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New directions in
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BOOK PROCEEDINGS

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Building bottom-up networks for the integrated enhancement of cultural heritage in inner areas.

Towards new paths

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ABSTRACT

The Faro Convention definitively recognises the value and potential of cultural heritage "as a resource for sustainable development and quality of life in a constantly evolving society" (Preamble). Sharing this assumption, the current research aims at understanding the role of museum networks both for the conservation and enhancement of local cultural heritage and for the promotion of sustainable development in inner areas. After discussing the scientific literature on cultural networks, the paper examines the state of the art of museum networking in Italy. Subsequently, it focuses on Marche's inner areas affected by the earthquakes that hit the Centre of Italy between 2016 and 2017, analysing a case study in-depth ("Rete Museale dei Sibillini"). The research results classify different typologies of networks and levels of cooperation, highlighting emerging trends in cultural networking. Finally, taking into account issues and opportunities arising from the European context, new perspectives are suggested to promote local sustainable development.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In a period experiencing a fresh wave of globalisation, diversity of place and polycentrism play an increasing part in people's aspirations and development opportunities. Italy is particularly well placed: there is no need to strive for polycentrism – it just needs to be maintained (*A Strategy for Inner Areas in Italy*, 2014: 42).

1. Introduction

The series of earthquakes that struck Central Italy between August 2016 and January 2017 has damaged many villages characterised by a widespread distribution of cultural heritage. This peripheral cultural heritage is still unknown to the general public and not yet adequately studied. However, it is highly relevant to understand the historical, cultural, social and economic dynamics that first determined the development and then, in the modern age, the progressive depopulation of the Apennines. As a consequence, in the planning of interventions for the restoration and reconstruction of inner villages and buildings, it is necessary to rethink the current model of development and the management of cultural heritage, identifying innovative strategies able to overcome the persistent economic and managerial weaknesses, and thus to ensure the survival of cultural heritage for future generations.

According to the Council of Europe Framework Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society, signed in Faro in 2005 and by Italy in 2013, the participation of local communities is an essential factor for the success of these interventions (Petraroia, 2010). By accepting an open and inclusive, dynamic and interactive notion of cultural heritage, the Faro Convention underlines the need to involve citizens in the identification, study, interpretation, protection, conservation and presentation of cultural heritage. This approach has been also highlighted by the MiBACT High Council for Cultural Heritage and Landscape in the motion "Cultural heritage is the future of territories struck by the earthquake", approved in an extraordinary meeting in Matelica (Marche Region, Italy) on the 20th of March 2017. Following the same path, the Siena Charter "Museums and Cultural Landscapes" has stressed the need for a participatory logic, recognising our responsibility as individuals and as a community in the interventions for the protection, conservation and understanding of landscape "within

a participatory logic and a sustainable development perspective" (ICOM, 2014: art. 1). Finally, nowadays this approach is widely confirmed and even supported by the scientific literature in so far that an increasing number of scholars has applied concepts as "value co-creation" and "community engagement" to the management of cultural heritage (Bakhashi & Throsby, 2010; Simon, 2010; Waterton & Watson, 2011; Scott, 2013; Golinelli, 2015). As argued by Loulanski (2006), the conceptual focus has shifted from monuments to people, from objects to functions and from preservation *per se* to purposeful preservation and sustainable use and development.

This is an important achievement for a country as Italy, that could be considered as an open air museum where "heritage communities" (Council of Europe, 2005: art. 2) live in close contact with cultural heritage. This cultural heritage is mostly preserved in inner areas, which are "areas at some considerable distance from hubs providing essential services (education, health and mobility), with a wealth of key environmental and cultural resources of many different kinds, which have been subject to anthropisation for centuries. Around one quarter of Italy's population lives in these areas, which cover sixty per cent of the total national territory, and are split into over four thousand municipalities" (*A strategy for Inner Areas in Italy*, 2014: 7). Many villages hit by the earthquake exemplary represent the positive and negative peculiarities of these areas.

The deep and wide fabric of cultural heritage diffused in inner areas is not yet organised as an effective system. Among the main weaknesses there are the managerial shortcomings that affect museums and cultural heritage all around Italy in small centres and marginal areas: lack of mission statements, regulations and autonomous budgets; lack of adequate professional figures and, consequently, poor quality of services (starting from short opening time); ineffectiveness of security systems.

Given this context, the current paper aims at developing the previous research on museum networks (Cerquetti, 2008; Cerquetti & Montella, 2015) and on cultural heritage in inner areas (Capriotti & Cerquetti, 2016), in order to highlight some emerging trends and issues, lights and shadows, stimuli and resistance to innovation. After discussing cultural and economic needs for building museum networks, it examines the state of the art of museum networking in Italy. Subsequently, the research focuses on the area affected by the earthquake, trying to draw a classification of networks and of levels of cooperation. In order to highlight emerging trends in cultural networking, a case study is analysed in-depth, presenting a recent project, the "Rete Museale dei Sibillini" (Sibillini Museum Network), started in 2013. Finally, taking into account issues and opportunities arising from the *National Strategy for Inner Areas in Italy*, new perspectives are suggested to promote local sustainable development.

The field research was performed according to the principles of qualitative research (Patton, 2005) and through the triangulation of different sources of evidence (Yin, 2003). In particular, the overview of museum networks in inner areas was carried out analysing public documents, reports, data, websites, etc., while the case study also included the visit to the exhibition "Capolavori dei Sibillini. L'arte dei luoghi feriti dal sisma" (Masterpieces from the Sibillyne Mountains. Artwork from earthquake-stricken

areas) and an interview to the director of the museum network "Rete museale dei Sibillini", in order to highlight strengths and weaknesses of this recent initiative.

2. Theoretical framework or a short history of network strategy

Over the last twenty years the role of networks in the cultural sector has been widely investigated, underlining its cultural and economic benefits in promoting social inclusion, intercultural dialogue and sustainable development (Innocenti, 2014, 2015). Cultural networks have fairly recently broadened in meaning to include information networks, social networking, international cooperation and cross-cultural exchanges and interactions, thus progressively shifting from the mere collaboration among cultural institutions to participatory processes involving citizens and other stakeholders.

However, if analysed through the lens of management, the word takes on a more restricted meaning than the emerging one. Managerially speaking, a network is a net of non-competitive relationships between autonomous entities without control or unified management, aimed at achieving objectives that are not attainable by individual organisations. Since the beginning of the 1990s, the role of networks has been highlighted by the resource-based view, a strategy identifying resources and competences as the main source of competitive advantage as well as of differentiation opportunity for a company (Grant, 1991; Porter, 1996). According to the VRIO framework (Barney, 1991), a resource/capability could be a source of sustainable competitive advantage if it is: (1) *valuable*, when the organisation is able to exploit an opportunity or neutralise an external threat with the resource/capability; (2) *rare*, when the control of the resource/capability is in the hands of a relative few; (3) *inimitable*, when it is difficult to imitate and there will be significant cost disadvantage to an organisation trying to obtain, develop, or duplicate the resource/capability; and (4) *organised*, when the organisation is organised, ready and able to exploit the resource/capability. Developing this approach, scholars have focused on the advantages of the specialisation on core-activities and the outsourcing of non-essential activities, strengthening the need for inter-company collaboration and business networks (Grant, 2005).

Subsequently, networks have been also identified as an effective strategy to promote the sustainable management of cultural heritage, in conjunction with the emergence of culture-driven processes for local development. Since the end of the 1990s, in Italy, scholars have focused the attention on their possible contribution to the development of cultural institutions, especially of small and local museums, with huge structural, economic and financial constraints, but tightly related to the territory that hosts them and its diffused cultural heritage (Bianchi, 1996; Zan, 1999; TCI, 2000; Bagdadli, 2001; Montella, 2003). Given the territorial conformation of the peninsula, especially in the regions of Central Italy, museums are spread in many small towns and villages, even located in peripheral areas, not only in the centres that have experienced a great industrial development. As a consequence, networks can become a means to achieve qualitative and quantitative objectives that cannot be achieved by individual organisations. Embracing this perspective, since 2003, Montella has strengthened both cultural and economic reasons to build museums networks in Italy.

From a cultural point of view, museum networks could enhance the distinctive features of Italian cultural heritage, linking local museums to their context, and providing more information about the territory as a whole. In a nutshell, according to the territory-oriented strategy for museums (Dragoni, 2005), they could add greater value to single museum institutions. In actual fact, the specific traits of Italian cultural heritage are not represented by UNESCO cultural sites and masterpieces preserved in the most important and biggest Italian museums of a few cultural cities attracting international tourism flows, like the Colosseum in Rome, the Uffizi Gallery in Florence or the Academia Galleries in Venice; they are primarily in the all-encompassing and endless extension of cultural heritage in space and time (Toscano, 1998). Developing the analysis made by Golinelli (2008), this potential competitive advantage could be synthesized in 4 Cs: (1) *continuity*, that is the deep historical stratification of cultural heritage and the uninterrupted evidence of humanity and its environment through time; (2) *capillarity*, meant as the pervasiveness of cultural heritage distribution on the national territory; (3) *contextuality*, thanks to the deep cultural and historical relationship between museum collections and the local context – not only squares, roads, monuments and countryside, but also works of art preserved beyond museum doors, in churches, convents, monasteries, and other historical buildings and open spaces; (4) *complementariness*, in so far that each museum refers to other ones as in "snakes and ladders". For this reason, Chastel (1980) called Italy a "threefold natural museum", where the collection, the historical building where it is preserved and the town in which it is located are mutually linked in an exemplary manner as three different aspects of the same museum.

From an economic point of view, networks allow to achieve the efficient boundaries of the various museum activities, thus solving the dimensional problems affecting small institutions. In particular, small museums could achieve better results in the three areas identified in Moore's Strategic Triangle (Moore, 1995, 2000; Moore M.H. & Moore G.W., 2005): (1) *operational capacity*, achieving economies of scale, scope and learning, exchanging information and equipment, and saturating the productive capacity of resources, through the allocation of fixed costs and the reduction of transaction costs; (2) *public value creation*, building more qualified projects, widening the range of museum services and raising high levels of quality, thus achieving museum mission; and (3) *legitimacy and support*, getting a better competitive position and image, "thereby ensuring that resources and authority will flow" (Weinberg & Lewis, 2009) (fig. 1).
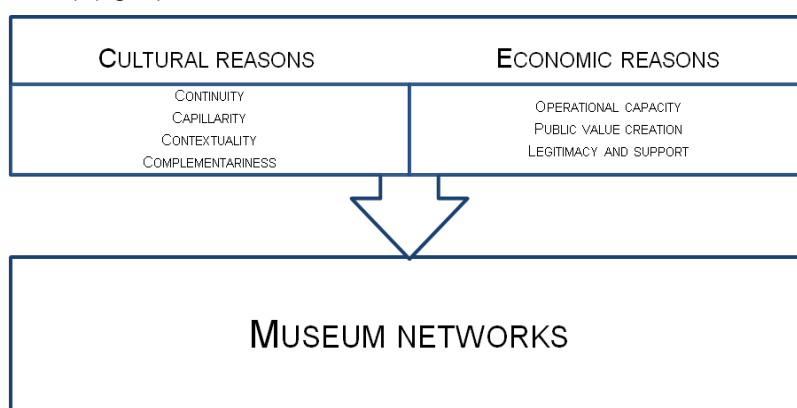

FIGURE 1. CULTURAL AND ECONOMIC REASONS FOR ITALIAN MUSEUM NETWORKS.
Source: author's elaboration.

3. State-of-the-art of museum networking in Italy

Considering both cultural and economic needs for museum networks, it is time to take stock of the state of networking of Italian museums, considering its shortcomings and progresses. In Italy, the first museum networks and systems[8] were born at the beginning of the 21st century, when Italian Regions promoted policies aimed at creating more or less formalised and institutionalised regional and sub-regional museum networks or systems (Alberti, 2005; Collodi et al, 2005; Montella, 2014)[9]. Even though the access to European funding programmes was the main incentive for creating networks (La Monica & Pellegrini, 2009), other motivations have to be mentioned such as economic efficiency, isomorphism, legitimacy, visibility and the complementariness of resources (Bagdadli, 2001; Aspen Institute Italia, 2013).

With a few rare exceptions, today these networks could be considered at a first stage of evolution, where cooperation – promoted by local administrators – is a tool to achieve a sufficient level of quality in providing the main public services in small museums (Alberti, 2005). However, in many cases these organisations have not been able to satisfy all the range of the abovementioned cultural and economic needs, failing in improving the quality and the amount of museum services (Cerquetti, 2008; Pencarelli & Splendiani, 2011). For that reason, Seddio recently underlined the need to provide network projects with integrated management plans for enhancement activities, aimed at clarifying the project placement and the capability to activate and regenerate over time the conditions for achieving the variety of expected results (Seddio, 2013: 84). This would also prevent the proliferation of networks whose management is unsustainable. On this point, as already suggested by Montella (2002), a possible solution could be identified in the adoption of *variable geometry networks*, providing different networks depending on the critical mass needed both to provide museums with adequate materials and services – also by means of outsourcing – and to deliver various museum services. If maintenance, security, and fire-fighting services can be conveniently shared only by close institutions, information services can be extended to a larger area. On the other hand, editorial activity finds the organisation's efficient boundaries on a regional scale, while rights management requires an even larger dimension.

In other cases, valorisation strategies have included all the place-specific assets, promoting the integration of the material and immaterial cultural heritage with all the local resources and production processes within a geographic context with well-defined boundaries, according to a district approach (Valentino, 2003; Sacco et al, 2015). Given that the district approach is not the focus of this paper, it is sufficient to remember that it considers cultural heritage as one of the factors to promote local policies based on place-specific values and resources. This strategy is based on the interaction between: (1) the *cultural weave* of places, understood as the formative matrix of local identities and as an active tool for local development; (2) the service system and production chains that gravitate around it; (3) the activation of network policies (Carta, 2004). Within the framework of pluralism and cooperation underlying all forms of networks (Cammelli, 2011), in this case, a policy action is needed to define

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[8]   "Networks" and "systems" are considered as synonyms, even though *stricto sensu* a network is a means to build a system.
[9]   A wide analysis of regional policies for museum system is available at: <http://sistemimuseali.sns.it/>.

relatively stable forms of cooperation between public and private actors with non-converging interests, bringing together resources to achieve a common goal (Hinna & Seddio, 2013).

4. Field research

4.1 Inner areas: a new scenario for an ancient territory

Inner areas, that cover most of the Europe's territory, have undergone a process of persistent marginalisation since the post-war period: far from services and communication routes, they are today a European emergency, because of depopulation and aging population, low levels of employment and scant industrialisation – with the exception of some typical food and wine productions.

In Italy, the depopulation has been hugely increasing since the 1960s, as a result of the industrialisation of the mid-valley and coastal areas, emphasising problems of hydro-geological instability and economic imbalance that today endanger the survival of cultural heritage and landscape:

> The population of Inner Areas tends to be very elderly, with various and significant consequences:
> a) when the proportion of the elderly and very elderly population (over 65) accounts for over 30 percent of the population, it is said to be at a "demographic point of no return", in the sense that it lacks the endogenous capacity to survive; it would take substantial immigration from outside the area to trigger a process of demographic vitality;
> b) with such high numbers of elderly and very elderly people, the provision of a widespread and appropriate care system becomes a priority;
> c) houses grow old along with their inhabitants, leading to the creation of housing stock, often larger than required, lacking any assurance of crucial upkeep, leading to significant deterioration in older properties (*A Strategy for Inner Areas in Italy*, 2014: 43).

Almost the half of this territory is a mountain territory, and more than the 4/5 of the national mountain territory is in inner areas[10]. As already argued, it is a fragile and vulnerable landscape, but also the spine of Italy's skeleton (Toscano, 2011; Tarpino, 2016; Borghi, 2017; Marchetti et al, 2017), rich in environmental (water resources, agricultural systems, forests, natural and human landscapes) and cultural resources (archaeological sites, historical settlements, abbeys, small museums, craft centers) (Lucatelli, 2016). The main strength of these areas is the dual nature of their diversity, both natural and cultural, changing in each location and including agricultural and building practices and traditions. In the globalised world, this diversity of place and polycentrism is a great opportunity, that could attract a new and increasing, but still unsatisfied, demand for authenticity in tourism and consumption (Grayson & Martinec, 2004; Pine & Gilmore, 2007; Cicerchia, 2009; Baverland & Farrelly, 2010).

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[10] There is a conceptual and semantic differentiation between a "mountain area" and a "inner area". The former is identified according to criteria of height and longitudinal slope, and has been recently modified to include social, economic and morphological factors; the latter is identified according to its distance from hubs providing essential services (education, health and mobility) (Marchetti et al., 2017: 32).

Trying to catch opportunities arising from a globalised world, in 2014, Italy adopted the *National Strategy for Inner Areas* for its National Reform Plan, in order to counteract the demographic decline and relaunch the economic recovery and services of these areas through ordinary and European community funds. A top priority was given to natural and cultural heritage and tourism development, "retaining the youthful population in situ, valorising them as repositories of territorial historic and cultural heritage, by giving them valid reasons to stay. Setting up local systems to improve daily life on one hand, and existing networks on the other, should constitute attractive preconditions for making young and adult populations want to stay" (*A Strategy for Inner Areas in Italy*, 2014: 44).

As already argued, cultural heritage in inner areas is a *proximity heritage*, because of its local dimension, which tells the local culture and identity (Buratti & Ferrari, 2011). Its fragility derives from economic, political, demographic and ecological events that have led to the gradual abandonment of mountain areas (from an economic point of view, generating unused land capital). The contribution that this heritage can give to local development is subordinate to the ability of local communities to recognise it as an expression of identity and collective memory. As a consequence, the challenge is to identify valorisation paths that can broaden their market and economic development opportunities (Salvatore & Chiodo, 2016).

The field research focuses on inner areas located in the South of Marche, a wide area affected by the earthquakes that hit the Centre of Italy between August 2016 and January 2017. The "crater surface"[11] extends altogether for approximately 8,000 Km^2, 17.4% of the total area of the four regions affected. Half of the "crater area" is in Marche Region, where it covers over 40% of the regional territory and affects four provinces of five. In the region, there are 87 of the 140 municipalities of the crater, more than half located in the province of Macerata and a quarter in the province of Ascoli Piceno. In Marche Region, there is about 60% of the population of the entire crater, corresponding to 22.7% of the regional one (Banca d'Italia, 2017: 48-49) (fig. 2).

Area del cratere nelle Marche (1)

(a) comuni nel cratere

(b) incidenza su popolazione e superficie (2)
(valori percentuali)
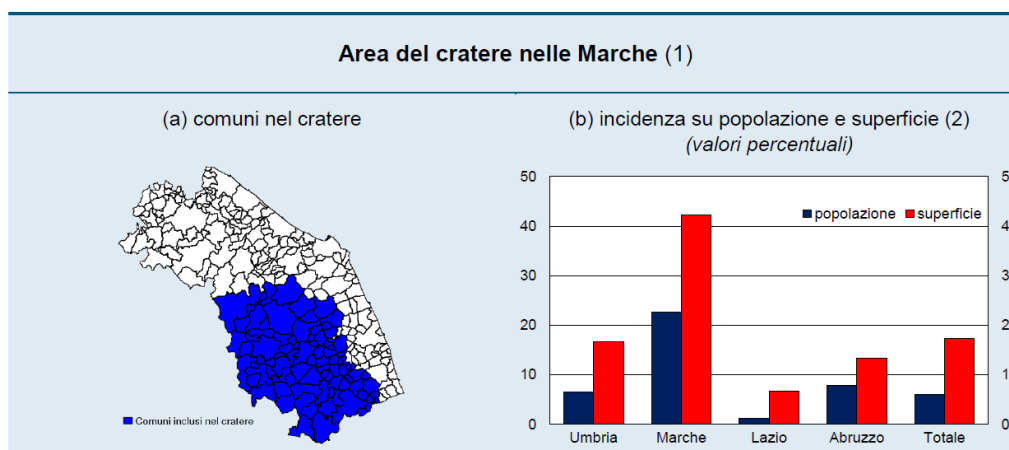
Fonte: elaborazioni su dati Istat.
(1) Comuni inclusi nel cratere ai sensi del D.L. n. 189 del 17 ottobre 2016, convertito in legge, con modificazioni, dalla L. n. 229 del 15 dicembre 2016 e successive integrazioni. – (2) Percentuale di superficie e popolazione residente nei comuni nell'area del cratere al 1° gennaio 2016 sul totale regionale.

FIGURE 2. The "crater area" in Marche Region.

Source: Banca d'Italia, 2017: 49.

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[11]   This definition was provided by Law No. 229/2016 and subsequent additions.

In this area of investigation there are two of the inner areas identified by the *National Strategy* (fig. 3). All the municipalities included in these areas have been affected by the earthquake[12]. The main economic activities in these two inner areas are agriculture and tourism[13]. An important role is covered by the "Parco Nazionale dei Monti Sibillini" (Monti Sibillini National Park)[14].
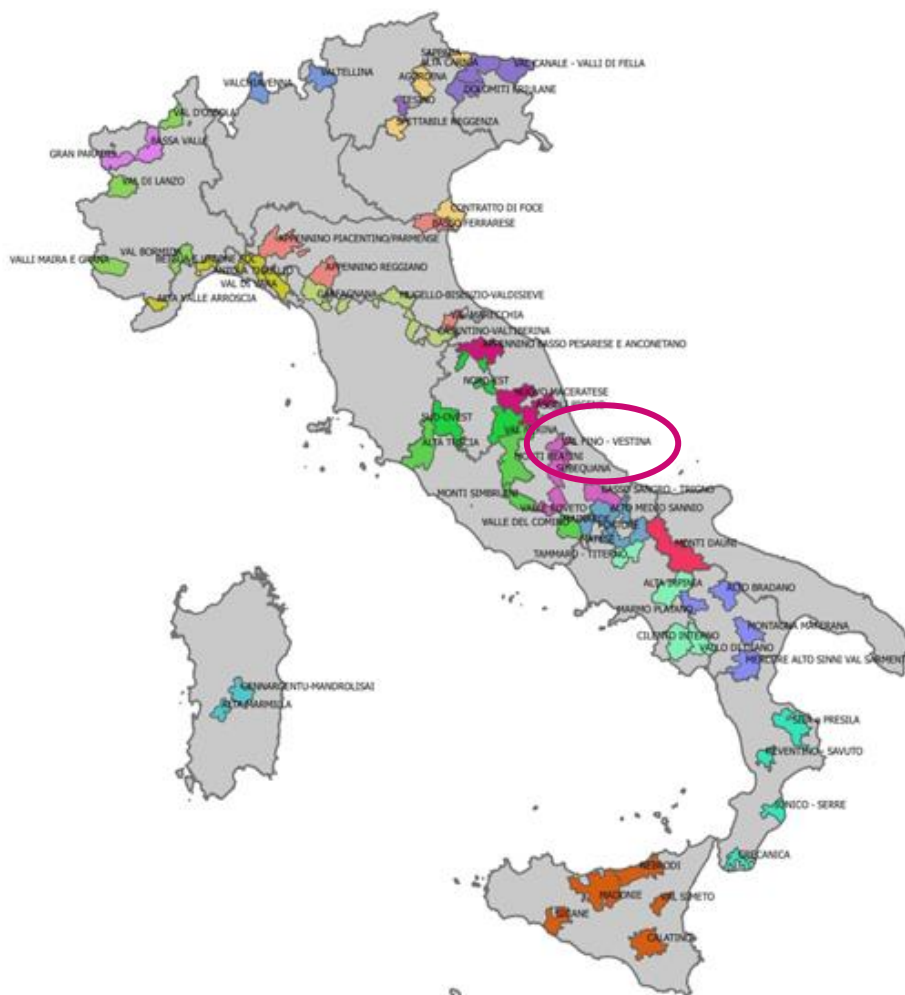
FIGURE 3. Inner Areas in Italy (the circle identifies the area of investigation).
Source: Lucatelli, 2016.

4.2 Twenty years after. A rest in museum networking?

In Marche Region, in the inner areas of the "crater surface", most of the museum networks were created at the beginning of the 21st century to access European funding, in many cases after the earthquake that affected Marche and Umbria Regions in 1997 and according to principles established by the Regional Law No. 6/1998, "New rules on preservation and enhancement of Marche's cultural

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[12]   Inner Area "Macerata" (Municipalities of Acquacanina, Bolognola, Castelsantangelo sul Nera, Fiastra, Fiordimonte, Monte Cavallo, Muccia, Pievebovigliana, Pieve Torina, Serravalle di Chienti, Ussita, Visso Cessapalombo, Gualdo, Monte San Martino, Penna San Giovanni, San Ginesio, Sant'Angelo in Pontano, Sarnano); Inner Area "Ascoli Piceno" (Municipalities of Comunanza, Force, Montedinove, Montemonaco, Rotella Acquasanta Terme, Arquata del Tronto, Castignano, Montegallo, Palmiano, Roccafluvione, Carassai, Cossignano, Montalto delle Marche, Offida).
[13]   Manufacturing industry is developed in the local work system of Comunanza.
[14]   See: <http://www.sibillini.net/en/>.

heritage and organisation of the diffused museum in a system" (Cerquetti & Montella, 2015). In line with strategies aiming at enhancing the specific features of Italian cultural heritage, the main purpose of this law was the organisation of a "Sistema Museo Diffuso" (Diffused Museum System) including museums, collections, warehouses and laboratories, historical houses and eco-museums, archaeological parks and areas, monuments and diffused cultural heritage, to be organised in order to guarantee its public use. European Community fund, available through the "Doc.u.p. Marche 2000-2006"[15], a single planning document, in conjunction with the law, accelerated the creation of network experiences, aimed at obtaining funding for the structural restoration and functional adjustment of local cultural heritage and to promote the enhancement of the diffused museum. The actions addressed to museums supported the improvement of museum facilities, and also promoted a "network building" capability, but at a first stage, just for the reduction of installation costs (for infrastructure projects), not to decrease ordinary management costs. Given these limitations, the following planning document, the "Por Fesr Marche 2007-2013", shifted the focus of cultural actions from conservation to enhancement, from single institutions to territories (Priority 5), paying more attention to the productive vision of a cultural system, its enhancement for social development and integrated cultural actions.

Focusing on networks created in Marche's inner areas affected by the earthquake between 1997 and 2013, we can identify four typologies of networks (tab. 1):

1) *networks created to access public funding* (Regional Law No. 6/98), with different levels of cooperation. In addition to the restoration and re-designing of its museums, the network "Musei Piceni" (Piceni Museums) has started a joint communication (e.g. coordinated corporate image, website, etc.) and shared some projects that are now concluded, i.e. "Museo e territorio" (Museum and territory) and "Museo aperto per lavori" (Open museum for works). Far from it, the "Rete dei Musei Civici e Diocesani del territorio di Camerino, Castelraimondo e Visso" (Network of Civic and Diocesan Museums of Camerino, Castelraimondo and Visso) has not been implemented after the restoration of museums, nor a website is available on line;

2) *provincial systems*, institutional networks aimed at supporting local museums (e.g. cataloguing museum collections) and organising promotional activities (e.g. website, events, etc.). One of the first network born in the Region with this purpose is the "Sistema Museale della Provincia di Macerata" (Museum System of Macerata Province), including many museums of the inner area of Macerata. In 2013, the Province of Fermo promoted the "Rete Museale Provinciale 'Musei Comuni'" (Provincial Museum Network 'Communes Museums') with similar purposes. The analysis of the websites reveals that the activities carried out by these networks have been at a standstill since 2014, after the reorganisation of local administrative functions started by Law No. 56/2014, "Provisions on metropolitan cities, provinces, unions and mergers of municipalities";

3) *multi-unit networks*: they are not networks meant as non-competitive relationships between autonomous entities, but relationships among the different hubs of the same organisation. An

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[15]   See in particular: Doc.u.p. Marche 2000/2006 – Axis 3 – Measure 3.2 "Recovering, enhancing and promoting the historical and cultural heritage" – Sub-measure 1 "Diffused Museum System: Integrated projects on a territorial scale" and Measure 3.4 – "Sub-measure 3.4 Digital services to support cultural itineraries".

example is provided by the "Musei Sistini del Piceno" (Piceno's Sistini Museums), a network of ecclesiastical museums, and the more recent "Rete Museale Civica Macerata Musei" (Macerata Civic Museums Network), that links the civic gallery and the civic cultural sites of the town of Macerata;

4) *thematic networks*, such as the "Rete dei Musei Scientifici della Provincia di Macerata" (Network of the Scientific Museums of the Province of Macerata), with a mainly marketing function.

Networks created to access public funding	Musei Piceni
	Rete dei Musei Civici e Diocesani del territorio di Camerino, Castelraimondo e Visso
Provincial systems	Sistema Museale della Provincia di Macerata
	Provincia di Fermo: Rete Museale Provinciale "Musei Comuni"
Multi-unit networks	Musei Sistini del Piceno
	Rete Museale Civica Macerata Musei*
Thematic networks	Rete dei Musei Scientifici della Provincia di Macerata

* network created after 2013

TABLE 1. MUSEUM NETWORK TYPOLOGIES IN THE AREA OF INVESTIGATION (1997-2013).
Source: author's elaboration.

In conclusion, networks created during this period[16] have been a useful tool for optimising resources in the restoration of historic buildings and in re-designing museums and, in some cases, also for launching a joint promotion activity (Cerquetti, 2008). However, as in other cases in Italy, these networks still have too little capability to achieve the aforementioned economies and to saturate the productive capacity of resources, which could ensure the museums' survival and development as well as their contribution to the sustainable innovation of local tourism: in the best case, they do not share qualified personnel to increase the quality of museum services yet; in the worst, they are drawn on paper, but still to be implemented in practice. Up to this time, in Marche Region, local museum networks have not gone beyond the simple goal of marketing communication through events, guided tours, brochures and guides, and they are still too weak to be able to succeed in innovating the services their museums offer. In particular, they do not respect the same opening hours and reveal a weak network cooperation and visibility. Moreover, they have not generated local employment increase, nor the development of new economic activities and entrepreneurship in other sectors.

4.3 Emerging trends and age-old issues. A case study

In 2010, the Regional Law No. 4 ("Rules on cultural goods and activities")[17] established that Marche Region organises unified and integrated services to support cultural institutions and areas, and promotes territorial or thematic networks and systems, in order to guarantee sustainable management and development of cultural institutes (article 16). In line with this purpose, in 2011, the institutions

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[16]   See: <http://www.regione.marche.it/Regione-Utile/Cultura/Musei#Reti-e-Sistemi>.
[17]   The Regional Law No. 4/2010 replaced the Regional Law No. 6/1998.

participating in the self-evaluation promoted and supported by the Region were differentiated between museums, which offer a public service, and collections, which are not open to the public. In 2012, the Region also established criteria to finance development activities in order to enhance the quality of museum services through two actions: 1) a premium for institutions possessing all the minimum equipment and performance requirements to improve public services, especially communication tools, e.g. ICT, labels, road signs, etc.; 2) regional financial support for museum/collection security, e.g. fire system certification, anti-intrusion system, etc. (Cerquetti & Montella, 2015).

This new context has provided small museums with the need and support for the progressive adaptation to minimum standards and the constant improvement of service quality. Within this framework, in 2013, the Municipalities of Montefortino, Montefalcone Appennino, Smerillo, Amandola and Montelparo created the "Rete Museale dei Sibillini" (Sibillini Museum Network)[18]. In the following years, while the Municipality of Amandola quit the project, other municipalities jointed the network: Montalto delle Marche and Monte Rinaldo (2015), and Loro Piceno and San Ginesio (2016). The network currently involves eight municipalities and covers an area including three provinces: Ascoli Piceno, Fermo and Macerata (fig. 4).
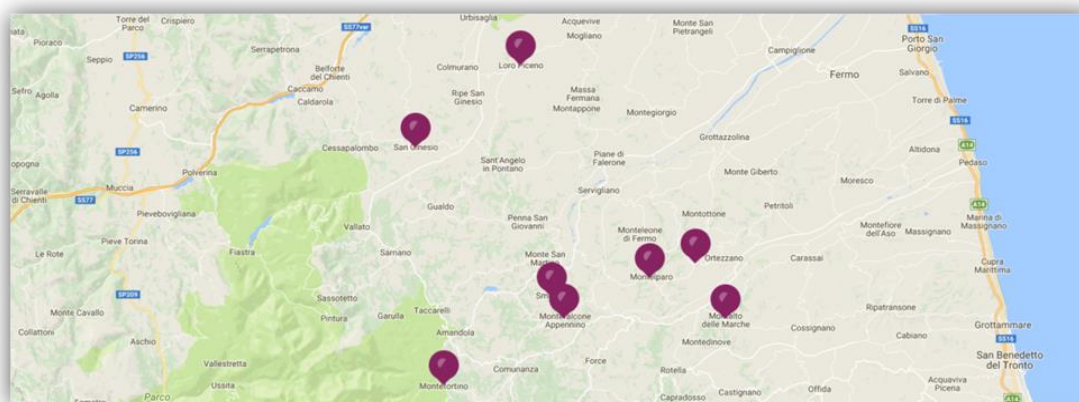

FIGURE 4. Municipalities of the "Rete Museale dei Sibillini".
Source: <http://www.retemusealedeisibillini.it/>.

The museum network involves artistic, scientific and archaeological museums[19] (tab. 2).

LORO PICENO	*Castello Brunforte* / Brunforte Castle
	Museo delle attrezzature e degli utensili per il vino cotto / Museum of equipment and utensils for "cooked" wine
	Museo interattivo della tradizione locale / Interactive museum of local tradition
	Museo delle due guerre / Museum of the two wars
MONTALTO DELLE MARCHE Polo museale Città di Sisto V	*Museo etnografico l'acqua, la terra, la tela* / Ethnographic museum "Water, earth, canvas"

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18   See: <http://www.retemusealedeisibillini.it/>.
19   See: <http://www.retemusealedeisibillini.it/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/guida-ai-musei-della-rete-2017.pdf>.

	Pinacoteca civica / Civic art gallery
	Museo delle carceri / Museum of the prisons
	Museo archeologico / Archaeological museum
MONTEFALCONE APPENNINO	*Museo dei fossili e dei minerali* / Museum of fossils and minerals
	Museo dell'Alamanno / Alamanno museum
	Centro di educazione ambientale / Environmental education centre
MONTEFORTINO **Polo museale Palazzo Leopardi**	*Pinacoteca civica Fortunato Duranti* / Fortunato Duranti civic art gallery
	Museo di arte sacra / Sacred art museum
	Museo dell'avifauna dei Monti Sibillini / Museum of the birdlife of the Sibillini Mountains
	Centro visita Parco Nazionale dei Monti Sibillini / Visitor centre to the Sibillini Mountains National Park
MONTELPARO **Polo culturale Sant'Agostino**	*Deposito di arte sacra* / Sacred art deposit
	Museo degli antichi mestieri ambulanti / Museum of ancient pedlar crafts
MONTE RINALDO	*Area archeologica "La Cuma"* / Archaeological area "La Cuma"
	Museo civico archeologico / Archeological civic museum
SAN GINESIO	*Pinacoteca civica Scipione Gentili* / Scipione Gentili civic art gallery
	Pieve collegiata / Parish collegiate church
	Teatro Giacomo Leopardi / Giacomo Leopardi theatre
	Centro Internazionale Studi Gentiliani / Gentiliani studies international centre
SMERILLO	*Museo di arte contemporanea MACS* / MACS contemporary art museum
	Museo dei fossili e dei minerali / Museum of fossils and minerals

TABLE 2. MUSEUMS OF THE "RETE MUSEALE DEI SIBILLINI".
Source: author's elaboration.

As stated by the agreement for the associated management of the network museums (art. 1), the Sibillini Museum Network has the following purposes:

- to strengthen the role of museums participating in the network such as cultural institutions and territorial facilities, able to integrate knowledge, safeguard and communication of museum collections and diffused cultural heritage;
- to ensure a better protection and use of cultural heritage and promote research, in order to qualify and strengthen museum collections and institutions;

- to ensure the achievement of minimum standards of quality and accessibility for all the network museums, according to the national scientific and technical criteria for museum management and development and to the objectives set by Marche Region;
- to coordinate the management of museum institutions through the adoption of technical standards and common services;
- to provide joint cultural services according to the international and national guidelines on museum professions, identifying as a priority a director responsible for museum collections and activities;
- to promote all the actions to capture external resources from provincial, regional, national and European funding programmes;
- to activate joint cultural services.

These objectives are achieved through: the provision of suitable operational tools – i.e. museum regulations, loan regulations, and service charters; the coordination of the activities carried out by groups, cultural associations and volunteers in network museums; and the link with research and high education institutions.

The municipal authorities and the director of the network participate in a steering committee, which discusses and approves annual programmes, actions and projects to be promoted, the yearly budget and the management report. The Steering Committee meets at least three times a year. The sessions are valid with the presence of at least two thirds of the members and the decisions are taken by the absolute majority of the participants.

The director of the network is appointed by the steering committee and is in office for 5 years. The director ensures the technical and operational support to the network museums and the integration and technical coordination of participants.

The associated municipalities give an annual financial support for the management of the network (max. €4,000 per municipality), broken down proportionally as follows: €1,000 as a fixed membership fee, €0.90 per inhabitant, €15 per km². European, national, regional, provincial and other funding could be added.

The museum network uses a strong brand (Sibillini[20]), that is not only a museum brand, but also a territorial brand, a factor of identity and social cohesion for the local community. Thanks to the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development 2007/2013, and through the support of the Local Development Plan of the "Gal Fermano Leader" – Sub-measure 4.1.3.7 "Territorial promotion and area certification", the network has promoted a project aimed at creating a coordinated corporate image for the museums participating in the network, including a uniform for the network staff. In the first phase, the project has financed the creation of a network logo, tickets and brochures; in the second step, the network website (in Italian and in English).

Network museums have the same opening hours and there is the possibility to visit all of them with a

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[20] Sibylline Mountains are a mountain group in Italy, situated between eastern Umbria and Marche Region. They are part of the central Apennines.

single ticket. Visits could be booked on line. Each museum entrusts an external company with the ordinary management, without a tender procedure, that is not required because of the low amount of the mandate. Formally, the staff is not shared; however, the network has a coordination function and almost all the museums have entrusted the management to the same company ("D&P Turismo e cultura"[21]). This allows the promotion of a joint, integrated and unitary image of the territory and its cultural assets. In addition, the educational activities are coordinated and presented under a common brand[22].

After the earthquakes that struck this area in 2016, the museums experienced the unavailability of a local deposit that could be used to secure museum collections[23]. For this reason, in November a memorandum of understanding was signed between the Municipality of Osimo, the Campana Institute for Permanent Education, the Marche Region, the Marche Superintendence for Archelogy, Fine Arts and Landscape and the Sibillini Museum Network, for the temporary transfer of works of art from the network museums to the city of Osimo (Province of Ancona, Marche Region). In February, an exhibition "Capolavori dei Sibillini. L'arte dei luoghi feriti dal sisma" (Masterpieces from the Sibillyne Mountains. Artwork from earthquake-stricken areas)[24] was inaugurated in Osimo, to present an anthology of the masterpieces from the network museums that have been already restored. The exhibition is divided in six sections corresponding to different areas and themes covered by the museum network: 1) Montefortino; 2) San Ginesio; 3) Moltelparo, Montalto Marche and Monte Rinaldo; 4) Loro Piceno; 5) Montefalcone Appennino and Smerillo (scientific section dedicated to the two museums of Fossils and Minerals); 6) a restoration laboratory open to the public. Thanks to the exhibition, the network has soon become the pride of Marche Region and other municipalities have expressed their will to join the network.

As confirmed by its director, one of the main strengths of the network is its bottom-up organisation, "the result of the joint effort of the municipal authorities to put together their cultural assets in a single project that can empower museums as a tool for cultural development and social cohesion"[25], promoting and raising awareness of local *milieu*, its art, history, environment and productions. The network was not created thanks to a policy action nor to access public funding, but to improve the quality of museum services, thus to promote cooperation in all museum activities and to coordinate their ordinary management. As a consequence, it does not fall within the previous categories and could be considered a real managerial network. Moreover, it involves not only museum institutions, but also the diffused cultural heritage (e.g. churches, cultural centres, etc.) under the same, strong and easily identifiable brand. Finally, the experience made thanks to the exhibition mounted in Osimo after the earthquake has contributed to the involvement of external communities through voluntary donations, thus developing new social networks.

However, some concerns have to be highlighted about museum staff. The low amount of the financial

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[21]   See: <http://www.depturismoecultura.com/>.
[22]   See: <http://www.retemusealedeisibillini.it/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/15x15_laboratori_didattici_18.pdf>.
[23]   A territorial hub for the recovering of museum collections and development of cultural and educational activities is currently being studied.
[24]   See: <http://www.capolavorisibillini.it/>.
[25]   <http://www.retemusealedeisibillini.it/en/>.

contribution provided by local authorities for ordinary management does not allow museum operators to have a stable employment, but a low salary, even though they have acquired high professional skills. If a network has to help participants to achieve objectives that are not attainable by individual organisations, the Sibillini Museum Network is far from approaching this goal. In Italy, this is an age-old problem in the cultural sector still compromising the sustainability of small museum management. Therefore, the innovation process started by the network could not be considered as already accomplished; indeed, it has to be implemented. A wider reflection has to be made at regional and national levels, in particular if the Sibillini Museum Network has the potentialities to become a jewel in the crown of regional cultural policies.

We are now experiencing a new phase both globally and locally. At a European level, a new place-based approach is underpinning the European Planning 2014-2020 (Angelini & Bruno, 2016; Mantino & Lucatelli, 2016). This approach is based on three assumptions: (1) new knowledge (innovation) is the main source of development, both growth and social inclusion; (2) only an open, heated and informed debate delivers it; (3) the development of a place is generally prevented by rent-seeking local elites (Barca, 2009). As a consequence, development policy has to promote integrated projects for the institutional change and investment through the interaction and creative conflict among exogenous and endogenous actors and among endogenous actors able to break the economic and social balance. The conflict has to be organised and driven by a multi-level governance. This strategy also underpins the *National Strategy for Inner Areas*, that recognises culture and tourism as factors of local development. On the other hand, at a local level, the earthquake has reset previous strategies and actions and activated energies and networks among citizens and local stakeholders: an example of a new and increasing *place awareness* (Becattini, 2016). These two processes should now meet in order to promote a real change for the sustainable future of cultural heritage in inner areas.

5. Conclusions

This paper has provided an overview of museum networks in Italy, discussing both the scientific literature on this matter and the state of the art of museum networking. Grounding on previous research on the same topic, a short theoretical and empirical history has been outlined, focusing on Marche's inner areas recently affected by the earthquake. The research is still a work in progress and in-depth analysis is strongly required, widening the field research through interviews to other actors operating in the museum and cultural sector at a regional level, in order to better analyse the current situation and policy and their possible development.

However, some first guidelines could be given for the development of museum networks in the era of place-based strategies and participatory processes. The research results reveal a rest in museum networking: with a few exceptions, networks experiences started at the beginning of the 21st century could be considered suspended or interrupted, even finished, in some cases almost never born. Set up to access European funding and to carry out infrastructural interventions or to promote small museums belonging to the same province, these networks have been experiencing the reform of Public Administration and a new European approach. The situation suggests that the network

approach still necessary, but networks also have to re-examine their role, mission and structure in order to overcome the persisting managerial lacks. Some positive inputs are coming from the recent experiences, acting towards a real improvement of museum standards. However, latest projects also show that a wider consideration has to be made at a regional and national level to make museum networks really sustainable.

An effective implementation of variable geometry networks is strongly required, in order to provide museums with qualified and stable personnel and building an operative system for the ordinary management of museum services. Criteria and standards have to be established at a national and regional level, to define the dimension of the networks for different services, the equipment and payment of personnel and curricula of museum professionals. Moreover, in the light of problems emerged after the earthquake, the first priority is the study and implementation of preventive and programmed conservation plans that guarantee the survival of cultural heritage, included the equipment of heritage deposits *in situ*. Finally, the multiple connections between museums and the diffused cultural heritage are to be valued, through thematic paths and the use of appropriate technological solutions. More generally, in line with the Strategic Plan for Tourism Development 2017/2022, as well as with the Faro Convention and the subsequent documents mentioned above, policies and actions addressed to cultural heritage and local development should aim at the integrated enhancement of all place-specific assets, through the collaboration with universities and the interconnection with the tourism and agri-food chains (Montella, 2009; Cerquetti, 2014). This approach could allow the attraction both of young generations and of new experiential tourism flows, and thus guarantee the real revitalization of territories that risk further depopulation.

In a nutshell, the evolution of museum networks in Marche Region could be summarised in two steps: the first one (1997-2009), characterised by a low level of cooperation for the setting up of museums and joint promotional activities, and a second one (since 2010), experiencing an advanced level of cooperation, aimed at improving the quality of museum services through bottom-up networks such as the Sibillini Museum Network. In order to holistically accomplish a process that is not yet well developed, a third step would be strongly desired, bridging top-down and bottom-up approaches (fig. 5).
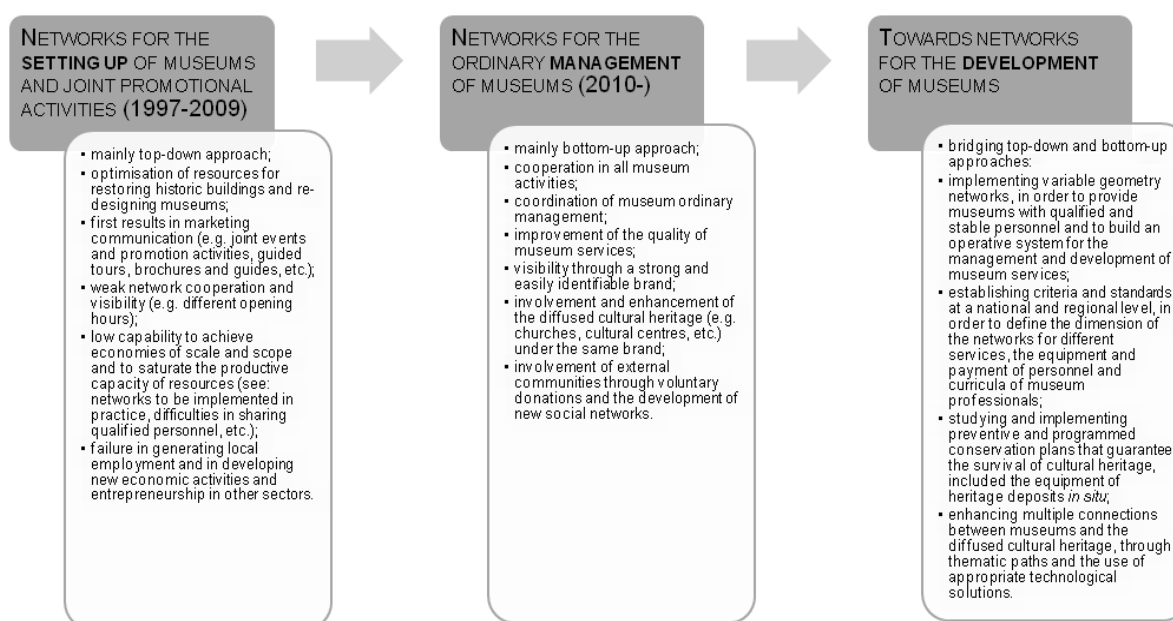
FIGURE 5. The evolution of museum networks in Marche Region.

Source: own elaboration.

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