

Creativity, place identity, music tourism and heritage: the case of the Cultural District of the province of Cremona

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This paper offers a theoretical overview on cultural districts, through the evolution of the concept of industrial district (Marshall, Beccattini) to the idea of milieu to enhance cultural activities (Sacco, Santagata), to foster settlement and concentration of cultural facilities and to attract creative workers (Florida), tourists and investors. The creation of a cultural district implies not only mixed-use developments and crossed-fertilization actions but also the collaboration and the involvement of the local community.

In the second part, it presents the case of one of the six Fondazione Cariplo's Cultural Districts approved in July 2010 within a broader strategy of local development. The Cultural District of the province of Cremona is characterized by the theme of music because of its tradition which is well-known all over the world both in terms of construction of music instruments (violin making since 16th century with Amati, Guarneri and most of all with Stradivari) and music execution. Since ever luthiery and music performance are deeply connected with the image and the brand of Cremona, along with other cultural practices of the city.

Introduction to Cultural Districts

For a long time the traditional industrial district in Italy has been characterized by small and medium-sized enterprises producing high aesthetic quality products which still are strongly recognizable all over the world (such as the Sassuolo's decorated and designed tiles and pottery; the Biella and Prato's wool and silk clothes and apparel; the Vicenza and Arezzo's gold jewelry, the Murano and Venice's glass, etc). Industrial districts based on sustainable and endogenous growth: even though the presence of small firms was considered to be essential to a district, this condition turned out to be not enough in itself. What seemed to be crucial was not only their interdependency but the so-called "industrial atmosphere": within the districts information must circulate and tacit knowledge, mutual trust and the accumulation of social capital played a crucial role for local society and culture development and empowerment (Beccattini, 1987, 1989).

Today more than ever, in the so called soft and new economy era, knowledge plays indeed a crucial role: "The growth of clusters is traditionally explained by the upgrading mechanisms and competitive advantages accruing to collocated similar and related firms, for example, the possibility for firms to benefit from a pool of experienced labour and specialized suppliers, and to pick up ideas and knowledge simply by being located in an information-intense industrial milieu." (Andersen K.V. et al., 2014, p.120).

In the last decades global changes and crisis have changed the focus of economy: culture has turned out to be an essential key for economic development. New economic orders have changed the nature of firms with the

consequent rise of an intellectual and cultural component: that's when cultural district formula has started to be conceptualized and intangible inputs have mattered more and more. No analysis of current thinking about cities and culture would be complete without Richard Florida (*The Rise of the Creative Class*, 2004): he has consistently championed the role of the creative class, those associated with technology, talent and tolerance, as urban regenerators. While the creative class is larger than those in performance and the arts, they are a group who are attracted to urban amenities, including cultural events and institutions.

Whereas traditional industry undergoes a delocalization process (firms in search for low labor costs), culture, which is deeply rooted with the place, becomes an identity asset, an intangible capital that cannot be delocalized: "The cultural economy has both direct and indirect relationship to regional development and impacts both production and consumption." (Florida R., Mellander C., Stolarick K., 2014, p. 43) Culture-based goods intertwine different dimensions, such as the individual and the social, the symbolic and the objective, as they are "...all engaged in the creation of marketable outputs whose competitive qualities depend on the fact that they function at least in part as personal ornaments, modes of social display, forms of entertainment and distraction, or sources of information and self-awareness, i.e. as artifacts whose symbolic value to the consumer is high relative to their practical purposes." (Scott, 2000, p.3)

Moreover the integration of the productive and cultural sectors not only with other sectors (Sacco's evolved cultural district) but also with the territory and the local community makes the real difference for economic growth. The impact of culture can be positive on different sectors, such as on tourism (attraction of tourists) and economy (attraction of investment), but also on society by increasing sense of belonging of local people and identification (attraction of new residents).

The creation of a cultural district implies on one hand, mixed-use developments, and on the other, the collaboration of different sectors along with the involvement of the local community. In the current globalized world, knowledge, know-how and expertise are as crucial as other economic resources and are considered productive assets. Information is not equivalent to knowledge, as the first implies an amount of quantitative data, stored passively and retrieved, while the latter involves qualitative, active, personal and cognitive skills able to recreate and enhance it.

Culture, creativity and city brand have become fashionable topics in the last decades and have increasingly become essential concepts everywhere, in particular in cities undergoing crisis and decline in order to trigger process of urban regeneration. Hoyman and Faricy go further and test the results of Florida's creative class theory. They found that investment meant to attract the creative class, along with the cultural activities, was not related to economic growth in a city. Rather human capital was a good predictor of economic growth and development. This argues that perhaps when cities seek to regenerate urban areas they should invest in education and especially in education that produces well developed graduates ready to turn around and invest in their own city. This is where the problem lies with cultural activities and events as the prime generator of urban renewal. The results may be as ephemeral as the events themselves. Lasting change may involve culture and the arts but differ in the locus of investment. New research is emerging on the outcomes of integration of the arts, performance, music, and fine arts, into the education of children. Such a holistic

education appears to boost the capabilities of graduates and allows them to find meaning in their lives. For all these reasons also the Distretto Culturale della provincia di Cremona – here analyzed the second part of the paper – chose to focus on the education issue.

Cremona: its *milieu* and identity

This case study regards Cremona, an Italian city located in the heart of the Po valley, 85 km south-east of Milan. It was originally founded as a Roman city with a long history first based on trade and commerce and then mainly on agriculture. The city offers a rich heritage of arts and culture: churches and historical buildings but also nature (the Po river, rural landscape, many villages in the surrounding area) and gastronomy (cheese, salami and the two most famous local products: *mostarda*, preserved sweet fruit pickles, and *torrone*, a nougat biscuit).

Since the 16th Century the reputation of Cremona is linked to violin making by Amati, Guarneri and most of all by Stradivari. Antonio Stradivari made around 1,100 instruments, a huge number by any standards: around 650 of those instruments survive, mostly violins. But there is also a tradition of other stringed instruments making, such as cellos, violas, contrabasses and also organs, especially in Crema. Musically speaking, Cremona gave birth also to the two great composers Claudio Monteverdi and Amilcare Ponchielli. All these elements make the Cremona province embedded of intellectual stimulation, skills, knowledge that inspire and attract great musicians and violin makers. The luthiers' presence, high quality schools and local strategies continue and foster its rooted tradition: Cremona and its surrounding area still today are capable of generating remarkable violin makers.

The identity of the city is thus inextricably associated with excellent handicraft and music in general: all these elements (bow instruments making, education and music performance) make a cluster effect and characterize the Cultural District.

The city disposes of a particular atmosphere which is an essential element to create a favorable *milieu* able to trigger a cross-fertilization process. Such an atmosphere is a crucial aspect to create a new economic development, just as Charles Landry states: “A creative milieu is a place – either a cluster of buildings, a part of a city, a city as a whole or a region – that contains the necessary preconditions in term of ‘hard’ and ‘soft’ infrastructure to generate a flow of ideas and inventions. Such a milieu is a physical setting where a critical mass of entrepreneurs, intellectuals, social activists, artists, administrators, power brokers or students can operate in an open-minded, cosmopolitan context and where face to face interaction creates new ideas, artefacts, products, services and institutions and as a consequence contributes to economic success.” (Landry, 2000)

Theory and empirical cases affirm that destinations need to find their own point of difference and differentiate themselves. To brand a place many strategies have to be adopted, such as: Vision and Strategic analysis; Internal and external place marketing, Market research, Identity building, Communications actions, web, digital and social media implementation, new image production, Public-private partnerships. Place branding is about how a city wants to be perceived: the image must be chosen, created and maintained. It is

somehow a promise that should be kept towards visitors' thoughts, feelings and expectations. The core values, deeply connected with the inner identity, are decisive for the emerging image of a place in order to be recognizable in the current competing world of destinations.

Brands must be renewed: "Brands are not static: as with any aspect of dynamic business practice, they must be refreshed, maintained, tested and reviewed. However, they are somewhat delicate and cannot easily be changed without careful thought being given to the emotional impact that change of a familiar aspect of everyday life has on consumers. This is particularly true when a branded product is closely attached to a city, a locale, or a type of lifestyle, so that it is attached to a parochial sensibility that is inherently fragile." (Hemelryk Donald S., Kofman E., Kevin C., 2009) Also Cremona refreshed its tradition: last September a new museum Museo del Violino opened. Before the Museum's opening, the best violins of history were contained in the Town hall where every morning a curator used to take each violin out of its glass case and play all of them for a few minutes to keep them at their best condition. Now the whole superb collection is gathered in the Museum which has also a great Auditorium and an innovative section dedicated to academic and scientific research. For the first time in Italy research enters an arts museum, opening a real dialogue between the two worlds usually kept apart and inaugurating new fields of studies. Scientific advances aim to improve restoration techniques and to be a support to excellent craftsmanship and restorers in order to grow more respectful to the original, fighting false and copies.

In 2012 traditional violin craftsmanship, concerning the construction and restoration of bowed stringed instruments, was added to the UNESCO Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. These unique skills are transmitted by professional Master Luthiers, specialized schools and apprenticeships in local workshops, where students continue to learn and perfect their techniques. That's a never-ending process that combines tangible and intangible aspects together as a whole. Craftsmanship has to do with education and requires a high level of creativity. Traditional violin-making is transmitted from generation to generation, from master to pupil, through both formal and tacit knowledge. Every violin maker has to adapt the general rules with his own personal knowledge and taste to every single instrument. The so-called "classical method" in violin making is a recognized Cremona's unique contribution to global heritage and the esteem in which it is held around the world.

From a touristic point of view, Cremona attracts mainly a small, specialist international audience interested in violin making and in music. In 2012 foreign visitors who came to the Province of Cremona were German, French, Romanian and Swiss. Cremona offers also fairs (*MondoMusica* is a point of reference for the global stringed instrument market), important music competitions (the most well known is the *Concorso Triennale* for stringed instruments) and many music festivals. It displays also theatre seasons, galleries and museum exhibitions. In the last years all this offer has been capitalized and organized through the cultural district formula, as it can be seen as a "cultural framework" where public and private, participation and cohesion, tourists, investors and citizens can meet.

The Fondazione Cariplo's Cultural Districts

The Cultural Districts is a Fondazione Cariplo's project to promote cultural heritage within a broader strategy for local development. It is a unique project in Italy which concerns six geographical areas of Lombardy, a wealthy region in the North of the Country, in order to expand the cultural heritage sphere to encompass related businesses, improve governance of the cultural heritage at local level, promote economic and financial sustainability in cultural heritage management and improve the skills of local players for better heritage conservation, management and capitalization.

In 2006, at the beginning of the process, Fondazione Cariplo co-funded operational feasibility studies throughout the region to help and focus the distinctive traits of the various contexts and check each potential to become a cultural district. A call for proposals was followed by in-depth feasibility studies. Then a selection was made where the Foundation singled out and approved six cultural districts giving each of them some funds to enable cultural actions committed by other local sources. Along the years Fondazione Cariplo has been providing support with technical assistance, monitoring and communication actions.

The total investment of the project consisted in 65 million: the total grants by Fondazione Cariplo amounted in 20 million € with the co-funding of local different private and public entities involved in each District.

The six Cultural Districts are: *Valle Camonica* (whose lead organization is *Comunità Montana* along with 42 municipal administrations, BIM Consortium, Italy's Ministry for Culture and Heritage, Brescia Provincial Administration, ARCUS, Terme di Boario and some cultural associations), *Dominus – OltrePo Mantovano* (whose lead organization is the Consortium of OltrePo Mantovano municipalities along with Mantua Provincial Administration, 13 municipal administrations, Politecnico di Milano, Consortium of Mantua Agro-tourism Establishments, Chamber of Commerce, GAL OltrePo Mantovano, the Libraries Network), *Distretto culturale della provincia di Cremona* (whose lead organization is the Cremona Province Administration along with Chamber of Commerce, 8 municipal administrations, the Stradivari Foundation, the Università di Pavia - Faculty of Musicology, Craft training and education organizations, music and performing arts foundations and associations), *Regge dei Gonzaga* (whose lead organization is the Regge dei Gonzaga Association along with 13 municipal administrations, Chamber of Commerce, Unione degli Industriali, Consortium of Mantua Agro-tourism establishments, Politecnico di Milano, and some cultural organizations), *Monza e Brianza* (whose lead organization is Monza e Brianza Province Administration along with 5 municipal administrations, Confederation of Italian Industry, Chamber of Commerce, CNA – the National Association representing Italian Artisans and SMEs), Assimpredil-ANCE – the National Association representing Italian building contractors and construction-related firms, some research and training institutes), *Valtellina* (whose lead organization is a local development Foundation along with Sondrio Provincial Administration, 3 mountain communities, 4 municipal administrations, A2A, banks, Università di Pavia, Agro-food district, GAL Valtellina Consortium).

Each District has its own character and bases most of its action on the themes related to its identity and distinctive trait.

The Cultural District of the province of Cremona

The Cultural District of the province of Cremona involves a partnership made of 24 subjects who share the design and the spirit of the project. Four different local networks in the fields of culture, education and tourism are part of the District: the Network of Music (schools and associations for music education and training), Network of Libraries, Network of Museums and Theatres in whole territory.

Music represents the core of the District: it deeply characterizes both the culture and the economy of the territory. The District's actions foster the promotion and development of music in all its aspects and include human capital, innovation and research for the craftsmanship of excellence, violin and organ makers. In order to reach such goals, the District works to involve as many subjects as possible to build an ongoing shared project: it intends both to settle in the local community and to overcome its borders according to a national and international perspective.

The 11 actions the District has been carrying on during these years concern music, heritage and building restoration, music training courses, theatre performance and festivals.

Lately a specific relevance has been given to the communication aspect, by different tools, channels and social networks (Facebook, Twitter, Vimeo, Youtube) along with the website www.distrettoculturaleprovinciacremona.it which gathers all cultural information related to events in the province of Cremona. Every event is described and refers to the networks within the Distretto (Libraries, Museums, Theatres, Education, etc) covering different cultural fields.

Other actions of communication concern also the realization of two art exhibitions: one has shown pictures of a local photographer and the other has produced a non-conventional tourist guide with illustrations.

From March 7th to 14th 2014 Palazzo Stanga Trecco in Cremona opened to host a rich program of events realized by the Distretto. A photo exhibition by the artist Ettore Favini named "Ipotesi di Finito #4 – Dare forma alla cultura" (Hypothesis of finite. #4 – Shape the culture) displayed pictures taken in some cultural places of the Distretto involving local people daily engaged in the cultural field. The theme of participation is indeed central in Favini's work and dialogue with universal issues, such as time and existence. This interaction between people and places finds its best collocation in Palazzo Stanga Trecco after its long restoration, in particular the first floor of the building and the so-called Napoleon room. The week offered also a rich program of conferences and performances, guided visits and tours of the Palace.

Last April 19th the inauguration of the exhibition "Aiuto mi sono perso" (Help. I got lost) took place in Museo del Violino. The cultural association Tapirulan made it for the Distretto Culturale della provincia di Cremona. It shows the illustrations contained in the travel guide which tells the different places, villages, people and stories of the concerned area. 50 authors narrate graphically all the treasures of the province along with unconventional writings leaving much space to imagination as an original travel journey between reality and fantasy. It is an unusual touristic and cultural trip through the land where signs and traces of the past are still present yet revisited in an artistic and ironic way.

Focus on education and training

Knowledge is a dominant feature in the post-industrial society and in the new economy. What is important is not only knowledge transfer and sharing but also the ability to recreate it. The district is considered as a cognitive system and a fertile context to facilitate the circulation and creation of new knowledge, both in terms of tacit and explicit knowledge (Polany 2000, Rullani 2004). According to research and studies in this field what seems to facilitate the transfer of knowledge is an horizontal approach of informal relationships (Nonaka & Takeuchi 1955) that fosters “coopetition” among those involved within networks, clusters, and districts, rather than a vertical and hierarchical one where relationships tend to be more formal between master and pupil.

Education is an asset to train and attract highly skilled human capital from all over the world: in the case of Cremona the presence of masters and teachers able to transfer their knowledge in a variety of settings that include high schools, universities, master classes and workshops is a relevant asset. Music is the distinctive trait of this Cultural District in terms of production, education and execution. Production is both material, the instruments, their components and restoration of bowed stringed instruments, and immaterial through knowledge, education in music and musicology, and execution for professionals and amateurs.

Local schools offer the best craftsmanship which must be followed by many years of practice and lots of creative energy, such as the Institute Stradivari and CR.Forma, just to make two examples.

The Institute Stradivari is an international violin making school with a remarkable experience in the excellence of bowed instrument handicraft and technical-scientific expertise, able to attract students from all over the world. Its students come from all over the world but fluency in Italian is one of the school’s entry requirements. They are all keen to learn how to make violins in the Cremonese classical tradition.

CR.Forma has a over thirty years of consolidated experience and a recognized tradition and offers training courses in the field of restoration and artistic handicraft production: paintings and frescoes in churches and buildings, ancient books and miniatures and in particular stringed instruments and organs. The institution is part of the Centers of Excellence of Region Lombardy. The school of restoration teaches the combination of innovation and tradition. Within the Cultural District project, it fostered the Project for the Restoration of Historical – Artistic Heritage and Enhancement of Musical Culture. The cooperation is active with many universities, superintendents, public and religious bodies, leading art restoration centers such as the Opificio delle Pietre dure in Florence. CR.Forma courses teach analysis and diagnosis, the use of tools, materials and methods, all operational stages to intervene and prevent regarding figurative and ornamental arrangements of old architectural buildings and churches, paintings on canvas, wood and boards; ancient books, prints, documents and paper heritage; stringed bow instruments and pipe organs, both construction and restoration. All these artifacts have a high aesthetic and historical value that must be preserved and kept alive. The school has well-equipped workshops where an experimental approach is combined to theoretical lessons: in particular non-invasive investigation are carried on, applying imaging techniques and precise methods.

From the research point of view, important and innovative activities are carried on by the Arvedi Laboratory of the University of Pavia and the Politecnico di Milano Lab, both housed in the Museo del Violino.

The first Laboratory focuses its activities to the development of a non-invasive and innovative analytical protocol devoted to the conservation of musical instruments. Using powerful scientific facilities, the laboratory provides the characterization of the constituent materials and their alterations, as well as the shapes and sizes of ancient and modern musical instrument. The choice of a totally non-invasive approach guarantees, in cooperation with curators and conservators, a thorough in situ analysis of the Museum's collection, in order to collect in a global database all the information about each instrument, sharing discoveries and knowledge with the violin-making's world. The second Laboratory is prone to experimentation and high expertise in geometric and mechanical design, sound processing, computational acoustics, acoustic and vibrational measurements and more. On one side what is studied concerns the materials (woods, but also the varnishes, the glues and all the other materials such as metals, fibres, etc.) and tools that are involved in or required for the crafting, the processing and the preservation of stringed instruments. On the other side, through direct experience or through advanced simulation/computational tools, it is investigated the acoustic/mechanical impact of new geometries on the instrument (strength, endurance, vibrational properties, projection, ergonomics, etc.). This research wants to offer a support and a service in designing new tools and methodologies for improving the quality and the efficiency of the luthiers' craftsmanship, also by being closely in touch with the violin makers community. The researchers dispose of some facilities such as a Chemical and materials lab, an Anechoic chamber, a Measurement lab, a Computing lab. The two Labs aim at understanding the handcraft artistry of luthiery from a scientific-technological standpoint as well as from an artistic-historical perspective, in order to be able to support and interact with both craftsmen and industries in the area of stringed musical instruments.

The education system can benefit of the essential presence of around 150 luthiers (both Italian and foreign violin makers), many of them worldwide famous. Some graduated students decide to set up shop in Cremona or stay and work for some workshops or to take their skills back home. Local Institution and the Chamber of Commerce support the sector and provide some financial support for actions, participation to fairs and exhibitions. Some luthiers have also instituted a Consortium to certify their products and Cremona craft's tradition.

The survey on education and internalization

In autumn 2013 a survey was conducted and consisted of semi-structured interviews done on-site with a qualitative approach and a quantitative data analysis through a questionnaire addressed to a selection of 11 subjects in the province of Cremona which are directly and indirectly related to music training or violin making schools and Institutions: CR.Forma (Cremona); Istituto superiore A. Stradivari (Cremona); Faculty of Musicology and Cultural Heritage - Università degli Studi di Pavia – Cremona campus; Casalmaggiore International Festival (Casalmaggiore); Istituto L. Folcioni (Crema); Cremona Chamber of Commerce; Servimpresa; Laboratorio G. Arvedi - Università degli Studi di Pavia (Museo del Violino, Cremona); Laboratorio del Politecnico di Milano (Museo del Violino, Cremona); Fondazione W. Stauffer (Cremona); Istituto Superiore di Studi Musicali C. Monteverdi (Cremona).

The research aimed at investigating the education system relations with a specific focus on Internationalization.

The network analysis method was applied to show the connections between the chosen subjects.

The questionnaire consisted of multiple choice and qualitative questions divided into five sections. The first part concerned data related to the Institution, the second referred to the Institution activities, the third asked questions about the number and origin of foreign students and the fourth about the network of external relations on local, national and international levels. The last part analyzed the inner connection among the 11 subjects.

The questionnaire included also open questions and descriptive comments for further evaluation of the degree of networking and judgments of specific activities and connection mainly abroad.

Every subject presents many contacts at different scales, in the province, in Italy and worldwide. Potentially many international contacts are active yet most are on personal and individual basis with a lack systemization and institutional exploitation. The network within the District turns out in need of strengthening (uni or bi-directional connections) in spite of the high quality and excellence of the knowledge transmitted.

What was explored was also the importance of research and innovation in museums, according to a renewed dialogue between art and science. Academic research can indeed play a crucial role: Museo del Violino, a brand new museum opened in Cremona on September 2013, offers not only the most extraordinary collection of ancient instruments and a innovative auditorium but has also two research laboratories dealing with studies on acoustic (Politecnico di Milano) and material aspects (Università di Pavia) of stringed and bow instruments. That's where for the first time in Italy the scientific and academic worlds meet the artistic dimension.

Conclusions

Smaller sized-cities seem more attractive because of work-life balance, authenticity and sense of community, low congestion, local social cohesion, reasonable house prices. Most of these provincial cities have a precise identity and a core which make them recognizable in the global scenario. Cremona has its own in the skill and wisdom of violin making, which is a human capital of great value – both cultural and economic, intangible and tangible. Human capital is considered as a movable resource that has to be attracted: “Most economists conceptualize human capital as a stock or endowment, which belongs to a place in the same way that a natural resource might. But the reality is that human capital is a flow, a highly mobile factor that can and does relocate.” (Florida R., C. Mellander C., Stolarick K., 2014, p.54)

The Cultural District works to share this knowledge in the local community while it is open to the external world through targeted communication and promotion activities. Music is a central element along with other cultural assets such as arts heritage, architecture, museums, libraries, and events aimed at the expression and combination of tradition and innovation in the cultural sector. This recognition aims to safeguard and foster this craftsmanship and the related immaterial values through various actions connected with the Cultural

District. It intends to demonstrate the potential of education to a global community to strengthen the image of Cremona in terms of place identity, ability to attract human capital, tourism and investments. Education may trigger interlocking driving forces towards national and international competitiveness to make the Cultural District of the province of Cremona a point of reference all over the world for both music learning and execution, the construction and restoration of bowed string instruments, along with research and innovation to set up an International Centre for Excellence.

As Florida said “an attractive city doesn’t have to be a big city, but it has to be cosmopolitan”: Cremona is opening up to the world with all its identity elements, to be competitive and attractive, combining old and new, tradition and innovation at its best. Attraction of skilled and qualified human capital flow can depend on: distribution of amenities, availability of jobs, peculiar life style and quality of life, openness, tolerance, heterogeneity, variety of leisure, sport and entertainment opportunities, vibrant street life, cultural offers such as concerts, theatre performance, art galleries, exhibitions and museums, etc. Distretto Culturale della provincia di Cremona’s mission has actually consisted in creating the condition, network and opportunity to express the territory potential both on the theoretical and empirical levels.

On the theoretical level, successful case studies demonstrate that creative quarters can combine different kinds and conjugations of –tainments: entertainment, eatertainment, shopertainment and edutainment. The conditions in which a ‘creative class’ choose to settle are defined by Florida’s 3 T characteristics: Technology, Talent, Tolerance.

On the empirical level investment is also needed in the local academic institutions to increase the human and social capital in the city. The link between investment in the cultural activities and education needs to be strong and lasting for long especially to be a strong point of reference and attraction at international level, as the Distretto culturale della provincia di Cremona actually is.

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