piccinelli

Uno è quello che riguarda il tema della Fondazione e quindi la gestione integrata, che necessita di una struttura di governance più solida. Un altro tema prioritario è quello di valorizzare e dare continuità al consistente lavoro di produzione di contenuti realizzato in questi anni. Abbiamo fatto un importante lavoro di ricerca storica, ricerca sull'immaginario, ricerca sull'arte e sui territori. Abbiamo prodotto una documentazione molto ricca e adesso c'è la necessità di sistematizzarla, rivederla e riadattarla, anche in vista dei nuovi strumenti di comunicazione. Il tema della comunicazione è molto delicato. È complesso raggiungere efficacemente le persone, i giovani soprattutto. La questione di come fare arrivare i contenuti a questo pubblico è molto articolata, considerando che il panorama della comunicazione si è frammentato in numerosi e diversificati strumenti. Tutto il lavoro realizzato dovrebbe essere meglio orientato sul fronte della comunicazione per raggiungere target diversificati, considerando il contesto in cui operiamo, caratterizzato da alcune specificità territoriali e dalla necessità di creare maggiori opportunità di coinvolgimento.

Annex B

Transcription of the interview with Alessandra Riccadonna, president of the Association “Distretto Culturale Le Regge dei Gonzaga”

Antonia Schiavone

Qual è stato lo sviluppo storico del Distretto Culturale Le Regge dei Gonzaga? Potrebbe delineare le fasi principali dalla sua costituzione fino ad oggi?

Alessandra Riccadonna

Il distretto nasce con un importante finanziamento di Cariplo. Da lì, dopo una prima fase progettuale di sperimentazione, trova un proprio percorso. Ad oggi il bilancio del distretto si costituisce delle quote associative dei soci, che sono 11. Oltre al Comune di Mantova e alla Provincia di Mantova, ci sono altri nove piccoli comuni, tutti accomunati dalla tematica gonzaghese. Il distretto nasce con questo focus: la valorizzazione dei beni gonzaghese. La tematica gonzaghese è presente con diverse varianti in tutti i comuni del distretto. Ciononostante, è possibile individuare alcuni tratti principali che caratterizzano le sedi gonzaghese: la cinta muraria e le porte urbane (e.g. a Sabbioneta e a Bozzolo), i portici commerciali (e.g., i Portici gonzaghese di Gazzuolo); i castelli e le torri (e.g., il Castello di Redondesco); i palazzi, le ville suburbane e le corti rurali (e.g., Corte Ghirardina a Motteggiana). Nel bilancio abbiamo le quote associative, versate da ogni comune, con la quota più consistente da parte del Comune di Mantova. Un'altra fonte di finanziamento è data dai bandi. Ad esempio, nel 2020, con un bando proprio di Fondazione Cariplo, abbiamo ottenuto un finanziamento di €200.000 circa, con un partenariato ampio, per promuovere delle attività culturali post pandemia. La pandemia ha “costretto” a rivedere un po' quelle che erano le modalità di fruizione.

È proprio in quell'occasione che nasce “Il Gusto del Bello”, una rassegna di esperienze a piccoli gruppi, che ben conciliava la normativa Covid con l'esperienza di visita di piccoli comuni. Si è deciso, in accordo con le amministrazioni locali, di aprire anche dei luoghi solitamente inaccessibili e riservarli alla visita di poche persone. Questo format, che faceva confluire le esigenze del post pandemia con quella dell'accessibilità ai luoghi dove si svolgevano le attività, ha poi trovato una sua sostenibilità nel corso degli anni.

Antonia Schiavone

Come è organizzato il vostro distretto culturale in termini di governance? Esiste un modello formale di governance?

Alessandra Riccadonna

Siamo formalmente organizzati in un'associazione culturale senza scopo di lucro, che prevede tra le sue finalità quella di promuovere la realizzazione e lo sviluppo del DC "Le Regge dei Gonzaga", coordinarlo e gestirlo. In aggiunta, l'associazione ha lo scopo di valorizzare il patrimonio culturale, tangibile e intangibile, presente sul territorio mantovano. Gli organi dell'associazione sono diversi. Io ricopro il ruolo di presidente dell'associazione; poi abbiamo un CDA, composto da 5 membri, di cui faccio parte, in rappresentanza del Comune di Mantova, assieme alla vicepresidente dell'associazione, in rappresentanza della Provincia di Mantova, e a tre consiglieri, attualmente i sindaci di Bozzolo e di Sabbioneta e la vicesindaca di Borgo Mantovano. La provincia fa parte dell'associazione in virtù del respiro che questo distretto ha. Poi c'è l'Assemblea degli Associati, composta da tutti gli enti soci. In merito alla possibilità di partecipazione all'associazione, l'attuale statuto, che è stato aggiornato da poco tempo, prevede che possano entrarne a far parte tutti quegli enti comunali che abbiano dei beni gonzagheschi. Questo è il collante della nostra associazione. Allo stesso tempo, lo statuto prevede che possano esserci dei cambiamenti in merito al numero di enti soci e di organi di governance. Rispetto a questo ultimo punto, si considera ammissibile la nomina di un Direttore (articolo 13 dello Statuto) e di un Comitato tecnico-scientifico (articolo 14 dello Statuto), qualora il Consiglio Direttivo ne ravvisi la necessità. Tra le varie finalità che l'associazione persegue di fondamentale importanza è la valorizzazione dei singoli comuni, attraverso l'organizzazione delle varie rassegne, attraverso servizi di supporto per candidatura a bandi di interesse e attraverso l'organizzazione di eventi trasversali di rete. In virtù di ciò, diventa un plus far parte del distretto. L'obiettivo è quello di fare in modo che questi piccoli comuni abbiano un vantaggio nel contribuire a questo distretto.

Tra le nostre rassegne, che coinvolgono i singoli comuni, c'è "Il Gusto del Bello", che rappresenta un'idea di turismo di prossimità, e "Cammina Mantova", che quest'anno prevede 15 eventi e vede il coinvolgimento di una decina di associazioni, oltre al Comune di Mantova (sostenitore della rassegna) e all'ufficio Mantova e Sabbioneta Patrimonio Mondiale dell'UNESCO (un ufficio del Comune di Mantova e del Comune di Sabbioneta per la valorizzazione del sito UNESCO). La cosa che a noi piace maggiormente è quella di aver coinvolto associazioni locali con cui creare occasioni di conoscenza del territorio con esperienze di turismo lento. Ci sono iniziative che possono permettere di sperimentare qualcosa di diverso: non solo si cammina intorno alla città, ma si è cercato di avvicinarsi anche all'elemento acquatico, essendo Mantova comunque una città di acqua, che ha visto anche una riqualificazione del Lago Superiore, dichiarato balneabile.

Antonia Schiavone

Come si sono evoluti gli obiettivi del distretto nel tempo? Quali sono le priorità strategiche attuali e le principali linee di azione che si intende implementare?

Alessandra Riccadonna

Con il Covid ci sono stati degli stravolgimenti che hanno inevitabilmente reindirizzato gli obiettivi del distretto ed è sempre importante considerare le disponibilità economiche. Fermo restando quello che è il nostro obiettivo principale, vale a dire la valorizzazione del patrimonio materiale e immateriale dei comuni soci del distretto, stabilito il bilancio del distretto, ne consegue poi una riflessione su come indirizzare le varie voci di spesa, considerando comunque che ci sono delle attività ormai consolidate. Quindi, attualmente portiamo avanti le due rassegne annuali “Il Gusto del Bello” e il “Cammina Mantova” e altre iniziative diverse che annualmente possono emergere a fronte di richieste, confronti o disponibilità economiche diverse che potrebbero arrivare da bandi.

Rimane fondamentale l’obiettivo di far conoscere il territorio e i beni legati alla storia e beni gonzagheschi, sia ai turisti che ai residenti. Spesso, infatti, sono proprio gli abitanti dei nostri Comuni a restare sorpresi dalla bellezza dei luoghi in cui vivono e stupiti nel rendersi conto di non conoscere a fondo patrimoni culturali che si trovano a pochi passi da casa. Il coinvolgimento della comunità è fondamentale per sensibilizzare innanzitutto i cittadini verso il proprio patrimonio. Quando le persone vivono con orgoglio e consapevolezza il luogo in cui abitano, questo atteggiamento viene naturalmente percepito anche dai visitatori. Il concetto emerso con forza dopo la pandemia – *Live like a Local* – rispecchia proprio ciò che molti turisti cercano oggi: un’esperienza autentica, radicata nella quotidianità del territorio. Le nostre iniziative si rivolgono sia alla popolazione locale sia ai visitatori, con proposte capaci di parlare a entrambi i pubblici. Detto ciò, non abbiamo l’ambizione di trasformare il Distretto in una meta turistica internazionale: è un obiettivo complesso e non prioritario. Tuttavia, siamo pienamente consapevoli del valore del nostro patrimonio, che merita senza dubbio di essere conosciuto e valorizzato.

Antonia Schiavone

Questo aspetto risponde ad una delle mie domande. Quello che emerge dalla letteratura sui DC è un tasso di partecipazione molto basso. Contrariamente, mi sembra di capire che nel vostro distretto si delineano due aspetti: da un lato una sorta di responsabilizzazione della comunità locale, che in qualche modo diventa socio del distretto stesso, e dall’altra la declinazione dell’offerta culturale per utenti che fanno parte della comunità stessa.

Alessandra Riccadonna

A questo proposito, aggiungo che il Distretto ha avviato anche una collaborazione con la Rete Bibliotecaria Mantovana, particolarmente significativa per l'elevato livello di coinvolgimento della popolazione locale. Le attività non si svolgono solo all'interno delle biblioteche comunali, ma anche in altri spazi. Ad esempio, uno dei Comuni soci del Distretto non dispone di una biblioteca, e in quel caso si è scelto di promuovere la lettura in luoghi alternativi, come i giardini pubblici. L'idea alla base è quella di portare i libri nei contesti ritenuti più adatti a coinvolgere bambini e famiglie, in base alla tipologia dell'evento. Grazie a questa collaborazione con la Rete Bibliotecaria Mantovana, lo scorso anno sono state coinvolte circa 400 persone, provenienti dai singoli Comuni aderenti o da quelli limitrofi. In ogni caso, si è trattato di un pubblico locale.

Antonia Schiavone

Il distretto coinvolge numerosi attori di diversa natura e questo potrebbe portare all'emergere di potenziali personalismi e localismi, non facilitando il processo di governabilità e gestione del distretto stesso. A tal proposito, ci sono stati episodi di divergenza nel distretto? Se sì, quali strategie avete adottato per bilanciare interessi potenzialmente divergenti e prevenire localismi?

Alessandra Riccadonna

Devo dire che non si è mai percepita una reale competizione tra i Comuni. Il nostro approccio è quello di offrire a tutti le stesse opportunità, trattando ogni socio con equità. Naturalmente, alcune iniziative possono coinvolgere un Comune in un anno e un altro l'anno successivo: non è possibile toccare tutti i territori contemporaneamente, ma questo aspetto è generalmente compreso e non ha mai generato particolari criticità. Ciò è anche merito del supporto che, come associazione, forniamo ai singoli Comuni e del fatto che, all'inizio dell'anno, le azioni da intraprendere vengono condivise in modo chiaro e trasparente con tutti i soci.

Antonia Schiavone

Rispetto a questo, direi che tale situazione è in qualche modo agevolata dall'esistenza di una struttura di governance ufficiale. Vista l'esistenza di una struttura centrale di governance – l'Associazione, nel momento in cui si decide di essere soci, i localismi in qualche modo vengono meno. Una situazione invece che può essere più delicata in quei casi in cui non esiste una struttura di governance ufficiale.

Alessandra Riccadonna

Il punto di forza sta nel fatto che i soci riconoscono il valore della rete. Noi cerchiamo di capire quali sono le esigenze dei singoli comuni. Anche sul fronte della comunicazione, l'associazione si impegna a portare avanti tutta una serie di attività volte alla promozione dei diversi comuni, attraverso ad esempio la gestione del sito web dedicato, dei canali social, della newsletter, la divulgazione di materiali stampati, l'organizzazione di campagne fotografiche e l'individuazione di video-maker per produrre contenuti idonei ai canali di comunicazione attuali. Tutte queste attività sul fronte comunicativo ci permettono di allargare la platea di potenziali utenti.

Antonia Schiavone

Ci sono stati interscambi con altri distretti culturali in questi anni?

Alessandra Riccadonna

Non recentemente, forse all'inizio. Quando c'era ancora Fondazione Cariplo, c'erano una serie di incontri di condivisione.

Antonia Schiavone

Il distretto ha una strategia specifica per ampliare il proprio bacino d'utenza oltre i confini del territorio provinciale stesso? Sono state delineate e adottate potenziali strategie di internazionalizzazione?

Alessandra Riccadonna

Non si tratta di una delle nostre ambizioni principali. A meno che non emerga un bando specifico finalizzato alla promozione dei distretti oltre i confini provinciali – ad esempio in altre regioni – non escludiamo la possibilità di partecipare, anche perché riteniamo che alcuni di questi beni meritino di essere valorizzati e conosciuti più ampiamente. Tuttavia, l'idea di un'internazionalizzazione o di un significativo ampliamento del bacino di utenza non rappresenta, al momento, una nostra priorità.

Antonia Schiavone

Oltre al settore culturale, altre filiere economiche sono state integrate nel vostro distretto? Se sì, quali?

Alessandra Riccadonna

In merito a questo aspetto, faccio riferimento alla nostra rassegna "Il Gusto del Bello" che nel proporre le degustazioni di prodotti e piatti locali ha attinto dalla rete "Ea(s)t Lombardy", un progetto che vede coinvolti il Comune di Mantova, il Comune di Brescia, il Comune di Bergamo e il Comune di Cremona, con relative province e CCIAA, che nel 2017

sono state riconosciute Capitale Europea della Gastronomia, perché si sono proposte come unica destinazione turistica, ossia Ea(s)t Lombardy (Lombardia orientale). Il riconoscimento europeo dalla durata di un anno ha l'obiettivo di promuovere produttori e ristoratori, che si fanno garanti di un cibo di qualità sostenibile e rappresentativo del territorio. Terminato l'anno della nomina, Ea(s)t Lombardy ha poi trovato un suo sviluppo, valorizzando gli operatori e le eccellenze locali. Si svolgono delle attività di promozione social, web, tramite ufficio stampa; è stato aperto un info point gastronomico presso l'aeroporto di Orio al Serio. Noi, dal canto nostro, abbiamo coinvolto gli operatori e ristoratori dei comuni soci che fanno parte della rete Ea(s)t Lombardy. Ad esempio, a Revere abbiamo fatto un bellissimo tour con aperitivo sul mulino natante con vini di una cantina del territorio, una degustazione di tartufi di un operatore che è coinvolto nell'area di Ea(s)t Lombardy e il pranzo in uno dei ristoranti Ea(s)t Lombardy del comune di Borgo Mantovano, che nasce dall'unione di tre comuni (Revere, Villa Poma, Pieve di Coriano). Abbiamo così attuato una delle missions del distretto, vale a dire la promozione della filiera del gusto.

Antonia Schiavone

Quali impatti economici e sociali ha generato il DC Le Regge dei Gonzaga per il territorio? Nel caso lo preveda, come misura il vostro distretto il proprio successo o efficacia (definizione sistema di indicatori, ecc.)?

Alessandra Riccadonna

Il Distretto attualmente non dispone di strumenti specifici per la misurazione dell'impatto economico delle proprie attività. Al di là dei dati quantitativi relativi al numero di persone coinvolte, che rappresentano un primo indicatore di risultato, non utilizziamo metodologie strutturate per valutare l'effettivo impatto generato. Iniziative come la rassegna locale con Telemantova, le escursioni de 'Il Gusto del Bello' o 'Cammina Mantova' possono certamente generare un indotto, anche attraverso il passaparola, ma si tratta di effetti difficilmente quantificabili con precisione.

Antonia Schiavone

Quali sono state le sfide principali che ha affrontato il vostro distretto? In merito a questo aspetto, mi viene in mente il Covid, periodo durante il quale comunque vi siete reinventati. Invece, guardando al futuro, quali sono le direzioni che si vogliono perseguire come distretto?

Alessandra Riccadonna

Riteniamo di aver raggiunto un buon equilibrio, ma restiamo sempre attenti a cogliere nuove opportunità di valorizzazione del territorio che magari non abbiamo ancora esplorato. Se

dovessero emergere iniziative specifiche dedicate ai distretti o alla loro promozione, siamo pronti a metterci in gioco e a valutare anche progettualità innovative. Un altro elemento su cui puntiamo molto è la presenza, all'interno del Distretto, di un sito UNESCO – Mantova e Sabbioneta – che rappresenta indubbiamente un valore aggiunto di grande rilevanza.

Annex C

Transcription of the interview with Raffaello de Ruggieri, president of Fondazione Zétema – leading organization of “Distretto Culturale dell’Habitat Rupestre della Basilicata”

Antonia Schiavone

Qual è stato lo sviluppo storico del Distretto Culturale dell’Habitat Rupestre della Basilicata? Potrebbe delineare le fasi principali dalla sua costituzione fino alla sua cessazione?

Raffello de Ruggieri

Noi eravamo partiti da un altro progetto: il sistema culturale della Basilicata. Sulla base dell’esperienza maturata a Matera, volevamo dimostrare che la Basilicata possiede notevoli qualità artistiche. Per questo progetto avevamo condotto un’indagine sul Rinascimento in Basilicata con l’intento di organizzare una grande mostra. Il progetto, tuttavia, non si è concretizzato come previsto. Partendo da questa iniziativa, abbiamo gradualmente sviluppato un’operazione più coerente con il lavoro che stavamo svolgendo per i Sassi. La nostra idea era quella di presentare i Sassi come simbolo di una continuità capace di raccontare la storia dell’uomo dalle origini fino ai nostri giorni. Questa visione ha progressivamente maturato definizioni più pertinenti: dai buchi neri di una grotta preistorica ai buchi neri dello spazio, considerando la presenza del centro di geodesia spaziale. Da questa traiettoria progettuale è nata una riflessione che ci ha portato a considerare un’operazione a respiro regionale. In quel periodo si parlava di distretti industriali, mentre quelli culturali sarebbero arrivati successivamente. In questo contesto, abbiamo proposto l’istituzione di un distretto culturale dell’habitat rupestre appulo-lucano, aggregando tutto il patrimonio rupestre che caratterizza il nostro territorio. Abbiamo iniziato il lavoro partendo da Gravina in Puglia, creando un nucleo operativo coordinato da quello che era il nostro direttore scientifico. Tuttavia, questa fase iniziale non ha avuto il seguito previsto.

Non avendo trovato altre possibilità di sviluppo, abbiamo deciso di istituire il distretto nella forma che conosciamo oggi. Nella mia visione, il distretto doveva aggregare luoghi della cultura omogenei. Consapevoli dell’omogeneità del patrimonio rupestre, abbiamo individuato i luoghi della cultura rupestre e, nel corso di questa operazione, ho identificato un altro fil rouge. Il rupestre nel nostro territorio poteva rappresentare un arco temporale che va dalla preistoria ai nostri giorni: dalle pitture rupestri di Filiano, risalenti a circa 6.000-7.000 anni prima di Cristo, fino alla contemporaneità, rappresentata dal museo in grotta d’arte contemporanea. La cadenza temporale del rupestre scandiva diversi periodi: il periodo preistorico di Filiano, il periodo longobardo con la Cripta del Peccato Originale a Matera, il periodo Svevo-Federiciano

con le chiese rupestri di Melfi, il periodo Angioino con le chiese rupestri di Oppido Lucano, e il Museo della Scultura Contemporanea (MUSMA) di Matera per l'epoca contemporanea.

Questo progetto è stato presentato al bando dell'ACRI – Sviluppo Sud nel 2003. In qualità di presidente della Fondazione Zétema, che ho fondato nel 1998, ho iniziato a comprendere le potenzialità espressive di una fondazione e a individuare i possibili canali finanziari. Durante questa fase di verifica, sono entrato in contatto con le fondazioni di origine bancaria che stavano nascendo in quel periodo. Ho partecipato a un incontro a Roma sulle fondazioni di origine bancaria, dove ho evidenziato come questa operazione, pur essendo straordinaria, rischiasse di aumentare il divario tra Nord e Mezzogiorno. Dopo alcuni mesi, ho ricevuto un altro invito a Roma, dove è stato annunciato il progetto Sviluppo Sud, destinato al Mezzogiorno. Era stato stabilito che questi finanziamenti sarebbero stati destinati esclusivamente ai distretti culturali. Durante quella manifestazione, ho avuto modo di intervenire sottolineando come in Basilicata avessimo già sviluppato un distretto culturale. Dopo un mese, siamo stati convocati a Milano e abbiamo presentato alla Cariplo il progetto del Distretto Culturale dell'Habitat Rupestre della Basilicata, elaborato tra la fine degli anni '90 e i primi anni 2000. Dopo alcuni mesi, abbiamo ricevuto l'esito positivo della presentazione e ottenuto il finanziamento da parte di ACRI.

Il 23 settembre del 2005 abbiamo inaugurato la Cripta del Peccato Originale. Precedentemente avevamo già completato i lavori a Filiano, mettendo in sicurezza il masso con le pitture rupestri. Dopo il lavoro sulla Cripta, abbiamo restaurato la chiesa di Santa Lucia e quella di Santa Margherita a Melfi. A Santa Margherita abbiamo sviluppato il tema dell'eroismo del protagonista, mentre nella Cripta del Peccato Originale il messaggio era incentrato sul misticismo e sulla fede. Dopo questo periodo di attività e risultati positivi, siamo entrati in una fase di difficoltà. Avevamo stabilito un'intesa con il comune di Melfi per creare una continuità condivisa tra Matera e Melfi, basata su un coordinamento gestito da Zétema e avvalendoci della Pro-Loce locale. Tuttavia, con il cambio amministrativo post-elettorale, le relazioni tra le parti si sono modificate. A Melfi avevamo installato le fibre ottiche e sviluppato un sistema di strutture e corpi luminosi particolari con voce narrante. A causa di dinamiche locali che hanno prevalso su un progetto a respiro regionale finalizzato alla valorizzazione di un patrimonio culturale di notevole rilevanza, abbiamo dovuto interrompere le attività, abbandonando anche i lavori previsti a Filiano, dove non abbiamo più avuto collaborazione con la Soprintendenza.

Nonostante le difficoltà, siamo riusciti a realizzare la Cripta del Peccato Originale (23 settembre 2005) e il MUSMA (14 ottobre 2006). Anche se il distretto non esiste più, alcuni dei suoi risultati, specificamente quelli realizzati a Matera - la Cripta e il MUSMA - continuano a funzionare efficacemente.

Antonia Schiavone

Quali sono state le attività principali del distretto? Qual era l'obiettivo?

Raffaello de Ruggieri

L'obiettivo era creare un sistema di circuito promozionale per visite culturali in quest'area. Nel momento di maggiore sviluppo dell'industria di Melfi, con la Fiat, e della cosiddetta linea Bradanica dell'industria, ho ideato la linea Bradanica della cultura per collegare queste operazioni. L'idea era quella di creare sentieri culturali per un turismo di qualità e consapevole. Eravamo nelle condizioni di realizzarlo, sia attraverso il distretto sia con altri punti di riferimento lungo la dorsale Bradanica. Il progetto prevedeva una Linea Bradanica della cultura, che includesse il sistema culturale e i distretti culturali.

Antonia Schiavone

Come era organizzato il vostro Distretto Culturale in termini di governance? Esisteva un modello formale di governance oppure si faceva riferimento alla Fondazione Zétema? Non si è creato un organo decisionale?

Raffaello de Ruggieri

Esatto, si faceva riferimento alla Fondazione. La creazione di un organo decisionale separato risultava complessa da implementare.

Antonia Schiavone

Nel caso del distretto i cittadini avevano un ruolo? Sono stati coinvolti?

Raffaello de Ruggieri

Era previsto un coinvolgimento per la parte partecipativa, per la co-creatività all'interno del contesto. Tuttavia, era necessario prima consolidare il nucleo operativo. Nel progetto e nell'idea principale, il coinvolgimento cittadino era comunque contemplato. Questo approccio è stato successivamente sviluppato nel progetto Matera, Capitale europea della Cultura. Nel dossier di marzo 2019, abbiamo voluto dimostrare che la cultura non è semplicemente un'espressione materiale rappresentata da monumenti, torri, chiese o castelli. La cultura diventa uno strumento di trasformazione sociale, che trasforma il cittadino in abitante culturale. Significa abitare consapevolmente la propria città, avere familiarità con essa, riconoscersi nel territorio e impegnarsi attivamente nella costruzione del futuro di una città che si percepisce come unica e distintiva. La cultura come strumento di trasformazione sociale consente il passaggio da una società comparsa a una società protagonista, in cui i cittadini si riconoscono finalmente nella propria polis e si assumono la responsabilità di costruire il futuro del territorio in cui si identificano.

Annex D

Transcription of the interview with Giorgia Govoni, technical contact of Distretto Culturale Pianura Est.

Antonia Schiavone

Qual è stato lo sviluppo storico del Distretto Culturale Pianura Est? Potrebbe delineare le fasi principali che hanno portato alla costituzione del distretto – dal macro-progetto avviato dalla Provincia di Bologna fino ad oggi?

Giorgia Govoni

I distretti sono nati nel 2011 dalla necessità di creare un percorso che definisse un sistema di governance culturale a livello metropolitano. Essendo l'area metropolitana molto vasta, si è cercato di dare voce il più possibile a tutti i componenti di questo insieme così ricco e variegato. Nel 2012, con un Protocollo d'Intesa, sono state definite le finalità e gli obiettivi che questo sistema distrettuale doveva perseguire, per poi essere inserito nel 2013 nel Piano strategico metropolitano. Si è trattato di percorsi di confronto a livello sia politico che tecnico. Questi due piani vengono portati avanti il più possibile in modalità parallela, facendo sempre precedere l'incontro e la definizione politica al confronto di tipo tecnico.

Il distretto culturale doveva essere un sistema di governance capace di valorizzare le caratteristiche locali, inserendole però in un quadro di sistema. La dotazione specifica del distretto era fondamentale, ma altrettanto importante era il modo in cui questa si inserisse in un sistema quadro, evitando così dinamiche di frammentazione territoriale. L'obiettivo era anche quello di arrivare a una razionalizzazione e ottimizzazione delle risorse, sia umane che economiche. Si tratta quindi di una sfida di alto livello, contraddistinta da un'architettura complessa. La definizione dei distretti culturali è nata da un'esigenza concreta di coordinamento e governance in un'area vasta e complessa. Successivamente si sono sviluppati confronti che si sono inseriti in contesti normativi specifici: la legge 56 del 2014, che attribuiva alla Città Metropolitana la promozione e il coordinamento dello sviluppo economico-sociale; la legge 13 del 2015, un accordo attuativo della Convenzione Quadro, per arrivare infine all'accordo con i comuni.

Antonia Schiavone

Possiamo dire che la definizione di questo modello di governance va di pari passo anche con il quadro normativo di riferimento. Facendo riferimento alla legge 56 del 2014, questa rappresenta una svolta rispetto al modello precedente, dove si parlava di Provincia di Bologna, mentre ora cambiano anche le interrelazioni tra i diversi enti.

Giorgia Govoni

Assolutamente e va sottolineato il ruolo importante della Regione. Si è discusso a lungo in merito alla Città metropolitana e alla possibilità che essa detenesse una delega o una titolarità nell'ambito della cultura. Nel confronto avuto sul tema dello sviluppo economico e sociale, tale ambito è rientrato a pieno titolo tra le competenze della Città metropolitana, in quanto volano di sviluppo.

Antonia Schiavone

Focalizzandoci sul Distretto Culturale Pianura Est, quale è l'obiettivo del distretto oggi? Quali sono le priorità strategiche attuali che si intende attuare proprio in risposta alle esigenze del territorio stesso?

Giorgia Govoni

In generale, le priorità del nostro distretto sono quelle condivise con tutti gli altri distretti. Il lavoro specifico che stiamo cercando di portare avanti nel nostro distretto, che è il più ricco in termini di comuni, è quello di recuperare in parte e consolidare una modalità di lavoro d'insieme. In passato, il numero di attività e progetti culturali realizzati in collaborazione con altri comuni del nostro distretto era più alto. Il nostro distretto collaborava per molte rassegne estive. In virtù della forza numerica, partecipavamo agli avvisi regionali e la capacità progettuale e di collaborazione diventavano valori aggiunti per presentare progetti significativi da candidare alle leggi regionali sulle attività culturali. Nel tempo le leggi regionali e gli avvisi regionali sono cambiati. La Regione ha stabilito, probabilmente anche considerazione delle risorse disponibili, che si poteva partecipare con un'unica progettualità. Mentre in passato candidavamo diversi progetti, ora se ne può presentare uno. Nel frattempo, è cambiata anche la compagine del nostro distretto, perché si è creata l'Unione Reno Galliera, un'unione di otto comuni che ha assunto anche la gestione della cultura. Otto dei quindici comuni del distretto gestiscono la cultura insieme. Per noi lavorare insieme agli altri comuni vuol dire costruire una rete. Tuttavia, l'Unione Reno Galliera, avendo conferito la cultura, viene già considerata dalla Regione una rete di otto comuni e presenta delle specificità nella partecipazione agli avvisi regionali, non potendo fare rete con il resto del distretto.

Riconoscendo questa situazione, una finalità nostra è aprire un confronto costruttivo con la Regione su questa difficoltà che stiamo vivendo. La Città metropolitana, soprattutto nell'ultimo biennio, ha promosso stimoli nuovi, come il Festival Narrativo del Paesaggio, dove l'Unione Reno Galliera è capofila e costruiamo questi progetti insieme. La nostra finalità è arrivare ad avere un maggiore coordinamento per una condivisione di buone pratiche. Oggi nel nostro distretto ci sono almeno cinque comuni che hanno realtà museali molto importanti

(Budrio, Castenaso, Bentivoglio, San Pietro in Casale e Pieve di Cento). Esiste un canale di confronto aperto quotidianamente per confrontarsi su questi temi. Le biblioteche rappresentano un tavolo di lavoro efficace. L'obiettivo è coordinarci il più possibile, condividere buone pratiche e, laddove possibile, parlare con un'unica voce.

Il nostro distretto sta vivendo ancora un momento di evoluzione, visti questi cambiamenti sia di governance sia dovuti a conseguenze indirette. Si è passati da un rapporto indiretto, che vedeva la vecchia provincia nel ruolo di mediatore, ad un rapporto diretto con la Regione. Vari cambiamenti sono intervenuti creando una fase di transizione. Dopo la costituzione della Città metropolitana, c'è stato un importante impulso. Stiamo lavorando per consolidare un distretto che operi con un'unica voce.

Antonia Schiavone

Come è organizzato il vostro distretto culturale in termini di governance? Da una prima analisi emerge come ci siano due livelli: sovra-distrettuale, che fa riferimento alla Città metropolitana di Bologna, e distrettuale. All'interno di questi due livelli di governance c'è da un lato un percorso più politico e dall'altro un tavolo più tecnico. Si parla anche della possibilità di poter istituire determinati gruppi di lavoro tematici a livello distrettuale. A tal proposito, le chiedo se effettivamente siano stati istituiti dei gruppi di lavoro tematici nel vostro distretto.

Giorgia Govoni

Ogni distretto ha un referente politico e un referente tecnico. Se il referente politico è espressione di una parte del distretto, allora il referente tecnico viene scelto nell'altra parte del distretto. Al momento non abbiamo gruppi culturali tematici. Abbiamo un tavolo politico formato da tutti gli assessori alla cultura e un tavolo tecnico dove partecipo io per gli Otto Comuni dell'Unione Reno Galliera in qualità di responsabile del Servizio Musei Teatri e Attività espositive, insieme agli operatori culturali e ai responsabili di cultura degli altri comuni.

Sul piano delle biblioteche, abbiamo un protocollo di intesa che si chiama Biblioteche associate, dove il coordinatore è il comune di Castenaso. Esiste un tavolo tecnico dei bibliotecari con un budget specifico. Questo protocollo stabilisce la quota per ogni Comune da versare e vengono finanziati alcuni servizi, come il sistema del PIC (Prestito intersistemico circolante), oltre ad attività di distretto. Nell'ambito della promozione della lettura del 2025, si è deciso di lavorare sulle tematiche culturali. Esiste un gruppo di lavoro bibliotecario che si riunisce con una certa regolarità.

Antonia Schiavone

Il distretto coinvolge numerosi attori di diversa natura (15 Comuni diversi, l'Unione Reno-Galliera). Come emerge da alcuni documenti analizzati, si sottolinea che la governance distrettuale intende trovare nuove modalità attraverso cui definire progetti culturali condivisi, non solo tra enti pubblici, ma anche insieme all'Università, alle associazioni, ai privati. Si enfatizza come la costruzione di una buona politica culturale possa avvenire solo con la compartecipazione di più soggetti e su macroaree territoriali, per rispondere anche a diverse necessità (e.g., risorse finanziarie limitate, riduzione numero operatori). Il coinvolgimento di tutti questi attori, di varia natura e con interessi diversi, potrebbe portare all'emergere di potenziali personalismi e localismi. A tal proposito, ci sono state tensioni in questo senso?

Giorgia Govoni

Non ci sono state tensioni significative. Tutte le progettualità che vengono messe in campo sono proposte condivise. Vengono vissute come un valore per tutti, anche quando il progetto non coinvolge direttamente tutti i membri, ma riguarda singole realtà. Se il progetto è di qualità, produce comunque un valore per tutti e genera un effetto positivo sull'intero distretto.

Antonia Schiavone

Per quanto riguarda la partecipazione della comunità locale, emerge dalla letteratura che ci sia un tasso di partecipazione della comunità locale molto basso nei distretti culturali. Da una prima analisi documentale sui distretti culturali della Città metropolitana di Bologna emerge però che alle riunioni dei comitati tecnici può essere prevista anche la partecipazione dei rappresentanti di associazioni pubbliche e private. Le chiedo se nel vostro caso la comunità locale è stata coinvolta nello sviluppo del distretto oppure no?

Giorgia Govoni

Secondo la mia esperienza, questa partecipazione esiste. Prendendo ad esempio il Festival Narrativo del Paesaggio, dove quest'anno hanno aderito 13 su 15 comuni del distretto, la maggior parte dei comuni ha sviluppato una progettualità in collaborazione con le associazioni locali. Quest'anno il tema del Festival era l'80° Anniversario della Liberazione di Bologna e abbiamo collaborato con tutte le ANPI del territorio, non solo nella nostra unione. La co-progettazione viene però attuata dai diversi comuni, non a livello distrettuale. In generale, osservo che la maggior parte di noi lavora in collaborazione con le associazioni, con intensità diverse in base alla circostanza. Dall'altro lato, emerge come l'associazionismo desideri essere coinvolto di più. Sicuramente c'è margine per sviluppare maggiormente questo aspetto, però le collaborazioni dei vari comuni con le associazioni del territorio ci sono e sono attive.

Antonia Schiavone

In linea generale, i distretti culturali sono visti come dei modelli volti a favorire lo sviluppo socioeconomico di un territorio attraverso la valorizzazione del patrimonio culturale locale. In questa logica di sostegno allo sviluppo locale, l'idea è quella di collegare il settore culturale con altre filiere economiche del territorio, attraverso una integrazione di tipo orizzontale. A questo proposito, analizzando anche l'accordo attuativo in materia di cultura, in particolar modo all'articolo 2, viene indicato come i distretti relativamente al proprio ambito territoriale collaborano alla valorizzazione della cultura come volano economico, potenziando il rapporto di collaborazione con l'ambito turistico, il sistema produttivo, in particolar modo le industrie creative, il sistema di welfare metropolitano, politiche giovanili, istruzione e formazione. In merito a questo aspetto, le chiedo se, oltre al settore culturale, altre filiere economiche sono state integrate nel distretto Pianura Est. Se sì, quali?

Giorgia Govoni

È presente questo aspetto. Per esempio, il progetto del Festival Narrativo del Paesaggio nasce con uno scopo culturale e turistico. Il filone del turismo è un aspetto importante. Lavoriamo anche per creare collegamenti con le politiche giovanili, facendo dialogare la proposta turistica con le iniziative per i giovani, offrendo esperienze e creando appuntamenti culturali specifici. Collaboriamo con il progetto ExtraBò, uno sportello turistico attraverso il quale è possibile ricevere informazioni sull'Appennino, sul territorio Imolese e su tutta la Pianura Bolognese. Sul versante turistico abbiamo un altro piano di collaborazione attraverso una convenzione con 18 comuni, che non coincide direttamente con il DC e cerchiamo di creare sinergie.

Antonia Schiavone

Negli anni, a parte i distretti culturali nati nell'ambito della provincia di Bologna, ci sono stati altri interscambi con distretti?

Giorgia Govoni

Quando è nato il nostro sistema e si è creato il gruppo tematico, ci si è confrontati con altri sistemi museali. Rispetto ad altri modelli di distretto, eventuali confronti sono stati gestiti dalla Città metropolitana, in quanto capofila di questo percorso. Il tentativo è di dialogare a livello istituzionale, non specificamente a livello di Pianura Est. L'area metropolitana di Bologna ha avuto scambi e confronti, cercando dialoghi anche a livello internazionale. Tuttavia, il nostro sistema distrettuale è inedito.

Antonia Schiavone

Quali impatti economici e sociali ha avuto il distretto sul territorio? Se previsto, come misura il vostro distretto il proprio successo o efficacia (definizione sistema di indicatori, ecc.)?

Giorgia Govoni

Questo è un aspetto su cui stiamo lavorando per sviluppare maggiori competenze, non essendo ancora una prassi consolidata. Realizziamo valutazioni su alcuni singoli progetti, ma l'impatto complessivo del distretto non è ancora oggetto di misurazione sistematica.

Antonia Schiavone

Esiste una strategia di internazionalizzazione o di allargamento del proprio bacino d'utenza verso il territorio nazionale, andando oltre i confini provinciali?

Giorgia Govoni

Come modalità di lavoro strutturata, questo aspetto non è incluso. Tra i progetti attuali, due potrebbero avere potenzialità in questa direzione. Tuttavia, è necessario dedicare maggiori risorse e tempo per sviluppare queste opportunità. La cultura richiede tempo e cura, e senza poter dedicare adeguate risorse, l'efficacia risulta limitata.

Antonia Schiavone

In merito alle sfide principali del distretto, mi ha già fornito indicazioni mentre presentava gli obiettivi distrettuali. Ha anche anticipato aspetti relativi agli sviluppi futuri del distretto. Il voler consolidare un lavoro di comunità può essere interpretato sia come una sfida che come una futura direzione strategica. Ci sono degli aspetti che vuole aggiungere rispetto alle sfide e alle direzioni future del distretto?

Giorgia Govoni

Una linea strategica su cui dovremmo crescere è quella di sviluppare sempre più la capacità della periferia di proporre iniziative al centro. Spesso riceviamo stimoli dal centro verso la periferia, ma dobbiamo diventare sempre più consapevoli del valore e della forza dei progetti presenti sul nostro territorio. In un'ottica di collegialità, dobbiamo prima di tutto acquisire maggiore consapevolezza del valore delle proposte del nostro territorio per poi portarle successivamente negli altri distretti o verso il centro. È necessaria più consapevolezza del nostro valore e un impegno nel favorire lo scambio e la conoscenza reciproca. Dobbiamo essere sempre più propositivi verso il centro. Trovare un coordinamento anche di calendari risulta di fondamentale importanza, così come riuscire a sviluppare sempre più progetti di rete, lavorando per superare le attuali specificità organizzative, principalmente legate al fatto che la nostra Unione Reno Galliera non coincide perfettamente con il distretto.