



“Culture will have an essential role to ensure future social interaction and foster solidarity at the crossroads of individual and social group identities. Post-COVID-19 reappropriation of spaces and practices of social interaction will be a powerful driver for sustainable development.”

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Reshaping cities' development: Preliminary signs of a post-pandemic urban culture

The performance of urban culture in the traditional sense is one of the losers of the pandemic restrictions, lockdowns and closures. During confinement, the body continued to be fed, but the food of the mind, the urban culture as practice of social encounter with the others, the strangers, with art and performance, was neglected. Bookstores were left open during the second wave, but cinema, theatres and exhibitions are banned. For festival organizers, theatre directors, museum curators, guide speakers and many others, they have paid a heavy price this year for the fight against the Covid-19 virus. It is, in the moment, the triumph of series and television. In these days, we do not know to fear for the after pandemic, should we fear to see people get used to no longer frequenting these public places of public culture? But what can already be predicted against this background: Culture will play an important role for the post-pandemic time. It is conducive to the fact that culture

has been seen since a while already playing an increasing role in the development of urban contexts.

In several cities, investment in the culinary infrastructure and charisma has increased, mostly with the intention of attracting tourists and increasing the attractiveness of international competition for locations. Cultural policy, its institutions and processes, has thus also taken an increasingly important position. This shows that, to the extent that urban cultural policy can play an influential role during the post-pandemic period, culture will become a meaningful, creative and intergenerational force of general “recovery” in the coming years.

Cultural policy has a formal, administrative, financial and managerial dimension. In order to mobilize them for an animating recovery culture, the UNESCO recommendations called Culture 2030 are offering a very promising scheme. In the year 2019, UNESCO has launched the Culture 2030 Indicators with the aim of integrating and influencing the Sustainable Development Goals. This already makes the Culture 2030 recommendations so important for the post-pandemic recovery that it is supposed to meet the demands of sustainable development. The 22 Indicators aim to complete the international strategy on sustainable development designing a fundamental role of culture as main driver for (re)shaping new scenarios and encouraging positive changes through processes, skills and above all social cohesion. Thematic areas will cover the essential aspects

of local development culture based and especially Environment & Resilience, Prosperity & Livelihoods, Knowledge & Skills and Inclusion & Participation.

It seems very probable that through the lenses of the post-pandemic perspective urban realities and opportunities will be rediscovered in terms of improvement of living, working, dwelling, producing and experiencing updated forms of community. In this way culture will have an essential stake for assuring social interaction, the open building and encounter of identities and solidarity. Cultural policy following the Culture 2030 Indicators would strengthen these up-coming re-appropriations of spaces and practices of social interaction in a meaningful manner.

From the perspective of medium sized cities in Italy it seems very likely that the re-appropriations of spaces will weave together both the urban and (their surrounding) rural cultural practices. This twist seems very probable considering the growing curiosity over the pandemic period and the before increasing open-mindedness on a shift from the urban-rural divide to a new urban-rural cultural nexus. Preliminary signs have already become visible before the pandemic, the reactivation of inland abandoned villages in Italy where new methods and new social and professional relations have been experimented and more and more noted in the public. There is for instance the project La Rivoluzione delle Seppie¹ (The Revolution of Cuttlefishes in Calabria, South Italy) where the engagement of local

people – and among them migrants, locals, national and international students – has shed light on a strong identity of the village following the renovation of public spaces, cultural events and workshops initiated by the community. In the same direction goes the project Camposaz² (Trentino, North Italy) where the local community plays an active role in shaping the space through living in together with temporary professional residents from outside. Again, the project Farm Cultural Park³ (Favara, Sicily, South Italy) boosted some years ago the idea that local development through culture is not just possible but even desirable if this practice brings new people and a new idea of living in the smallest villages which can attract exciting cultural international highlights.

1. <https://larivoluzionedelleseppie.org/>

2. <https://www.camposaz.com/>

3. <https://www.farmculturalpark.com/>