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Culture and economic crisis: cultural value in Italy from 2008 to the present day

1 volume

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Inclusion of Published Work

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Abstract

This doctoral work is based on analysis of the discourse on cultural value in contemporary Italy, what are the 'grand narratives' that characterize this discourse and what is the relationship between them. In particular, great relevance is given to the concepts of "neoliberalism" and "commons". The application of these two economical terms to the field of culture is particularly relevant in the Italian discourse: in 2011, Italy saw the rise of protest groups made of professionals from the arts sector who opposed practices influenced by the theories on the commons to the implementation of neoliberal-inspired policies. In fact, since the beginning of the economic crisis in 2008, the discontent of the Italian population with the implementation of austerity policies and the lack of political and economic stability caused an uprising involvement in political activism. The cultural sector, in particular, was facing a lack of state funding; in addition, many young professionals had been struggling to find a paid job, especially in the theatre sector. The dissatisfaction of the emergent creative class led to a series of demonstrations and campaigns that asked for the recognition of the rights of arts workers. Many abandoned buildings, especially former theatres, were occupied and became spaces dedicated to artistic and political experimentation. Two of these organisations are discussed in the case studies: Teatro Valle Occupato, in Rome, and Rebeldía, in Pisa. The idea of cultural value promoted by these organisations is analysed in relation to the one reflected by Italian cultural policy after 2008. This thesis shows not only how cultural value is shaped by economic factors such as austerity, but also how it represents a battleground where different ways of understanding politics and policy clash, mingle and sometimes overlap. Furthermore, it shows that activist forms of arts management can develop their own pathways to innovation, filling a vacuum left by cultural policy.

Introduction

This project is an analysis of the discourse on cultural value in contemporary Italy; it aims to explore the 'grand narratives' that characterize it and the relationship between them. The concepts of neoliberalism and commons, and the theories that have them at their core, are a particular focus of the research. These two terms are particularly relevant in the Italian cultural discourse: in 2011, Italy saw the rise of a group of high-profile protests by professionals from the arts sector who developed practices influenced by the theories on the commons in opposition to the implementation of neoliberal-inspired policies. The idea of cultural value promoted by these organisations is analysed in relation to the one reflected by Italian cultural policy after 2008. This thesis shows not only how cultural value is shaped by economic factors such as austerity, but also how it represents a battleground where different ways of understanding politics and policy clash, mingle and sometimes overlap. The thesis includes an analysis of two grassroots cultural organizations born out of protest groups: *Rebeldía* in Pisa and *Teatro Valle Occupato* in Rome, focusing on their notions of cultural value and culture-driven activism, and how they promote it in relation to their local cultural environment. However, despite its focus on the Italian case, the thesis acknowledges that what has happened in Pisa and Rome is in fact part of a broader political, social and cultural phenomenon, and of a revived interest in and vitality of arts-led activism. My analysis found that these organizations' activities include participatory governance practices, the co-production of projects and an inclusive approach to audiences; however, the local authorities that interacted with them showed no interest for legitimizing these practices or employ them in the local cultural policy. These findings raise questions about the value of the cultural work of activists and the resistance of policy-makers in recognising it.

The key research questions behind this doctoral project are the following: How is cultural value affected by economic and political factors? What were the grand narratives that dominated the discourse on cultural value in Italy between 2007 and 2016? What did culture represent in the political discourse after the economic crisis? What is the trajectory of cultural value in a country divided between neoliberal

tendencies and radical participative practices? And lastly, can opposite positions produce mingled, mixed-up concepts of cultural value?

In order to find an answer to these questions, we must first position this study within the field of research on “cultural value”. Cultural value and the way it is formed, interpreted and justified constitute a particularly relevant area of cultural policy studies. Indeed, justifying spending in the arts and culture is a crucial issue of cultural policy making. In his report *Capturing Cultural Value: How Culture has Become a Tool of Government Policy*, John Holden (2006) describes how culture has become a tool to serve governments’ social and economic agendas. Investment in culture is allocated on the ground of instrumental values, and the methods used to supply evidence of the social and economic impacts are not always fit for the purpose or sufficient to justify such expenditures (pp.16-17). Instrumentalism has become one of the key methods to justify public expenditure in the arts. In particular, economic impact has often been used as a *raison d’être* for spending taxpayers’ money in the arts. For example, in 2013, the Arts Council of England declared that arts and culture deliver 0.4 per cent of gross domestic product, a significant return on less than 0.1 percent of total government spending (Centre of Economic and Business Research, 2013, p.1). Belfiore (2014, p. 21). links this concept of cultural value back to the idea of “monoculture” theorised by F.S. Michaels (2011). According to Michaels, neoliberalism constitutes the only way of understanding reality in the contemporary world: every single aspect of our life, from relationships to work, are analysed in terms of economic value, that is, in terms of cost vs. benefit. It is the triumph of the *Homo economicus*; this vision is so pervasive that it goes completely unquestioned. Against this backdrop, this doctoral work aims to analyse narratives that oppose the monoculture and propose new perspectives to understand cultural value. The concept of cultural value I juxtapose to neoliberalism is inspired by another economic theory, Elinor Ostrom’s theory of the commons (1990). At the heart of this theory lie concepts that go beyond the administration of common pool resources: in fact, the theory of the commons is based on collaboration, interest for the common good, and the ability of groups to come up with a shared system of norms that they can self-impose and monitor without the intervention of an external agency. Where neoliberalism values individualism, self-interest and loose regulations, the commons instead are based on the logic of collective action, the common good and self-imposed

norms. Some of the questions I explore in this thesis, in order to tackle the main research questions referred to above, therefore are: How does the theory of the commons affect the notion of cultural value? What organisations reflect or even embody this system of values?

The area of study that explores the cultural commons is still a very young one and the very idea of “cultural commons” is subject to a variety of interpretations. Walter Santagata, Enrico Bertacchini, Giangiacomo Bravo and Massimo Marrelli (2011) provide an in-depth analysis of the concept of cultural commons. According to the authors, “Cultural Commons refer to cultures located in time and space – either physical or virtual - and shared and expressed by a community (p.1)”. This definition includes languages, traditions, artistic movements and, in some cases, even brands. An interesting source on the concept of cultural commons in practice is *The city as a commons: a policy reader* (Ramos, 2016), which provides some interesting applications of the concept of culture as a commons in the urban context. The understanding of the cultural commons purported by the writer and activist Arlene Goldbard resonates with Santagata et al.’s definition: she stresses the importance of the “sense of belonging, the sites of public memory, the gathering-places, the expressions and embodiments of heritage cultures (in Ramos, pp. 125-126)” in the city. Marta Botta (in Ramos, 2016, pp.26-31) explains how heritage and heritage sites constitute a commons, as they are embodiments of a shared past that can be enjoyed by all citizens.

Jenny Hughes (2017), following Nicholas Ridout (2013), underlines that theatre has a disruptive potential against capitalism because it is deeply embedded in it; however, theatre also exists outside capitalism; this particular position gives it a critical potential. Furthermore, she argues that theatre is social work; in particular, socially engaged theatre practitioners can be seen as “social virtuosos” (2017), meaning that they engage in virtuosic labour. This term means to “engage in work that involves acts of communication and performance, drawing on their capacity to perform flexibly and creatively, and to self-govern, self-care, and self-create (idem)”. Its position both outside and inside capitalistic logics of artistic production and its power to stimulate people’s capability to self-govern make socially engaged theatre a particularly interesting form of cultural commons. As it is possible to understand from these examples, the idea of

culture as a commons can be interpreted in a variety of ways. But how do we understand the cultural commons? As a form of management, as a type of property, or as a set of values?

This question is at the core of my analysis of occupied cultural spaces. Indeed, this doctoral study aims to understand how cultural value is a continuously changing matter, subject to political, economic and historical factors; moreover, cultural value is the result of the interplay of different narratives, of how they mingle and clash. In order to analyse the change in cultural value in Italy between 2008 and the present day it was necessary not only to analyse cultural policies, but also the reception and the contestation they received. In fact, cultural value is not a monolithic entity that can be ascribed to a whole nation, but rather the object of a continuous negotiation that encompasses aesthetics, philosophy, economics and politics. For this reason, I felt that my research needed to include the voices of those who, on one hand, are in direct and open contrast with governmental cultural policies and, on the other, seek the collaboration of cultural policy agencies to legitimise their work. The rationale for choosing to study the protest of cultural workers in Italy is to provide a counter-narrative to the government's cultural policies and, most importantly, to the values they represent. Secondly, I was interested in observing the actions of people whose life was directly affected by cultural policy: many people who took part in the occupation of these sites are cultural workers and/or part of the "cognitive precariat" (Caruso et al., 2010; Allegri and Ciccarelli, 2011), a term that refers to highly skilled people on temporary job contracts. As it will be explained in the following chapters, the cuts to public funding to the arts in Italy between 2008 and 2012 have had a profound effect on the sector, excluding young professionals from the job market. Thirdly, as these occupied organisations were managed as commons, I wanted to observe the ways in which a group of activists might be able not only to manage and give itself policies, but also to reflect upon its own sustainability and reproducibility. Interestingly, these activists started to collaborate with law scholars to design a law on the commons and initiated a dialogue with the local city councils in order to have the support of the local government for the implementation of experimental forms of legal self-government. These initiatives are a form of grassroots policy design that, in the Italian context, where even the smallest forms of policy-making are strongly

bureaucratized and sometimes undecipherable to the laypeople (Miriam A. Golden, 2003), is a radical and novel practice.

I am aware that it might seem that the two sides of my research, governmental cultural policies and autonomous cultural organisations in occupied spaces, are completely disconnected from each other. An organisation that cannot legally receive state funding is, theoretically, completely separated from the decisions of the state on the subject of culture. However, I want to analyse these parts of the Italian cultural life in terms of reaction and interaction.

W.T.J. Mitchell's (in Mitchell, Harcourt and Tassig, 2013) definition of "occupatio" is useful for understanding the purpose of occupied spaces and the interaction between occupant and adversary. In his analysis of the etymology of the word "occupation", Mitchell underlines the rhetorical function of the practice of occupation:

It is directly linked to the trope of occupatio, the tactic of anticipating an adversary's arguments by preempting them, taking the initiative in a space where one knows in advance that there will be resistance and counterarguments. In the context of the rhetoric of public space, occupatio, as the etymology of the word reveals, is the "seizure" of an "empty"; place: one that is supposed to be *res nullius*, not owned by anyone, not private property. It is a demand in its own right, a demand for presence, an insistence on being heard and seen before any specific political demands are made, and that the public be allowed to gather and remain in a public space. But the demand of occupatio is made in the full knowledge that public space is in fact "preoccupied" by the state and the police, that its "pacified" and democratic character, apparently open to all, is sustained by the ever-present possibility of violent eviction. Occupatio thus aims not just at taking possession of an empty space in an argument, but also at provoking a response and framing it in advance (Mitchell, in Mitchell, Harcourt and Tassig, 2013, p.102).

According to Mitchell, the nature of the Occupy movement has to be seen as a "dramatic performance of the rhetoric of occupatio" (idem). The movement elicits the response of the state, but also forms strategies to counteract it and to find a solution to the restraints

it poses. However, this pre-emptive strategy does not advance a univocal solution; instead, it refuses the anticipated demand of a programme, a single request or project (Mitchell, in in Mitchell, Harcourt and Tassig, 2013, pp.102-103). The impossibility of reuniting the different perspectives contained in the Occupy movement in a single, coherent voice is what made it so inclusive. People with different backgrounds and aims gave their own contribution to the Occupy movement, resulting in a variety of protests all over the world. If we transpose this concept to the reality of Italian occupied cultural spaces, we can see how the two spheres of policy and protest relate to each other.

First, the activists occupied not only physical empty spaces, but also symbolic ones. With the progressive cuts to funding and de-regularization of work, the state had left an “empty space”: a space for cultural professionals to reclaim the dignity of their profession and to work independently. Another symbolic empty space left by the state was the social dimension of culture: by renting out museums and public spaces to companies for dinner parties, and by focusing on the economic value of culture, which is still regarded as “Italy’s oil” (Galasso, 1996, in Belfiore, 2006, p. 285), the state has been overlooking issues of inclusion and accessibility to culture and the arts. Therefore, the activists decided to fill a gap left by the government by making access to culture as inclusive as possible and by experimenting with the creation of spaces for social interactions inside cultural spaces. Furthermore, this thesis explores how occupied theatres and cultural spaces can be seen as a grassroots attempt to fill a vacuum in cultural policy, in particular in the area of theatre. As it will be explained later, the abolition of an important theatrical public body created confusion and uncertainty in the Italian theatrical world, especially for those theatres that were directly managed by said public body, including Teatro Valle. The act of occupying the theatre, therefore, was a way to prevent the neoliberalisation of culture in the withdrawal of the state, keeping it accessible to everyone.

Furthermore, the occupations were intended to elicit a reaction from cultural policy agencies, both on a local and a national level. The occupants decided to occupy abandoned spaces also because they hoped that the government would take action as a result, and give new life to run-down theatres, arts centres and period buildings; in order to keep these places accessible to everyone, it was necessary to the activists to

call for the action of the government. It was over time that the activists realised that some of the organisations born out of their protest were able to manage these spaces without the intervention of the state: the occupation of Teatro Valle lasted for over three years, and other spaces, such as Teatro Rossi Aperto, in Pisa, are still managed by activists. At this point, the relationship with cultural policy agencies changed: it was not only about provoking a reaction, but about finding a common ground. The activists realised that there was enough potential in their organisation to thrive in the long run; the only thing they needed was to become legal organisations that could apply for funding and be acknowledged by the official arts world. On the other hand, local councils had to take a clear position towards the occupations. Most councils, at first, did not directly intervene against the occupations; over time, however, their position became clearer and more explicit, either positively or negatively.

As it is possible to understand, in this complex scenario different notions of cultural value are opposed, challenged, but also mediated. In both of my case studies, the activists had to communicate with the local council to try to reach a legal position; this implied an effort in adapting their language to their respondents and a will to negotiate to find solutions that could be acceptable by both parties. This cultural battleground where activists and politicians struggle for power is an ideal site in which to observe how economic conditions and political interests have an effect on the value of culture.

The geographical and historical context of this doctoral work is Italy in the years between 2007 and 2016. These years were characterised by the effects of the global economic crisis, which were particularly hard in Italy: Italy is part of the so-called PIIGS (Portugal, Ireland, Italy, Greece and Spain), that is, the countries that present bigger risks of being unable to pay their national debts (Koba, 2011). Italy's financial situation, which was already aggravated by a large public debt (Eurostat, 2017), worsened after the crisis: from the 99.8% of 2007, by 2012 Italy's public debt had raised to 123.4% of the domestic gross product (idem). These times were also characterised by a perpetual state of political crisis, which persists today. In particular, the year 2011 is still clear in the memory of the Italian people for several reasons: first, on 12th November 2011, Berlusconi resigned from Prime Minister. This event was the culmination of a series of scandals and divisions that had characterised the government since its formation in May

2008. Secondly, the Prime Minister had to answer several legal charges of corruption and illegal abuse of position that severely undermined his image and credibility. The stories of prostitution, debauchery and extravagance that also enthralled the international press, severely damaged the credibility of Berlusconi and some of his collaborators, and also exposed the image of the Italian state to ridicule on the international scene (BBC News, 2014). Besides his personal life, scandals around Berlusconi involved also his political life. In 2013 he was accused and sentenced for having a police wiretap involving Piero Fassino, one of his opponents, leaked to a newspaper (idem). This came shortly after another scandal, the “compravendita dei parlamentari” (“the paying off of MPs”), a matter which is still under investigation at the time of writing: in 2006, Berlusconi allegedly paid a bribe worth three million euros to a senator to leave his party join Berlusconi’s, Forza Italia, in order to maintain the majority of seats in parliament (idem). The senator’s sudden decision to join a different party on the day before an important voting session caused some suspicion and lead the court of Naples to investigate and eventually open a legal case in 2014. Similar accusations were moved against Berlusconi again in 2010, when he allegedly paid two MPs to join his party (Il Corriere della Sera, 2010). These episodes provide an example of the heated and somewhat precarious political atmosphere of the last part of Berlusconi’s 20 years in government.

The year 2011 was also important because on the 12th and 13th June the Italian population was called to vote on a referendum that would be crucial for the survival of the Berlusconi government. The vote covered four topics: the management of economically important local public services, the privatisation of water supplies, the production of nuclear energy and the abrogation of the law of “legittimo impedimento”, a form of immunity that allows cabinet members “to postpone criminal proceedings against them for up to 18 months if the charges constituted a ‘lawful impediment’ to performing public duties” (Zebley, 2011). Citizen associations all over Italy campaigned for the so-called “Quattro sì” (“Four yes”) movement. The public’s interest in the referendum was also very high because of the question about “legittimo impedimento”, which directly affected Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi. The law about lawful impediment allowed Berlusconi to delay the criminal proceedings against him, as he was a member of the parliament, and eventually caused the charges against him to lapse.

The turnout to this referendum was 57% of eligible voters, a high result compared to most referenda held in the previous years, several of which did not even meet the quorum. For all the referendum items, the majority of the population voted “yes”, thus abrogating the relevant laws. The Italian citizens’ decision against the privatisation of water supplies became a symbol of the popularity of the referendum and of the debate on the commons.

As a result, the consensus over Berlusconi’s government was shaken again. An analysis by jurist Ugo Mattei, one of the most important Italian experts on the subject of the commons, states that the referendum was “the climax moment of a long struggle to limit the apparently irresistible process of neo-liberal commodification and privatization” (2013, p.367). Indeed, the referendum not only had very high participation rates, but was also the first time in Italian history that the majority of voters answered “yes” to a proposed statutory abolition (idem). One of the laws discussed by the referendum was the reintroduction of nuclear energy plants in Italy. A law on nuclear energy had already been abrogated with another referendum in 1987, after nearly thirty years of nuclear activity on the Italian soil. The 1987 referendum was the result of a growing preoccupation about nuclear energy’s safety: The Chernobyl disaster in 1986 had directly affected Italy with acid rains, and the fear of a similar accident happening in Italy urged the government to a national referendum. Coincidentally, the 2011 referendum happened after Fukushima’s accident in Japan, the only one comparable to Chernobyl for its catastrophic damages in the history of nuclear accidents. Nuclear energy’s safety, once again, was being doubted, and the Italians voted not to change the decision they made in 1987. Another important issue, directly connected with the idea of commons, was the privatisation of water supplies. The ‘yes’ vote on this referendum question was the result of the conjoint effort of several movements that had campaigned all over Italy with the slogan “Acqua bene comune” (water as a commons) against the privatisation and that co-wrote a referendum proposal in 2010. The law on water supplies was part of a larger policy of privatisation implemented by the Berlusconi government that affected public transportation, nursery schools, etc. Another question the referendum asked citizens to vote on was often criticised as an *ad personam* move that, had the ‘no’ vote prevailed and had the law been promulgated, would have directly given an advantage to Silvio Berlusconi. “Legittimo impedimento”, or lawful

impediment, refers to a form of temporary immunity that allows public officials to postpone their criminal charges up to six months whenever their having to appear in court might “disrupt” the political life of the state. This law can be seen as a juridical *escamotage* to make Berlusconi’s criminal charges lapse, as happened in the case of his trial for corruption in 2012 (Il Fatto Quotidiano, 2012). Lastly, the referendum proposal on the management of economically relevant local public services was an attempt to privatise or, at least, liberalise some areas of the Italian public sector. In particular, the law Ronchi-Fitto, the one on which the referendum called the population to express their judgement, envisaged opening the administrative sector to market competition. However, despite considering the privatisation of some public services as a key part of his political philosophy, Silvio Berlusconi did not succeed in implementing it, as the ‘yes’ vote abrogated the abovementioned law.

Since its formation in 2008, the Berlusconi government had faced a continuous decrease in popularity. The first problems arose in 2009, when the minister for Foreign Affairs, Massimo Fini, left the coalition government. Another attack to the stability of the government were the administrative elections of 2011, when the prime minister’s party, Forza Italia, lost in many Italian towns. Forza Italia officially lost the majority of the seats in parliament on November 8th 2011, when the first article of the state general budget was rejected by the majority of the MPs. After a three-day long government crisis, Berlusconi resigned from his role of Prime Minister (La Repubblica, 2011).

After Berlusconi’s resignation on 11th November 2011, the President of the Republic Giorgio Napolitano put in charge a technical government led by Mario Monti, a renowned economist and European Commissioner. Monti’s government was supposed to take emergency measures against the economic crisis and restore Italy’s credibility before international partners and investors, especially within the EU. According to jurist Saki Bailey and Ugo Mattei, the purpose of the technical government was “to carry out the neoliberal policy mandate of the troika” (2013, p.40). The idea that the International Monetary Fund, the European Commission and the European Central Bank have played a key role in Berlusconi’s resignation and the subsequent technical government was supported by different agencies both on the left and the right (Il Fatto Quotidiano,

2014). In particular, the Monti government was accused of implementing austerity policies without any democratic support. As stated by Mattei and Bailey:

The Monti Government, far from being a technical executive, shows a very marked pro-business attitude. Among its early successes there were a pension system reform, passed without consultation with the trade unions, a reform of the labor market, dismantling most of the guarantees that the workers' movement had obtained in the nineteenth seventies, and a reform of professional services aimed at liberalization. (...) In sum, through deploying the "state of emergency," the Monti government has been able to implement a "shock doctrine," facilitating the expansion of capital and profits for the private sector. (idem, p.52-53).

The technocratic government, which had been welcomed as the only plausible solution to Italy's economic problems, became more and more unpopular. In particular, the implementation of the Fornero law on pensions (named after the minister of Labour, Social Policy and Gender Equality Elisa Fornero) caused the disappointment both of young and older workers. This law raised the minimum retirement age to 66 years and the minimum period of social security contributions to over 42 years for men and 41 years for women (Telara, 2015). The law was criticised as a further impairment for an already stagnating economy, where the turnover of young workers replacing those retiring was already very low.

Mario Monti resigned in December 21st 2012, as he had announced he would do on December 8th of the same year. The elections that followed the technical government were another proof of Italy's divided political situation. The elections were held in February 2013; the coalition *Italia Bene Comune*, led by Partito Democratico, the major centre-left party, achieved a very close victory over *Il popolo della Libertà*, Silvio Berlusconi's coalition (La Repubblica, 2013). It is also interesting to note that *Movimento 5 Stelle*, an emerging populist party, gained 25% of the votes, establishing itself as one of the major political forces in the country. Pier Luigi Bersani, the leader of PD, was unable to form a government, despite having the majority of the votes. For this reason, a new coalition government composed of *Partito Democratico* and *Forza Italia* was installed. The new coalition government faced a severe crisis due to the rejection of the

nomination of Prodi and Marini as members of the Senate (de Gregorio, 2013). *Movimento 5 stelle*, but also far-right and far-left wing parties, therefore, became the only opposition in the parliament. This centre coalition was led by Enrico Letta (PD) and vice-premier Angelino Alfano (FI) but it did not last long: because of internal decisions of *Partito Democratico*, on February 14th, 2016 Letta had to resign in favour of the recently elected party leader, Matteo Renzi. During this tumultuous period of political instability and reciprocal accusations outside and inside the main political parties, the Ministry for Cultural Activities and Heritage suffered from the same precariousness as the rest of the governing bodies in the country: ministers were replaced quickly, making it impossible to implement long-term policy plans.

This brief historical outline of recent Italian politics is useful to understand why Italy has been chosen as the focus of this doctoral work. Italy is far from being the only country that has suffered from the effects of the global economic crisis: ten years since, many other countries, indeed, are still recovering from the disastrous effects of the 2007 crisis. Furthermore, neoliberalism is not a local phenomenon but, as explained by F.S. Michaels, rather a global, sweeping narrative that has changed the way people understand values all over the world. Lastly, artists and cultural professionals are a precarious, highly skilled yet underpaid class not only in Italy, but rather on a global scale (a-n Artist Information Company, 2015; Bain and Mclean, 2013). However, few other countries presented such an instable political situation that, on one hand, provoked a new interest in activism amid the local population but, on the other, fostered a climate of mistrust towards political institutions (Demos, 2016).

It is exactly from this climate of neoliberal monoculture and political and economic crisis that the movement of the commons was born. In a moment where the boundaries between leading party and opposition was blurred, a radical approach to building alternatives to the cultural and political vacuum did not come from parliamentary politics, but from grassroots organisations. Furthermore, this sense of precariousness and instability deeply affected the discourse on cultural value between 2007 and 2016. The role of cultural workers was put into question by austerity measures towards arts and culture and by the neoliberalisation of the job market; in the meantime, Italian cultural policy steered towards an increasingly market-oriented strategy, with little or

no attention for issues of access and inclusion. However, the very existence of these activist organisations was directly linked to the realm of official cultural policy: legitimisation was very often a serious concern of protest groups, which led them to pursue a dialogue with the local government. On the other hand, in the case studies of this doctoral thesis, local policy-makers showed little if any interest in the activities of these organisations, giving them either a direct refusal or vague, ultimately unfulfilled promises. As a result, the activists that were trying to enter the sphere of legal Italian cultural organisations had to implement their best resilience techniques to continue their activities outside occupied spaces and to stay relevant.

Between 2011 and 2016, several conditions changed: first, the landscape of Italian activism lost the momentum it had gained in 2011, and much of the dissatisfaction of the Italians for their ruling class has been conveyed in populist parties such as *Movimento 5 Stelle* or *Lega Nord*. Secondly, despite the negative trend of its public debt (Eurostat 2017), the Italian political class has tried to build a new image for itself, far from the scandals that had characterised the Berlusconi era between 1994 and 2011. This effort can be seen also in the attitude of the Ministry for Cultural Assets and Activities after 2011, which has been more active in implementing reforms for the sector and which has directly addressed issues that had been cause of embarrassment for Italian cultural policy, such as the restoration of the poorly preserved mosaics in Pompeii (Viola, 2017).

As a result, the present scenario of Italian cultural value does not present the same radical oppositions between activists and governmental politics that exploded in 2011. Since then, experimental form of collaboration between local councils and activists have been implemented, with results that still need to be assessed in the long run. Representatives of the private sector are now playing an important role in liaising with the Ministry of Cultural Assets and Activities and grassroots groups, contributing to unprecedented cultural partnerships. Furthermore, the activist groups that were created between 2011 and 2014 also evolved: some gained legal recognition, some dissolved and some changed the direction of their activities. Since the first occupations of 2011, the Italian cultural policy sector, represented by the national and local government, has showed both adaptive and innovative tendencies and conservative,

anti-participative attitudes, not to mention a penchant for ‘bullshit’, that is, making unsubstantiated claims that are not concerned with the reality of facts, for their impact (Belfiore, 2009). In the case studies portrayed in this doctoral work, we find two cases of ill-fated mediation between activists and local governments. The reason behind these unsuccessful attempts at legalising radical forms of cultural participation are to be found not only in a gap between the intent of mainstream and grassroots cultural policy, but also in a gap of language: as this thesis shows, the language of official cultural policy is completely different from the one of cultural activists. This linguistic difference is the result of, on the one hand, the effects of the neoliberal grand narrative and, on the other, the result of the interlinking of the values of the commons, of participatory arts and of some of the rhetoric of the Italian counterculture of the 1960s and 1970s. What emerges from this situation of opposite positions therefore, is that the concept of cultural value is a malleable one, subject to economic, ideological and political influences. It must be noted, however, that the aftermath of the protest of cultural workers coincided with a more open-minded approach of Italian cultural policy towards grassroots initiatives. It is not possible to directly trace this change of direction back to the activities of occupied cultural spaces and similar activist groups, but it is safe to say that the protests of cultural workers have sparked a larger debate on cultural value and cultural practices beyond economic instrumentalism. This thesis will illustrate how this debate was at times a battlefield and, on other occasions, a common ground for radically different parties.

This thesis is made up of five chapters. Chapter One will present the theoretical background of some concepts that are fundamental to this doctoral work: neoliberalism, grand narratives and the commons. Chapter Two will analyse Italian cultural policies between 2007 and 2016, with a particular focus on two key policy areas, theatre and the re-use of abandoned heritage sites. Chapter three will explain the methodological framework of this thesis, including the challenges that have characterised the research process. Chapter Four and Five will address the two case studies of this thesis, Teatro Valle Occupato (Rome) and Rebeldía (Pisa), two activist organisations that occupied abandoned spaces in urban contexts in order to build a local form of commons. These two chapters will address the activities and the idea of cultural value offered by these organisations and their controversial relationship with the local government. The thesis

ends with a conclusion chapter that offers a brief account of the case Asilo Filangieri, an interesting example of cultural commons created by a protest group in Naples, and summarises the main findings of the thesis and points towards possible fruitful avenues for future research.

Chapter One

Theoretical background

This thesis analyses the concept of cultural value in the Italian context after the 2008 economic crisis. This chapter will discuss the key concepts that provide the theoretical infrastructure that supports the analysis that will unfold in the following chapters: neoliberalism, artistic labour and the commons.

Neoliberalism

This thesis is concerned with the influence of neoliberalism on Italian cultural policy after the economic crisis; to understand this process, it is necessary to analyse the effects of neoliberalism on contemporary politics and everyday life. As England and Ward (2007) point out, the word “neoliberalism” has been used in different contexts and according to different meanings: as an ideological hegemonic project based on class alliances (regardless of geographical location); as a kind of policy and political programme characterised by the shift of ownership from public to private; as a form of governance where the boundaries between state, society and market are redrawn with a view to guaranteeing the freedom of the latter; as a kind of governmentality centred on the responsibility of the individual (p.11-13). Moreover, neoliberalism has also been analysed as an economic doctrine (Peet, 2001, in England and Ward, 2007, p.7) and a philosophy (Treanor, 2005). However, as argued by McGuigan (2009), the most convincing definition, which is worth quoting in full, has been given by Harvey:

Neoliberalism is in the first instance a theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can be best advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterised by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade. The role of the state is to create and preserve an institutional framework appropriate to such practices. The state has to guarantee, for example, the quality and integrity of money. It must also set up those military, defence, police and legal structures and functions required to secure private property rights and to guarantee, by force if need be, the proper functioning of the markets. Furthermore, if markets do not exist (in such areas as land, water, education, health care, social security, or

environmental pollution) then they must be created, by state action if necessary. But beyond these tasks the state should not venture. State intervention in markets (once created) must be kept to a bare minimum because, according to the theory, the state cannot possibly possess enough information to second guess market signals (prices) and because powerful interest groups will inevitably distort and bias state interventions (particularly in democracies) for their own benefit (Harvey, 2005, p.2).

There is a vast array of terms in economic studies to define the complex set of political, economic and philosophical ideas we are taking into consideration: “market triumphalism” (Sandel, 2012), “neo-classical economic theory” and “neoclassical economics” (McMurtry, 2004, Morris, 2006, Palley, 2012), and “turbo-capitalism” (Luttwak, 1998). However, in this thesis the term “neoliberalism” is chosen as the preferred option. Neoliberalism, according to Harvey’s definition, is a phenomenon that does not only affect people’s economic behaviour, but also their way of thinking: neoliberalism can be considered as a predominant discourse that affects the way people think about reality, formulate ideas and measure values in politics, language, morals and culture. This is why this section will analyse the role of neoliberalism as a “grand narrative”, according to Lyotard’s theory (1984) with particular attention to the narratives it offers on the economic crisis and its influence on culture.

The neoliberal faith in market values can be summarised by the following quote by Friedrich Hayek, a notorious endorser of free market, who clearly stated that economic advancement is the only way to “build a decent world”:

It may sound noble to say “Damn economics, let’s build a decent world!”, but it is, in fact, merely irresponsible. With our world as it is, with everyone convinced that material conditions here and there must be improved, our chance of building a decent world is that we can continue to improve the general level of wealth (Hayek, 2008, p.215-16).

However, Hayek’s statement raises fundamental questions. What makes the world decent? What means are acceptable to improve the general level of wealth? When we formulate our answers, we must consider the factors that shape our system of values and the way we look at the reality surrounding us. We will now analyse Neoliberalism as

a discourse that carries a shared system of values, a specific language, its own *Weltanschauung* and a teleological argument; in order to do so, we will define Neoliberalism as a 'grand narrative', and its perspectives on the causes of the economic crisis will be taken into account.

Following Eleonora Belfiore's example (2006), this section will argue that neoliberalism is not only a political philosophy and an economic system, but also a "grand narrative". The term 'grand narrative' was first introduced by Lyotard in his "The Postmodern Condition" (1984). This concept describes

a privileged discourse capable of situating characterising and evaluating all other discourses, but not itself inflicted by the historicity and contingency which render first-order discourses potentially distorted and in need of legitimation (Fraser and Nicholson, 1989 in Browning, 2000, p.2).

A grand narrative, therefore, is a philosophical system based on consensus that provides explanation and legitimation for the existing reality; the consistency and the relation to reality of any other narrative is valued in comparison to the existing grand narrative, which is instead immune from external criticism. Another definition of grand narratives focuses on the notion of "language game", another crucial aspect of Lyotard's theories. Language games are a social practice between people with different levels of power that are used to establish and reinforce said power relations. In this view, a 'grand narrative' is a

particular type of (potentially) hegemonic language frame which functions, not always successfully, to mask both the conditions of its own engendering as well as the pluralism of language games within the established socio-political order of which it is a vital aspect (Keane, in Benjamin, 1992, p.88-89).

Arguably, the most relevant criticism advanced to Lyotard's notion of the "end of grand narratives" is that his prophecy about the end of grand narratives has not been fulfilled (Keane, in Benjamin, p.74). Nevertheless, even scientific truth is not immune to critique: Lyotard himself warns us about this when describing the future as the "age of knowledge" in which scientific truth should theoretically put an end to the concept of grand narratives. Indeed, Lyotard states that scientific knowledge is a discourse that encompasses a variety of subjects and requires to be interpreted and translated:

therefore, as any other discourse, it is likely to be problematized and put into question by external agents (Lyotard, p.4, 1984). Scientific knowledge also raises problems of interaction with existing powers, such as the State. The “hegemony of computers” (p.4) requires change in the system of power, (idem, p.6): corporations owning scientific knowledge will be likely to contest the power of the State, as its influence is perceived as a form of “noise” opposed to the “transparency” of scientific knowledge (idem, p.5). Therefore, it is hard to say that Lyotard actually prophesied the end of ideology; it is probably more accurate to say that he forecasted a change in the equilibrium of existing power forces, due to the rise of knowledge as a form of wealth.

Another critique against Lyotard’s theory relates to the “desire for reality” (Keane, in Benjamin, p.75) that the author saw as an endemic condition of academia. This desire for objectivity and transparency is not an experience limited to scientific thought, but is also present in philosophy: in materialism, for example, and positivism. More broadly, human beings tend to have a preferred way to understand reality and to form a precise idea of what reality is; this notion of reality also encompasses metaphysics and subjective ideas. Therefore, scientific truth is not the only truth that humans are out to seek. Moreover, the notions of subjectivism and relativism that characterise postmodernism did not suppress the desire of humanity for ontological truth. In this scenario, people still try to find an array of philosophical instruments to interpret reality and understand what our role in this world is. What is the role of neoliberalism in a society that, despite being accused of relativism, is still in search of meaning?

Neoliberalism is both an economic and a political discourse; it is, in fact, a “privileged discourse”; it is a “vital aspect” of the “established socio-political order” (Keane, in Benjamin, 1992, p.88-89); and indeed, it renders all other discourses “in need of legitimation” (Fraser and Browning, in Nicholson, 2002). As Harvey (2005, p. 40) points out, the concept of freedom was fundamental to the diffusion and process of legitimation of neoliberalism, to the point that Margaret Thatcher’s famous phrase “there is no alternative” (to market freedom) (Mirowski, 2013, p.235) became an accepted matter of fact. As summarised by Harvey, “(n)eoliberalism, in short, becomes hegemonic as a mode of discourse. It has pervasive effects in the ways of thought to the point where it has been incorporated into the common-sense way of many of us interpret, live in and understand the world” (Harvey, 2005, p.3).

Moreover, Treanor underlines that

(n)oliberalism is not simply an economic structure, it is a philosophy. This is most visible in attitudes to society, the individual and employment. Neoliberals tend to see the world in term of market metaphors (2005, par. 5)

Neoliberalism, as stated by Anderson, can be seen as the “most successful ideology in world history” (2000, in Belfiore, 2006, p.337). The notions of grand narrative and ideology, in the discourse on neoliberalism, are seen as part of a specific political project that produces a social order; therefore, it is necessary to mention the concept of “hegemony” in the global context.

The term hegemony comes from the Ancient Greek, means “dominance over” and was used to describe the relations between city-states (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2015). The concept of hegemony was introduced in the political discourse in the first quarter of the twentieth century, on the occasion of the Third International, and in the context of the attempt at devising a society where workers would be both the dominated and dominant class (Cox, 1983, p.163). Antonio Gramsci was inspired by Lenin’s idea of “dictatorship of the proletariat”, where the dominance of workers was affirmed with the consent and cooperation of allied classes over the enemy groups (idem). Gramsci used this concept to analyse the power of the bourgeoisie over the working class and its relationship to capitalism. Hegemony is not only created by the ruling class, but also by all those institutions that contribute to the intellectual and behavioural formation of the people, such as the Church and the press (Cox, p. 164). Moreover, thanks to the cooperation of these agencies and to the consent of the ruled class, hegemony ensures a homogeneity of behaviour (idem).

According to some authors (Duménil and Lévy, 2011, Katz, 2006), neoliberalism provides a unique example of a globalised hegemony. For Katz, it constitutes the dominant ideology of globalisation (2006, p. 333). Duménil and Lévy (2011, pp.8-9), in their analysis of neoliberalism, define it as form of hegemony, comprehensive of social order and power configuration that was imposed after World War II by the rising class of capitalist owners and upper fractions of management from capitalist countries unto the rest of the world, albeit not without crises. According to these authors, in this process the U.S. took a leading role and eventually became an imperialist country. As a result, neoliberalism, from the political point of view, is a direct expression of the U.S.

hegemony on the rest of the world.

The way people act according to a grand narrative is linked to the concept of *doxa*. The term comes from Pierre Bourdieu's *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (2005), where the experience of *doxa* is described as a:

System of classification which reproduce, in their own specific logic, the objective classes, i.e. the divisions by age, sex, or position in the relations of production, make their specific contribution to the reproduction of the power relations of which they are the product, by securing the misrecognition, and hence the recognition, of the arbitrariness on which they are based: in the extreme case, that is to say, when there is a quasi-perfect correspondence between the objective order and the subjective principles of organization (as in ancient societies) the natural and social world appear as self-evident (Bourdieu, 2005, p.164).

The term *doxa* differs from both heterodoxy and orthodoxy, as the subject that experiences it is not aware of the possibility of any different belief (idem). In fact, the experience of *doxa* affects cognitive ability to the point that the perception of reality coincides almost perfectly with the system of beliefs that justifies power relations. In short, *doxa* becomes the only possible way of understanding reality. The legitimacy of *doxa* corresponds to the legitimacy of existing power relations, as they come to be perceived not as an arbitrary social organization, but an essential part of the natural order of things. The most interesting characteristic of *doxa* is the series of acts and rituals that people perform "to make the world conform to the myth" (p.167). Bourdieu makes the example of the community of Kabylia (a village in north-eastern Algeria where Bourdieu conducted extensive fieldwork), where children were taught sayings and proverbs that conform to ideas of nature that belonged to the local *doxa*. He thus showed how even the perception of nature is not the result of scientific analysis, but is instead a cultural product (idem). However, *doxa* is not a static concept, for it is subject to crisis and change. The struggle for legitimacy that characterises the relationship between heterodoxy and orthodoxy mirrors the class struggle between the dominated class and the dominant one; when class struggles lead to a discrepancy in the perception of *doxa*, the dominant class will enact a strategy of resistance. In cases of deep crisis that

end with the subversion of the social order, *doxa* will be subject to modification. However, in most cases, this discrepancy will end up in the establishment of a new orthodoxy and heterodoxy:

The dominated classes have an interest in pushing back the limits of *doxa* and exposing the arbitrariness of the taken for granted; the dominant classes have an interest in defending the integrity of *doxa* or, short of this, of establishing in its place the necessarily imperfect substitute, orthodoxy (p.169).

Orthodoxy exists only in relation to heterodoxy, as it aims to “restore the innocence of *doxa*” (idem), meaning that it conceals its arbitrariness and reinforces its reproduction and the existing power relations. On the other hand, heterodoxy exists thanks to “competing possibles” (idem), meaning the alternative possibilities that exist inside of *doxa*: heterodoxy does not advocate the arbitrariness of *doxa*, but it puts into question the choices that the dominant class makes within it. The struggle between orthodoxy and heterodoxy, or “right” and “wrong” opinions, is a struggle for legitimacy (p.168) and, consequently, for power. The reproduction of *doxa* is essential to the persistence of power relations: in fact, in class societies the definition of the limits of *doxa* is inherent to class struggle. Protesting and promoting heterodox views hardly ever puts into question *doxa* itself; however, it tries to reshape the power relations that are reproduced and reinforced through *doxa*. If we apply this to the case of neoliberalism, we can say that most protests that bring about ideas of equality and social justice do not aim to subvert the existing socio-economical system; however, they try to reshape power relations inside this system. When instead we analyse the crisis of *doxa* and the production of new social orders, we must analyse the role of the heretical discourse and its disruptive power in undermining *doxa*. Heretical discourse, for Bourdieu, is the kind of discourse that denounces the arbitrariness of power relations and of the adherence of the social world to the established order (p.127, 1991). It differs then from heterodox discourse, which, despite being critical of the choices of the dominant class, is inherent to the *doxa*; heretical discourse, instead, takes place outside the universe of the possible discourse. Heretical discourse is based on a “cognitive subversion” that changes radically the way people understand the world (idem, p.128); it sweeps away the experience of *doxa* and unveils its arbitrariness. When *doxa* is facing a period of crisis, which usually

coincides with a crisis of political or religious power, the extraordinary situation generates of an extraordinary discourse (p. 129). When an objective crisis that undermines the symbolic power of dominant institutions meets and intersects a critical discourse, *doxa* can be exposed and subverted. In this case, heretical discourse is capable to produce *époché*, “a suspension of the initial adherence to the established order” (p.128). By breaking with the established order, the heretical discourse puts into question the limits of *doxa* and, consequently, of language. The heretical function has the power of “speaking the unspeakable”, of moving and expanding the universe of possible discourse. In fact, it does not merely break “the silence of the *doxa*” (p.131), but it produces a new common sense and establishes a new order (p.129). In this sense, heretical discourse consists of “performative utterances”: it has the power of changing reality, as “it aims to bring about what it utters” (p.128). Bourdieu sees the heretical discourse as a form of political pre-vision: as soon as it is uttered, it is made conceivable, credible, and thus reproducible (idem). The very project of the heretical discourse, the subversion of the possible discourse, is implemented as soon as it is formulated. Nevertheless, according to Bourdieu, the dominated classes cannot bring about a symbolic revolution. Heretical discourse, in order to have a performative function, needs to be uttered by groups that are publicly recognised as legitimate and that can express themselves publicly. Most importantly, this group must endure the labour of enunciating and dramatizing confused experiences, such as unease or rebelliousness, and to convey them into the construction of a social identity (p.129-130). Dominated classes, according to Bourdieu, cannot constitute themselves as a separate group and tend to adhere to orthodoxy, as they are the product of a social order which inclined them to submit to it. For Bourdieu, contemplating different or antagonistic beliefs does not make sense: questioning the grand narrative corresponds to questioning the natural order of things. Different opinions and interpretations of reality only have sense within *doxa*: *doxa* itself constitutes the universe of the undiscussed; it is only inside of this universe that it is possible to form opinions, which, instead, belong to the universe of discourse.

The concept of *doxa* is useful to understand how deeply neoliberalism has affected our way to understand reality. Indeed, as the next section will analyse, neoliberalism constitutes today's *doxa*; any attempt to break it constitutes a form of heretic discourse.

In Chapter Four and Five this thesis will analyse how alternative conceptions of cultural value, such the one based on the commons, have attempted to break the neoliberal doxa.

We will now consider the relationship between language and symbolic power, as analysed by Bourdieu, and its application to the neoliberal context.

Bourdieu recognizes three institutions that constitute and reinforce the collective thought at the basis of *doxa*: language, myth and art. Language, in particular, has the most powerful effect on the way people think and understand reality. In fact, language is one of the most important institutions that shape experience of doxa: language marks the boundary between thinkable and unthinkable, expressible and inexpressible, disputable and undisputable. According to Bourdieu, “the different classes and class fractions are engaged in a symbolic struggle properly speaking, one aimed at imposing the definition of social world that is best suited to their interest” (Bourdieu, 1991, p.167); language is both an instrument and a site of this struggle, as it is the base of symbolic production and of the constitution of social order.

Bourdieu analyses language as a structure by distinguishing three possible ways of understanding it: as a structuring structure, as a structured structure and as an instrument of domination (1991, p. 165). In fact, language can be seen as a “structuring structure” or, in other words, as a necessary instrument to know and construct the objective world. However, it can also be seen as a structured structure, as in the Hegelian and Saussurian tradition: language, in order to be intelligible, it has to be reconstructed (analysed), so that it is possible to establish the connection between sound and meaning. This relationship, however, is not intrinsic: it must be agreed within a social group. In this sense, language has a gnoseological function, as we use it to construct reality, but also a social function as, by agreeing on its meaning and using its parts to build our utterances, we need it to communicate with each other. If we intend language both as a structuring and structured structure, we can see that it is necessary to form our perception of both the objective world and the social order: it is a symbolic system, and as such it affects how we relate to reality (*idem*). The symbolic power of language is a crucial element to impose and reproduce grand narratives and to unify the experience of *doxa*. The dominant classes use symbolic productions to operate a

constant censorship that excludes “unspeakable” concepts from discourse and aims to defend *doxa*, and to reinforce their own legitimacy.

What is interesting to note, at the institutional level, is the performative power of language. Language does not simply describe, but actually defines the world surrounding us. The performative power of language, according to Bourdieu, is best represented by the figure of the ministry (1991, p.75), meaning all representative figures of power (king, priest, spokesperson) that act not representing their own authority, but whose utterances have an immediate effect on the social world. The religious minister acts in representation of a group, but this group includes himself too: this figure has been invested the authority and the legitimacy to affect the social order, as his status and the symbolic value of his role allow him to do so.

Bourdieu and Wacquant (2001, p.2) analyse how change in language reflects a change in political discourse. Language circumscribes the limits of discourse, shapes it and contributes to the legitimation of the dominant class; in our times, thanks to mass communication, language circulates globally, functioning as an instrument of domination. The new vocabulary used in media, academia, international organisations and corporations is the language of a globalised society that seems oblivious of the concepts of class, imperialism and capitalism. The language the authors call “NewSpeak”, a clear reference to George Orwell’s novel “1984”, constitutes the field of the contemporary heterodox discourse. According to the authors, this language constitutes a form of symbolic violence that is an instrument of cultural imperialism (idem): language, as stated earlier, can be used as an instrument of domination that shapes social order; in this case, it has been used by the U.S. to establish their power. The diffusion of neoliberal thought through a globalized form of cultural imperialism is the triumph of a grand narrative that is reproduced and justified as *doxa*. Bourdieu and Wacquant analyse how globalization, in particular in relation to the influence of the US model on social and cultural practices, is to be understood as a rhetorical tool of governments to bring about neoliberal policies, rather than a new phase of capitalism. The rhetoric of globalization used to justify power imbalances between classes and lack of social policies (idem, p.4). Bourdieu and Wacquant’s analysis of NewSpeak reflects how neoliberalism constitutes a form of global *doxa* that is reinforced by a language that

reflects the power relationships that constitute neoliberalism. The opposition between orthodoxy and heterodoxy delimits the universe of the possible discourse. Newspeak responds to a precise ideological schema that favours market values against the very concept of state:

state ->	[globalization]	-> market
closed		open
constraint		freedom
rigid		flexible
immobile, fossilized		dynamic, moving, self-transforming
past, outdated		future, novelty
stasis		growth
group, lobby, holism, collectivism		individual, individualism
uniformity, artificiality		diversity, authenticity
autocratic (totalitarian)		democratic

(Bourdieu and Wacquant, 2001, p. 4).

The words on the right-hand side constitute a large part of the neoliberal vocabulary that, as we can see, reflects market values. If we define NewSpeak as the language of neoliberalism and globalisation, we can analyse the success of the neoliberal grand narrative as a heretical discourse that managed to assert itself as a *doxa*. According to Bourdieu and Wacquant (2001, p. 3), neoliberalism is brought about by “supposedly neutral agencies” that have symbolic and political power: major international organizations (the World Bank, International Monetary Fund, European Commission and OECD), conservative think-tanks (the Manhattan Institute in New York City, the Adam Smith Institute in London, the Fondation Saint-Simon in Paris, and the Deutsche Bank Foundation in Frankfurt) and philanthropic foundations, to the schools of power (Science-Po in France, the London School of Economics in England, Harvard's Kennedy School of Government in America, etc.). The rise of neoliberalism can be seen as the rise of a heretical discourse that swept away former

concepts of state, nation and labour that constituted the base of political discourse, and that eventually constituted a new common sense, based on the principle of economic rationality. If we think of neoliberalism as a grand narrative that defines the limits of the universe of the possible discourse, we can argue that the perception of the world in a neoliberal society is an experience of *doxa*. As stated by F.S. Michaels' book title (2011), "one story is changing everything" with effects not only on power relations and political discourse, but also on our everyday life.

As suggested by Campbell and Pederson (in England and Ward, p.7, 2007), neoliberalism as a philosophy becomes something "more complex, diverse, contested and open to interpretation than is often recognised". Duménil and Lévy define neoliberalism as a "social order in which a new discipline was imposed on labor and new managerial criteria and policies established (...) the so-called free market is an instrument in service of this objective" (2011, p.35). Therefore, neoliberalism does not only provide a set of political ideals and economic theories, but also requires changes in society as a whole and on the everyday life of individuals.

Many scholars have interpreted the last thirty years as the rise of the "homo economicus":

Economics thus becomes an 'approach' capable in principle of addressing the totality of human behaviour, and, consequently, of envisaging a coherent, purely economic method of programming the totality of governmental action. The neo-liberal homo economicus is both a reactivation and a radical inversion of the economic agent as conceived by the liberalism of Smith, Hume or Ferguson. The reactivation consists in positing a fundamental human faculty of choice, a principle which empowers economic calculation effectively to sweep aside the anthropological categories and frameworks of the human and social sciences. (Gordon, 1991, in Belfiore, 2006, p.335).

This definition is particularly powerful and highlights the fact that the influence of neoclassical economics and its means-end rationality is so strong that Western society perceives it as second nature (hence the term "homo economicus"). The behaviour of "homo economicus" is predicated on their faculty of choice: this choice is always

directed towards the individual's own good and to the fulfilment of their own happiness. From an economic perspective, Neoliberalism assumes that this tendency to self-realisation is also a tendency to improve one's own economic condition. This tendency will always result in a positive increase of the general wealth: richer people spend more and are more likely to invest money and create new jobs. Therefore, from this standpoint, the common good coincides with the individual good. When it comes to sociological analysis, neoliberalism emphasises the role of the individual, their capacity to make rational decisions and their pursuit of their own wellbeing. In sociology, this centrality of the individual can be described as “methodological individualism”. This term was first introduced by Joseph Alois Schumpeter in 1908 (Hodgson, 2007, p. 211): it “just means that one starts from the individual in order to describe certain economic relationships” (Schumpeter, 1908, in Hodgson, 2007, p. 213). This idea has been fully developed by Hayek (2008), whose theory on collectivism and totalitarianism sees individualism as the best means to achieve freedom and democracy. Individualism, for Hayek, is not just a method of enquiry or one of the possible ethical behaviours of humans. Rather, he believes that it is an innate characteristic of man’s capacity to elaborate scales of values. According to Hayek, there is no such thing as “collective values”: values are inevitably subjective and individual. This is due to our naturally limited imagination, as our capacity of producing ideas is necessarily limited by our personal experience. If a person cannot imagine concepts outside of their life experience, it is very unlikely for them to attribute value to concepts and things in exactly the same way another person does, as subjectivity varies from one person to the other. This limitation makes it impossible for people to produce scales of values that are universal and consistent with each other (p.102). Individualism is the behaviour at the roots of the liberal market system, as it is based on the individual freedom of choice. Totalitarian regimes that control the means of production aim to the achievement of a universal end for the whole society; in order to maintain their legitimacy and reach said end, they need to make everybody believe in it (p.172). Totalitarian regimes control not only the means of production, but also their ideas; this undermines “one of the foundations of all morals: the sense and respect for truth” (idem). Those who do not share the common ideology are excluded from the allocation of the means (p.126). In this view, the principle of free choice that supports the market system, instead, is the

same that supports liberal democracy; in a democratic system, the fortune of a person “depends solely on him and not on the favours of the mighty” (p.130). Of course, in a system based on competition, poverty and inequalities still exist, but, according to Hayek, they can be borne with more dignity if they are attributed to chance and not to somebody else’s scheme (p.137). The “invisible hand” of the market, therefore, guides people’s destiny according to their ability to obtain the fulfilment of their own interests, but a certain amount of chance is not excluded from this system. Moreover, even though methodological individualism tends to explain every social phenomenon – poverty, unequal redistribution of capital and so forth – in terms of individual choices and acts, Hayek nevertheless asserts that the normal interaction of people also creates change in terms of social mobility (in Hodgson, 2007, p. 215), so that, as Longworth puts it, “capitalism is by far the most productive and liberating channel for the realisation of human ambitions and needs” (in Bennett, 2001, p.175).

One of the most problematic issues not only in economics, but also in philosophy and politics, is to define what the “common good” is. According to liberal economic theory, the market is only able to provide “Pareto-optimal¹” results, creating inequality and uneven distribution of wealth. To what extent should this inequality be corrected, by whom and why?

In order to properly address the problem of the common good, we first need to define the role of society in neoliberal theory. As it is clear from the previous analysis of neoliberal thought, the idea of society as an agency is far from the neoliberal focus on the will of the individual. Neoliberalism, and liberalism before it, are based on Adam Smith’s theory of self-interest: as quoted earlier, according to Smith, wealth can only be achieved thanks to the “uniform, constant, and uninterrupted effort of every man to better his condition” (Smith, 2010, p.xxiii). The pursuit of the single individual’s self-interest, and not the effort of the collective, is the main driving force in the quest for the

¹ Pareto-optimality is a concept of efficiency used in the social sciences, named after Italian sociologist Vilfredo Pareto. “A state of affairs is Pareto-optimal (or Pareto-efficient) if and only if there is no alternative state that would make some people better off without making anyone worse off. More precisely, a state of affairs *x* is said to be Pareto-inefficient (or suboptimal) if and only if there is some state of affairs *y* such that no one strictly prefers *x* to *y* and at least one person strictly prefers *y* to *x*. The concept of Pareto-optimality thus assumes that anyone would prefer an option that is cheaper, more efficient, or more reliable or that otherwise comparatively improves one’s condition (Sen, 1993). “Markets and freedom: Achievements and limitations of the market mechanism in promoting individual freedoms” (PDF). Oxford Economic Papers. 45 (4): 519–541. JSTOR 2663703.

common good. When referring to Adam Smith *Wealth of the Nations*, Morris (2006, p.7) notices that often the pursuit of self-interest promoted by Smith has been misinterpreted as a justification for the selfishness of human nature. He argues, however, that Adam Smith's theory does not disregard shared moral values and society in general; the well-being of the individual is a step towards the achievement of the general interest. However, (in Hodgson, 2004, p.158) underlines that Adam Smith sees the fulfilment of what he calls "the public interest" as a necessary – thus, inevitable - consequence of the individual interest; the common good is just an accidental outcome, not the main objective, of human rational behaviour.

The relationship between morals and markets has been investigated with a variety of outcomes. Tavis and Tavis (2004) identify the market as a system based on contracts: one of the main duties of law is to ensure that said contracts are fully observed, making sure that the "rules of the game" of the market, in Friedman's words, are respected (in Tavis and Tavis, 2004, p.318). Furthermore, they argue that the concept of morality in the exchange system of the market has little intrinsic value:

The strength of the market model is that it serves what is often viewed as a selfish personal drive while, at the same time, enhancing the overall material well-being of society. The weakness is its singular focus on economic efficiency as its goal. In this model, morality serves a functional role in enhancing the effectiveness of contracts. Thus, the goal is narrow but the implementation of that goal is reasonably effective (p.318).

Thus, morals do not constitute a system of values themselves: they are an instrument to the implementation of the contracts that regulate human relationships. In a neoliberal system, morality is based on *do ut des* contracts (Sandel, 2012): the common good is achieved by the effort of individuals in implementing and respecting these contracts. Society, in this system, can be best represented as a network of contracts that tie together individuals, leaving little space for such things as sense of belonging and community.

The economic rationality of the neoliberal self is at the core of Garrett Hardin's *Tragedy of the Commons* (1968). As it will be analysed later in this chapter, individualism and economic rationality have been seen as intrinsic characteristics

of humankind that prevent the success of forms of self-governed collective action. The theory of the commons, which is based instead on human's ability to overcome individual interest for the sake of the common good, is at the core of the two case studies of this doctoral work, Teatro Valle Occupato and Rebeldía.

Michael Sandel recognises how neoliberalism managed to provide a model for social relationship, thus creating a "market society":

(a)t the heart of this science there is a simple but sweeping idea: In all domains of life, human behaviour can be explained by assuming that people decide what to do by weighing the costs and benefits of the options before them, and choosing the one they believe will give them the greatest welfare, or utility (2012, p.48).

According to Sandel, the concept of "utility" eventually pervaded all the aspects of the human society. In his analysis, he shows how market concepts like "outsourcing", "advertising" and "incentives" have invaded the realm of what once was considered outside the buying-and-selling process: access to medical care, queuing, life insurances, taking care of oneself and even the human body. Sandel (2012) shows how, from its mildest manifestation (such as for instance members of the wealthy class hiring homeless people to queue for them, thus outsourcing one of their everyday tasks) to the most macabre ones (as in the various forms of putting a price on the life of employees, celebrities and perfect strangers as if they were just another share on the stock market), the behaviour imposed by the market system is pervading our life.

Similarly, Mirowski (2013), starting from Foucault's lectures on neoliberalism, points out that what the French author defines "the neoliberal agent" (p. 105) has changed the way not only we live our everyday life, but perceive ourselves. The "neoliberal way of being" (p. 106) has, alongside the effects quoted by Sandel in the everyday relationship between individuals, very deep consequences on self-perception and the concept of personhood as well. This is especially evident in the process of what he defines as "fragmentation" of the self (p.107).

The fragmentation of the neoliberal self begins when the agent is brought face to face with the realisation that she is not just an employee or a student, but also simultaneously a product to be sold, a walking advertisement, a

manager of her résumé, a biographer of her rationales, and an entrepreneur of her possibilities. (...) She is all at once the business, the raw material, the product and the customer of her own life (p.108).

The pervasive force of neoliberalism is analysed in great detail in F.S. Michaels' already mentioned volume *Monoculture* (2011). The author defines the way we look at reality as "our personal mythology" (p.10) made of stories that describe who we are, what is the world we live in like, and the way we interact with it. In this system a "master story", meaning a broader narrative that changes and justifies all other narratives, is likely to emerge (p.8). At the beginning of the 21st century, this "master story" – or grand narrative – is clearly the economic one (p.9). This master story is what eventually forms a "monoculture", that is a dominant perspective that replaces the individual ones. In a mono-cultural system, people fail to perceive the "master story" as just another possible standpoint to explain reality and eventually accept it unquestioningly (idem). The economic monoculture affirms that:

You're a rational, self-interested individual who is trying to satisfy unlimited wants (...). Power is in the market, not in people, and cannot be personally directed (...). Market size and market growth know no limits (...). You compete with everyone and everyone competes with you. Relationships are impersonal, anonymous and transactional, and economic growth enables social growth (idem, p.19).

Monoculture affects all human activities, from education to relationships, from working to being creative. Michaels argues that the monoculture effect prevents people from being creative and independent (pp.107-109), as living in a mono-cultural system requires conformity. Therefore, monoculture is not only detrimental to the people who conform to it and have to give up their own individuality, but also to those who decide to exile themselves from it and have to face exclusion and punishment (p.110).

Neoliberalism has not only been criticised as a hegemonic cultural system, but also as a form of substitution for people's metaphysical needs. This kind of analysis of neoliberalism as a type of religion is offered by Paul Treanor (2005). First, he analyses liberal philosophy, which developed around the end of 18th century: it includes such basic principles as anti-utopianism, the role of the market in shaping society, the market system as "freedom" itself, equality of rights opposed to inequality of talents and the

concept of “liberty”, meaning the freedom of action of the individual, beyond moral constraints. But the most important feature of liberal thinking is “the belief in the moral necessity of market forces” (idem), a feature we also find in neoliberalism. Treanor’s analysis of neoliberal philosophy is strongly critical and underlines the quasi-religious nature of neoliberal beliefs: this sacral status of the market has also been analysed by McMurtry (in Hodgson, 2004). The divine force of neoliberalism, according to McMurtry, is to be found in “invisible hand” of the market (p.154).

The underlying ideas of market religion, according to McMurtry, are

- (1) the necessary operations of the “invisible hand” adjusting market supply to market demand by natural laws of motion; and (2) the achievement of what no human, alone or all together, could ever plan – an optimum social end-state that could not be better (idem).

For McMurtry, neoliberalism is accepted not only unquestioningly, but with blind faith. The market provides a whole set of values and beliefs, and critique is condemned as severely as heresy.

The main critiques moved to neoliberalism, therefore, oppose its value as a “master story” or “grand narrative”. Furthermore, they unveil the arbitrariness of both the power relations established according to this grand narrative, and the whole social order it presumes. The next section will analyse how this grand narrative also affected the spheres of creativity and culture.

Neoliberalism has not only attracted critiques from intellectuals, but also praise and enthusiasm. The importance of the market system has been acclaimed in philosophy and arts alike, emphasising how economic values are positive to the wellbeing of society.

Fukuyama's theory of the end of history is part of the philosophical tendency of “cultural optimism”. The term has been analysed by Cowen in his “In Praise of Commercial Culture” (1998): it indicates a belief that the market system not only produces the best outcomes in terms of democracy and economics, as stated by Fukuyama, but also the best cultural products (p. 13, Cowen, 1998). This perfect system of cultural goods is illustrated as follows:

Distributors bring together producer and consumer, whether the product be beauty soap, bread, or Beethoven. The resultant meeting of supply and

demand fuels the creative drive and disseminates its results. Neither producers nor consumers of art can flourish without the other side of the market. No distributor can profit without attracting both artists and consumers” (Cowen, idem, p.15).

There are several implications of this system: the market system provides the necessary democracy and freedom of speech required for artistic expression; moreover, artists can rely on their own income and not be dependent on the control of patrons or of the state (Cowen, 1998p. 96-128). Secondly, the increase of wealth calls for increase in artistic education and taste development (idem, p.23). More complex cultural tastes fuel differentiation in artistic production (id., p.24); moreover, it is easy to observe that the market is interested in providing for all the possible cultural niches. The competition that is at the core of the market system fosters innovation (id., p.25), which promotes the social inclusion of cultural outsiders (id., p.29). The marketization of past works of art guarantees their conservation (id., p.30), and the technological advancements brought about by liberal economics is a trigger for cultural innovation and equal distribution of cultural products (id., pp.96-128). This short list outlines a supposedly perfect system that admits failure only when such failure is attributed to the inability of a cultural product to attract sufficient individuals to create a niche in the market. However, the relationship between culture and neoliberalism is not so straightforward: Jim McGuigan provides a full account of how the relationship between culture, the arts and the market has evolved in the neoliberal context (2009). With the term “cool capitalism” McGuigan identifies the appropriation of the creative appeal, typical of the arts, by corporate management (p.7) in order to provide justification, legitimisation and a cultural face for capitalism (p.9). The author distinguishes the two “spirits” of capitalism: the old one that was characterised by a high level of bureaucracy and a conservative attitude (pp.9-19), and the new, which began to spread in the 1960s. McGuigan draws the concept of the “new spirit of capitalism” from a book by Luc Boltanski and Eve Chiapello, that analyses the change in capitalism from 1965 to 1995 (p.22). The authors talk of a process of “absorption of the artistic critique into a rejuvenated capitalism” (p.30). In particular, capitalism absorbed:

autonomy, spontaneity, rhizomorphous capacity, multitasking (...),
conviviality, openness to others and novelty, availability, creativity, visionary

intuition, sensitivity to difference, listening to lived experience and receptiveness to a whole range of experiences, being attracted to informality and the search for interpersonal contacts – these are taken directly from the repertoire of May 1968 (Boltanski and Chiapello, 2005, p.97).

Neoliberalism, according to McGuigan, over the last fifty years has assimilated all the qualities that used to distinguish art: innovation, creativity, originality, quirkiness, unruliness and even rebellion. These characteristics spread from marketing campaigns to the cult of the personality of famous CEOs and to the self-representation of entrepreneurs and businessmen. Neoliberalism, to put it simply, has been trying to look “cool”.

The opposition between “cool” and “square” is at the root of Joseph Heath and Andrew Potter’s analysis of counterculture (2005). Their analysis of counterculture is based on Bourdieu’s idea of “distinction” according to which taste, and specifically cultural taste, acts as an agent of social distinction (p.122). Counterculture acts outside the mainstream (or, in F.S. Michael’s worlds, the “monoculture”) and reaffirms the originality of the individual, their coolness, as opposed to a “square” society of conformists. Therefore, from the countercultural point of view, society is divided between superior people who know and appreciate “cool”, unique and alternative cultural products (or, in Bourdieu’s terms, those who have a conspicuous cultural capital) and the inferior conformists, who unquestioningly enjoy mainstream entertainment (idem). The process of incorporation, meaning the appropriation of countercultural elements by the monoculture, makes counterculture volatile and quickly obsolete (p. 130). The countercultural rebels, in their effort to state their individuality in a system they find unjust, contribute to the success and the longevity of this system. As Thomas Frank states:

With the ‘alternative’ facelift, ‘rebellion’ continues to perform its traditional function of justifying the economy’s ever-accelerating cycles of obsolescence with admirable efficiency. (...) And over the years the rebel has naturally become the central image of this culture of consumption, symbolising endless, directionless change, and eternal restlessness with ‘the establishment’ – or, more correctly, with the stuff ‘the establishment’ convinced him to buy last year (Frank, in Heath and Potter, 2005, p.131).

This analysis portrays a particular kind of customer: the “rebel”, or the person who

claims to think outside the mono-cultural box and displays their distinction by purchasing niche cultural products (such as music and films). Moreover, in order to show their belonging to the “hip” world, the rebel buys clothes and accessories that state their non-conformism. However, their consumer choices do not actually represent a threat to the “establishment”, or the market system. On the contrary, the quick obsolescence of alternative gear makes them competitive consumers and, therefore, excellent contributors to the market system. Counterculture, therefore, does not oppose, but actually is a major driving force of consumer society (idem). The concern for the possibility of a genuine counterculture was one of the main concerns of the organisations that will be presented in chapter Four and Five of this doctoral thesis. The desire of legal recognition of their work and the fear of ‘selling out’ and losing the uniqueness and the political value of their work caused several tensions in the way they interacted with the local authorities. The influence of market values is also reflected in the decision-making process of cultural policies (Gray, 2000; McGuigan, 2004). Gray (2000) focusses on the process of “commodification” of the arts, meaning the replacement of use-value by exchange value: the arts are not valued on the basis of aesthetic or personal criteria, but by those of the market system (2001, p.6). This process of commodification also influenced cultural policy: the target of public policy is no longer society as a collective, but the individual (Gray, 2007). Moreover, the value of public policies is not measured by their use value, but by their economic value: public policies, in order to be valued as efficient and worthy, need to be instrumental to economic growth. Cultural policies are the ones most subject to instrumentalization, as:

lack of political interest and power associated with the sector, particularly at the local level, leads to the development of policy “attachment” strategies whereby funding for the sector can be gained by demonstrating the role that it can play in the fulfilment of the goals of other policy sectors (idem, p.206).

Cultural policies, therefore, become an “attachment” to other, more politically important policies (usually health or social inclusion policies). Cultural policies that lack a high exchange value or, in other words, do not imply high economic returns, must affirm their worth in other sectors. Therefore, the focus on exchange value and economic return is one of the most significant effects of neoliberalism in the sphere of cultural policy and cultural value. Neoliberalism does not recognise any independent or intrinsic value to

culture and the arts: their worth is only measured by other value scales. This concept is crucial to understand the trajectory of Italian cultural policies after the economic crisis, as it will be analysed in the next chapter.

Crisis, precarity and precariousness

Another concept that is crucial to clarify for the purpose of this doctoral work is the one of crisis, and its relationship to the concepts of neoliberalism and precariousness. The financial crisis of 2008 provides a perfect example to discuss the role of “market failures” in neoliberal theory. Neoliberalism recognizes the existence of “market failures”, meaning single episodes and a more general mechanism in which the market is not able to fulfil its main objectives, like the maximisation of profit and general wealth. As with any historical event, the crisis has been subject to a variety of analysis and the search for its causes has led to very different theories; we will now focus on how the occurrence of this event has been integrated into the Neoliberal grand narrative. Understanding the causes and the effects of the economic crisis is crucial to explain the Italian context between 2008 and the present days; furthermore, the economic crisis deeply affected the class of young cultural workers who protested against the austerity policies implemented by the Italian government.

Duménil and Lévy trace the starting point of the economic recession in the crash of the housing market that took place in the USA in 2007 (2011, p.38). According to the authors, this was not the only cause of the crisis, but the process that led to such a failure and the other events that aggravated the situation; how the crash of the USA housing market caused a global economic crisis is a subject of division between scholars. The Chicago School of Economics tends to attribute the cause of the crisis mainly to the excessive intervention of the State in the USA housing and monetary policy; the soft-core MIT theories argue the very opposite as, according to them, the lack of effective State intervention eventually led to the crash (Palley, p.23, 2012). In general, neoliberal theorists tend to locate the causes of the crisis outside of the market system, reinforcing the idea that the market is perfectly self-regulating. If we analyse this narrative according to Bourdieu’s notion of discourse, we can say that the neoliberal explanation of the crisis belongs to the current orthodoxy, as it aims to restore the innocence of *doxa*

and not to question the existing social order. However, the neoliberal analysis of the economic crisis is not the only one that has been put forward within the field of economics. A different account of the economic crisis is provided by Duménil and Lévy (2011), who impute the economic crisis to “contradictions”, with a clear echo from Marx, within the neoliberal system (p.34). In their view, there are two different sets of causes of the economic crisis which are interdependent on each other. The first set is composed by three intrinsic characteristics of the economic system: “the quest for higher income, financialization and globalization” (idem.). The quest for higher income is a reflection of that desire for individual self-realisation which is at the core of neoliberal philosophy, and the authors especially refer to the profit of the higher managerial classes in every form, from monthly wages to stock options (idem.). Financialization and globalisation are seen as the tools for the attainment of this objective (p.36): while globalisation refers to a global phenomenon, financialization was originally specific of the U.S. economic macro-trajectory and then spread all over the world (p.36). The economic trajectory of the U.S. was characterised for over thirty years by “(1) the low and declining (investment) accumulation rates, (2) the trade deficit, and (3) the growing dependency on financing from the rest of the world and domestic indebtedness” (Duménil and Lévy, 2011, p.36). These three causes can be all be regarded as “internal contradictions” of the neoliberal structure: while the first one is an effect of overconsumption (p.37), a common feature of the neoliberal society, the other ones can be also described as a sign of “global imbalance” (p.36).

Whilst this is how the financial crisis as a phenomenon of global significance has been understood, we will now focus the analytical gaze on the particular case of the Italian economy and the shape that the 2008 crash took there. This is an important step in setting out the political and economic context in which the occupations of cultural spaces and the resulting struggles over cultural value between cultural activists and legitimate policy making agents took place. The case studies presented in chapter Four and Five, therefore need to be looked in relation to the broader economic and political trends discussed here.

Italy was one of the countries that was mostly affected by the global economic crisis: along with Portugal, Greece and Spain, it was one of the countries within the EU that

faced the worst debt crisis. According to Pasquale Tridico (2012, p.4-5), the causes of the Italian economic crisis were not just the events that led to the global crisis, but are mainly rooted in internal and long-standing problems: inflation, recession, strong privatization, reduction of public expenditure and reforms of the labour market. These problems have their origins in policies implemented prior to 2007:

These factors are direct or indirect consequences of policies implemented mostly in the nineties and the beginning of 2000s (...). These policies, which tried mainly to introduce a very market-oriented economic model, following the so called Washington Consensus approach (Williamson 1990, Rodrik, 2004), ended up producing bad consequences on the economic performance and social problems such as high income inequality, job precariousness, declining wage share over GDP, low wage and low consumption levels and a strong profit soar; along with low education and training on the job place, low competitiveness and low labour productivity, low innovation and low R&D (Levrero and Stirati 2005; Rodrik, 2008). All these consequences, coupled with the historical problems of the Italian economies such as low labour force participation, labour segmentation, bad transition from school to market with weaker and not reinforced institutions able to guarantee such a transition, regional dualism, biased politics, inefficient institutions and bad governance, are the real causes of the Italian decline and the persistency of the current crisis (Tridico, 2012, p.5).

This analysis is very critical of the neoliberal policies that Italy has been implementing in the last thirty years, and in particular of the adoption of the US model. According to Tridico's views, the roots of the Italian crisis are to be found in the "internal contradictions" of capital and in Italy's submission to the US cultural imperialism.

Not all commentators seem to attribute the main factors of the Italian economic crisis to internal policies and bad governance: a number of them point to the responsibility of the EU and to the introduction of euro in 2001 in particular. Spokespeople of political parties like *Movimento 5 Stelle* and *Lega Nord* have released public statements at various points in the past few years, that attributed the main responsibility of the economic crisis to the Euro and even launched initiatives aimed at the reintroduction of the Italian lira (Lega Nord, 2015, Movimento 5 Stelle, 2015).

Italian public opinion also tends to have a negative attitude towards the Euro (Erik Jones, 2009, p.93) because the Italians tend to associate the rise in prices that have taken place over the past twenty years to the introduction of the new currency. As Jones (2009) explains, a part of the Italian public tends to think that much of the inflation was the result of shop owners who, upon the introduction of the Euro in 2001, have supposedly taken advantage of the adjustment from lira to euro to surreptitiously raise prices (p.94). Also, some economists, such as Marcello de Cecco, claim that joining the Eurozone strongly worsened Italy's inflation rate with negative effects on the national industry (2007, p.773). This account of the crisis seems to blame Prodi's government, under which the euro was introduced, and the influence of the EU on Italian national governance.

Whatever its causes, the economic crisis deepened and accelerated some of the changes in the Italian job market that already had started during the earlier years. The most evident effect of the crisis can be seen on employment: the general unemployment rate, after hitting a low of 4% in 2007, peaked at 13.5% in 2014 (ISTAT, 2015). The effects of the crisis, however, were particularly harsh on the younger generations: since 2007, the unemployment rate of people aged between 15 and 24 has risen from 16.5% to 4.8% in 2014 (ISTAT, 2015). This has understandably had serious implications for the condition of young Italians, who often find themselves in a state of long-term precarity.

In a neoliberal system, a strongly deregulated job market is a useful tool to maximise profits: in any organisation, a strategic recruitment policy based on short-term contracts and apprenticeships can guarantee a continuous stream of cheap workforce. As a result, many Western countries in the early 2000s changed their labour laws in order to make the job market more flexible. The deregulation of the job market can be seen as part of a larger process of "neoliberalization" of everyday life, accordingly to Bourdieu's description of the spread of the US model to the rest of the world. Temporary contracts are seen as an essential part of contemporary work: in a globalized world, people change home and job fluidly. In Europe in particular, the European Union's principle of free movement contributed to the normalisation of an international society where EU citizens can travel freely and can experience different working environments. The terms *precariato* (precariat) and *precarietà* (precarity) have become particularly familiar to

Italians since the introduction, in 2003, of the legge Biagi (Biagi law), or legge 30, which reformed the job market. Marcello Tari and Ilaria Vanni provide a summary of the content of the law:

According to this legislation the job market would be managed through the development of private job agencies, including temping agencies. Unemployment benefit (a fiction at best) in the legge Biagi is connected to professional development and training. Apprenticeship and professional development constitute new forms of contracts, and the line between apprenticeship and work experience is blurred, opening up the possibility of employing at no cost high school and university students. (...) The legge Biagi also provides a new taxonomy of flexible contract work: “part-time” contracts, “intermittent” work, job sharing, freelancing (*lavoro a progetto*), “occasional” work in the service and care industry (Ministero del Lavoro e delle Politiche Sociali, 2004) (2005, par. 6).

Although the legge Biagi was only the last step in a long reformation of the job market that began in the 1980s, Italian society experienced the transition as a sudden change. In Italy, professional aspirations are generally oriented towards the ideal of the *posto fisso*, the permanent position (Tari, Vanni, 2005). The shift from being permanently employed to becoming “atypical workers” (*lavoratori atipici*) was problematic not only from a cultural point of view, but also for practical reasons: Italy does not have social security systems that protect the status of these workers, such as those existing in France with the laws protecting *les intermittents*. As noted by Tari and Vanni (2005), post-Fordist workers all over the world tend not to share their parents’ aspiration of having the same job for their whole life: cultural change and new forms of employment tend to celebrate the workers’ flexibility and their right to work for different organisations. Nevertheless, they require institutions to conform to the present needs of the global job market and provide some form of *flexicurity*, that is, forms of welfare that protect workers who do not have stable jobs (*idem*).

The term “*précarité*” has been translated from French all over the world and used to describe the condition of working on temporary contracts, eventually spreading to include also underpayment and other forms of occupational insecurity. The term *precari* has a deeply negative connotation in the Italian language, as it does not only describes

temporary employment, but also the living conditions it causes: poverty, ignored rights (e.g. working illegally; working overtime without retribution; being underpaid) and anxiety about the future. As stated by Brett Neilson and Ned Rossiter, the term precarity includes “all possible shapes of unsure, not guaranteed, flexible exploitation: from illegalised, seasonal and temporary employment to homework, flex- and temp-work to subcontractors, freelancers or so-called self-employed persons” (2005, p.10).

Since the early 2000s the efforts to mobilize the Italian precariat to achieve “flexicurity” and better working conditions have been numerous, with some occasional success. The San Precario movement and network organised protests all over Italy during the early 2000s, often in a creative and daring way; more recent attempts to unite the forces of precarious workers include the Social Strike of 14 November 2014, joined by thousands of people (La Repubblica, 2014). However, trying to give a precise political connotation to precarity is a hard task, as the term embraces an occupational, economic and social condition. Success in mobilizing precarious masses is always momentous and temporary, as the diversity of practices and conditions makes it impossible to coordinate all the subjects into a single movement (Neilson and Rossiter, 2005, p.11).

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Although the legge Biagi was only the last step in a long reformation of the job market that began in the 1980s, Italian society experienced the transition as a sudden change. In Italy, professional aspirations are generally oriented towards the ideal of the *posto fisso*, the permanent position (Tari, Vanni, 2005). The shift from being permanently employed to becoming “atypical workers” (*lavoratori atipici*) was problematic not only from a cultural point of view, but also for practical reasons: Italy does not have social security systems that protect the status of these workers, such as those existing in France with the laws protecting *les intermittents*. As noted by Tari and Vanni (2005), post-Fordist workers all over the world tend not to share their parents’ aspiration of having the same job for their whole life: cultural change and new forms of employment tend to celebrate the workers’ flexibility and their right to work for different organisations. Nevertheless, they require institutions to conform to the present needs of the global job market and provide some form of *flexicurity*, that is, forms of welfare that protect workers who do not have stable jobs (*idem*).

The term “*précarité*” has been translated from French all over the world and used to describe the condition of working on temporary contracts, eventually spreading to include also underpayment and other forms of occupational insecurity. The term *precari* has a deeply negative connotation in the Italian language, as it does not only describes temporary employment, but also the living conditions it causes: poverty, ignored rights (e.g. working illegally; working overtime without retribution; being underpaid) and anxiety about the future. As stated by Brett Neilson and Ned Rossiter, the term precarity

includes “all possible shapes of unsure, not guaranteed, flexible exploitation: from illegalised, seasonal and temporary employment to homework, flex- and temp-work to subcontractors, freelancers or so-called self-employed persons” (2005, p.10). Since the early 2000s the efforts to mobilize the Italian precariat to achieve “flexicurity” and better working conditions have been numerous, with some occasional success. The San Precario movement and network organised protests all over Italy during the early 2000s, often in a creative and daring way; more recent attempts to unite the forces of precarious workers include the Social Strike of 14 November 2014, joined by thousands of people (La Repubblica, 2014). However, trying to give a precise political connotation to precarity is a hard task, as the term embraces an occupational, economic and social condition. Success in mobilizing precarious masses is always momentous and temporary, as the diversity of practices and conditions makes it impossible to coordinate all the subjects into a single movement (Neilson and Rossiter, 2005, p.11).

Having analysed the term “precarity”, but in the analysis of the precarious class, this work now analyses the word “precariousness”. According to Butler (2009), precariousness indicates the condition of transience and vulnerability common to all human experience. However, some subjects tend to be more vulnerable than others, as they are more exposed to violence and lack of economic, social and physical security: therefore, precariousness is not evenly distributed. This condition, according to Butler, is typical of people living in war zones, whose life is under constant threat. Even more broadly, their lives are not recognised as such; the reasons behind this are to be found in hegemonic discourses about life:

The epistemological capacity to apprehend a life is partially dependent on that life being produced according to norms that qualify it as a life or, indeed, as part of life. [...] Normative schemes are interrupted by one another, they emerge and fade on the broader operations of power, and very often come up against spectral versions of what it is they claim to know: thus, there are ‘subjects’ who are not quite recognizable as subjects, and there are ‘lives’ that are not quite – or indeed, are never – recognized as lives (Butler, 2009, p.3).

The precarious subject is a person that has been dispossessed of their dignity, their safety and, essentially, their humanity. In order to understand the role of precariousness

in the way people understand life and the Other's life, we follow Butler in her analysis of the thought of Emmanuel Levinas. In this sense, Butler exposes the grand narrative that stands behind the dehumanization of precarious lives, trying to break the surface of *doxa* and to establish a new way to apprehend, recognise and represent life. The intersectionality of "precariousness" and "precarity" is explained by Butler from an ontological perspective (2004, p.33). Every life is, by definition, not permanent, and thus precarious. This inherent condition of precariousness determines the vulnerability of all human beings; recognising this precariousness is equivalent to recognising one's human dignity. People who are part of the precariat are economically disadvantaged; moreover, their condition also affects their social relationships (Neil, Rossiter, 2005). Therefore, they are more prone to be exposed to the lack of social and economic networks, with repercussions on their security. In this sense, precariousness and precarity are closely intertwined: precarity is one of the causes of the unequal distribution of precariousness in society, as this condition implies vulnerability and fragility. People who live in a condition of precarity, and thus of precariousness, often face problems of representation. Precarious work comes under many forms – temporary contracts, zero hours contracts - and it is therefore difficult to address. The challenge in organizing and mobilizing the precariat everywhere, as stated earlier, lies in the multitude of experiences, practices and situations that constitute the precarious workforce: as a result, for precarious workers, even self-representation can be problematic. This lack of representation is at the basis of both their precarity and their precariousness. In a neoliberal context, work is a commodity like any other, subject to market rules and completely dehumanized. The misrecognition of the precariat's working rights mirrors the misrecognition of their existences: in the neoliberal narrative, a small number of heroic self-made men (usually they are men), whose lives are represented by the media in a hagiographic way, lead millions of faceless workforce units, whose story, and whose humanity are destined to stay unrepresented. Nevertheless, as Neilson and Rossiter point out, the relationship between precarity and neoliberalism is ambivalent: neoliberalism itself is precarious, as capital is always subject to risk, danger and loss (2005). If we apply Bourdieu's theory of the heretic discourse's performative power to the precarious workers' initiatives, we must take into account that the precariat is a dominated class, which is a product of the existing social order. Therefore, despite their

creative power, precarious workers' organisations lack the necessary legitimacy to bring about a subversion in the neoliberal *doxa*. However, this is not sufficient to explain the problematic relationship of precarity and neoliberalism: we must also see precarity as an element of discourse and its meaning in NewSpeak. What we encounter is the problem of reducing multiple experiences to a single term, therefore losing part of each of the experiences' meaning. As stated by Neilson and Rossiter, precarity can be an "empty signifier" that loses its power in the site of political struggle:

In the case of social movements that begin to engage with what passes for global civil society, this can entail an abstraction of material constitution that is often difficult to separate from the histories and practices of abstract sociality vis-à-vis capitalism. Such a condition begins to explain why there is a tendency to collapse the vastly different situations of workers into the catch-all categories of the multitudes and precarity. This, if you will, is the logic of the empty signifier. And here lies the challenge, and difficulty, of articulating new forms of social-political organisation in ways that remain receptive to local circumstances that are bound to the international division of labour (Neilson and Rossiter, 2005, p.10).

In some cases, it is even possible to argue that the aims of some institutions that unite precarious workers are inspired by the same principles of progress, innovation and creativity that characterise the discourse of the creative economy, embracing especially the aspirations of what Richard Florida defines the creative class (2002). A good example of such institutions are co-working agencies: co-working spaces have become indispensable to freelance and precarious workers, especially from the creative sector, as many young professionals cannot afford a personal office. These organisations seem to have some of the communitarian spirit of Do-It-Ourselves organisation and to value collaboration over individualism. However, they also share the same language of efficiency, innovation and brand culture typical of the neoliberal discourse. After having analysed the characteristics of the precariat, will now move onto analysing how it constitutes a dispossessed class and the performative power that lies in its precariousness.

The term "dispossession" was first used to signify the process of land encroachment in colonial and postcolonial contexts (Butler and Athanasiou 2013, p.10). In the

philosophical sense, according to Judith Butler and Athena Athanasiou (2013, p. 1), it carries a double philosophical meaning: one is based on the concept of relationality, the other on the idea of loss. In the first case, dispossession is the process of “being exposed to and affected by the other’s vulnerability (idem)”. Dispossession, in this sense, marks the coming-in-existence of the social subject who has to subject themselves to the norms of intelligibility in order to establish relationships and survive. The second meaning indicates “the process and ideologies by which persons are disowned by normative and normalizing powers that define cultural intelligibility and that regulate the distribution of vulnerability: (...) possessive individualism, neoliberal governmentality and precarization” (Butler and Athanasiou 2013, p. 2). In order to fully understand the condition of the dispossessed subject, it is necessary to intertwine the two interpretations and analyse it as a phenomenon that originates from both relational and institutional causes. According to Butler and Athanasiou (2013), dispossession can be seen as both as a physical loss (e.g. the loss of physical or economic security, but also of a loved one) and as the loss of the self. Not only self-determination, but also full self-consciousness is denied to the dispossessed subject: “laboring subjects are deprived of the ability to have control over their life, but they are also denied the consciousness of their subjugation as they are interpellated as subjects of inalienable freedom” (idem, p.6). Dispossession, in the relational sense, places the subject into a context of vulnerability, dependence upon others and, therefore, their vulnerability, and environments. However, institutions refuse to recognise this status of vulnerability and still consider the dispossessed subject as a fully autonomous self-driven one. The status of dispossession is not recognised by institutions, in line with the neoliberal grand narrative of the individualistic *homo economicus*. The precarious subject, therefore, is a dispossessed subject: a vulnerable individual whose security is undermined by normative agencies. But if we think about the first meaning of dispossession, the precarious subject is also a relational subject: when precarious subjects unite and experiment with forms of self-management, they can obtain positive results. In this sense, the relationality of the dispossessed self has a performative power. Butler and Athanasiou give the example of protests as a form of the performative power of the plural dispossessed self:

The public gatherings enable and enact a performativity of embodied agency, in which we own our bodies and struggle for the right to claim our bodies as “ours” (we ask, for example, that the state keep off our bodies). However, our claim does not refer merely to individual, individually owned, self-sufficient bodies, but rather to the relationality of these bodies (2013, p. 178).

Dispossessed subjects are “a social form of agency, or performativity in plurality” (p. 157): this means that dispossession, and the action taken against it, are an agency of change that is not based on individualism, but on collectiveness. In the previous section, we have analysed how the relationship between precarious workers and neoliberalism is complicated and how it presents some grey areas. We also mentioned how the precarious class has problems in organising forms of self-representation and how the multiplicity of its experiences raises problems when it tries to claim its rights. However, in the dispossession of the precarious subjects lies the ability of creating a rupture in *doxa*, to experiment with forms of self-representation and self-re-appropriation. Uniting, for precarious workers, represents a form of re-appropriation of their social nets and, the following section will show that it also offers occasions for performative action. What follows is a discussion of how the creative class can be seen as constituting a dispossessed, precarious class. In his book *The Rise of the Creative Class: Revisited* (2011), Richard Florida portrays a new class that incarnates perfectly the spirit of “cool capitalism” described by McGuigan (2009). Members of the creative class are people “whose economic function is to create new ideas, new technology and new content” (Florida, 2011, p.8) – a group that encompasses scientist and artists, engineers and teachers. As we can see, this class includes a very wide range of professions in Florida’s definition: it represents about one third of the current population of the USA (idem). The creative

class, in this view, is an extremely powerful factor of social and economic transformation. Indeed, this class is “the norm-setting class of our time” (p.9) and promotes values of openness to difference, tolerance and self-expression. He maintains that the members of this class “share a common ethos that values creativity, individuality, difference and merit” (id., p.8) The creative class described by Florida, therefore, has embraced fully the principles of “Cool Capitalism” described by McGuigan (2009). Its political views are open-minded and progressive, but these ideas revolve around individualism. They value creativity, but the value of creativity itself lies more in the marketability of the innovation it produces than in the opportunities for exchange and self-expression it offers.

Alison Bain and Heather McLean (2013) have noted that Florida’s “creative class” does not cover artists intended as a professional group. Artists tend to be very creative and highly educated innovators, but they also tend to have a low income; moreover, they “show higher rates of self-employment, higher rates of unemployment, several forms of constrained underemployment, and are more often multiple job holders” (Menger, 1999, 545, in Bain and McLean, 2013, p.97). This professional group, rather than being a high-earning class that sets the standards for society, tends in fact to be an underprivileged section that has to compromise its status for the opportunity to be able to express itself. Bain and McLean (2013) consider the problems of representing the rights of the artists: first, artists trade unions are present, but also quite fragmented. It is difficult to represent coherently several different groups with different needs: for example, one can think of temporary work for performers and self-employment for visual artists. Artists and creative workers are indeed the precarious class par excellence. As analysed by Gill and Pratt, precariousness is typical in cultural work: the cultural sector relies on flexibility, short-term contracts, informality, lack of job security, long working hours and poor pay (2008, p. 14). Over the last few years, several campaigns to defend the rights of artists have been created in Europe, with different outcomes and different modalities. In the UK, AIR, the magazine of a-n. The Artist Information

Company in 2013 launched the #payingArtists campaign. The aim of this campaign is to get the value of arts and artists recognised by institutions. Most importantly, it promotes the fair financial retribution of artists on all stages of their career, and encourages institutions that commission works and exhibitions to support artists adequately. Along with the campaign, a-n/AIR conducted an extensive research that included surveys and case studies from the British artistic scene and showed that in the artistic community the problems of underpayment, unemployment and lack of professional support are systemic. One of the initial surveys found that the 72% of the interviewees earned between £0 and £10,000 a year from their artistic practice, and that 71% of respondents had not been paid for taking part in an exhibition in a publicly funded space (a-n/AIR infographic, 2014). Similar motivations inspired another protest in Italy: during a strike that involved various sectors, on 14th November 2014, cultural workers in Venice put stickers and banners on museums and universities accused of exploiting intellectual and artistic labour (La Nuova Venezia, 14/11/2014).

In the specific case of theatre, the 2014 Festival d'Avignon hosted a wide protest by French professionals who saw their social status threatened by governmental budget cuts (Kim Willsher 2014). In France, the so-called *intermittents culturels* are professionals from the theatrical, musical and cinematic industries who only work for limited periods during the year. The revision of their welfare condition started in 2014, when a new law proposed that in order to have access to 9 months of unemployment benefits, the *intermittents* needed to provide evidence of having worked for at least 500 hours in a 10 months and a half period (Angelique Chrisafis 2012). This request was particularly contested, as most artists are paid on the basis of the number of performances, and not based on the number of rehearsal hours: counting their working hours based solely on their performances would in practice prevent them from accessing the welfare program dedicated to the *intermittents* (Schofield 2014).

During one of the most important international theatre festivals, a large group of precarious and temporary workers of the theatre sector took to the streets of Avignon, causing the cancelation of several performances. The main motivation for the protest were the cuts to funding planned by the French government. This decision was seen as contradictory to France's tradition of *exception culturelle*, that tends to insulate culture

and cultural work from the market. The strike was met with the solidarity of several famous artists who refused to perform during the festival in support of the protest, thus giving more visibility to the workers' struggle. (Willsher, 2014). This protest is one instance of a long struggle, started in 2003, by the temporary workers of the theatre sector, or *intermittents*, to defend their particular welfare and working rights determined by France's historical protection of culture and cultural work. This rupture with France's *exception culturelle* marked not only a time of austerity, but also a rejection of the concept of culture as something that needs to be protected from market values.

However, creative workers have found different approaches to resist the commodification of culture and the misrecognition of their work. Bain and McLean (2013) define this approach as "Do-It-Ourselves". The kind of anticapitalistic approach to creative work known as "Do-It-Yourself", or "DIY", has its roots the 1960s. The term indicates "both an attitude and a working method for taking responsibility of one's own potential role in the creation of culture and its local context" (Purves, in Bain and McLean, 2013, p.99). This interpretation of DIY is centralised on the self, as the ability to create something instead of buying it is seen as an act of creative self-expression, self-realisation and critique to the capitalist system. However, the organisations analysed by the authors are instead based on an interpretation of DIY that relies on networks, communities and collaboration; this approach is called "DIO", "Do It Ourselves". In DIO grassroots movements, people with different specializations collaborate in an informal environment. Not only artists, but also non-artists cooperate in a collective creative process that leads to the realisation of an artistic work (*idem*). The use of the pronoun "ourselves" instead of "yourself" marks a strong detachment from the individualistic work ethics of neoliberalism. Moreover, collective artistic productions contradict the myth of the artist as a single genius and present art as a result of cooperation (Bain and McLean, 2013).

The idea of DIO contrasts strongly the idea that the creative class values individuality over collectiveness. According to Florida (2011), creativity is based on self-expression; however, the creative process does not exclude mutual exchange, inspiration and feedback from different people. In the example used by Bain and Mclean (2013), the

artistic organisations open their doors to a heterogeneous audience that cooperates in a non-hierarchical way: self-expression is a collective process and there is no celebration of the individual creative genius. The example of DIO organizations is an example of how precarity can foster the creation of new forms of creative labour. The crisis of the traditional work organisation has opened up new spaces where the precarious workers could implement organizational models that exploit precarity in a positive, strategical way. Considering Butler's analysis of the performative power of the precarious class, we can see DIO organisations as a successful example of plural performativity. By uniting and reclaiming their own rules for their creative expression and for their work, DIO organisations manage to break neoliberal *doxa* and to create their own discourse. The case studies contained in chapter Four and Five of this thesis provide an interesting example of organisations that used DIO cultural practices as a way to oppose the neoliberal grand narrative. These organisations based their activities on the theory of the commons, which was an important inspiration both for their cultural and managerial practices.

The interconnectedness of precariousness and precarity with the neoliberalism provides an important context to understand the discontent of artistic workers with their right to work and welfare. However, this has encouraged precarious cultural workers to shape their own notion of cultural value and, consequently, new forms of creative work practices. The following section analyses the theory of the commons, how it opposes the neoliberal *doxa* and how it can provide a theoretical basis for innovative cultural activities.

The commons

The rest of the chapter now turns to a discussion of the notion of the commons, which is the last key concepts that provides a theoretical foundation for the rest of the thesis, and particularly the analysis of the two case studies of occupied cultural spaces in Pisa and Rome, which were established and run by activists that explicitly referred to it as a key theoretical and political reference point.

The term "commons" initially defined areas of land owned collectively by rural communities in medieval England (Coccoli, 2011). The villagers shared the land for gathering natural resources, for animal grazing or to grow vegetables (Ibid.). By the late

fifteenth century, commons started to decline. The emerging bourgeois class started enclosing the commons and privatising them in order to turn them into privately-owned grazing lands: these areas were now physically delimited by fences or ditches, so that the local villagers could not access them. The disappearance of the commons, together with the rise of the bourgeoisie, epitomises the rise of capitalism and the progressive disappearing of pre-modern forms of common property. The enclosures, according to Coccoli, were also the origin of the dichotomy between public and private that has characterised Western thinking since the Modern Age (id.). To understand the importance of the notion of commons in the contemporary debate, it is necessary to jump forward in time, to 1968. World War II provoked a strong fear of totalitarianism throughout the West. The 1960s in particular were a time of important democratic achievements both in Europe and the United States. Progress, not only in the political sense, but also in terms of demographic increase, seemed unstoppable: since 1945, the world population had increased from 2.4 billion people to 3.5 billion (BBC 2011). The time between 1950 and the late 1970s went down in history as “The Golden Age of Capitalism” (Marglin, Schor, 1992), as the western world faced a period of strong economic expansion. Notably, the annual growth rate of the 20 original countries that signed the Convention on the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) was “averaging over 4 per cent annually in the 1950s and near 5 per cent in the 1960s” (Marglin, Schor, 1992, p.2). The cold war divided the world into two blocks, one under the influence of the USSR, the other under the one of the USA. The two countries represented two different models: the Russian totalitarian communist regime versus the American democracy, where neoliberalism was rising (Painter, 1999, p.112-118). The cold war between these two major power agencies kept the world in constant fear of a sudden catastrophe, a tragedy that might even had led to global destruction (Idem, p.46). The race to arms operated by USA and USSR posed serious questions about national safety and military power. The arms race brought about technological innovations and investments in the army, causing an increase of military power, but also determined a decrease in national security, as the population was continuously threatened by the danger of an imminent war. These questions were at the heart of an article by Jerome B. Wiesner and Herbert F. York who asserted that there was no technical solution to the problem: this meant that science and technology

could either a practical solution to the problem, or equally, worsen it (Hardin, 1968). The growth of the world population, just like the military competition between Russia and USA, posed real issues in terms of global security: could the overexploitation of natural resources be prevented? Could the production of basic goods keep up with the pace of population growth? Hardin claims that resolving the problem of overpopulation should be a priority for all states in the world, as it is likely to cause disasters in the future. Following Wiesner and York's categorization, he classifies overpopulation as a "no technical solution problem" (idem): Hardin uses this definition to describe a situation where, given population and resources as two variables, it is impossible to maximise them both. Therefore, in a situation where the population is continuously growing, it is impossible for resources to grow at the same pace, as they are necessarily finite. Hardin's views on overpopulation clash with a pillar of liberalism, Adam Smith's "invisible hand" of the market. In order to achieve the common good, the choice of individuals -in this case, reproductive choice - must be regulated by an external agent, the state. According to Hardin, people take decisions based on their economic rationality, calculating the costs and benefits of their choice. However, he thinks that this does not lead to social order and progress but, instead, he argues that this kind of calculating approach to the common good is bound to fail. This theory is grounded on the same assumption that lies behind Hayek's theories on individualism and democracy: men cannot formulate scales of value that can be collectively shared (see p.17). Therefore, in Hardin's example, all the herders in the community using the commons, because of the limited imagination at the basis of their individualism, fail to produce a shared idea of how the area is supposed to be used; every shepherd will base his decisions only on his economic rationality, resulting in the overexploitation of the natural resource. Individualism and economical rationality, therefore, do not always guide men to take the best possible decisions. These ideas clash against Adam Smith's faith in the rationality of men and in the "invisible hand" that guides them to achieve common good. Hardin suggests that the only way to prevent public goods from being abused is state regulation, as the tragedy of the medieval English commons prove that all human beings are inevitably rational and individualistic; therefore, the exploitation of common resources should be prevented by state intervention. His argument goes even further in claiming that the state should pursue the common good: he

recommends to governments all over the world to implement family planning policies in order to prevent overpopulation and, consequently, the exploitation of all natural resources.

We have seen that for Hardin the core of the tragedy of the commons lies in the fact that humans always take decisions based on their self-interest and evaluate risks and problems using a calculating, rational approach. James Buchanan (1999), indeed, asserts that the behaviour of politicians and voters follows the logic of market individualism. According to Buchanan, both politicians and voters pursue their personal good when taking political decisions: politicians tend to take decisions that will make people re-elect them in the future, while voters choose the candidate that best represent their own interest (idem). Economic rationality, therefore, is not applied only in taking decisions regarding one's immediate interest (as in the case of a herder who decides to add a sheep to their flock), it is also the main driving force in collective decisions, such as voting for a political candidate. In Hardin's original example, a shepherd pursues their self-interest by adding another animal to their herd and uses their rationality to calculate how the potential damage of their action affects each individual among the community of shepherds. The shepherd compares their benefit (+1) to the damage caused to all other shepherds ($-1/x$) and acts according to the result ($+1 > -1/x$). From this calculation, the benefit of the shepherd is greater than the damage caused to their community; therefore, they will decide to add another animal to their flock, as the damage caused to other shepherds is so small enough to be ignored. The consequence of this reasoning is that every single shepherd in the community will take the same decision for the same reason, as everybody take decisions on the basis of their economic rationality. Eventually, all the shepherds will add more and more animals to their flocks, but the natural resources available in the commons will not be sufficient to feed them all. The area will be quickly over-exploited, causing great damage to the community. Hence the term "tragedy", that Hardin (1968) uses to define the destiny of medieval English commons and of the communities that shared them. Hardin claims that individual choice driven by rationality and self-interest inevitably hijacks all forms of self-governance; therefore, people need strong external institutions, such as the state, in order to restrain the decision-making power of the citizens in those situations where the pursue of their personal interest would put the safeguard of the common good at risk (Idem.).

The concept of economic rationality, however, because of its rational and abstract nature, overlooks the socio-psychological and cultural aspects of choice. Some forms of human behaviour cannot be explained using mathematical and rational tools alone: Michael Sandel (2012) provides a series of examples where economic rationality is defied by common practices, such as gift-giving. Despite the growing application of economic rationality to social practices that used to be traditionally seen as spontaneous, such as queueing or finding a partner, according to Sandel there are still some behaviours that are driven by cultural factors, such as values and traditions. Elinor Ostrom, the American economist awarded the Nobel Prize for Economics in 2009, openly challenges Hardin's theory of the tragedy of the commons, providing another example of how economic rationality and individualism are not always the main driving forces in human behaviour. Her book *Governing the Commons* (1990) analyses institutions for collective actions, that is, the systems that people around the world have developed to manage shared resources without the direct intervention of the state. Her work starts from previous theories on the logic of the collective action that explained the rationales underlying human's ability to pursue common interest (Olson, 1965; Dawes, 1973; Hardin, 1968; in Ostrom, 1990) and builds a theoretical and empirical framework that analyses the necessary conditions for the implementation of self-organised collective action. Her work is particularly relevant to the purpose of this thesis because, as it will be analysed in chapter Four and Five, the theory of the commons offered a theoretical basis for the construction of a new concept of cultural value that could provide an alternative to the one promoted by Italian cultural policy makers.

First, she gives a definition of common pool resource (CPR), that is, "a natural or man-made system that is sufficiently large to make it costly (but not impossible) to exclude potential beneficiaries from obtaining benefits from its use (Ostrom, 1990, p.30)". "Appropriators" is the term used to define everyone that subtracts resource units from a resource system, such as fish in a fishery, or cube metres of water from a stream. Ostrom analysed CPRs such as groundwater basins, fisheries and irrigation systems in diverse geographical and socio-cultural contexts, like Japan, Nova Scotia, California, Spain, the Philippines and more. What she observed was that economic rationality was not the only factor that determined the appropriators' behaviour: in fact, they had developed a shared system of rules and sanctions that regulated the usage of CPRs.

These rules were based on collective choice-making, not on individual decisions. Furthermore, the appropriators use strategies for the effective management of the commons, such as defining clear boundaries between those who have the right to use a CPRs and those who do not, mutual monitoring and the use of sanctions. The success of a commons, according to Ostrom, can be traced back to these factors:

clear resource boundaries (i.e. knowing physical and ecological properties of the resource); clear rules of membership (knowing who is entitled to use the resource); congruence between rules of provision/appropriation and local conditions; arenas for 'collective choice'; mutual monitoring; 'graduated' sanctions; mechanisms for conflict resolution (i.e. ensuring that resource users are able to monitor and sanction other resource users); and finally, a state that is willing to recognize (or at least not challenge) local rights of organization (ibid.: 90) (in Forsyth and Johnson, 2014).

Her analysis of CPRs proves that a correct management of a commons is possible and sustainable in the long run. However, Ostrom refuses to advocate that the commons are always the best form of economic system, or that it is possible to determine a perfect system in general (Ostrom, 1990, p.70). This holistic approach to the analysis of socio-economical systems does not provide a perfect recipe for the ideal administration, but is a valuable tool for evaluating different managerial solutions that considers a wide range of variables that also include human factors. Ostrom avoided oversimplification by applying a strict scientific methodology to the problem. She developed a multiple-tier framework to analyse socio-ecological systems that recognises the existence of a large number of variables that affect the behaviour of the actors who manage it, and therefore contrasts Hardin's idea that humans always and only apply mathematical rationality to take decisions. For Ostrom, governance should not be equated only with the state, which, for Hardin, represents the sole agency capable of restraining humans' self-interest in a coercive way (Ostrom, 1990, p.70). Instead, in a CPR, it is possible to establish a form of governance based on collective action and collaboration. In a commons, the appropriators and the CPR are interdependent: appropriators do not only subtract resource units, but also contribute actively to the maintenance of that

resource. Their work, their knowledge and their decisions are essential: freeloading would cause the overexploitation of their resource.

One of the most interesting concepts of Ostrom's theory is what Lee Anne Fennel (2011), called "Ostrom's law": 'A resource arrangement that works in practice can work in theory (emphasis in the original, p.1)'. This concept is very useful when understanding the functioning of common-pool shared resources, their systems of governance and the replicability of said systems. This concept, as it will be analysed later, is fundamental to understand the potential of the experimentations with cultural commons illustrated in chapter Four and Five.

Since the 1990s, the discourse on the commons has evolved and expanded, gaining momentum in the last ten years. Despite the fact that it has initially been used to define natural common pool resources, the term commons now includes shared human-made resources. The reason behind the popularity of the study of the commons is aptly explained by the law scholar Ugo Mattei:

Commons lie beyond the reductionist opposition of 'subject-object', which produces the commodification of both. Commons, unlike private goods and public goods, are not commodities and cannot be reduced to the language of ownership. They express a qualitative relation. It would be reductive to say that we have a common good: we should rather see to what extent we are the commons, in as much as we are part of an environment, an urban or rural ecosystem. Here, the subject is part of the object. For this reason commons are inseparably related and link individuals, communities and the ecosystem itself (Mattei, 2015, pp. 45-46).

In particular, the term has gained a particular relevance in the field of knowledge sharing (Hess and Ostrom, 2006). Today, the most important forms of commons are not tangible: for example, the academic world has begun to adopt a commons-oriented approach for scholarly communications (Wendy Parrott Lougee, in Hess and Ostrom, 2006, p. 311-332). Furthermore, as explained by Vandana Shiva, indigenous knowledge of biodiversity constitutes a commons and, as such, must be protected from unauthorised exploitation for private gains (2007). Traditional and/or IT-based, structured or informal, the knowledge commons are a productive development of

management of common pool resources. Over the last twenty years knowledge has become one of the most important economic resources, as it provides the basis for technological and scientific innovation. The role of knowledge in the contemporary economic scenario is so important to characterise it as a “knowledge-driven economy”. This term describes

(...) an economy in which the generation and the exploitation of knowledge have come to play the predominant part in the creation of wealth. It is not simply about pushing back the frontiers of knowledge; it is also about the more effective use and exploitation of all types of knowledge in all manner of economic activity (Coates and Warwick, p.12, 1999).

In a knowledge-driven economy, knowledge is not only intrinsically valuable, nor it is only an instrument to improve technology and find more efficient ways to produce goods and make profits; instead, it represents a source of profit per se. Lyotard foresaw this transformation in 1985 and described this process of commodification of knowledge as follows: “Knowledge is and will be produced in order to be sold, it is and will be consumed in order to be valorised in a new production: in both cases, the goal is exchange” (1985, p.4). Exchange, therefore, is what pushes knowledge forward. Starting from the assumption that in a neoliberal age, the value of every commodity is determined by its exchange value, one can see how knowledge represents a highly profitable source of wealth. As ideas are not physical objects and IT allows them to be reproduced and shared with no geographical boundaries, the opportunities for exchange are limitless, and the global marketization of knowledge is highly remunerative. One useful example of how knowledge is commodified and what kind of strategies are taken to make it more accessible are academic journals, including the increasing popularity of publishing academic material in open access outlets. A completely different approach to the commons and creativity involves alternative ways of managing one’s intellectual property on the Internet.

The concept of commons finds applications as well in the field of cultural production. The romantic, anti-capitalist and rebellious nature of the commons is also inspirational to many artists. For example, the poet Stephen Collis dedicated a book of poems to the commons (2008), inspired by the work of Henry David Thoreau and John Clare. In the

book's appendix, the anti-capitalistic value of the commons for the literary sphere is described by Alfred Noyes and Ramon Fernandez with these words:

The resistance to capital's "primitive accumulation", registered in peasant revolts of the fourteenth through eighteenth centuries, failing to hold off the tide of what we now call "privatization", spilt over into literary romanticism's own advocacy of a kind of commons. Underground in "the literary" since the nineteenth century, the fight against enclosures resurfaces today amidst continuing accumulations, new enclosures, and a renascent sense of the commons under globalization (Fernandez and Noyes, in Collis, 2008, p.121).

The authors emphasize the antagonism of artists towards the "new enclosures", meaning the commodification of creativity and the sense of alienation that prevents collective artistic expression. The concept of commons escapes the dichotomy between private and public property and opens up for new opportunities for cooperation, both with other artists and the audience, for arts practitioners. In a globalised context, the artistic commons can be seen both a physical space that facilitates meeting, creating and sharing knowledge, and a virtual space where people can share and discuss their work. Moreover, artistic practice as a form of commons is appealing to some artists because of its revolutionary allure, as it represents an alternative to neoliberalism, both from the economical and philosophical perspective.

Walter Santagata, Enrico Bertacchini, Giangiacomo Bravo and Massimo Marrelli (2011) provide an in-depth analysis of the concept of cultural commons. According to the authors, "Cultural Commons refer to cultures located in time and space – either physical or virtual - and shared and expressed by a community" (p.1). This definition includes languages, traditions, artistic movements and, in some cases, even brands. Like natural common pool resources, they are shared systems of collective action, but with an important difference:

Cultural Commons do not suffer from limited carrying capacity. Their carrying capacity, as public goods, is infinite: consuming culture does not reduce its total amount for the others. Unlike typical common-pool resources, characterized by exhaustion problems due to limited carrying capacity (Hardin, 1968; Ostrom, 1990), Cultural Commons are non-rival in

consumption. A cultural tradition or a music or a poem can be consumed, played and listened without any limit (Santagata et al., 2011, p. 3).

However, the authors underline that the cultural commons, despite being non-rival goods, still face social dilemmas, such as freeriding, that is, the consumption of resources without contributing to the maintenance of the commons, and uncertainty in the reproduction and sustainment of the commons from one generation to the other (p.3). Cultural commons, therefore, be they artistic movements or ancient traditions shared by communities, still face the threat of opportunistic behaviour from appropriators: if they do not contribute to the commons with new inputs, or they fail to hand it down to the next generation, the cultural commons will eventually lose relevance and disappear. The behaviour of appropriators in a cultural commons, therefore, will affect the dynamics of cultural change.

An interesting read on the concept of cultural commons in practice is *The city as a commons: a policy reader* edited by José Maria Ramos (2016). This book offers interesting applications of the concept of culture as a commons in the urban context. In her contribution to the volume, the writer and activist Arlene Goldbard stresses the importance of the “sense of belonging, the sites of public memory, the gathering-places, the expressions and embodiments of heritage cultures” in the city (2016, pp. 125-126). This mixture of tangible and intangible elements, social relations and everyday practices is also the heart of Charles Ikem’s chapter, (pp.128-130) in which the author applies the Philosophy of Ubuntu to art and culture in the urban context. Ubuntu is a philosophical concept that revolves around the interconnectedness of all humankind, and is at the basis of sharing practices in Southern African countries. Lastly, Marta Botta (pp.26-31) explains how heritage and heritage sites constitute a commons, as they are embodiments of a shared past that can be enjoyed by all citizens. At the heart of the cultural commons, therefore, lie a sense of interconnectedness, sense of belonging and mutual responsibility.

However,

Having analysed the cultural commons as a broad concept that encompasses space, time, values and practices, this chapter will address some more specific issues concerning the focus of this doctoral work: how do we understand occupied theatres

and cultural spaces as a commons, and what is the symbolic importance of the act of occupying in this? In order to do so, it is necessary to analyse the tradition of occupation in Italian social movements. The experiences of *centri sociali* are very important to understand the nature of occupied cultural places, as they embody the tradition of Italian political activism and present many common features with the organisations born inside occupied cultural spaces between 2011 and 2014. Researching occupied spaces in Italy entails researching grand narratives, to use Lyotard's vocabulary, of the Italian radical left. *Centri sociali* represent an important alternative to the alienation, commodification and conformation of neoliberalised life in Italy. Indeed, the collective of Italian writers WuMing described *centri sociali* as the most important resource of the resistance to the second Berlusconi government (2001-2005); in a state where most media were controlled by one person (who was also the country's Prime Minister), spaces where people could gather, talk, disseminate ideas with a clear leftist agenda were crucial. As it will be analysed later, in the years following the 2008 economic crisis, occupied spaces became increasingly important. A significant change in the way people use *centri sociali* has been described by Angelo Mastrandrea (2016) in an article about Milan's Leoncavallo, the oldest *centro sociale* in Italy. First, some centres sought, and obtained, a legal status. This change can be seen as a necessary step for many organisations; as their role in the cultural and social life of the city became more important, it was necessary for them to seek public funding. Their illegal status made it impossible for them to obtain any form of official financial support; for example, Leoncavallo, despite being officially recognized by the Region of Lombardy as a cultural association, is still threatened to be forcibly evacuated, because the activists are occupying a building that is private property of the Cabassi family. When they obtained funding from a foundation to put some solar panels on the roof of the building, they could not proceed with the work, as they were not the owners of the building (Mastrandrea, 2016). The relationship with local politics has also changed. In the 1970s, *centri sociali* were outside of parliamentary politics and often in complete contrast to all forms of authority. In 2016, instead, Leoncavallo, which used to be a hive of activity for anarchists, hosted the primary elections for the local Democratic Party; in 2012, it even publicly endorsed Carlo Pisapia, the Democratic Party candidate for the title of Mayor of Milan. From a radical perspective, this change can be seen as "selling out", finding

compromises and support in mainstream political parties. However, the quality of the initiatives promoted by *centri sociali* is such that it finds the support of national and international organisations, even among traditional enemies. Letizia Moratti, who was the Forza Italia Mayor of Milan between 2006 and 2011, declared that she wanted to evict the occupants; however, because of their many cultural activities, she also invited them to public events. Another significant change lies in the way people engage *with centri sociali*. In 1970s, they were mainly a place where activists could organize their activities; several generations over the decades have taken part in the occupations, each of them with different political focuses (from partisans to anti-prohibitionists). According to the activist interviewed in Mastrandea's article, people don't have time for activism anymore; they are more focused on finding a job or on sustaining themselves between freelancing and short-term contracts. This trend is noticeable in the rise of the creation co-working spaces, workshops and artisanal laboratories in *centri sociali*. Other initiatives, such as communal gardens and kitchens, provide a significant help for those people who struggle with poverty; over the years, *centri sociali* also developed a particular attention to migrants and refugees, offering help and support.

The act of occupying a place is a highly symbolic gesture that carries many different meanings: it is an act of protest, but it also has an element of performance and narrative content. The #OccupyWallStreet movement that was born in New York in 2011 as a form of protest against financial greed and corruption, brought about a new interest in the forms of protest that were once associated with the French movement of 1968. Italy's history of occupation is strongly connected to the history of self-managed social centres; the term chosen to define these *centri sociali* is not "squats", as in English it usually defines occupation for social housing purposes only. Italy's *centri sociali*, like squats, are spaces that offer shelter to the occupiers, but they are aimed at the organisation of political activities and are themselves a form of protest against governmental powers. The occupied buildings are often former factories, as they offer the necessary room to organise assemblies, shows and concerts, and are located in industrial areas, where the young population is more likely to face problems such as poverty, lack of cultural provision and therefore is most in need of a space where to experience creative, cultural and political activities. Over the years some of these

structures have conducted internal research and published their results (Consorzio Aaster et al., 1996), yet data about their users and their activities are not often available. In this sense, Rebeldía represents a classic form of occupation in terms of mission, activities and organisation. It has provided a common ground for students, migrants and local citizens alike, and offered a wide range of services with a cinema and a library of its own. What distinguishes it from the classic idea of *centro sociale* is that it is a network of organisations, and not a single entity. With a radio station of their own, several social media pages and a website, they aim to connect and unite associations that are different for mission and location, but that can provide support to each other and join the same causes. This conception of *centro sociale* is radically different from the traditional one, which usually is strongly connected to a single building and a single town; this virtual space that connects people who share the same ideals, despite working towards different purposes, provides a platform where small associations can unite and find support outside of their local area. This virtual space is the result of a practical need, as in the last few years Rebeldía occupied and left several different buildings in Pisa. Another key aspect of Rebeldía is its role as one of the main partners of the “Municipality of Commons” (*Municipio dei Beni Comuni*), a network that brings together several different associations involved in the cause of the commons. The Municipality of the Commons runs campaigns for the legal recognition of the commons in Italian law and for other causes associated with the common good of the nation. How the theory of commons met the political instances of organizations such as Rebeldía will be discussed in the following section of this chapter.

In the last five years, Italy saw the rise of a number of occupied spaces that share some of the key features of a *centro sociale*, as they are conceived as a space of contestation of the current system and provide a home for the occupants as well, but are radically different in their organisation and mission. These buildings have a symbolic meaning per se, as their former use was cultural, which is the case of *teatri occupati*, occupied theatres all over Italy, or educational, like the recently evacuated ex-kindergarten Filangieri, which had been converted in the cultural space Angelo Mai. At the root of these occupation there is not a deliberately antagonist political position, but the dissatisfaction and the concern of a group of professionals who work in the field of theatre and culture. The occupation of a building, therefore, is not only an act of

contestation, but also an occasion to do what the Italian professionals of the cultural sector felt denied – working. The economic crisis and the subsequent cuts to the arts inevitably provoked a sense of exclusion from the job market and a feeling of helplessness among young cultural professionals, especially in theatre and performance. The theatre sector has been one of the most challenged by the economic crisis (Costantini 2012); nevertheless, it is also one of the most prolific and creative areas of production. Theatre professionals were not only looking for a space for aesthetic experimentation, but for the contestation of a system that did not acknowledge the dignity of their work and their right to receive a fair pay.

This kind of artistic practice, intertwined with public engagement and an underlying idea of social justice, eventually found its political counterpart in the theories of the commons. The management model of *teatri occupati* is an adhocracy, a term coined by Slater and Bennis (1964) to define a democratic organisation based on specialism; it is a flexible form of organisation that relies on expertise and is common in cultural organisations. However, compared to traditional theatre management, there are no roles such as “artistic director” or “chief executive”, as decisions are taken as a community. In time, the experience of occupied theatres shifted from being a peaceful form of contestation to representing an alternative way to produce art and manage a cultural organisation. The concept of “commons” became a programmatic part of the activities, and occupied theatres eventually became symbolic commons themselves.

Occupied theatres are highly symbolic spaces that provide a meeting point for different people and different topics. They are a centre of attraction for students, especially from the humanities, highly specialised professionals from the cultural field, amateur artists, mere squatters, lawyers and jurists, people interested in politics and in new ways of rethinking the concept of property. They quickly became workshops to discuss aesthetics and organisational theory, property and Italian law. In February 2012, TVO hosted European Alternatives’ forum titled “Minimum income, common goods and democracy”; in June 2013 Rebeldía, then located in a former paint factory, hosted the second Assembly on the Commons, which included guests such as the jurist Stefano Rodotà and the magistrate Paolo Maddalena.

The diversity of the people that occupied theatres and of the activities they promoted, and their location eventually caused these spaces to become a unique addition to the

city landscape. These buildings are usually located in the historical city centres of the town and, in their former incarnation had a single, clearly defined function. Only artists and theatregoers had access to them and, more often than not, they catered for a social élite. The difference between the people theatres usually attract and the diverse multitude of *teatri occupati* is striking; the very presence of these heterogeneous communities in the historical city centres is something unusual in Italy because, as stated before, *centri sociali* and squats are in suburban and industrial areas. Therefore, these places became also a place of confrontation and mingling of different social groups, creating what Richard Sennett would define “disorder” (1971). These spaces seem to contest the kind of city planning described by Sennett in *The Uses of Disorder*, as they refuse to assume a single purpose and invite the local community to gather, do things together and discuss; in these spaces, one can have the “feeling of being socially important” (Sennett, 1971, p.167). According to Sennett, the separation of spaces according to their use in contemporary towns replicates the class divisions that exists in society. As a result, people that belong not only to different classes, but also differ in age, ethnicity etc., despite living in the same town, tend not to meet each other, as they move around different spaces. In a site of disorder, the economy of exchange gains a new meaning: instead of a monetary exchange, what happens is a flow of experiences and ideas.

The occupation of theatres in Italy represents a peculiar case of progressive stratification of meaning that includes culture, social justice, economics and politics. It is interesting to notice how a trend in modes of protest of the professionals of a single sector eventually led to a larger debate that encompassed scholars and non-specialists alike, which managed to reach the government and obtain its reaction – in some cases positive for both parties, in others not. Teatro Valle Occupato, in particular, became a reference point in this debate: in 2013 it established the Constituency of the Commons (La Costituente dei Beni Comuni), a permanent assembly on a law proposal for the legal recognition of the commons. Jurists like Ugo Mattei, Gaetano Azzariti and Maria Rosaria Marella, the emeritus vice-president of the Constitutional Court Paolo Maddalena and politician and Jurist Stefano Rodotà took part in this debate, supporting the cause of an Italian law on the commons.

This chapter analysed the main theories on neoliberalism, which is a theory of political economic practices that states that happiness and freedom of humans is best achieved in a free market system with little state intervention that values entrepreneurialism and individualism (Harvey, 2009). Neoliberalism can be understood as the main grand narrative (Lyotard, 1984) of our times: it is a hegemonic discourse that pervades not only economy and politics, but also philosophy. Neoliberalism can also be analysed as a monoculture (F.S. Michaels, 2011), a dominant narrative that changes and justifies all other narratives. We can say that neoliberalism constitutes a form of *doxa* (Bourdieu, 2005), that is, a system of classification that allows the reproduction of the class system of which is the product and that constitutes the only way in which reality can be understood. The chapter then analysed the neoliberal self, that is, the human whose behaviour responds to the logic of neoliberalism, and the values of individualism, entrepreneurialism and economic rationality that lie at the core of this concept. Furthermore, the chapter analysed the way neoliberalism influences the behaviour of humans in most aspects of their life, including culture. In particular, the chapter explored the relationship between counterculture and the market system, underlying the system of appropriation of countercultural elements that is at the basis of “cool capitalism” (McGuigan, 2009). This chapter also provided a brief account of some economic and political theories on the economic crisis of 2007/2008; in the case of Italy, this was aggravated by its pre-existing economic conditions. The economic crisis played an important role in the precarisation of Italian workers, especially the young ones. The relationship between precariousness and precarity has been analysed in this chapter, following Butler’s concept of precarious life (2004). Butler, in collaboration with Athanasiou, was also the main reference for the analysis of the dispossession and the performative power of the precarious class. The chapter then moved onto the analysis of the creative class as the precarious class par excellence; this section included an account of the struggles of precarious creative workers for the recognition of their rights and the alternatives they have been able to build to counteract the neoliberalisation and precarisation of cultural work. In order to provide a theoretical background for the organisations presented in chapter Four and Five, this chapter included an analysis of the theory of the commons designed by Elinor Ostrom (1990). Ostrom argues that Garrett Hardin’s analysis of “Tragedy of the Commons” (1968), which asserted that

humans' economic rationality and individualism prevents them from creating successful strategies for the management of common pool resources, fails to include many important cultural and behavioural aspects. Indeed, her theoretical framework for the analysis of common pool resources includes a variety of factors, including the ability of those who use the resource to acknowledge the benefit they can have from the pursue of the common good and collaborate to design a shared set of rules. The concept of commons has become increasingly popular over the decades; nowadays, it does not only refer to natural resources, but also to knowledge, creative works and culture. This chapter, therefore, shows the way cultural value is shaped by dominant ideologies, such as neoliberalism, but also gets reinterpreted by resisting narratives. The principal agents of these narratives are those who operate on the margins of capitalism: precarious subject. The artist and the cultural worker are often precarious subjects and by uniting and using the power of their plural performativity can produce not only new narratives, but also new working practices around the idea of cultural value. This relationship, however, is not binary: the commercialisation and of counterculture is a good example of how antagonistic narratives get co-opted and exploited by the neoliberalism, or, in McGuigan's words, "cool capitalism". The dominance of market values and their interplay with other discourse on cultural value, such as the social value of culture, is at the basis of the Italian cultural policies that have followed the 2008 economic crisis. The next chapter will survey some of the most important policies in the area of culture, abandoned heritage sites and theatre implemented by the Italian government after the crisis.

Chapter Two

Italian Cultural Policy after the economic crisis

This chapter will explore the tradition of Italian cultural policy, picking up from Eleonora Belfiore's work *Ubi Maior Minor Cessat* (2006) and offering a discussion of the most important changes in Italian cultural policy between 2006 and the present days, with a focus on the system for public funding for cultural assets and performing arts. Lastly, it will analyse the case of the recovery of abandoned artistically relevant sites, posing some questions on the connection between activism and public policy. The policies presented in this chapter have been selected in order to observe the change in Italian public policy, which is historically was very centralized and focused on public property, and the role of private and regional agents in this. In this way, this chapter will present a critical review of the political and policy backdrop against which the case studies of TVO and Rebeldía presented in the following chapters are to be read.

The tradition of Italian cultural policies

In her PhD thesis, Eleonora Belfiore traces the complete history of Italian cultural policy. It is interesting to note that, even before Italy's Unification, the first norms regulating Italian cultural policies were characterised by the centrality of heritage preservation (p.240). This trend was consolidated in the period that followed: the newly unified state adopted a centralised approach to heritage policy, unifying the different modalities of heritage conservation of the pre-existing states (pp.239-240). According to Pinna (2001, in Belfiore, 2006, p. 241) this choice marked the beginning of the distinction between "heritage" and "cultural assets". If the term "heritage" stresses the symbolic and cultural relevance of artistically relevant artefacts from the past, "cultural assets", instead, emphasizes their economic value. According to Pinna, Italian cultural policy had an historical tendency to ignore the symbolic and cultural value that heritages sites had for the local communities, and instead placed emphasis on their material value; as a consequence, Italian cultural policy has focused more on the preservation of heritage sites and less on the access to them (idem).

The Fascist era was a time of great change in Italian cultural policy: the main objective of the regime was to "make the Italians" (p.243). First, in order to create a new national identity, the fascist state launched a series of mass ritualistic events that could easily be

enjoyed by a largely illiterate population (p.244). Secondly, during the *ventennio* the state promulgated a large number of laws on heritage preservation, the most important being the law n. 1089 of 1939 (p.250). This law introduced some principles that remained a feature of Italian cultural policy well after the end of the regime: first, the law is based on the ideology of the “masterpiece”, “the notion of the exceptional work of art that can be appreciated independently from its local and cultural context in virtue of its objective artistic quality” (Serio 2001a, in Belfiore, 2006 p.252). Moreover, this law allowed the state to intervene and establish limitations to the moving and selling of privately owned objects of artistic and cultural interest (p.253). Lastly, the law established the *principio d’inalienabilità*, meaning that publicly owned heritage assets cannot be sold (p.254): this remained a staple of Italian cultural policy for many years to come.

The period between the post-war years and the 1970s was characterised by a 'cultural assets boom' (Council of Europe 1995, in Belfiore, 2006, p.229). The new Constitution introduced the safeguard of cultural heritage among its fundamental principles. The word “tutela” (preservation) assumed a new meaning in the Republic: it did not only represent the superficial material conservation of heritage sites, but also of the cultural and symbolic values they embodied (Cicerchia, 2002, in Belfiore, 2006, p.263). The term “cultural assets” became increasingly popular between the 1960s and the 1970s: it was used in an official setting for the first time in 1964 by the Franceschini Commission, which was in charge of reforming the laws on Italian heritage of 1939 (p.264). The term indicates a specific way of understanding heritage, that focuses on its material aspect and not on the context it was produced (Pinna, 2001, in Belfiore, p. 241). The ministry officially changed name in 1975, becoming the Ministero per i Beni Culturali e Ambientali (Ministry for Cultural and Environmental Assets) (p.266).

The period from the 1980s to the mid-2000 was a time of change in the ideas and ideology behind Italian cultural policy-making. As analysed by Belfiore, during this period Italian cultural policy was affected by the global neoliberal trend. In the 1980s, heritage started to be regarded as an easily exploitable economic resource which could guarantee a high return of investment. An example of this tendency is the Fondo Investimenti e Occupazione (Investments and Employment Fund) created in 1982, which

oversaw the funding of a series of structural and infrastructural projects, some of which regarding heritage. The projects were assessed on the basis of how they could generate occupation and wealth; indeed, it was considered "for the first time an attempt to evaluate intervention in the cultural heritage according to criteria of profitability" (Council of Europe 1995, in Belfiore, 2006, p.280). Furthermore, in 1986 the Ministry for Employment and Welfare established the *giacimenti culturali* (cultural deposits): these funding schemes were destined to fund "heritage-related inventory, training and employment programmes that made use of new information technologies (Bianchini et al 1996, in Belfiore, 2006, p. 280)". These initiatives were largely unsuccessful and did not create a new market for heritage tourism, nor generate the hoped for occupational and economic outcomes. However, they mark the beginning of a change in the rhetoric of cultural policy in Italy. At the core of these initiatives there is an oversimplified belief in the economic potential of Italian heritage, which overlooks not only its symbolic and cultural value, but also the limitations of such criteria for public funding. In particular, the word "giacimenti" has an economically charged meaning: it conveys the idea that heritage is just an endless, passive resource awaiting to be exploited (Settis, 2002, Montella, 2003, in Belfiore, 2006, pp. 282-283). According to Settis (2002) and Galasso (1996, in Belfiore, 2006, p. 285), it is exactly in the 1980s that Italian cultural policies start using a rhetoric imbued with the language of economy, reflecting a change in the way the government understands cultural value: no longer as a crucial part of the collective identity of the Italians, but as a mine that needs to be exploited. As a matter of fact, Antonio Paolucci, who was Minister for Cultural and Environmental Assets between 1995 and 1996, declared that it was in the 1980s that "threatening and glittering slogan of the cultural assets as 'our oil'" was coined (idem). From that point on, the accent on the economic value of heritage became more and more central to Italian cultural policy: some notable examples of this trend are the law n. 4 of 1993, the law n. 59 of 1997, the Testo Unico of 1999 and the law n. 112 of 2002.

The law n.4 of 1993, also known as the Ronchey Act, introduces "the possibility for the Ministry to 'rent out' (the Italian legal expression is *concedere in uso*) cultural assets under its responsibility to other public institutions or private individuals and companies" (Jalla 2003, in Belfiore, 2006). It also set forth the outsourcing of additional museum services such as cafeterias and bookshops.

The law n.59 of 1997, which is also known as the Bassanini Act, contained an ambiguous norm that suggested the abrogation of the *inalienabilità* of *beni culturali*. As it was ironically observed by Dino Cofrancesco, this law opens up the possibility of “selling the Colosseum” (idem, p.297); as this chapter will argue later, this idea is currently not so far from reality.

The new Ministry for Cultural Assets and Activities was introduced by the legislative decree n. 368 of 1998, which also opens up the possibility to externalise services to private firms also for the Ministry itself (idem, p. 301). It is important to note that this legislative decree makes a clear distinction between two different areas of responsibility of the Ministry: *tutela*, on one hand, and *valorizzazione* and management on the other (idem). *Tutela*, as aptly translated by Belfiore, indicates “the measures of heritage conservation and restoration (idem, p. 289)”, while *valorizzazione* has a double meaning of promotion and exploitation of heritage assets (p.290). This distinction meant that those services that focused on *valorizzazione* and management could be outsourced to private companies, whereas the Ministry should remain in charge of all the operations of *tutela*.

The Testo Unico of 1999 made other significant changes; it unified all existing norms on cultural assets and expanded the sphere of museum services that could be outsourced to private companies, including “services of cultural assistance and hospitality” (idem, p. 304). It is clear, then, that the 1990s marked a period of continuous decentralisation of the power of the Ministry for Cultural Assets, and an unprecedented liberalisation of public cultural services. Furthermore, the Bassanini Act of 1997 contained the legal basis for the privatisation of public heritage assets, a legal possibility that was consolidated in the following decade. In fact, the law n.112 of 2002 introduces the creation of *Patrimonio dello Stato s.p.a.* and *Infrastrutture dello Stato s.p.a.*, two joint stock companies owned by the state. This law transferred to Patrimonio dello Stato s.p.a. “all property rights with regards to all the real estate assets that belong to the State's patrimony, including those that are part of the Demanio Pubblico (State Property), on the uses of which, traditionally, a number of strict limitations were in place - including the already mentioned *inalienabilità*” (Belfiore, 2006, p. 309). *Infrastrutture s.p.a.* aimed to sustain economic development, create new infrastructures and public works; it must

be noted that, unlikely Patrimonio s.p.a., it was open to private investors. The Minister for Economy had the power to transfer assets from one joint company to the other, simply by issuing a ministerial decree. In the case of assets of high artistic value, the Minister for the Economy was legally bound to take this decision jointly with the Minister for Cultural Assets. Potentially, this meant that, with a decree signed by two ministers, any cultural assets that belonged to Patrimonio s.p.a., could be transferred to Infrastrutture s.p.a., thus losing their inalienability and potentially being up for grabs for any private investor (Belfiore, pp. 309-311, 2006). This law was then corrected by the Codice Urbani of 2004, which introduced some limitations for assets such as museums, libraries, archives etc. (idem, 312). However, despite the new limitations, in 2004, 36 historical objects, from the medieval period to the 20th century, were sold to American Carlyle Investment Group, a global private equity firm (idem, p.313), which paid a sum below the average market price.

Lastly, it must be noted that the 1990s saw the introduction and the development of the administrative structure of the Fondazione, that is, “an area-based organisation that is run by a number of diverse bodies and is financed through numerous sources of funding” (Belfiore, p.305). The rationale for this development was “the transformation of some of the main public cultural institutions into private organisations, generally under foundation status. [...] The logic behind these measures was twofold: a) to pursue a more efficient management of such institutions, traditionally paralysed by red tape; b) to ease the burden they represent for the public purse by facilitating fundraising from the private sector” (Carla Bodo, 2002, in Belfiore, 2006, p. 305). Foundations constitute the most common example of managerialisation of cultural institutions in Italy, as analysed by Luca Zan (2003, in Belfiore, 2006, p.306).

Belfiore aptly describes the governmental justification for this unprecedented liberalisation of the Italian heritage sector as a “defence of the act of selling off of the family jewels to face the hardship caused by the difficult economic circumstances” (p. 319). Indeed, the then-Minister for Cultural Assets Giuliano Urbani justified the sale of public cultural assets as a necessary strategy, for a country with such underdeveloped infrastructures

From 2006 onwards

The joint stock companies created by the Berlusconi government were short lived: Infrastrutture S.p.a., according to the law 266/2005, was incorporated into the Cassa Depositi e Prestiti Spa, an investment bank mostly owned by the Italian Ministry of Economy and Finance, and the article 33 of law decree 98/2011 disposed the dissolution of Patrimonio dello Stato S.p.a. The abolition of these joint stock companies was part of a larger plan of reduction of the public expenditure (Michael Sciascia, 2013, p.76). The system for heritage safeguard, however, was subject to major changes thanks to the introduction of “federalismo demaniale” (federal state property). In 2001, the centre-right wing government, led by Silvio Berlusconi, called a referendum for the introduction of a new law in the Constitution on the subject of federalism, which was approved by the majority of voters. The new law gave more legislative power to the Italian Regions and introduced the fiscal autonomy of Towns, Provinces, Metropolitan Cities and Regions (La Repubblica, 2001). This referendum was seen as part of a process of decentralisation of the power of the State; indeed, a second referendum was called in 2006, this time for an even stronger modification of the Constitution. The 2006 referendum aimed at the devolution of many of the state powers, such as the organisation of educational and health services; however, this constitutional law did not encounter the favour of the Italians, and thus was abrogated (Il Post, 2016). The law approved in 2001 was officially implemented on 5th May 2009 and became known as “Legge Calderoli”. However, this was only the beginning of a process of federalisation of various aspects of the State administration. The law implemented in 2009 was complemented by a legislative decree on 28th May 2010, which introduced the possibility for Towns, Provinces, Regions and Metropolitan Cities to take charge of assets belonging to the central Demanio of the State for free (D.L. 28th May 2010). This possibility became much easier to implement thanks to the article 56-bis of the law decree 69-2013, which was aimed at revamping the Italian economy and to simplify the intricate administrative and normative Italian bureaucracy (D.L. 21ST June 2013). Article 56 simplified the procedures for the transferral of state assets belonging to the Demanio to the local government and defined a specific time slot, between September and November 2013, in which the local bodies should present their requests for acquiring state-owned assets. A further decree, nicknamed “Milleproroghe” (one thousand extensions) extended the deadline for these requests to December 2016 (D.L. 30th

December 2015). Furthermore, *federalismo demaniale* is a law decree that has been introduced in 2009 as an amendment of the current law on fiscal federalism that transfers the ownership of some state-owned assets to local authorities, such as Cities and Regions (D.L. 28th May 2010). The current law on *federalismo demaniale* states that some of the state's assets cannot be transferred to local governments, following the principle of inalienability. These assets are: buildings that are currently in use by public bodies for institutional purposes; economically relevant ports and airports; energy networks and networks of roads that are of national interest; state-owned railway lines; national parks and natural reserves (idem). As it is easy to notice, this list does not include cultural assets or artistically relevant buildings. In fact, the legislative decree 85/2010 includes an article on "*federalismo demaniale culturale*". The procedure for the attribution of cultural assets to local governments is quite less straightforward than the one followed for "ordinary" assets: this process requires a three-party agreement between the local government, the Agenzia del Demanio, an economic body of the state that regulates the management of state-owned properties, and MiBACT (the Ministry with responsibility for culture). The resulting so-called "*accordo di valorizzazione*" (valorisation agreement) must respect the safeguard of the cultural asset but can also introduce its "requalification", with a stress on the economic sustainability (and exploitation) of the project. In 2016, 571 local bodies have seized this opportunity by presenting 2390 requests, and 4139 assets have already been given over to local entities. The website dedicated to Federalismo Demaniale assures that all the assets acquired for free by local councils and other local governments will only be used to "start sustainable projects that are in line with the local plans of urban regeneration". For the year 2017, the Agenzia del Demanio is in charge of monitoring the process of "valorisation" (as in the ambiguous Italian term "*valorizzazione*", in which exploitation and value are mixed together) of these assets. These policies clearly indicate that the concept of *valorizzazione* is still strong in the language of Italian public policies.

In May 2008, Silvio Berlusconi nominated Sandro Bondi for the role of Minister of Culture. Bondi's career in the ministry was characterised by a series of controversies that led a political opponent to define him "the worst minister in the history of the Republic" (La Repubblica, 2010). For example, during his mandate, the cuts to the public funds for culture reached their peak; however, Bondi later said that these cuts were made without

his authorisation (La Stampa, 2010). The most famous scandal of the Bondi mandate, however, were the damages to Pompeii's archaeological site, when a flood almost destroyed the Gladiators' *domus*. The poor measures of preservation and restoration taken at the time by the minister received strong criticisms from many members of the opposition. Crumbling, neglected, vandalized, Pompeii was highly symbolic of the failures of Italian cultural policy, but also of the general political climate of the time. In an irate appeal for more funding for his region, which had recently been affected by floods, Luca Zaia, the governor of Veneto, stated in 2010, "it is a shame to waste 250 million euros for those four stones in Pompeii" (Giulia Floris, 2010). It is possible to argue that governor Zaia might have a political bias against Southern Italy (and therefore resent public investments made there), as he is a member of the Northern League party; this declaration pictures a geographically and culturally divided Italy, fighting over few resources and pitting its citizens one against the other.

In total, the public expenditure for culture decreased by 10.5% between 2001 and 2014 (Carla Bodo and Simona Bodo, 2016). Over the course of five years, between 2008 and 2013, the funds allocated to the Ministry of Cultural Assets and Activities, and Tourism faced a 23,7% cut (Roberto Ciccarelli, 2014b). As explained by Roberto Ciccarelli, the economic crisis did not only affect the sphere of public funding for culture, but also the private one: over the same period, private sponsorship for arts and culture decreased by 41%. This situation was also aggravated by the severe cuts to funding for local administrations (-45.8%) and by the decrease of disposable income of Italian families. It has been reported that the Minister for Economy at the time, Giulio Tremonti, when justifying the cuts for public funding for culture, said that "culture does not put food on the table" (*con la cultura non si mangia*): the former Minister has always denied saying these words, but they encapsulate the general disbelief of the politics of the time towards cultural value.

In particular, during the mandate of Silvio Berlusconi (2008-2011) the cuts were particularly serious. The reason behind this choice was not only to mitigate the damages brought on by the economic crisis: in 2008, the government abolished the ICI (*imposta comunale sugli immobili*, a local tax on owned housing property), thus diminishing the income of the state. In order to compensate for this loss of revenue, the government

moved 60 million euros that had been allocated for funding culture and landscape preservation to other sectors of public expenditure (Settis, 2008). Furthermore, the law decree 112 of 2008 officialised a series of cuts to public funding for culture for the three-year period from 2009 to 2011 for a total of 891 million € (idem). Minister of Cultural Assets and Activities Sandro Bondi replied to a concerned article by Salvatore Settis (an archaeologist and art historian who at the time was the director of the Higher Council for Cultural Assets, an advisory body of the abovementioned ministry), by saying: “We’ll spend less, but we’ll spend better” (Bondi, 2008). The Pompeii scandal, and the consequent bipartisan criticism towards his work, costed Bondi the presidency of the ministry: he resigned on 23rd March 2011 and was replaced by the vice-minister Giancarlo Galan. The most notable feature of Galan’s short-lived mandate was the rapid nomination of right-wing politicians’ friends and relatives in the management of national film commissions (Il Fatto Quotidiano, 2011). He concluded his mandate in November 2011, following Berlusconi’s resignations².

The new technical government led by Mario Monti was supposed to be composed of experts; this is why the nomination of Lorenzo Ornaghi, professor of Political Science at the Catholic University of the Sacred Heart in Milan and with no previous track record of involvement in cultural matters, for the role of Minister of Culture was quite unexpected. During his mandate Ornaghi, who held the position for the whole duration of the Monti government (from November 16th 2011 to April 28th 2013), seemed quite detached from his role. He received some criticism for his apparent disinterest in cultural matters, his strong links with the Vatican, his arbitrary decisions when selecting nominees for important roles, and a general contempt for cultural professionals (Arosio and Fantuzzi, 2012). In general, his mandate was characterised by the reinforcement of the status quo and cuts to public funding for culture (Montanari, 2012). It must be noted that Ornaghi launched the “Great Pompeii Project”, an extraordinary €105 million restoration plan to save Pompeii’s crumbling archaeological site whose deteriorated

² Galan’s role in parliamentary politics for culture was extensive, yet troubled. From 7th May 2013 to 20th July 2015, Galan was also the president of the Parliamentary Commission for Culture. In June 2014, he was accused of abusing his power in his role of Governor of the Veneto region, receiving bribes worth 1ml€ per year (Il Fatto Quotidiano 2014). In October of the same year, he was sentenced to house arrest for 2 years and 10 months. Nevertheless, he remained president of the Commission for Culture until 21st July 2015, when he was removed from his role by a parliamentary vote.

state played an important role in Bondi's resignation (European Commission 2013). However, the actual implementation of the project was quite slow: in February 2017, only 65 million out of 105 had been spent (Vera Viola, 2017).

In 2013, the coalition government led by Enrico Letta, by implementing the article 71 of the law 24 June 2013, changed the name of the ministry to "Ministero dei beni e delle attività culturali e del turismo" (Ministry for cultural assets and activities and tourism). The functions that were previously carried out by the Office for Tourism Policy, a body that was directly controlled by the Presidency of the Council of Ministers, passed to the newly named ministry. This change was part of a larger program of reduction of governmental bodies aimed at reducing public expenditure, a necessary move after the economic crisis.

Massimo Bray was in charge of the ministry for Heritage and Cultural Activities during Letta's government. Bray's public declarations focused primarily on the importance of access to culture: he stated that culture belongs to everyone, and stressed the importance of intangible cultural assets, which, historically, had not been given much consideration by Italian cultural policy. He also emphasised the importance of abandoning the "emergency logic" that had characterised politicians' approach to the system of public arts funding in the recent past as, for example, in Galan's Pompeii programme (whether a state of degradation that has progressively worsened for years can nonetheless be defined an "emergency" is another question altogether) (Bray and Petrillo, 2014). The most significant initiative of the Ministry under Bray's direction was Law 122/2013, also known as law *Valore Cultura*. The law was a long-term plan for culture that included organisational improvements for the Great Pompeii Project. It also allocated funds for the Uffizi in Florence and for the Shoah Museum in Ferrara, and designed a rationalisation of the internal funds of museums. In order to benefit young artists, the law included a plan for the allocation of public properties to artists younger than 35 on a six-month rota basis, and 500 12-month job placements for young people who had recently graduated and who would be in charge of the digitalisation of a large part of the Italian heritage. In relation to the performing arts, the law introduced a tax credit for private investors, and made the allocation of funds to cultural organisations more transparent and based on their budgeted activities. Lastly, it made donations for

arts and heritage easier and less costly for private benefactors. However, this programme, despite its breadth and its ambition, was not perfect: the 500 job placements that started in the summer of 2015 offered very little money for the youngsters' highly specialised work (around 9.3€ per hour), and in some cases, the salary was even lower than that. In 2016, the funds were suspended for several months, so the young professionals of culture were not paid. Lastly, those who had hoped to continue to work for the ministry after the end of their placements were soon disappointed: instead of hiring the people who had already been trained, the Ministry launched a new placement scheme (Iannaccone, 2016).

Massimo Bray's interpretation of cultural value was not based on the concept of "Italy's oil", but on the idea of culture as a public good that everyone should be able to access, and that should foster a sense of community, was a welcome change in the rhetoric of Italian cultural policy. In fact, when he left his position following Letta's resignations, about 4000 Twitter users wrote a public plea for him to keep his role as a minister. The hashtag #iostoconBray (I'm with Bray) became a trending topic (Huffington Post, 2014); in a country characterised by a certain mistrust for politics and politicians, this is certainly an unusual achievement.

If Massimo Bray had tried to use a new language for Italian cultural policy, Franceschini, who was nominated Minister in February 2014, following the nomination of Matteo Renzi as Prime Minister, went back to the old vocabulary. When talking about Italy's heritage, he said that "we're walking on gold nuggets without realising" (Il Sole 24Ore, 19/06/2014). The idea of "promotion" associated to culture, whose rise in the 1990s has been analysed by Belfiore, came back to the centre stage of the Italian public discourse on culture. Franceschini's rhetoric is strongly influenced by the concept of culture as Italy's oil. The comparisons are frequent in his public declarations: "(The Ministry of) cultural assets is an economic ministry. I think that the Ministry for culture in Italy is like the one for oil in an Arab country" (in Cherchi, 2014); "cultural treasure" (in Carm, 2015); "In Italy there is a gold mine we can exploit everywhere, with its museums, our Patrimony, our beauty: and we were not able to use it" (in Morando, 2014); "cultural treasure" (in Carm, 2015). He is not alone, though: in 2014, the president of the Senate, Pietro Grasso, stated that culture should "look at the logic of markets to modify its offer"

(Ciccarelli, 2014b). Franceschini, after being his direct antagonist in an internal struggle within the Partito Democratico in 2009, became Renzi's strongest ally in Parliament. During his mandate, he has shown to be in line with Renzi's of *svecchiamento* (renewal) and *rottamazione* (disposal) of old Italian politics; he has been a very active minister, in comparison to Galan, Ornaghi and Bondi, and he has implemented several reforms and public initiatives. The following sections will look at some of the most relevant initiatives implemented by the ministry led by Franceschini: the investment-publicity exchange with private investors, Artbonus, Bonus Cultura and Culturability.

At the core of Franceschini's political philosophy there is the idea that Italy's cultural assets alone can be a major driving economic force, as they attract large number of tourists. According to him, even poor touristic structures, a problem that has affected Italy for a long time, are not a sufficient deterrent for tourists (in Carm, 2015). In one of his first interviews, Franceschini stated that his mandate would not be affected by those taboos that have undermined Italian cultural policy in the past, meaning the resistance to cooperation with private investors (Cerchi, 2014) and the belief that "culture doesn't put food on the table". His belief in the economic value of culture soon gained international resonance: in a telephone interview to the New York Times (Pianigiani and Yardley, 2014.), the minister declared: "Our doors are wide open for all the philanthropists and donors who want to tie their name to an Italian monument (...) We have a long list, as our heritage offers endless options, from small countryside churches to the Colosseum (...) Just pick." The kind of private investment invoked by the Ministry was similar to the one offered by the fashion company Tod's for the restoration of the Colosseum in 2011: in return of his investment, Diego della Valle, the company's CEO, gained publicity and rights over the image of the famous heritage site. Similarly, Fendi offered funds for the restoration of the famous Fontana di Trevi, and is now able to organise spectacular fashion shows with models walking on the edge on the fountain. "Looking for money where the money is", as stated again by Franceschini, sounds like a safe strategy, but it also implies some difficulties. As pointed out by Stefano Monti (2015), what private investors get in exchange for their contribution is visibility; consequently, the most visited and, thus, visible cultural organisations and heritage sites are more likely to get funding from private investors. Moreover, "visibility" does not only mean being able to place one's small logo outside a heritage site, but also to use said

cultural asset for private events. The city of Florence is a leader in this practice: Ponte Vecchio, the Uffizi, Palazzo Pitti are all available to hire for cocktails and dinners (Montanari, 2013). These activities represent the ultimate neoliberal exploitation of culture: they are obviously profitable, but they make access to culture an exclusive opportunity for the rich. In the case of Ponte Vecchio, the historical bridge that is used every day by Florentines to walk from one side of the city to the other, closing the bridge for private functions represents not only an exclusion from culture, but from easy access to an extremely important part of the town. It might also be argued that, from the point of view of the preservation of heritage sites and artworks, being used as venues for private events might be detrimental: lights, the continuous presence of people and the practicalities of arranging catering in these spaces might not have a good effect on cultural assets. Belfiore thus reports the concerns of the law scholar Giovanni Cofrancesco: “Cofrancesco (Ibid.) sardonically observes that this particular norm introduced by law n. 59 of 1997 would seem to create the legal premises for a paradoxical scenario in which the State could simply sell off the Colosseum -a situation occurring in a very popular Italian comedy film starring Totò, the most loved Italian comic actor of all times” (Belfiore, 2006, p.297). Cofrancesco was expressing concern over the consequences of the Bassanini act; however, the possibility of “selling out” heritage sites seems very palpable in the current cultural policy scenario.

Furthermore, this indiscriminate call for private funding seems not to consider issues of ethics. Italy’s cultural life, including sports and religion, is affected by the generosity of large corporations. As denounced by Giuseppe Pipitone (2016), the energy suppliers Eni and Enel, the oil companies Esso, Total and Shell, but also Nestlé, invest large sums of money in different aspects of Italian cultural life, including cultural events, food festivals and religious celebrations. The author stresses that these investments are often directed to areas that are directly damaged by the companies’ activity: for example, Esso’s oil refineries in Augusta (Sicily) are connected to the high incidence of tumours among the local population, so the oil company’s decision to fund activities for the local disabled children can be seen as a way to restore their image in the area. For private companies, thus, investing in culture is not only a way to increase their visibility or prestige, but can also be a strategy to distract the local population from their misdeeds. These ethically

questionable practices cannot be classified as philanthropy, but are instead, arguably, akin to corruption.

A different take on private funding for culture is represented by the law decree 31st May 2014, n. 83, also known as Art Bonus. The law introduces a fiscal bonus that allows private patrons to claim up to 65% on their tax rebates for donations to heritage sites and cultural organisations. The beneficiaries of the bonus are cultural organisations, such as foundations and associations, the Ministry itself, but mainly local councils. The first version of this law did not include not-for-profit organisations, but this was later modified.

The three funding areas for the Art Bonus are the following:

- Restoration of heritage sites
- Support for institutions and organisations that promote public culture, lyrical-symphonic foundations and traditional theatres.
- Building, restoration and improvement of public live performing arts organisations.

Art Bonus was an unprecedented policy plan aimed at connecting private investors with the world of publicly funded art. Minister Franceschini underlined how this tax benefit was one of the most generous in Europe. However, the first data was not as positive as hoped: only 40% of the projects listed on the Art Bonus programme managed to receive funding, and only the 1,36% of the total number of the projects listed reached their financial goal. However, the project, which was initially designed as an extraordinary donation campaign, became a permanent policy. Despite the disappointing initial results, the ministry decided to stick to its idea of “look[ing] for the money where the money is”; the results of the second year of Art Bonus proved that this strategy was successful. The numbers of donations made during 2015 significantly increased: total funding reached 62 million euros, and private companies represented 61% of donors (Pirrelli, 2016). The number of donors itself nearly doubled: 1400 opposed to 774 in 2014. This raise in the number of donors might simply be due to the natural development of the campaign: over the time, more people became aware of it and the project gained momentum. It is possible to argue, however, that the change might perhaps also be due to some important additions to the list of organisations: an

amendment to the law decree states that also no-profit organisations that manage artistically relevant buildings, lyrical-symphonic foundations and *teatri di tradizione* (traditional theatres) can now benefit from the Art Bonus.

This kind of incentives for private investors is fairly less ethically questionable compared to traditional sponsorship methods: it does not affect access to cultural organisations, it does not allow ruthless forms of sponsorship and allows for a very wide range both in terms of donors and of beneficiaries. This system, however, does not resolve old issues of geographical imbalance and status quo: in fact, the majority of cultural organisations that received funding from Art Bonus are located in the North of Italy (Pirrelli, 2016), and the ones who benefitted the most from these donations are lyrical-symphonic foundations, which already benefit from conspicuous public funding (Basciano, 2013).

Recently, the call for public investment has also been supported by an increment in public expenditure for culture, which had been one of the lowest in the Eurozone for several years. On 21st November 2015, the then Prime Minister Matteo Renzi announced a two-billion plan of governmental investment in culture. What is particularly interesting about this plan is the way it was announced and its purpose. Matteo Renzi presented this investment as an instrument to defeat ISIS. Referring to the November 2015 terrorist attacks in Paris, Renzi commented: “What happened in Paris signalled a step-up in the cultural battle that we are living. They imagine terror, we answer with culture. They destroy statues, we love art. They destroy books, we are the country of libraries (in Politi, 2015)”. The plan included “investing money into communities where there's been tension between immigrants and native Italians (Feeney, 2015).

Part of this funding plan is the initiative called “Bonus Cultura”. This initiative offers to every eighteen-year old in the country €500 to be spent in cultural products and experiences. According to the former Prime Minister, the bonus would “reinforce their sense of being guardians of Italy’s vast cultural heritage” (idem). This statement sounds incredibly out-of-tune with the ideology underlining recent cultural policy: in fact, it implies an immense faith in the social power of culture and overlooks completely economic impact. It is not easy to locate Renzi’s statement within the current debate on cultural value: on the one hand, it might seem imbued with a strong belief in the concept of cultural citizenship; on the other, it might simply sound as a strategical, ad-hoc way

to justify a 2bl € plan of public investment in culture. It is also necessary to say that the grandiose ambition of Renzi's plan reinforces a romanticised vision of Italy as the nation of culture, where culture can do everything, from saving the country's economy to defeating international terrorism. This rhetoric can be ascribed to the phenomenon described by Frankfurt and further analysed by Belfiore (2009) which is known as "bullshit". Bullshit, as described by Frankfurt, is characterised by a 'lack of connection to a concern with the truth' and 'indifference to how things really are' (in Belfiore 2009, p.347). It is clear, here, that Renzi is making sweeping statements about the value of culture and, more specifically, of Italian culture, not only without giving any evidence to support his statements, but also without making any connection to the reality of the Italian cultural sphere. Bonus Cultura is the perfect example of a "lack of connection to a concern with the truth": Renzi's high hopes to fight terrorism with books were soon crushed by the reality of the relationship between Italian youth and culture. When it came to it, many teenagers decided to sell their €500 bonus at a discounted price online, finding ingenious ways to circumnavigate the identification system required to spend the coupon, and spend their money on something else. As the resale of "Bonus Cultura" takes place mainly online, especially on social media, it is difficult to estimate the extent of the phenomenon; we cannot then generalise about the attitude of young Italians towards investing money in culture. Nevertheless, the lack of enthusiasm for the Bonus Cultura represents a clear sign of the lacunae of the Italian educational system. This attitude reflects a general lack of education in respecting legality and a scarce interest for culture in young people: in order to invest in culture, you must believe that culture is worth something. Have young people been exposed to the idea that culture is good for you in the last decade, or has neoliberalism taken a toll on the notion of cultural value in younger generations? The lack of interest of the Italian youth towards the initiative is not only a matter of cultural value; in fact, this initiative was not received without criticism. The Bonus was sometimes perceived as "pocket money" to offer to eighteen-year olds in exchange for their vote (Il Fatto Quotidiano, 2015). From a two-episode enquiry of the online magazine Vice Italia, conducted in 2015, when the bonus was announced, and in 2017, after its implementation, emerges a strong sense of mistrust among young Italians towards politics: the small sample size of the interviews does not confer to this enquiry, of course, the credibility of a rigorous academic study;

however, the issues that emerge from these two articles are particularly relevant for the current debate on cultural value in Italy. Some interviewees either did not believe that the initiative was actually going to be implemented, and thought that Renzi's announcement was mere propaganda; others felt that the offering of €500 was a bribe for political support (Olivieri, 2017; Benz and Ligresti, 2015). Some of the interviewees were simply not aware of the initiative, showing not only a lack of interest in culture, but in current events and politics too. It is clear, then, that no €500 panacea can fix the lack of trust in politics of young Italians.

The abandonment of heritage and cultural sites in Italy

This section focuses on one of the most complicated issues regarding the preservation of cultural assets in Italy, that is, the abandonment and neglect of culturally relevant buildings. This specific issue of Italian cultural policy is particularly relevant to the purpose of this doctoral thesis, as the grassroots organisations that are at the centre of the case studies contained in the following chapters directly engaged with abandoned heritage sites and tried to build participatory alternatives for their use. As this section will show, the reuse of abandoned heritage and cultural sites in Italy in some cases are a form of resistance to instrumental and neoliberal-oriented rationales that put into question issues of access and cultural democracy.

The concession of cultural assets not only to associations, but also private firms, has been debated in the Italian cultural scene for a long time. It is not uncommon that culturally relevant buildings, such as former theatres, become commercial activities, regardless of their original vocation of use. An example of this new usage of cultural sites for commercial activities is the former theatre Smeraldo in Milan, now an Eataly shop. The theatre, that was property of a the Longoni family, used to host artists such as David Bowie and Astor Piazzolla, but had to close when the last heir of the family could not afford to keep it open (Roberto Ciccarelli, 2014). The theatre was sold to the Eataly company, owned by Oscar Farinetti, an entrepreneur who played a major role in the 2015 Milan Expo. Eataly is a high-end chain of supermarkets and restaurants that boasts regional Italian products and takes pride in being located in culturally significant buildings, such as the aforementioned theatre, or the Cinema Museum of Turin. The concept of Eataly is deeply embedded in the neoliberal vision of culture as Italy's oil: its

combination of traditional food and historical locations represent what are considered to be Italy's main assets, and its success shows that these can be easily replicated, marketed and sold abroad. Eataly shops, which can be also found in the US, Brazil, South Korea, United Arab Emirates, Japan, Denmark, Germany and Turkey, can be seen as a high-end fast food chain, which promote local food but eventually causes a homogenization of taste and culture that is not much different from the one promoted by any other multinational food corporation. As told in Ciccarelli's article, Eataly's strategy was seen with preoccupation by many in Italy: given the quantity of culturally relevant sites in need of restoration and reutilisation, there was a concern among the professionals of the cultural sector that the "Eataly phenomenon" would quickly become the norm.

These preoccupations, however, were partly mitigated by the government's actions to solve the issue of abandoned cultural assets. In 2015, the ministry for Cultural Assets and Activities and Tourism decided to let abandoned heritage sites belonging to the state to no-profit organisations and associations for free. According to the ministerial decree 6th October 2015, organisations can use these heritage sites for their own activities, on the condition that they pay for the necessary restoration works, open these buildings to the public and respect their original destination of use (D.M. 6th October 2015).

The ministerial decree 6th October 2015, however, did not completely resolve the issue with Italian abandoned heritage sites. On March 8th 2016 the Italian Senate held an enquiry on the abandonment of cultural assets: it hosted academics, activists and associations that had researched the phenomenon of the abandonment of private and public cultural assets on the Italian territory. The commission acknowledged that many cultural assets belonging to the Italian state had been abandoned, but failed to provide a precise number. The aim of the commission was to devise a strategy for the recovery of these assets and to prevent similar issues in the future. Despite the several interesting points made by activists on that occasion, the commission identified several problems with the potential implementation of a scheme for the reutilisation of public spaces. First, there is a lack of organisational and planning skills for the reutilisation of these spaces, especially in the long term; secondly, there is also a lack of skilled staff in public

administration and, consequently, of professionals who can oversee the development of these projects; furthermore, the restoration of culturally relevant spaces must follow specific norms: the role of art conservators and restorers is crucial here, but this professional category is not adequately recognised. In fact, they are not officially inscribed in a public register yet, and this creates confusion about the professionals who are qualified to perform restorations on cultural spaces and those who are not; furthermore, art conservators and restorers are slowly disappearing, as young professionals struggle to find a job (Senato della Repubblica, 2016). However, the commission also identified a possible route for the implementation of such a scheme: first, the Agenzia del Demanio should map all the abandoned cultural spaces in Italy; secondly, there should also be a map of Italian intangible cultural assets. Abandoned cultural sites should be included in regional landscape plans, so that the local population can be more aware about the issue. The most important recommended solution, however, is the extension of the “art bonus” to the private donors who will fund this project, and possibly create a crowdfunding network. Another important point made by the commission is to promote a certain level of “flexibility” for the management and the ownership of public cultural spaces. In fact, it suggests that, in order to maximise their *valorizzazione*, the ownership and the management of cultural spaces should pass from the central state to local authorities. Lastly, the commission proposes to increase the number of public school initiatives aiming at teaching not only respect for the environment, heritage and culture, but also the concept of legality and respect of the law. This, as we have seen in the case of the Bonus Cultura, is a crucial point for Italian society.

An interesting initiative for the reutilisation of abandoned cultural assets came from the private sector. Culturability is an initiative led by several different public and private bodies which, in my opinion, exemplifies a possible future direction of Italian cultural policy (Culturability, 2017). It is led by the Ministry for Cultural Assets and Activities and the Unipolis foundation, which leads social and cultural initiatives promoted by the financial services holding company Unipol Group; the Fitzcarraldo Foundation, an independent centre for research and documentation on cultural, arts and media management; Avanzi, a company specialised in sustainable development; and Make a

Cube3, a consultancy company and start-up incubator and its special project dedicated to “projects of high cultural, social and environmental value (Make a Cube 3, 2017)”. More specifically, the ministerial body involved in this project is the *Direzione Generale Arte e Architettura Contemporanee e Periferie Urbane* (General Direction for Contemporary Arts and Architecture and Urban Peripheries) or DG AAP. The Unipolis foundation belongs to the financial services holding company Unipol, which is one of the major insurance groups in Italy. Its foundation, Unipolis, is in charge of funding several different cultural initiatives. Culturability’s aim is to make culture accessible to all Italians and funds projects that aim at creating structures and experiences that are available to everyone, such as libraries and festivals. The applicants are usually grassroots organisations, be they community centres or cultural foundations, and successful applications often target particularly disadvantaged areas, such as the Scampia suburb in Naples, made famous by Roberto Saviano’s book about mafia *Gomorra*. Culturability is an interesting example of how citizen-led initiatives can be sustained by a partnership between private investors and the state. Here grassroots projects find the support of the private and the public sector and are responsible for tackling one of the most worrying issue of Italian urban and cultural policy, urban abandonment. Successful projects were located in and gave new life to culturally relevant buildings, such as the former church that now hosts a children’s library in Palermo, and helped providing culture in areas where cultural participation is very low.

Theatre and Performing Arts

This section focuses on theatre and performing arts, another issue that is particularly close to the heart of the grassroots organisations I have analysed in my case studies. In particular, the experience of Teatro Valle Occupato expresses the dissatisfaction of Italian cultural workers towards the attitude of the Italian state in this area of cultural policy: lack of funding, policies that consolidate the *status quo* of well-established performing arts companies rather than enabling the success of smaller and younger ones and a conservative attitude of the Italian theatre sector were behind the wave of protests by theatre professionals that characterised the years between 2011 and 2014.

As analysed by Belfiore (2006), the structure of Italian cultural policy remained heavily dependent on the system introduced by Fascism for a long time: this is reflected in how

theatre, cinema and music remained separate from cultural assets over the history of Italian cultural policy. Over the period of time between the 1940s and the 1990s, the competencies for theatre, cinema and music were shared between ministers and other governmental bodies, with some overlapping and some waste of resources. The Italian peculiarity of the administrative separation of cultural assets and performing arts remained unaltered until 1998: the law decree 398 of 20th October transferred the responsibilities for sport and performing arts to the Ministry for Cultural Assets, which changed its name to Ministry for Cultural and Environmental Assets and Activities.

Among the governmental bodies that held responsibilities for the performing arts in the past, one of the most long-lived was Ente Teatrale Italiano (ETI). ETI had been established in 1942 as a body for the promotion of Italian theatre both nationally and internationally, and was also in charge of the management of four theatres: Teatro della Pergola, in Florence, Teatro Valle and Teatro Quirino, in Rome, and Teatro Duse in Bologna. Between the 1990s and the early 2000s, ETI's functions focused on the promotion of theatrical activities in disadvantaged areas and on facilitating the employment of young people in theatre, two activities of high importance for the Italian cultural scene. However, it was a costly governmental body and its resources were not spent effectively (Gallina, 2004). As stated by Gallina's article, the Italian theatrical scene debated for a long time over what should have been the functions of ETI and how it could have improved; Gallina, in particular, also advanced the idea of abolishing ETI and to use its resources differently. This proposal became reality in May 2010, when a law decree that aimed at reducing the costs of public administration was implemented by art. 7 comma 20 (D.L. 31st May 2010). The functions of ETI are now fulfilled by the Minister for Heritage and Cultural Activities (MiBAC)³.

The abolition of ETI caused a commotion in the Italian theatre. It was acknowledged as the end of a useless, highly bureaucratised state organisation that was unable to spend its funds efficiently and effectively; but, as explained by the theatre critic Andrea Porcheddu, professionals from the sector feared that, without ETI, Italian theatre would lack the support it needed and would become heavily business-oriented (Porcheddu, 2010). Major concerns were expressed for the future of the four theatres that had been

managed by ETI. The destiny of one of these theatres, Teatro Valle, is analysed in one of the following chapters. The other theatres followed a less turbulent path: Teatro della Pergola is currently managed by a partnership between Florence city council and the bank Ente Cassa di Risparmio di Firenze.; Teatro Quirino and Teatro Duse became limited liability companies led by groups of theatre professionals.

In 2014, the Ministry for Cultural Assets and Activities, led by Massimo Bray, called for a reform of the system of public funding for theatre and performing arts. The professionals in this field had been waiting a long time for a reform in the system of public funding for the sector. The last decree on the topic was dated 2008, and was seen as the start of a reformation of the Italian system of funding for the performing arts.

A decree instituting the new procedures for the public funding of the performing arts came out on 1st July 2014. The decree aimed at developing the system of performative arts, increasing the quality and the diversity of the offer; promoting access, especially for that part of the audience with “fewer opportunities” to engage; to foster the generational turnover in the field; to rebalance offer and demand across the Italian territory; to make Italian theatre more relevant internationally; to encourage organisations to find alternative avenues of funding, so as not to have to rely completely on the State; to strengthen the network of cultural practitioners and organisations (art. 2, comma 2, in Gallina e Ponte di Pino, 2016, ch.1). The reform considers cultural organisations’ production, programming and promotion activities on a three-year basis (Gallina e Ponte di Pino, 2016, ch.1). It affects all sectors of the performing arts: theatre, music, dance, circuses and travelling shows, multidisciplinary projects, and also allocates funds for promotion activities and tours abroad (idem).

The ministerial decree changed the categorization of the system for “*teatri stabili*”. These can be translated as “repertory theatres”, although in the Italian context, this label has a distinctive social connotation. Created by Giorgio Strehler and Paolo Grassi in 1947, “*teatro stabile*” is a form of theatre oriented towards social inclusion, that aims at making high culture available to all social classes (Cappa and Gelli, 1998). Over time, public and private *teatri stabili* were established; the public ones often belong to the local council and are managed by a resident theatre company.

The reform distinguishes National Theatres (*Teatri Nazionali*), Theatres of Relevant Cultural Interest (*Teatri di Rilevante Interesse Culturale*) or TRIC, Centres for Theatrical Production (*Centri di Produzione Teatrale*) and Artist-in-Residence programs (*Residenze*). This system allocates public funds according to the cultural and economic significance of the theatre, with national theatres being the most relevant ones. In order to gain one of these prestigious statuses, theatrical organisations are evaluated on the basis of the number of paid working days of their employees, the number of seats available and their activities. Prior to this reform, Italy never had a system of national theatres (*idem*); the ministerial decree describes them as organisations of “remarkable national and international prestige, characterised by their tradition and history”. In practice, the status of national theatre is only awarded by the Ministry for Cultural Activities to large (min. 1000 seats) and productive (min. 15000 days of work paid) organisations; furthermore, they must also feature a drama school. TRICs, instead, must feature 6000 paid working days, and must be active mainly in their region; lastly, the Centres for Theatrical Production must provide evidence of 3500 working days. The regulation for Artist-in-Residence Programs is still very experimental, and is based on agreements between the ministry, the regional and provincial governments (*idem*).

As it is possible to notice from the requirements for the new regulation for *Teatri Stabili*, it is clear that the reform strives to establish an objective method of evaluation for performing arts companies. In fact, the evaluation of the proposals is ranked according to these criteria:

- Artistic quality (30 points)
- Indexed quality (30 points)
- Management (40 points).

The “indexed quality” criterion aims at evaluating the performance and the development of cultural organisations. It analyses factors such as any increase in audience, the ability to obtain resources, the more frequent use of available venues, and so on. It must be noted that, among these parameters, there is also the capability to attract external funding and generate earned income: Italian theatres, therefore, must prove not only their artistic quality, but also their business skills. As observed by Gallina and Ponte di Pino (*idem*), these factors are clearly quantitative, and not qualitative;

following their reasoning, it is possible to argue that this is an attempt at evaluating “excellence” according to measurable parameters. As will be discussed later, this was one of the factors that led to the legitimacy of this decree being challenged. Evaluating quality in the performing arts according to objective, measurable criteria is one of the most intriguing problems of cultural policy: for example, Throsby (1990) proposes his own formulas and methods to solve this issue, considering a large and complex set of variables. It is possible to inscribe this debate in the larger issue of value and justification of cultural policy, in particular regarding the use of “econocratic” approaches to determine value in the sphere of culture. This discourse is characterised by “the belief that there exist fundamental economic tests or yardsticks according to which policy decisions can and should be made, and that cost–benefit analysis and cognate econometric methods are the best form of such tests” (Self, 1975, in Belfiore, 2014, p.98). The idea of evaluating the “indexed quality” of performing arts organisations, and conducting this evaluation on the basis of the measurement of their performance, reflects the process of embracing neoliberal values that characterises the life of Italian cultural policy since the 1990s. If we consider the term “indexed quality” for what it means in this law’s text, that is, a quantitative measurement of criteria that are directly connected to the organisations’ economic performance, it becomes clear that 70% of this evaluation system is based on non-artistic criteria. Therefore, the cultural and aesthetic value of the artistic work proposed by these organisations becomes, ostensibly, a mere accessory to their economic stability and their capacity to attract large audiences. Despite its apparently objective and meritocratic approach, it is possible to say that this method tends to reward already well-functioning, established organisations, and to damage those that struggle the most, especially in territories where theatre attendance is relatively low and where private investment is harder to come by. This analysis is supported by the geographic distribution of the organisations that have been recognised as National Theatres or TRIC: most of them are located in the wealthier North of the country, whereas there are no National Theatres and only four TRIC in the area that comprises Sardinia, Sicily and in the regions south of Naples. Thus, if the aim of the reform was to re-balance the discrepancy in the cultural offer between Southern and Northern Italy, this has not been achieved (Ateatro, 2015).

The reform has some strong merits though: first, it tries to rationalise the funding system for theatre on the basis of objective standards for the sake of transparency. Secondly, it promotes the employment of young artists: in a country where a high percentage of young people are unemployed, it is very important to acknowledge the work of organisations that employ young artists. However, as underlined by Gallina and Ponte di Pino (2016), the effects of the reform also include defending the status quo, incentivizing the precariousness of professional actors and pushing towards a business-oriented understanding of theatre-making. As it could easily be predicted, the cultural organisations that did not benefit, or were directly damaged, by the new criteria for public funding imposed by the new decree were dissatisfied with it. Teatro dell'Elfo (Milan) and Teatro Due (Parma) made an appeal to the Regional Administrative Tribunal of Lazio (TAR) to question the methods used by the ministry and, most importantly, the very nature of the decree. The verdict that ruled in favour of the appeal presented by the two theatres stated that this decree introduces substantial changes to the existing legislation not only on a formal level, but mostly on a normative level. This contravenes the current Italian legislative procedures for law decrees; according to the TAR, the Ministry should have requested the approval of the Council of the State, according to art. 17 of the law n. 400/1988. The decree, therefore, was judged unconstitutional, causing the immediate suspension of the funding assigned for the year 2016. Minister Franceschini declared that the ministry was going to appeal the sentence. In the meantime, the suspension of the funds caused the anger of those organisations that were successful in the bid (Benedettini, 2016). The Ministry was forced to take a step back and make an ad hoc amendment to the decree. On July 12th 2016, the MP Roberto Rampi presented an amendment that stated that “the (Ministerial) decree does not have a regulatory nature” (Bandettini, 2016). As a result, the sentence of the TAR was overturned by the Council of State on 30th November 2016, and the Ministerial Decree 1/07/2014 was declared legal⁴.

This reform, that came after the wave of protest cultural workers of 2011, does not resolve the majority of the issues they raised, such as the lack of participation and

⁴ <https://www.giustizia-amministrativa.it/cdsintra/cdsintra/AmministrazionePortale/DocumentViewer/index.html?ddocname=5KRGBLCDQY76E5STONLQFIV4EM&q=spettacolo>

democracy in the theatre sector. The reform can be evaluated as a much-needed change in the system for public funding for the performing arts that establishes new, clear criteria that aim to steer away from the waste of resource that had characterised governmental bodies dedicated to theatre, such as ETI. However, this reform does not completely accomplish its goals and tends to replicate an econocratic logic, with clear neoliberal connotation, that has affected cultural policy in Italy and elsewhere. The following chapter will explain how this economic-driven approach to culture, which has characterised the Italian economic cultural policies for the last two decades and still persists today, contributed to the rise of protests of Italian cultural workers in the years between 2011 and 2014. Teatro Valle Occupato, the organisation chosen as a case study for the following chapter, aptly represents the grievances of cultural workers since the closure of ETI and the alternative concept of theatre they opposed to national cultural policies.

This chapter illustrates the continuation of a trajectory of Italian cultural policy that, as demonstrated by Belfiore (2006), has its roots in the 1990s. In the years between 2008 and 2016, the discourse on Italian culture, from a governmental perspective, has been dominated by market values: on one hand, with the concept, sustained by Berlusconi's fourth government, that "culture does not bring food on the table" and, on the other hand, by Franceschini's strong belief in the economic value of culture and in the exploitability of heritage assets. This discourse, united to the increased attempts of the Ministry to encourage private funding for culture and its substantially conservative approach to cultural policy, characterises the type of cultural value promoted by Italian policy-makers as neoliberal-oriented and not very concerned with issues of access, if we exclude the case of the Bonus Cultura and Matteo Renzi's extraordinary claim that a €500-worth investment in culture for 18-year-olds could prevent terrorism. In the case of theatre policy, the abolition of ETI in 2011 and the lack of any significant reform in the field before 2015 produced a policy vacuum that resulted with the uprising of theatre professionals, as it will be analysed in the following chapter. Furthermore, the 2015 reform did not manage to challenge the status quo of large theatrical organisations and did little to help smaller ones to emerge. Instead, in the area of abandoned heritage sites, a concerning issue for Italian cultural policy, interesting forms of innovation have come up in the form of partnerships between private, public and grassroots agents;

however, it must be noted that these initiatives were created by private actors and that the Ministry only supported them when they were already established projects. Even in the rare cases when it takes part to innovation, the Italian state is a late adapter, in the area of cultural policy.

The next chapter will explore the methodology used for the case studies of Teatro Valle Occupato and Rebeldía, in which the lack of policy support for theatre and the abandonment of heritage sites produced controversial, yet valuable innovative forms of cultural management and urban planning based on the theory of the commons illustrated in Chapter One.

Chapter Three

Methodology

The previous chapters have set the historical and policy context of this doctoral study and the theoretical framework that lie at its basis; informed by the theories presented there, this chapter explains the methodology of this research project, pointing out changes to the original research design that were made as a result of particular contingencies.

This chapter will be devoted to the methods and the challenges of Chapter Four and Five, which contain, respectively, the case study of Teatro Valle Occupato (Rome) and Rebeldía (Pisa). This section will explain the rationale for the selection of the case studies, the methods of the field research and the challenges related to researching occupied spaces.

Research approach

The aim of this doctoral work is not only to understand cultural value from a cultural policy perspective, but also to research those agents that resist mainstream understandings of cultural values and propose their own alternatives. Since 2011, Italy has witnessed the rise of activist groups made up of cultural professionals that openly opposed governmental cultural policies, especially in relation to cuts to the funding for arts and culture, and the official rhetoric of the Italian cultural sphere. I selected the two organisations, The Teatro Valle Occupato (TVO) in Rome and Rebeldía in Pisa, according to criteria of national relevance and diversity of objectives. Both TVO and Rebeldía were important reference points for Italian cultural activists, but for different reasons: Teatro Valle Occupato was the occupation that received the greatest attention from the media, and also the one that managed to offer a high-quality cultural program over a long period of time. Rebeldía, on the other hand, has played an important role as the centre of a network of organisations that pursue the common good and the legal recognition of the commons. The two organisations had different aims: TVO's ambitions were political, but also artistic, as it aimed at managing Teatro Valle as a commons, whereas Rebeldía was more focused on using abandoned spaces as multipurpose commons that offered not only cultural activities, but also a range of services for the local population. The purpose of these case studies, following O'Reilly (2009, p.26) is to identify the

common values and struggles of occupied cultural spaces in Italy, but also to focus on regional differences and diversity of intent of these organisations. In order to understand the values underlying the cultural work of grassroots activist organisations and how they opposed the trends of governmental cultural policies, I originally decided to conduct ethnographic research; however, as I will explain in the following section, I was not able to do so, and eventually based the data collection of both my case studies on participant-observation and interviews. As explained by Madison (2005, p.28), interviews allow a complex and in-depth understanding of the interviewee's experience; in his words, "the beauty of this method of interviewing is in the complex realms of individual subjectivity, memory, yearnings, polemics, and hope that are unveiled and inseparable from shared and inherited expressions of communal strivings, social history, and political possibility". The relation between individual and communal values was a key feature of my research, so semi-structured interviews have been an obvious choice. What I wanted to gather from participant-observation, instead, were the practices of cultural value, meaning the activities, politics and relationships that united the activists in their daily lives. Indeed, the objective of the field research was to understand how the notion of cultural value as a common good is practiced and promoted in the alternative spaces of Teatro Valle Occupato and Rebeldía.

The nature of this research, which is very connected to activism, raises some necessary questions about my identity and my objectivity as a researcher. I would not describe myself as an activist, as I am not formally involved in any grassroots or activist groups. I have taken part to protests in the past, but none of these was directly connected to the occupation of heritage and culturally relevant buildings that started in 2011. In 2010, I have taken part to *L'Onda*, a national student movement that protested against the cuts to funding for higher education implemented by the fourth Berlusconi government; this concern with the value of culture and access to it, however, was indeed at the root of my interest for the work of the organisations I have analysed for my doctoral work. Indeed, the concern for the marketisation of cultural value and the neoliberalisation of everyday life is a grievance that I share with the cultural professionals and activists of the aforementioned organisations. For this reason, my personal perspective towards them is not devoid of sympathy; however, my interest towards is not motivated by ideological support, but rather on my interest alternative forms of cultural value that do

not reflect the individualistic, market-market oriented that characterize the neoliberal discourse on culture. Furthermore, my interaction with these organisations was limited to interviews and “e” (DeWalt and DeWalt, 2011, p.30), therefore limiting any form of collaboration with them. I did not present myself to my interviewees as a fellow activists, but rather an academic who understood their motivations.

Furthermore, as a cultural policy researcher, I think that their experimentations with participatory governance practices and inclusive access policies deserve some scholarly attention; on the other hand, it is also necessary to take into account the (sometimes insurmountable) challenges and the inherent contradictions that characterize these hybrids between activist groups and professional organisations. For these reasons, I believe that despite the ideological concerns that connect me to the activists, my research findings identify not only successful strategies, but also key issues and failures of these movements.

Change in methodology, or coping with unforeseen circumstances

I went to Italy to start my field research on the 22nd of July 2014. On August 10th, the occupants vacated Teatro Valle. This came as a complete surprise to me. During my preliminary meetings with V., one of the occupants, he never mentioned the possibility of the occupants leaving the theatre in the near future. Instead, he had described the future activities of the theatre, suggesting which ones I could contribute to as a participant-observer. Nevertheless, with the benefit of hindsight, I now recognize that I had been myopic: the tremendous success of Teatro Valle Occupato made me overlook how fragile the equilibria of organisations that operate in occupied spaces can be. The evacuation of the theatre happened before I could build a rapport with the occupants. Indeed, I thought I would develop a connection with the occupants whilst on site, enlarging my network over the course of my time spent as a participant-observer. At this point, I was facing two options: discarding Teatro Valle as a case study or trying to recollect and reconstruct what had happened and follow the unfolding of the events after the evacuation of the building. Both options were less than ideal: I could not ignore the importance of Teatro Valle Occupato as a case study, but suddenly changing my methodological strategy was not an easy decision either. However, after discussing the situation with my supervisor, I decided to take Teatro Valle Occupato’s hiatus as an

opportunity to analyse the relationship between the local government and the activists. As a result, I had no options but to try to meet the people I had previously identified as key figures in the organisation of the theatre and interview them.

TVO attracted activists and artists from different parts of Italy: when the occupation was over, many of them moved back to their home cities, or moved outside of Rome in search of new opportunities. This made my quest even more complicated: not only I had to meet these people outside of TVO, but I also had to track them down. In the end, I interviewed three key figures of TVO, who were able to explain to me both the circumstances that led to the occupation and the situation with the local council after they left the building. These interviews, however, were not sufficient for the purpose of my research, and so I decided to attend TVO's post-occupation activities, that is, public assemblies and workshops.

This phase of Teatro Valle Occupato's life was not meant to be its ending: from the occupants' point of view, instead, it was a crucial time of reorganisation and reflection. According to the agreement between Teatro di Roma and TVO, the occupants would soon re-enter the theatre, this time not as intruders, but as legitimate members of staff; but before doing so, the occupants needed to form an official foundation. The status of "foundation" would have acknowledged TVO as a legal organisation and would have made its work much easier: in fact, as a foundation, they could use the funds they had already obtained through their crowdfunding campaign and carry out new fundraising activities, much like other European grassroots organisations, like Têtes de l'Art (Krytyka Polityczna, 2016). The time that followed the evacuation of the building was characterised by a series of assemblies, some of which were open to the public. These assemblies were an important resource for my research as, unlike interviews, they shone a light onto the relationship between the communards, as well as their deepest feelings. During the assemblies, the occupants showed hope, disappointment, rage, solidarity, determination, resignation and, most importantly, conflict.

I also attended two drama workshops, where I became acquainted with TVO's idea of drama education, based on mutual exchange and non-hierarchy.

My research would have benefitted from a deeper rapport with the respondents. Kathleen B. Dewalt et al. (2011) state that rapport is built through shared experiences with the community of interest; in some cases, the researcher has an opportunity to

bond with the respondents by experiencing and overcoming stressful situations, or by demonstrating their commitment to the community (p.268-269). In my field research, I did not have the opportunity to achieve such a connection with my interviewees, especially in the case of TVO.

Since I did not have direct access to gatekeepers in the community, I had two options: I could either introduce myself as a researcher or go incognito. In the case of interviews and participating to workshops, I followed the University of Warwick's ethical guidelines and introduced myself, my research and the purpose of the interviews. Instead, when I observed public assemblies, I simply mingled with the crowd of activists and sympathizers. These assemblies were open to everyone and live streamed on YouTube, so the participants were conscious that anything they said was not confidential. As a result, I had the opportunity to hear the experience of three interviewees (one actor, a lawyer and a director) and to observe the normal activities of TVO in public arenas such as the assemblies and the workshops.

For what concerns Rebeldía, instead, I had the opportunity to interview the same person more than once. I had known my gatekeeper of the community, F., for a few years; we are not close friends but our relationship, in the words of Viditch (1955), helped me with being accepted by the activists as a 'benign presence'.

Taking part in the activities of Teatro Valle Occupato as a communard would have undoubtedly given me a better sense of the organisation's daily life, its struggles and its successes. Nevertheless, I wonder how such a level of participation in the theatre's activities would have changed my perspective. My concern is directly connected to my identity as a researcher: in the field of anthropology, the expression "going native" indicates the complete immersion of the ethnographer in the culture of the community they are studying. This method allows to get a first-hand experience of a community's culture and to try to understand it as closely as possible as an insider. As stated by Barbara Tedlock in her analysis of the importance of narrative ethnography (1991), in some cases researchers engage so much with the culture of a community to the point they identify with it, experiencing a strong cultural change; in some case, they eventually self-identify as "bicultural" (Dalby, 1983, in Tedlock). This strong identification is not untypical for anthropologist (Dewalt et al., 2011, Tedlock, 1991); but what about cultural policy researchers?

For the purpose of this research, I was interested in understanding how cultural value is formed not only through discourse, but also through practice. Would my participation in these everyday practices have affected my analysis? Would I have been able to distance myself from the group dynamics of the organisation and to analyse data objectively? Or would I have projected my own values, feelings and intellectual process onto the other communards? I did not initially put much thought into these questions when I originally planned my research, mainly because of my lack of experience and my still very vague understanding of working and living in an occupied space. However, after meeting the activists and discussing their experience with them, I now understand that occupying and managing a cultural space requires a continuous effort, not only on the practical level but also on the intellectual one; keeping an organisation alive while remaining politically relevant and not “selling out” is most importantly an act of mental balance that has much to do with the individual’s conscience and how they identify as activists and cultural professionals. This is not an easy exercise and requires both self-reflectivity and the ability to communicate one’s views to the whole assembly. From my research, the communards’ experience emerges as a journey that saw both exhilarating and depressing moments, collective intelligence and individual resilience. Given this picture, it is hard to ignore the communards’ emotional labour; if we add to that the average self-reflectivity work necessary to maintain the researcher’s objectivity, I think that my research would have been much more fascinating, but also much harder on the emotional level. Furthermore, the issues of affect and intentionality in my collection and interpretation of data would have been more difficult to carry out, since I would have had to critically reflect on my own work.

As a result of this change in circumstances, I was not able to carry out real ethnographies for my case studies, but I have only used two ethnographic methods, participant-observation and interviews. The following sections illustrate how they have been employed in my research.

Participant observation

Participant observation, as stated by O’Reilly (pp. 157-158, 2009), is an oxymoron: it requires both an insider’s knowledge about the field and an academic detachment from the object of the analysis. The process of participant observation is based on a

continuous tension between objectivity and subjectivity. In fact, the balance between observing and participating is not easy to achieve and mistakes risk to compromise the result of one's research.

Despite the open nature of these organisations, at the time of my research they no longer operated in a single building, and therefore activists were more disconnected from each other. For this reason, I could not always achieve a "rapport", a relationship of mutual trust between the researcher and the participants (O'Reilly, 2009, p.174).

Arthur J. Viditch underlines that respondents always form an image of the field worker and their response is affected by it (1955, p. 355). The identity of the researcher is positioned in a system of social relationships which are essential to the community, and choosing one's position and identity plays an important role in the outcome of the research. In the case of occupied spaces this image is very important: the risk of being considered as a police informer or an "enemy", like a member of an extreme right-wing group who tries to obtain information about the organisation, is high. It is essential, then, to communicate the researcher's genuine interest towards these organisations, and to be very clear about the nature of one's enquiry.

The Teatro Valle and Rebeldía are large organisations that are run on a voluntary basis and welcome people with different backgrounds. Furthermore, it must be noted that it is very common for organisations based in occupied buildings to attract not only people interested in taking part in the protest, but also mere squatters that are looking for a place to stay and are happy to give their contribution for the cause in exchange for shelter. This openness makes basic access to the organisations easy, but when it comes to obtaining crucial information, things get more complicated: identifying key figures inside the organisation is not an easy task, especially when they are not connected to an occupied building anymore. Because of this and other issues I have outlined in the previous section of this chapter, I was not able to build a stable rapport and to take part actively to these organisations' activities. For these reasons, mine can be described as a form of "passive participation" (DeWalt and DeWalt, 2011, p.30); every time I attended workshops and assemblies, I did not take part to them as a participant, but rather observed participants' interactions.

Eventually, I found that the best way to keep updated on the activities of the organisations was to check regularly their social media pages, as they were the most reliable and immediate source of information. This allowed me to be constantly informed about the activities of the organisations and to take part in them as a participant-observer. The hypothesis behind the decision of using participant-observation on the field is based on the idea that informally structured organisations, such as occupied spaces, are sites where there is a continuous evolution and change of values and ideas which it would be very hard to capture through a single series of interviews. Moreover, the illegal status of the occupying community led to another hypothesis. Occupants, in order to legitimise their status and gain the trust of the local community, have to be able to communicate via a variety of different channels. The example of Teatro Valle, that uses social media and gives interviews and press releases regularly to the local press, is excellent to illustrate the importance of sharing information for these organisations. Communication, nevertheless, is a skill and, in this case, a habit: it is possible to hypothesise that they might have a set of “official answers” they commonly share with the media, and that a single interview might not yield any different information to that available from the press. All the information activists choose to share is itself a form of legitimisation of the occupation; what is usually left out from official communication is internal conflict, which I wanted to observe and analyse.

Interviews

For the purpose of this research, I conducted interview sessions of approximately one hour with 5 administrators/occupiers: these interviews are designed to gather information about the relationship between the individual’s notion of cultural value and how it is related to their personal experience and their sense of belonging to the organisation. I designed semi-structured interviews for three key members of TVO and two of Rebeldía, for a total of 9 interviews; I have interviewed some interviewees twice, as a follow-up to particular events, as in the case of the refusal of Pisa’s city council to take into consideration Rebeldía’s proposal for the reutilisation of an abandoned military district.

I have interviewed three men and two women with an age range between mid-twenties and early forties. Despite their common engagement in activism, their background was quite heterogeneous: for example, the case of TVO, I interviewed an actor, a lawyer, and a workshop facilitator. For Rebeldía, I interviewed my gatekeeper, and the leader of the organisation. The selection of the sample was based on practical constraints: as I mentioned earlier, I was not able to meet the occupants while they were delivering their activities in occupied spaces, so I had to rely on my own network to find people connected to them. In both cases, I identified the interviewees by asking for contacts to acquaintances and friends who, at different stages of the occupation, were directly involved in the activities the organisations.

The areas covered by my interviews were the following:

1. The interviewee's personal trajectory towards activism and culture; previous experiences of activism, protests and engagement in artistic and cultural activities.
2. What attracted the interviewee to occupied spaces;
3. The day-to-day activities of the organisation and in what sense they function as a commons;
4. The relationship of the organisation with the audience and the local residents;
5. The relationship of the organisation with the local authorities.

I have also asked questions in relation to specific tasks and projects according to what the person I was interviewing. In terms of data analysis, I first focused on description rather than on conceptualisation, as I wanted to get an understanding of the practical functioning of these organisations and of the background of the people who ran them. Therefore, my interviews allowed me to describe the structure of these organisations some examples of their daily activities. After the completion of my interviews for both organisations, I focused on conceptualising the data I gathered, connecting the examples provided by the interviews with Ostrom's theory of the commons and its possible interpretation in the field of culture. Furthermore, I looked for differences and similarities between the two organisations and identifying key issues and challenges in their management and in their relationship with the local authorities. Given the small number of interviews I collected, I did not use a software to analyse my data.

Qualitative data was collected in the form of field notes during the participant-observation sessions, while interviews were digitally recorded. The sessions were recorded only with the participants' consent and on the understanding that participants could withdraw from the study at any time, in line with the University of Warwick's research ethics code of practice.

Description

The case studies selected for this field work are Teatro Valle Occupato (Rome) and Rebeldía (Pisa). These two organisations share many characteristics: they both are located in occupied spaces, are based on volunteer work, organise and promote cultural events, feature activities that are both an expression of cultural and political struggle, and have a theoretical background largely based on theories of commons. The research involved both the users and the occupiers/administrators of the organisations. With the term "users" I refer to the people who do not volunteer in the occupied spaces but take part in the activities they offer, and are therefore audience members, workshop participants or assembly delegates according to the event they are taking part in. The occupiers/administrators, instead, are the people who actively occupy the structures and/or organise the activities; using a double term is necessary as we are talking about a group that carries out a wide spectrum of tasks and are involved to different degrees in running the organisations.

Teatro Valle Occupato was an organisation led by a group of activists who occupied Teatro Valle, a 18th century theatre in the city centre of Rome, between 2011 and 2014. It is considered as the heart of the protest of cultural professionals in Italy; since its birth in 2011, it has attracted not only popular artists, but also famous scholars such as Ugo Mattei, Salvatore Settis and Stefano Rodotà: the former two are public intellectuals involved in the advocacy of the theories of commons (Mattei is a law professor at UC Hastings and at the University of Turin and Salvatore Settis is the former Director of the Getty Research Institute in Los Angeles and of the Scuola Normale Superiore di Pisa); Rodotà, who passed away in June 2017, was a jurist and a politician. The activities of this organisation are all based in the building of the restored Teatro Valle, forming thus a strongly centralised structure. The life of Teatro Valle Occupato was characterised by a continuous negotiation with the local authorities in order to reach a legal status and

become a no-profit foundation. The occupied theatre and the local Soprintendenza Speciale Archeologia Belle Arti e Paesaggio (Special Superintendence for Archaeology, Fine Arts and Landscape) ⁵ finally reached an agreement on August 10th 2014, when the occupiers agreed to leave the building in order to allow the necessary maintenance work to happen. The theatre is set to become a legal structure where the former occupiers can run their activities, especially those related to socially engaged theatre practice (Giannoli and Favale, 2014). In the meantime, the activities of Teatro Valle Occupato continue in different locations, preparing for a new phase of the life of the theatre (Teatro Valle Occupato, 2014).

Rebeldía's nature, instead, is deeply "rhizomatic". The use of the term "rhizome" comes from Deleuze and Guattari's metaphor for organisations and system of thoughts; as opposed to the prevalent image of the tree,

...(t)he rhizome connects any point with any other point, and none of its features necessarily refers to features of the same kind ... The rhizome doesn't allow itself to be reduced to the One or the Many ... It has neither beginning nor end, but always a middle, through which it pushes and overflows ... The rhizome proceeds by variation, expansion, conquest, capture, stitching ... (T)he rhizome is an a-centred system, non-hierarchical and non-signifying, without a General, without an organising memory or central autonomy, uniquely defined by a circulation of states (Deleuze, Guattari, 1983, in Carter and Jackson, in Linstead, 2004, p.115).

Dynamic structures such as the rhizome have proven central to the organisation of anti-capitalist movements, such as #OccupyWallStreet (Welty, 2013, p.26) and the World Social Forum (Gilbert, 2008, p.146). The rhizome allows for a continuous flow of action without bureaucracy and hierarchy; each member of the organisation has access to the same amount of information and is free to circulate it with no boundaries using their media of choice. This kind of "liquid" organisation allows all the individuals

⁵ Soprintendenza Speciale Archeologia Belle Arti e Paesaggio of Rome is a peripheral body of the Ministry for Cultural Heritage, Activities and Tourism that aims at safeguarding Rome's cultural, artistic, architectural and natural assets.

to take initiatives spontaneously, but all the main decisions are taken as a collective. Moreover, the same organisation is able to operate in different areas at the same time by keeping their members updated, mostly via social media, without being bound to a single space or to a single person.

Rebeldía defines itself as a network of associations, thus a point of connection between legally established groups, but it has always been based in occupied locations. Its status has always been on the edge of the legal as, despite it being an occupying group, it provides useful services to the local community, such as courses of Italian language for immigrants and after school care for children. It is a system composed of many different organisations without leaders or hierarchy where information flows through different channels (a web radio, a website, social media, regular meetings, small publications) and has connections outside the urban space of Pisa. Rebeldía is able to move quickly and to count on the contribution and the expertise of several groups; for these reasons, it plays an important role in the life of volunteers, activists and citizens in Pisa.

It is thus clear that these two organisations, despite their affinities, have a completely different internal organisation and use different ways to spread their ideals. Another crucial difference between the two is that while Rebeldía is based in Pisa, a small town in Tuscany mostly populated by students, Teatro Valle Occupato is instead located in the historical centre of Rome, a few steps away from the tourist-crowded Piazza Navona and, most importantly, to the Cinecittà cinema studios and the many theatres, museums and art galleries scattered around the capital city. A natural consequence of this situation is that their occupiers/administrators and their users come from different backgrounds and, despite promoting similar values, are united by different ideals and aims. The differences between these two organisations make for a good example of the variety of the alternative occupied spaces that exist in Italy and of the ways in which, despite their origin as a form of protest, they try to establish themselves as legitimate cultural organisations and are constantly negotiating their status with the national and local government.

Ethics

The two organisations selected for this field work share, to different degrees, the characteristic of being illegal. Teatro Valle Occupato was born, in fact, of a protest that

started out as a temporary occupation and eventually became a long-term one; its activities as a cultural organisation have never been officially acknowledged by the local and national government, and therefore its status was always an object of debate, dialogue, mediation and dissent. Rebeldía, instead, despite being a network that involves officially recognised and legal organisations, has a long history of occupations; born as a *centro sociale* (see Chapter One) located in an occupied building in Pisa's city centre, it has moved to different locations over the years, one clear-out after the other. The field work in both locations was conducted as an overt participant-observation; this means that the participants were fully aware of my role as a researcher, of the nature of my research and of the fact that I was making records of what happened in these organisations. The overt status of the researcher is necessary to the construction of stable rapport and of mutual trust between them and the participants. The activities of these organisations are usually tolerated by the local government and any confrontation that happened with the police in the past has always been peaceful and cooperative; nevertheless, it was necessary to make it clear to the participants that the researcher is not a police informer and that their identity is not going to be disclosed in the study.

This chapter presented the methodological outline of this doctoral thesis, which was based on interviews, observation and document analysis. The next chapter is a case study of Teatro Valle Occupato, the idea of cultural value it represented and its relationship with national and local authorities.

Chapter Four

Teatro Valle Occupato

This chapter presents one of the most famous examples of occupied cultural spaces in Italy, Teatro Valle Occupato (TVO). This case is particularly interesting because demonstrates that, in a period of economic crisis and withdrawal of the state, cultural workers and activists can produce innovative forms of cultural management and cultural work that is intertwined with the non-violent, yet illegal, protest practice of occupation. Furthermore, it shows how TVO's notion of culture as a commons, helped to develop a broader discussion on both on cultural value and on the role of the commons in Italian legislation. TVO's challenges in having a dialogue with the city council illustrate how cultural value is a battleground where agencies with different political sides and power status can create or dismantle alternative and innovative approaches to culture.

Teatro Valle, designed by the architect Tommaso Morelli, was built in 1727, commissioned by the noble family of Capranica del Grillo. In 1819, Giuseppe Valadier, an architect who was famous for his innovations in theatre acoustics, re-built the theatre (Stefan Grundmann, 1996, p.284). The theatrical offer of Teatro Valle has always been a particularly varied one: between the day of its opening show and 1850, theatregoers had the opportunity to hear the music of Giovan Battista Pergolesi, Giuseppe Verdi and Gaetano Donizetti; but they also had a chance to see a burlesque opera, or a commedia (Martina Grempler, 2012). However, Teatro Valle became particularly famous for the premiere of Luigi Pirandello's *Sei personaggi in cerca di autore* (Six characters in search of an author), in May 1921. The play, because of its revolutionary style and unsettling content, caused a scandal at the time of its debut: the show was ended by the audience screaming with indignation. In 1955 responsibility for the support of theatre went to the Ente Teatrale Italiano (ETI), a governmental body for the promotion of Italian theatre both nationally and internationally; ETI was also in charge of four theatres, including the Teatro Valle in Rome. ETI restored the building and commissioned a new painting for the ceiling. In 1998 the theatre was enlarged and renovated with a cloakroom and a bar (Fernando Bevilacqua, 2011, p. 72). The theatre remained an important cultural institution, hosting famous artists such as Emma Dante, Toni Servillo, Carmelo Bene and Peter Stein.

The year 2011 was particularly difficult for the Italian theatrical sector: the cuts reached -43,52% compared to the expenditure of 2010 (Manfredi, 2011). Most importantly, as explained in chapter Two, this was the year that ETI was shut down. As a result, it was rumoured within the sector that the Teatro Valle, which had been managed by ETI, might close down at the end of the 2010/2011 season. The cuts to public funding for theatre took place in a period of renewed interest for political activism in Italy: as explained in this thesis' introduction, during this time Italy saw the rise of demonstrations and protests led by different groups, including the student movement L'Onda (The Wave) and the movement championing the rights of precarious workers. In this political and economic scenario, the occupation and the subsequent management of Teatro Valle by a group of activists and cultural professionals was not only a signal of dissent, but also a demonstration of the possibility to bring about actual change in Italian culture. Moreover, the now renamed Teatro Valle Occupato (TVO)'s battle to become a legally recognized foundation also meant an attempt to change the Italian law. To this end, the communards collaborated with jurists to design a law on the legal recognition of the commons, and grassroots organisations and social movements interacted with the authorities in novel ways. This chapter will first analyse the way the theatre was occupied and the practical management of TVO, including the organisation's artistic production, its fundraising strategies and its approach to drama education. Secondly, it will compare different versions of the statute of Fondazione Teatro Valle Bene Comune, which is the name of the foundation created by the communards, and which was not recognized by the Prefecture of the city of Rome. Then, it will analyse the language of the communards and the role of affect in their practice. Lastly, the chapter will explore the relationship between TVO and local authorities, and what happened in the aftermath of the occupation.

"I knew that the Valle was going to be occupied", said G., one of my respondents, during one of our interviews. The origin of the occupation lies in a group of theatre professionals known as "Company 3.0". The company was known for introducing its plays with a message for the audience on the hard conditions of cultural professionals in Italy and on the difficulties of making art in such an elitist context as the Italian theatre sector (Salzmann, 2014). As reported in Salzmann's dossier, the idea of occupying the theatre started at first as a seemingly impossible challenge, and then evolved into a

feasible plan. The initial idea, however, was simply to occupy the theatre for a few days, as a demonstration against the funding cuts: what happened next was not expected nor planned for.

Teatro Valle Occupato's book *La rivolta culturale dei beni comuni* ("the cultural revolt of the commons") includes a small section of poetry that summarizes the period that anticipated the occupation of Teatro Valle. The first poem describes the isolation and the deep sense of dissatisfaction felt by theatre workers before they organized into a movement. Actors and directors are described as hopeless individuals who are continuously at war against each other, competing for little sums of public funding, unable to organize a real protest. The first lines of the poem represent the importance of organizing a movement and designing such a bold act as the occupation:

We have occupied the Valle

I have occupied the Valle

I we

Can I be us and can we be me

(p.88, 2012, my translation).

The union of "me" and "us" represents the political importance of TVO as a movement. As stated by Bain and McLean (2013), given the characteristics of artistic work, it can be hard for artists to organize a movement and unionise, since each artistic discipline presents its particular challenges, from self-employment to temporary work. The mobilisation caused by TVO was unprecedented in Italy and brought together a fragmented world where cooperation was not a common practice. These verses describe the process of unification that, in Butler's terms, can be seen as the collective voice of the demonstration: by renouncing their previous artistic and political identity and creating a new, collective one, these artists managed to create a "performativity in plurality", a collective act of self-definition and reclamation of collective rights (Butler, 2009, p.157) generated by their precarious condition. By uniting and reclaiming their existence, they re-appropriated the social nets and the sense of belonging that their social condition had denied them. In short, the occupants used their condition of

dispossession as a tool to bring about change, but also overcame some of the obstacles imposed by that condition by uniting as a collective performative agent.

The rest of the poems mimic the pages of a personal journal. The first entry is dated 30 November 2010: the date is connected to the demonstrations of Onda (the wave), the student movement that occupied the streets, the monuments and the roofs of cities all over Italy to protest against the budget cuts to education. The poem sympathises with the student movement, and connects the artists' hopes to those of the young protesters. The second entry, dated 9 December 2010, describes the birth of the movement of theatre workers: on that very date the parliament confirmed the cuts to the Fondo Unico per lo Spettacolo (FUS), the main funding mechanism for the theatrical sector, which was reduced from 408 to 258 million euro (Paloscia, 2010). The intent of the artists who united against the cuts was to stop using forms of micro-protests organised by small, scattered groups; instead, they wanted to create a large movement that could bring about real change in the sector. The description of their first demonstration, dated 14 December 2010, includes two important passages:

From this moment on from 13.32 of 14 December 2010 you're our enemy to us, from today on we want to definitively empty that palace, from today on all our efforts are made to take away your sovereignty.

From today on we will do what we consider legitimate.

(TVO, 2012, pp.90-91, my translation).

These lines describe the activists drawing a line between their past practices and their future actions. It is clear that the activists decided not to act according to what was legal, but to what was, in their view, legitimate. The Italian word *palazzo*, 'palace', is a common metonymy for state power; here it symbolizes governmental authority. The activists wanted not only to act against this authority, but also to openly challenge it, even wipe it away. This poem also contains a clear distinction between the earlier actions of the activist group and the later ones: the activists stated that they would do what they consider "legitimate", rather than legal. This is a key distinction: the activists were no longer concerned with the legality of their actions, since they no longer had faith in the Italian government and its laws; therefore, they would take back their

sovereignty from an authority they did not recognise as legitimate, even if this meant breaking the law.

The last poems of the collection describe the months of meetings, demonstrations and planning that led to the occupation of Teatro Valle. The informal nature of the movement and the atmosphere of excitement are best exemplified by the last poem, dated June 13th 2011, the day before the occupation. The poem makes clear the intent of taking action, changing things and, most importantly, “do something big” is the main force that drove the activists to the occupation of the theatre, which had been taken into consideration for a future occupation since January of the same year.

It is possible to notice that these poems contain all the elements of a programmatic manifesto; however, instead of being written in a straightforward, energetic and clear prose, as it is common for mission statements, here political activism and objectives are narrated in verses. The poems use the first person, but often switch from the singular to the plural: “I becomes us”, signalling the loss of the individuality and the process of formation of a collective voice. The use of poetry and artistic prose will be a constant feature of Teatro Valle Occupato throughout the occupation.

The moment of the occupation is narrated in the prologue of the book *Teatro Valle Occupato: La rivolta culturale dei beni comuni* (Occupied Teatro Valle: the revolt of the commons). On the morning of June 14th 2011, the activists gathered in Piazza Argentina, which is a short walk away from Teatro Valle, and marched together towards the theatre. They were fully aware of the illegality of their action: however, they felt that the occupation was a way to redefine and challenge the concepts of legitimacy and legality (pp. 7-8). The prologue stresses the centrality of the body in this process and the act of occupation as a way of reaffirming one’s existence and presence. Using Butler’s terminology, we can see the action of occupation as the performative act of a precarious body.

The group of activists did not break into the theatre, as one could have supposed; instead, they knocked on the front door of the theatre and were let in by the maintenance workers who were inside. A girl rang the intercom, and as the keeper opened the door, all the activists entered the theatre; quite surprisingly, the workers who were inside sympathized with them immediately, and a stage technician even

joined the protest (Dossier Valle, p.148). The effortlessness of the occupation process and the immediate solidarity of the technical and maintenance staff of the theatre have raised suspicions about the authenticity of the act and the possibility of a pre-staged stunt. However, the occupiers felt that it was a signal of the legitimacy of their struggle, and their respectful behaviour towards the building and the people who were working there was an indication of their peaceful intentions.

Teatro Valle's occupation can be seen as a performance. Performance is an art form "related to dance and theatre, in which the actions of the body, generally presented 'live' to an audience, are the most important element (Chilvers and Graves-Smith, 2009, par.1)". Indeed, the occupation had an element of staged performance: once the occupants entered the building, they started a three-day long program of live performances and plays. The first public declarations of the activists can be seen as a form of performance too: they knew they would have an audience of journalists and politicians, and therefore what they said was not casual (de Leo, 2011).

The performative value of the occupation can be assessed on several levels: first, as an immediate effect, because, by occupying the building, the protesters created a new organisation and a new life for the theatre. Secondly, it was a change in the theatrical practice taking place in the building: the communards worked in a non-hierarchical way and their productions at Teatro Valle were also particularly daring and innovative, such as the monologue *La Merda* (Shit), directed by Cristian Ceresoli and performed by Silvia Gallerano, which won several awards, including the Fringe First Award in 2012. Lastly, the occupation can be seen as the development of a conceptual model of management based on the commons: a non-hierarchical structure with internal rules.

The activists, by uttering "Teatro Valle is occupied", immediately affected reality: Teatro Valle was no longer a semi-abandoned property of the state, but was under the occupation of a group of theatre professionals. This was the most immediate effect of the performative function of speech; in a similar way to the officiant that transforms a man and woman into husband and wife by declaring them wedded, the occupants changed the status of the theatre by declaring it occupied.

Moreover, the occupation was performative not only because it changed the state of Teatro Valle, but also because it changed its usage, its programme and its very mission.

As the communards started working together in the theatre, Teatro Valle existed no more, and Teatro Valle Occupato was born. Teatro Valle was no longer a theatre destined to be forgotten, or to be turned into a fancy bistro, but a container for political and artistic activism, a place in which to develop performance projects, create a new methodology for theatre didactics, and bring about an in-depth research and an ambitious campaign for a law on the commons. However, what remained intact was Teatro Valle's vocation: the cultural value of the building and of the activities that it was created for was not only respected, but was a crucial point in the activists' manifesto.

Lastly, the occupation of Teatro Valle Occupato entailed a breach in the dual system of private/public that belong to the property *doxa*. For the first time in Italy, a cultural organisation was declared a commons and was managed as such, despite the lack of a system of laws that could support and regulate this change.

The story of G., one of the communards I have interviewed for this project, is useful to understand who the people who occupied Teatro Valle were. G., an actor and director in his late thirties, told me that he was not new to activism: during the last years of the Berlusconi government, he was part of informal groups that were engaged with various forms of protest actions, drawing inspiration from Situationism. He had also been involved in "*Fabbrica di Nichi*" (Nichi's factory), a national activist organisation that was closely linked to the politician Nichi Vendola, leader of the left-wing party Sinistra, Ecologia e Libertà (Left, Ecology and Freedom). However, he was disappointed in seeing how little Italian official politics cared for grassroots activism, so eventually he left that organisation, which had been crumbling apart anyway. He joined a group that united what in Italy is called "*precariato cognitivo*", the "cognitive precariat". This umbrella term refers to the class of highly educated young people who face a condition of precarity and struggle to find employment that matches their academic qualifications. Most importantly, G. is an actor and a director. He started being interested in theatre at high school, and this has remained his main professional interest for the rest of his life. He worked with different companies until he started his own that specialised in theatrical productions for children.

G. was involved with the campaign around the June 2011 referendum; it was a very tiring time for him, so on June 14th he did not take part in the occupation. He joined Teatro

Valle Occupato a few days later, at first out of curiosity. Over time, he became more and more involved: initially he tended to see himself as a quasi-external member, or a supporter; then he decided to help the activists with the occupation, and eventually he decided to stay. The reason behind his growing commitment was that Teatro Valle Occupato was the embodiment of his political struggle, his artistic formation and his passion for theatre. He described the occupation as a place of renewal, where it was possible to “remix the creative language” and where “imagination” could bring about “change in society (my translation)”. For him, Teatro Valle Occupato was a “perfect synthesis” of political and artistic activity. During the first part of the occupation, TVO attracted different people. There were those who “had nothing to lose”, as G. says, and those people who were looking for a job and housing support, as what they had in their life was not enough for them. There were artists who were tired of bad management and the lack of interest towards culture in Italy. The people who stayed, according to G., had the opportunity to develop professionally and to play an important role in the organisation of the commune.

This brief ‘portrait of a communitard’ illustrates the dissatisfaction of young activists and cultural professionals during the years of the economic crisis. On the one hand, many young people found themselves in a condition of cognitive precarity, trying to find a job that met their expectations and, most importantly, that could sustain them financially. On the other hand, this dispossessed class found no answers in traditional political party activism, as the Italian political class has long acted as a privileged caste, completely disconnected from the needs and the ideas of its voters. In this context, for many people Teatro Valle represented at once an opportunity to make their voice heard, an important meeting point, and a place where their ideas could become reality. For artists, it was a chance to work independently, to define their own creative practices and to experiment freely, unconstrained by issues of funding and external control.

One of the most pressing concerns for the occupants was the maintenance of the historical building and how to prevent damages that could ruin the image of the communitards in the public eye. One of the possible outcomes of an occupation is, in fact, vandalism: in recent Italian history, there are several examples of activists who have damaged the building they were occupying. In most cases, it was ascribable to the fact

that the occupants were particularly young and irresponsible, as in the cases of teenage students occupying schools; on in others, the accusation of vandalism is due to the activists' extreme practices, such as setting garbage bins on fire to prevent access to the police (Il Manifesto, 2015). However, when I visited the theatre in May 2014, I found that it was in good conditions. A cleaning rota that, according to G., caused some tensions from time to time, kept the theatre in decent conditions, so that it could be enjoyed by the audience and the communards.

On that day, I had a first conversation with G. in a bar in front of Teatro Valle. He explained that the occupants had a good relationship with that bar, and that the owners and the people working there often helped them. The integration of the communards with the environment surrounding the theatre was a stark contradiction of the typical narrative of centri sociali. Whereas centri sociali are usually located at the margins of the city and struggle to defend themselves from their surroundings – for example, trying to distance local drug dealers and criminals – and often become scenarios of conflict (Ruggiero, 2000, pp.79-80), Teatro Valle managed to create a network of good relations in the glamorous city centre of Rome. The location of Teatro Valle, close both to touristic attractions and sites of power, could have represented a serious issue for the communards: such a radical organisation might have been considered too dangerous for the sake of tourists and, most importantly, politicians. However, Teatro Valle Occupato managed to be accepted by its neighbours. The only dispute they ever had with the local residents was one time when some theatregoers and occupants stood outside of the theatre late at night, drinking and chatting; on that occasion, someone living in the area threw a bucket of water from a window on the people outside the theatre. Teatro Valle even became a tourist attraction; G. said that it was common for him to hear about people coming from outside of Rome to take a look at the occupied theatre, much as they would visit the Coliseum or Piazza di Spagna.

TVO was a prolific site of artistic production. During one interview, G. told me that the aim of the artists inside Teatro Valle was to make contemporary theatre; accordingly, most of the productions by the organisation were not classical plays, but new and original works. Nevertheless, sometimes the program presented also some incursions in

the Italian theatrical tradition, for example opera. In terms of genre, TVO's work focused mostly on applied theatre projects. Applied theatre is

a broad set of theatrical practices and creative processes that take participants and audiences beyond the scope of conventional, mainstream theatre into the realm of a theatre that is responsive to ordinary people and their stories, local settings and priorities. The work often, but not always, happens in informal spaces, in non-theatre venues in a variety of geographical and social settings (...). Applied theatre usually works in contexts where the work created and performed has a specific resonance with its participants and its audiences and often, to different degrees, involves them in it. Frequently those who engage in applied theatre are motivated by the belief that theatre experienced both as participant and as audience, might make some difference to the way in which people interact with each other and with the wider world. For both practitioners and participants there may often be an overt, political desire to use the process of theatre in the service of social and community change (Prentki and Preston, 2009, p.9).

In the Italian context, applied theatre is usually translated with the expression "*teatro partecipato*". In the Italian context, experiences of applied theatre go back to the 1970s, and to Giuseppe Bertolucci's first works. In the contemporary context, one of the most relevant figures of teatro partecipato is the director Mimmo Sorrentino, who has worked with a wide range of social groups: underage immigrants, housewives, convicts, high school kids and people affected by mental health problems (Sorrentino, 2009).

Teatro Valle Occupato's success was not only due to the quality of the works it produced and to the legitimacy of the struggles it represented, but also to its ability to engage with a large, heterogeneous audience. Firstly, they attracted artists and cultural professionals, creating an environment that fostered cooperation and constructive criticism. Secondly, they managed to give a new shape to the theatre's activity, creating a program that despite its avant-garde nature, also drew inspiration from tradition. An example of this continuum between avant-garde, education and tradition is the way TVO engaged with schoolchildren: the program included experimental workshops, but

also an educational course on opera that taught children to sing arias from Giuseppe Verdi's opera "Rigoletto" in 2013, and from Gioacchino Rossini's "Barber of Seville" in 2014.

Over 5000 people subscribed to the Foundation Teatro Valle Bene Comune, raising over 150.000 €. This sum is an excellent result, considering that the subscription campaign was entirely led by TVO alone, using only social media and the website to invite people to raise funds. TVO managed to raise this sum without using any external platform, nor supplementing it with other funding of any sort, neither public, nor coming from private companies. TVO, therefore, made all possible effort to maintain its identity as a commons also with the most problematic managerial issue, fundraising. As it will be explained later in this chapter, the "complicity fee", that is, the subscription fee to Foundation Teatro Valle Bene Comune, automatically makes the donor a member of the foundation; in Ostrom's terms, this quote includes the donor in the group of "appropriators".

The sustainability of TVO's life was entirely dependent on the donation to finance the shows and the workshops organised by the theatre. In general, workshops, as well as the series of post-occupation activities called "Carovana Valle", tended to be free, or to charge a small fee for observation or participation. *Rabbia* (Rage), the creative writing workshop directed by Christian Ceresoli, was free for the participants whose works were selected by a group of examiners; performers and auditors, instead, paid €10 to attend the sessions. Moreover, even when the events were free, the audience was free to make a small donation to contribute to the sustainability of TVO.

Teatro Valle represented an occasion to develop a new teaching methodology for drama outside the Italian academic context. Rome is the most important Italian centre for drama, attracting aspiring actors, playwrights and director from all over Italy. It is the home of Silvio d'Amico National Academy of Dramatic Arts, one of the most ancient and famous institutions in Italy, and of a growing number of drama schools. Rome and its abundance of theatre and theatre schools is perhaps one of the reasons why TVO managed to attract so many people: for many, TVO represented a precious occasion to learn more about acting and playwriting in the capital, without having to pay an expensive academy tuition.

F., the director of TVO I interviewed, told me that Teatro Valle became the place where actors, directors and playwrights could experiment with new forms of teaching and learning. The canon of theatrical higher education, based on the division of the subjects into modules, each of them corresponding to different professional aspirations, was contested and reinvented. Furthermore, the final recital, or *saggio finale*, the staple of theatre education where, at the end of the course, pupils perform a play to an audience, was questioned and reshaped. An example of this process was a series of workshops Crisi (Crisis) led by a notorious playwright, director and actor. My fieldwork began after the end of the occupation, so I had the chance to attend two different workshops organised as part of the initiative “Carovana Valle”. One was an afternoon session in Rome, at Centro Sociale La Strada, and the other a morning session in Genova at Teatro della Maddalena.

The workshops were usually advertised through Teatro Valle’s website and social media platforms and include a call for participants and auditors. The selection criteria for the participants were their CV and a piece of their theatrical writing; as a result, groups tended to be quite heterogeneous, but with a prevalence of people between twenty and thirty years old. People who were not selected as participants were invited to join the workshop as auditors: they could not attend morning sessions, but they still had the opportunity to audit the workshop and discuss their own works in the afternoon. The workshop included playwriting and acting; participants attended the same session and contributed with suggestions and comments to the work of their fellows. From the discussion between the director and the participants, it was possible to understand that the director had a clear artistic vision and aimed to specific learning outcomes; the workshop, however, was based on trial-and-error process, leaving time for the students to try out different possible solutions. Both aspiring actors and playwrights had to follow the director’s directions, who offered a deep textual analysis of the works presented and invited the students to form their own ideas on the meaning of the texts. I attended a morning session in Teatro della Maddalena, in Genova, in 2015, and one in Centro Sociale La Strada, in Rome, in 2014. Teatro della Maddalena and Centro Sociale La Strada were two of the various organisations that, after the end of the occupation of Teatro Valle, offered their spaces to the communards so that they could continue their activities. This allowed the communards to communicate a sense of continuity in their

work after the end of the occupation, and also to engage different audiences outside of Rome, as in the case of Teatro della Maddalena in Genova.

The project treated culture as a commons in several ways. First, it was free and welcomed participants of all ages and educational background. This choice contributed to create a diverse and lively audience, where people with different experiences could have an honest exchange about each other's work. Moreover, this choice changed the usual dynamics of "commercial" workshops, where participants tend to see themselves as customers and therefore want the director to meet their demands. Secondly, the fact that the work of the participants was not formally assessed encouraged a non-competitive atmosphere and collaboration. Significantly, the workshop was focused on process: analysis, creation and debate were the core of the work. In fact, the director chose not to end the workshop with a show, as normally theatre workshops do, but with an extended session of analysis, rehearsal and debate. The final event, called "Assolutamente non un saggio" ("Absolutely not a recital") included the rehearsal of a play and the analysis of the text. By removing the final show, it avoided to present the participants' work as a product. The entry was free of charge, just like the rest of the sessions, presented the same interplay of acting, textual analysis and playwriting.

This kind of drama pedagogy reverses the stereotypical idea of the artist as an isolated genius who is the only judge of his work. In these workshops, students are taught to give and receive feedback, to listen to each other's ideas and to cooperate together in a creative process where there is no hierarchy. This approach has the same methodology of Do It Ourselves Projects, which are based on independent, horizontal collective work, but goes far beyond that; here, the direction of an experienced artist is not seen as a limit, but as an encouragement for discussion. Presenting theatre as a process, instead, gives a new sense to the work of the director: instead of producing a marketable event, he opens up the world of theatre making to his audience. This choice is central to the main reason that led to the occupation of Teatro Valle: the dignity of cultural work. Letting the audience access the production of a play means to make them aware of the complexity of theatrical work: research, creativity, rehearsal, discipline and revision are laid out before the spectator's eyes. At this point, the boundary between audience and participant is blurred out: just like the people on the stage, spectators are called to use

their critical sense, their artistic sensitiveness and their imagination. The creative process is celebrated and shared with everyone, giving dignity not only to the creative works that happens on stage, but also to the one that takes place before the show.

TVO and the commons

It is legitimate to wonder where the idea of TVO as a commons comes from. As we have seen previously, the concept of commons was particularly popular among Italians in 2011, thanks to the referendum on the privatisation of water. The discussion, however, was not limited to activism: the project of creating a law on the commons can be traced back to 2007. In the Italian Constitution it is possible to spot a glimpse of the principles that lie at the basis of the theory of the commons. Article 43 states that the law can expropriate and private enterprises and transfer them to a community of workers, if that is done for the sake of the common good. Article 43 was originally thought as an instrument for nationalising private enterprises should they act against the common good, but the wording of the article opens up new possible scenarios.

The design of a law on the commons started with the Rodotà commission for a modification of the laws of the Civil Code on public property. The commission was established by the Ministry of Justice in 2007, but the first proposal for creating a commission on the subject had already been submitted by a group of scholars in 2003. The idea of a revision of the Civil Code was born in 2006 at the prestigious Accademia dei Lincei, where property law scholars had gathered for a conference. Over the years, the proposal was subject to several changes, but the key point, that is the distinction between public property, private property and commons remained intact.

As was the case for G., several activists who joined the occupation of TVO had been directly involved in the 2011 referendum campaign “Water as a commons”, but also belonged to the world of the cognitive precariat. TVO was the meeting point of two different causes: one, the dignity and the rights of cultural workers; the other, the legalisation of commons in the Italian civil code. The two campaigns fused into a management vision that had many objectives, from a new way of thinking about theatre making, to promoting unity and sociality.

The idea of managing the theatre as a commons and of making Teatro Valle the centre of public debate on the topic, both at a national and international level, is reflected in TVO's statute. This document was born during one of the round tables held during the early phase of the life of TVO: at the time, the communards felt the need to create a program that officialised the occupation as the birth of a new cultural organisation. TVO describes its statute as a *statuto partecipato*, "participatory statute". This document was not a set of regulations imposed by the first occupants, but instead was the result of a process of consultation between the different groups taking part in the commune. Moreover, the statute was object of continuous revisions; external pressures caused the communards to change several points of their work, as the need to meet the favour of the local government became more and more urgent.

J., the activist and lawyer who helped TVO with its legal procedures told me that the first version of the statute defined the foundation as a political organisation, aimed at the promotion of the commons. Indeed, from its beginning, TVO had not been a merely artistic organisation, but one that had a deep political nature that brought together the promotion of the commons and the safeguard of artistic workers. An early version of the statute, published in TVO's 2012 book *La rivolta culturale dei beni comuni* (The cultural revolt of the commons), clearly reflects the radical nature of the communards. The articles of the statute are preceded by a preamble that vindicates the political and cultural struggle of the communards, which is seen as a form of "resistance against social commodification and decadence" (2012, p. 59). Moreover, the occupation is described as the re-appropriation and the restitution to the public of the theatre; all the actions of Teatro Valle Occupato, therefore, are legitimised by the communards, even those that are not legal. This preamble is described as the only part of the participative statute that is not subject to change because it is the result of a long series of participatory meetings and every single word in it has an important, well thought out meaning. The registered address for the foundation is set exactly in Teatro Valle; the communards reclaim its management under their new legal form. This statute, indeed, is pervaded by the idea that the communards are entitled to the full management of the theatre. Moreover, it is clearly stated that the foundation must be seen as the natural continuation of the Teatro Valle Occupato Committee, the provisional organisation that was in charge of running the theatre during the occupation (2012, p.59).

Over the years, the statute was edited several times. A copy I acquired in April 2015 in Rome during *Respiro* (breath), a series of events led by the communards after the evacuation of Teatro Valle, shows some major changes from the one of 2012. Since the early version of the statute, some major changes were made in order to improve the activists' possibilities to be recognized as a legal institution. First, the preamble, which had been described as the most important and immutable part of the statute, had completely disappeared. The vindication of the occupation, the importance of the communards' struggle, and the idea of TVO as a resistant agency against a decaying sociality cannot be found on the handout distributed by the communards inside Angelo Mai, an occupied space in Rome that organises cultural events. In general, the connection between the occupation and the foundation have disappeared: it is possible to think that the authorities did not like the explicit mention of the illegal past of the communards in the official document of the foundation. However, the later version of the statute presents a particularly problematic issue: article 4.1, point a, states that the foundation can cooperate with "movements, associations, struggle committees, informal communities and all the autonomous and constitutive institutions, and independent and self-managed spaces" (TVO, 2015). This point is a clear statement of solidarity towards *centri sociali* and other occupied spaces all over Italy, which, just like Teatro Valle used to, work in an illegal context. This reference to illegal organisations was seen as a daring move for a foundation that was attempting to become legal itself; however, the communards decided to maintain this position because, as it will be discussed later, the solidarity of *centri sociali* and *spazi occupati* was fundamental for the continuation of their activities after the occupation.

If we analyse the objectives of the foundation as proposed in this document, it is interesting to notice that the first one listed is not broader than the promotion of culture as a commons:

the preservation, the safeguard and the valorisation of the historical and artistic heritage of Italian theatres, locations of cultural activities, abandoned or neglected spaces that are perceived by the community as a common heritage, and also the preservation and the valorisation of the cultural heritage that Teatro Valle has expressed and built during its history,

since the year of its foundation (1727) in every sector and area of the performative arts (TVO, 2015, 3.2., point a).

This change of primary mission is an interesting development of the communards strategies. Whereas in the early version of the statute the right to manage the theatre was motivated by a sense of entitlement deriving from the occupation of the building, here it is justified as a part of a broader spectrum of intents. Furthermore, by setting the safeguard of “abandoned” and “neglected” spaces in general as their main objective, the communards open up the possibility of managing a theatre or a cultural organisation not necessarily located inside Teatro Valle. This links to another important modification: the change of registered address. The foundation cannot be officially established inside Teatro Valle, as the former communards have no official access to it anymore. In this document, the location is simply “Rome”, with no address specified; it is possible to infer that this detail must be a provisional one, and that is bound to change as soon as the communards find another space. The problem of finding a fixed location might seem a small issue, but it was a major problem for the communards after the occupation, as it slowed down their attempts to become a legal foundation.

One of my interviewees, J., explained to me that in the initial period of the occupation featured the organisation of “round tables” (*tavoli di lavoro*), working sessions where occupants and sympathizers were invited to design the organisation’s agenda in a given area. The round tables covered a variety of topics: the statute of the foundation, the Agorà program for public assemblies, artistic choices, work ethics, and the theatre program for children. The practice of “round tables” is a form of participatory democracy that is particularly successful with urban activism; in fact, it makes it possible to channel different opinions into a single decision-making process by focusing on a single issue and reporting the final decisions to the rest of the assembly. This work strategy remained a constant element of TVO during the years of the occupation; in fact, the workload of managing the theatre and organising events was divided into groups who would work together on a single project. It is possible to notice that this organisational structure is not hierarchical: the occupation did not have a leader. Moreover, as will be discussed later, one of the missions of TVO was to find new methods to teach drama and theatrical professional skills. TVO offered continuous opportunities for professional training and,

on some occasions, integrated its students into its activities giving them an opportunity for professional development.

In the 2012 version of the statute, the only authority in TVO is represented by the “Consiglio dei 12”; this decision-making body is composed of twelve of the founding members of the commune and has the duty to discuss the issues raised by the different working groups and to work using consensus decision-making. In fact, this version of the statute envisions a large assembly of foundation members with voting powers that is in communication with this smaller group that can work efficiently with consensus-based methods.

The idea of a smaller group of associates with decision-making duties is present also in the 2015 version of the statute, under the name “soci fondatori” (founding members). In this version, however, the role of this group of members is much more limited, in comparison with the precedent statute. In this version, the main difference between associates is the distinction between “supporters” and “communards”. This distinction was mentioned also in the early version of the statute, but here the difference between the two is more detailed. Supporters can take part in assemblies, but cannot take part in regular decision-making meetings. They can only express their views once a year, when they can vote on the approval of the accounts of the foundation. Inversely, communards have the obligation to take part actively in the management of the theatre, and have decisional power in all assemblies. This revised structure, which is quite closer to the real decision-making process in use in Teatro Valle during the occupation, gives more power to those members involved with the daily management of the theatre and less responsibilities to the sympathisers, making the distribution of power inside of the foundation more balanced.

Consensus was a fundamental characteristic of the life of TVO during the occupation. Decisions were always taken as a unanimous group, and not by voting. As it is stated in the statute, the communards see voting as the imposition of a majority over a minority; therefore, it cannot be the appropriate democratic tool for managing a commons (TVO, 2012, p.68). This democratic process, however, was not always an efficient method: as stated by G., during the occupation some communards grew frustrated with the long and extenuating decision-making sessions, and eventually left the commune. G.

admitted that this method can be very conflictual and even utopian, and that it can also generate stressful group dynamics. In the 2012 version of the statute, the communards had expressed awareness of this criticism, and replied with the slogan “let’s take the time for democracy back” (*riprendiamoci i tempi della democrazia*).

The dossier about Teatro Valle Occupato published in the Italian academic journal *Teatro e Storia* includes a detailed dictionary of the most used terms of the communards (di Tizio, 2013, pp 189-195). This section is an analysis of some of the terms used by Teatro Valle Occupato to explain their activities, their theoretical foundations and their legitimacy.

Comune, comunardo

Teatro Valle Occupato drew inspiration from the Paris Commune, the government formed by the citizens of Paris between March and May in 1871, which was then repressed by the Thiers government. The Paris commune itself was shaped upon the 1793 government installed by the French Revolution, taking inspiration from the principles “of égalité, fraternité and solidarité”. The commune established by TVO replicates the principles of self-government, democracy, laity and respect for workers that characterised the popular government of Paris during Thiers’ mandate. The word commune (in Italian, comune), however, in the Italian context evokes also more recent scenarios. Communes were made popular in the 1960s by the freak, or hippie, countercultural movement. Between the Sixties and the Seventies, Italy absorbed the influences of youth culture and underground, freak and punk movements coming from Britain and the USA, resulting in local expressions of self-government and DIY organisations. Some of the most dynamic areas of experiments with cohabitation, collective production and radical activism were the areas between Tuscany and Emilia-Romagna. Bologna and the local university, in particular, were one of the epicentres of Italian youth culture of the time. However, within TVO, the term despite still being charged with its romanticised 1960s meaning, aims to describe a new concept: the community that has access to a commons and manages it. In fact, in TVO’s documents, the term “comune” is used to address the whole group of the communards not simply as inhabitants of a space, but also as its managers. It is possible to define the word communards as a particular variation of Elinor Ostrom’s term “appropriators”, that is, is

the term used to define everyone that subtracts resource units from a resource system. The term “appropriators”, nevertheless, might give rise to issues of legitimacy, as in everyday language it can have a negative connotation; “communards”, instead, is more politically connoted, but does not evoke the ghosts of colonialism, illegitimacy and violence.

Lavoro (work)

One of the main driving forces behind the occupation of Teatro Valle was the exigency of opposing governmental cuts to culture, and to defend the right to fair working conditions for the professionals of the theatre sector. The campaign for the right to a fair pay was brought about not only by the creative and cultural professionals, but by the larger group of the Italian precariat, which constituted a particularly active activist group during those years. It is for this reason that Teatro Valle found sympathy also outside of the creative class.

Quota di complicità

The “complicity fee” of Teatro Valle Occupato is the quota that members pay to become part of the foundation. The term “complicity” is an important indicator of what it means to support TVO and what its relationship to audiences and governance is. First, the term complicity acknowledges the illegality of the condition of Teatro Valle. By declaring oneself an accomplice of Teatro Valle Occupato, one does not only show sympathy for its communards, but also identifies as a collaborator of the occupation. It is a lower level of engagement than that of the communards, but it is still more significant than the passive role of the audience member. However, the term complicità in Italian also refers to couples, family members or friends: when two people are affectionate, mutually supportive, and share secrets and memories, they are said to be *complici* (accomplices). According to this meaning, supporting TVO does not only involve political engagement and a small financial donation, but also an emotional investment. TVO is not only a place where to enjoy high quality theatre, but also a community where people are united by shared values. The status of *complice* does not bring particular advantages, like the free admission to shows or glamorous parties, as in the case of museum memberships. In fact, Teatro Valle Occupato’s audience is radically different from the figure of the *abbonato*, the person who buys a season ticket, perhaps every year as it is often the

case in Italy. In the Italian context, the word *abbonato* evokes a middle class, elderly member of the audience with a preference for mainstream productions, for whom going to the theatre represents a symbol of cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1989). This stereotypical audience member does not engage with what they are watching, but sees the theatre as a place of social gathering for people with similar cultural and economic capital. When it comes to cultural taste, the *abbonato* prefers well-known plays, mainstream productions, a conservative style of directing and famous actors. The *complici* of Teatro Valle Occupato, instead, have a radically different role: first, they are not passive users of TVO, but they have the right to influence its activities and have a say on important issues, such as the statute of the foundation and its legalisation. Secondly, if they want, they can join the occupation, or contribute to the organisation of the activities: the boundary between audience member and member of TVO is a very elastic one and every level of engagement is welcome. The use of the word *complicità* is the expression of the importance of affect in TVO's relationship with its audience, as will be analysed later.

Vocazione

The term "vocation" in Italian has different nuances of meaning. First, it is a "call" that encourages people to take a religious or professional path. It has a mystical connotation and presumes that a person's destiny is predetermined by an external, powerful force. Another important meaning of this word is to be found in the legal sector: "*vocazione d'uso*", or vocation of use, is the purpose for which a building has been erected. The relevance of the vocation of use has become increasingly relevant in contemporary Italian cultural policy, as many buildings that used to host cultural organisations, or in some case even relevant heritage sites, are becoming something else. For the purpose of the analysis of TVO, the most relevant case is the transformation of the theatre Smeraldo in Milan into one of the venues of Eataly, a high-end food and catering company owned by the entrepreneur Oscar Farinetti. The new purpose of the building raised many concerns, as summarised by Roberto Ciccarelli's article on *La Furia dei Cervelli*'s website. The theatre, which used to be one of the few private cultural organisations in Italy, in 2007 became one of the various projects of urban regeneration designed by Farinetti, who is famous for using abandoned urban spaces as a location for his shops. Eataly is a luxury brand that aims to become the symbol of Italian gastronomic

excellence in the world; however, its labour practices and its relationship with the Italian government have been often criticised for being dubious and unfair (Ciccarelli, 2012). Most importantly, activists have demonstrated their dissent towards the transformation of a cultural site into an expensive supermarket where there is no space for artistic expression by organising a flash mob in May 2014. In this case, the vocation of use of the building has not been respected: despite Eataly's program of cultural activities, such as book launches (Eataly, 2017) Farinetti's shops represent a "beautiful, clean, well-kept world (...) where there is no space for disorder, criticism and dissent", as stated by the activists (Ciccarelli, 2012). It is relevant to notice that, before the occupation, in Rome there were rumours around a possible new life for Teatro Valle as an Eataly shop. The activists have prevented the possibility of seeing it transformed in the umpteenth location of the elegant food brand by transforming it into a place dedicated exactly to "disorder, criticism and dissent" (idem). In this light, we can see that TVO used the term "vocation" to justify their occupation not only on a legal level, but also on a metaphysical one: Teatro Valle's vocation is to be used for cultural purposes, the communards' mission is to make it possible.

As we can see from this analysis, the vocabulary of Teatro Valle is charged with emotional meaning. Indeed, if we analyse the success of TVO in mobilising supporters, we can see that affect plays an important role in shaping the relationship between the two.

The term "affect" is used according Deborah Gould's definition as a "nonconscious and unnamed, but nevertheless registered, experiences of bodily energy and intensity that arise in response to stimuli impinging on the body" (2009, p.19). However, affect should not be considered simply as a trigger for irrational behaviour; in fact, affect is not contrary, but outside cognitive sense-making (p.24). The difference between emotions and affect is that emotions are cognitively recognizable and can be named; affect, instead, belongs to the sphere of the unconscious and has neither positive, nor negative value. Affect is merely "energy" and "intensity"; it is impossible to evaluate, as it is not rationally classifiable.

Gould describes the role of affects in organising, expanding and legitimating social movements:

Social movement contexts provide a language for people's affective states as well as a pedagogy of sorts regarding what and how to feel and what to do in light of those feelings. Movements, in short, "make sense" of affective states and authorize selected feelings and actions while downplaying and even invalidating others (pp.35-36).

Gould's aim is to broaden the causes of human action, and more specifically, for political activity, outside of the cognitive sphere. Affect, according to the author, is a term used "to preserve a space for human motivation that is nonconscious, noncognitive, nonlinguistic, noncoherent, nonrational, and unpredetermined—all qualities that I argue play a role in political action and inaction" (Gould, 2009, p.23). In fact, complex affective states, such as anger and grief, are given a new meaning and analysed in a political light. For example, the condition of precariousness, in the sense of a condition of vulnerability, and precarity, which is to be understood as the condition of precarious workers, described by Butler has not only objective, quantifiable effects on the life of the precariat, but also affects their emotional life with feelings of fear and anxiety. Joining a movement that fights to see the rights of precarious workers recognised can give a new meaning to this affective state, thus moving the precariat to action.

Gould uses Bourdieu's concept of habitus for her analysis of affect and social change. The concept of habitus was used by Bourdieu in his explanation of social reproduction: the habitus is the socially constituted understandings that are considered obvious and common sense in a social group (Bourdieu, 2005). The habitus does not affect only our cognitive faculties, but also our body; in fact, it can be considered as a form of bodily knowledge, a noncognitive "incorporation", in Judith Butler's words (1997, p.154). Habitus becomes a "second nature", a sense of obvious that trespasses the cognitive field and becomes embedded in the body's immediate response. Moreover, the habitus influences not only individual, but also collective behaviours.

Operating beneath conscious awareness, the emotional habitus of a social group provides members with an emotional disposition, with a sense of what and how to feel, with labels for their feelings, with schemas about what feelings are and what they mean, with ways of figuring out and understanding what they are feeling. An emotional habitus contains an

emotional pedagogy, a template for what and how to feel, in part by conferring on some feelings and modes of expression an axiomatic, natural quality and making other feeling states unintelligible within its terms and thus in a sense unfeeling and inexpressible (Gould, 2009, p.34).

The concept of habitus, therefore, is not limited to social behaviour, but also to the field of emotions. In fact, Gould uses the term “emotional habitus” to extend this concept to the field of feeling (idem):

a habitus might be instrumental in generating social change. Social movements, for example, generate schemas of perception, ways of understanding the world, sentiments—habitus—that dispose participants to question the status quo and to engage in specific forms of activism and other movement practices that can lead to social transformation (p.36).

Affect, therefore, can operate on a social group’s emotional habitus and be able to prompt engagement in activism. In particular, affect can be a determining factor when activism is linked to the arts. Bleiker (2009, in Ryan, 2015) explains how activists can be moved by forms of affect that are connected to artistic practice.

(...) certain historical junctures, moments of crisis and transition, communities or indeed entire societies may experience a gap or pause in comprehension brought on by the lack of adequate categories for describing and processing the phenomenon at hand. In these instances, acts such as painting and musical composition can perhaps enable us to express compulsions that we cannot yet verbalise. Their non-linguistic character here offers something unique. It is possible to consider too, the ways in which affective states might be transmitted through sensory contact with visual or aural interventions, and how moods can carry, infect and absorb us in ways that we are not immediately attuned to (p.46).

In particular, Holly Ryan argues that when affective states are generated by crisis and incomprehension, they might prompt valuable artistic and political responses (2015, p.56).

The occupation of Teatro Valle can be seen exactly as a political and artistic response provoked by an affective state connected to a period of deep crisis. The movement that eventually led to the occupation of Teatro Valle was able to make sense of various affective states deriving from different issues: precariousness, social inequality, preoccupation with the future of the arts and of public property in Italy. This is evident from the diaries published in Teatro Valle's book *La Rivolta Culturale dei Beni Comuni*: the lyrical description of the months of tension, anger, anxiety and disappointment make it clear that the activists were experiencing complex affective states.

Affect continued to play a significant role also in the development of TVO: arguably, the work of TVO and its relationship with the audience was prompted by affect. If we analyse the phenomenon of the occupation, the logic behind it is far from the notion of economic rationality that, according to neoliberalism, is supposed to lie at the basis of human reasoning. First, the activists risked putting their whole career in danger and facing criminal charges; moreover, the occupation of the theatre did not provoke a significant improvement in the economic condition of the activists. The audience also behaved in a non-economically rational way; as a matter of fact, instead of condemning the activists for seizing a public property, they supported their struggle, even if it did not affect them personally. It is possible to think that TVO elicited this affective response of support with their artistic and political activities. Since the start of the occupation, Teatro Valle Occupato experimented with the interplay of social and political activism, and the arts; using performance as a medium to spread political messages can be seen as a way of transmitting affective states, as stated by Holly Ryan (2015, p.46).

In particular, TVO distinguished itself for its use of language. Even the statute of TVO has a lyrical introduction, and all its public messages, spread through the Internet or at press conferences, make a large use of literary or poetical language. The language of the activists is contaminated by that of the artists: as a result, their message is delivered in a way that affects not only the rational, cognitive level of the reader, but also their subconscious sphere. Moreover, Teatro Valle Occupato represented a form of immersive activism that engaged people's private and public life. The occupation was a public action, but, as stated by the activists, the physical aspect of the occupation was a crucial part of the process. The group of activists is described as "one, expanded,

molecular body” (TVO, 2012, p.7). The “body” is another recurring theme of the language of TVO, which is used to designate both a public and a private dimension. In fact, the relationship between audience and artists is described by the communards as physical relationship:

The common ground between arts and politics is experimentation: both create new forms, of life and language. The way of understanding the audience changes: the relationship between subjects that take part to an event of creation is not equitable to the category of supplier–user, but to that of mutual enjoyment. (TVO, 2012, p.13).

This interplay of the private and the public, the political and the aesthetic can also be seen in Teatro Valle’s artistic production. One the artistic projects of TVO that best exemplifies this is called *Tutto il nostro folle amore* (all of our crazy love). The inspiration is drawn from Pierpaolo Pasolini’s 1963 film *Comizi d’amore* (translated as “Love meetings” for the foreign market, but literally translated in “Love speeches”), a documentary where the director investigates the ideas of love and sexuality in Italy. It was the first attempt at conducting a public enquiry into the Italian sphere of sex and affection, and at analysing intimacy and politics in a film. “Al vostro amore si aggiunga la coscienza del vostro amore”, meaning “shall the awareness of your love be added your love”, is a sentence from the film that has been reprised by the communards in the report on their project in order to give a sense of their work between public missions and private desires. In the words of the comunards: “Drawing inspiration from Pierpaolo Pasolini’s “Love meetings”, that extraordinary oxymoron between the public action and the intimate sphere, we imagine some “moments” in which to ask questions, open up confrontation, and foster sharing (TVO, 2014)”. Similar to Pasolini’s documentary, “Tutto il nostro folle amore” investigates issues of privacy, affect and public; however, the focus of the research is the city as a site of socialisation and as a commons.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, TVO was the object of harsh criticism from representatives of different political parties. Premier Matteo Renzi criticised their management methods as “unsustainable” and promoted instead different kinds of interventions on the heritage sites of Teatro la Pergola, in Florence, when he was mayor of the town (Boccacci and Giannoli, 2014). La Pergola, a historical theatre in the city centre of Florence, faced

serious risks of closing down when the funding body Ente Teatrale Italiano was abolished in 2011. Florence city council, whose mayor was Renzi at the time, created a foundation in partnership with the Ente Cassa di Risparmio di Firenze, a bank, and took charge of the management of the theatre (Toscana Oggi, 2011). In this case, the change in management and the reopening of the theatre, which was seen by Renzi as a process of “salvation of culture”, was a top-down process, where all decisions were made by two of the most important power agencies in the town: the city council and a local bank. The foundation does not represent a significant change in cultural policy, as it reflects the Italian preference for publicly managed cultural organisations, and the recent push towards substantial private investments in culture. The foundation expanded over time, encompassing the management of another long-forgotten Florentine theatre, the Niccolini. This form of “rescue” of culture is a top-down approach, based on the cooperation between the public sector and private firms that aims to create solid, centralised cultural organisations that manage several different theatres.

As concerns the relationship of TVO with the local council, this was at times contradictory. When the activists occupied the building, the then city council member for culture, Dino Gasperini, stated that the theatre was not going to close, and that the occupants would take part in the creation of a special public call for bids to establish Teatro Valle’s new management (Benedettini, 2011). One of my interviewers stated that during the occupation, the local council never tried to forcefully evacuate the building and only threatened to do so on a couple of occasions. Quite surprisingly, the city of Rome kept paying Teatro Valle’s electricity bills for the whole period; this allowed the artists to carry on their activities regularly and alleviated the pressure of covering part of the costs for the maintenance of the theatre.

The relationship with the local authorities was a very relaxed one. During one of our interviews, G. explained that the police only came to TVO on two occasions: one time, someone who was driving in front of the theatre started an argument with one of the communards; another time, the police was simply helping to direct the traffic around the theatre, as the area was hosting an event with street artists and was very crowded.

However, during the summer of 2014 Teatro Valle Occupato received an ultimatum from the municipality and eventually, on August 11th, the communards (not

unanimously) decided to leave the building. The ultimatum was the result of a period of consultations, as it will be analysed at the end of this chapter.

Teatro Valle gained the support of famous Italian performing artists and intellectuals, such as Moni Ovadia, Pippo Delbono, Marco Travaglio, Silvio Orlando, Luca Zingaretti, Stefano Bollani, Jovanotti, Peppe Servillo, Elio De Capitani, Franco Battiato, Cesare Ronconi, Roberto Benigni and Dario Fo, but also of international artists, such as Peter Stein. The attraction for Teatro Valle experienced by well-known Italian cultural professionals can be explained by the general dissatisfaction with the Italian government's attitude towards arts and culture and by the frustration of artists and intellectual with mainstream cultural institutions. In this scenario, Teatro Valle Occupato represented an exciting new way to talk about theatre, politics and the arts.

TVO, despite being positioned outside the system of Italian cultural organisations, was awarded national and international prizes. In 2011 TVO received its first award by the Italian environmentalist association Legambiente, for its engagement with the promotion of the commons. The second award of 2011 was the Ubu Prize, for proving the possibility of theatre as a commons. The Ubu Prize was created by the theatre critic and journalist Franco Quadri in 1979 and acknowledges the most interesting contribution to the Italian theatrical scene. Lastly, TVO was awarded the Salvo Randone prize, known as the "Academy Prize of Italian theatre", in 2011, for its contribution to Italian culture. This series of awards demonstrates the interest of Italian cultural organisations and activist association towards TVO; moreover, it is interesting to see that its clandestine condition did not affect its early success. TVO's success echoed beyond the Italian borders, being acknowledged also by international organisations: in 2012, TVO won the Euromed - Anna Lindh prize, awarded by an intergovernmental institution for Mediterranean countries, for uniting arts and civil engagement. In 2014, it was the time of European Cultural Foundation's prestigious Princess Margriet Award, for its engagement in building a cultural commons. These achievements are impressive, if we consider that TVO was a short-lived organisation, and that it had little chance to partake in official national and international competitions. These prizes played a significant part in legitimising the *communard's* work and in proving that the occupation had effectively produced a positive contribution to Italian culture.

Teatro Valle Occupato was also subject to harsh criticism, both inside and outside the theatre world. The main cause of disapproval was due to the action of occupying a public theatre. To some commentators, this action was not a form of re-appropriation serving the common good, but a sort of theft. For example, the journalist Paolo Fallai stated that the *communards'* management of the theatre, instead of being inclusive, was a tool of exclusion: the occupants, according to the author, were a minority that's appropriated a public asset (2012).

This criticism is closely linked to another cause of contestation of TVO, namely its closed, self-referencing attitude. According to an activist I interviewed in Pisa, TVO failed to become fully embedded in the network of autonomous organisations, occupied spaces and no-profit organisations working on culture and commons. This person found that Teatro Valle, despite its large success, did not show sufficient interest in smaller organisations with similar interests elsewhere in Italy. On some occasions, this lack of communication and mutual exchange was perceived as the result of TVO's sense of self-sufficiency and self-centredness. This attitude is in stark contrast with the philosophy behind the commons, which is based on sharing resources and creating networks. This sense of isolation of Teatro Valle Occupato evoked in some commentators the image of the artist's ivory tower that keeps them far from everyday concerns and protects their precious art. Teatro Valle, despite its efforts to become a commons and engage in forms of applied theatre, according to journalist Marianna Rizzini, completely failed to engage with the local population (2014). Rizzini's vitriolic article, published in the newspaper "Il Foglio" published shortly before the evacuation of the Valle, assesses the whole period of the occupation as a failure. Gabriele Lavia, a notable Italian theatre director, at first supported the occupation, but over time criticised the occupants and the lack of strength of the local council. "The mayor was afraid to do something not leftist enough – even if he belongs to a right-wing party", stated the director (Favale, 2014).

Much of this criticism is rooted in one of the most complex issues surrounding the building of a commons: defining the appropriators. According to Fallai, the occupation of the theatre took away a public space from the citizens; however, the writer and activist Christian Raimo points out that the appropriation of the theatre was not a process that only involved the occupants, but also the 5600 subscribers to the

foundation and all the people who visited the theatre (Raimo, 2014). It is overly simplistic to see the occupation as an isolated action of a group of cultural professionals; it was rather a collective action that involved thousands of people and cannot be minimised as a shenanigan of a gang of activist who, according to Lavia, “needed some spanking” (Favale, 2014).

As analysed previously, artists and cultural professionals in the past have used DIO as a tactic to respond to the commodification of culture and to artistic precarity. From this perspective, TVO can be seen as the ultimate DIO project: the activists not only created their own working practices, but even occupied a theatre to use as their working space. The very nature of TVO, despite the high quality of its productions, can be seen as process-based. As noted earlier, the theatre ran a series of events that focused on participation and arts as a process, not as a commodity. However, one of the characteristics of DIO organisations is being managed by “prosumers” (Ruggiero, 2000, p.176). Prosumers are “producer-consumer located in an independent social niche where work serves the immediate needs of those inhabiting it” (Bonomi, 1996, in Ruggiero, 2000, p. 176). In centri sociali and similar occupied spaces, the occupants are at the same time, producers and consumers. Collaboration is highly valued, but what is produced usually is only available to members of the organisation. Teatro Valle Occupato had a radical political and critical nature and often showed that it felt closer to the sphere of centri sociali and so-called antagonistic organisations than to those of theatres and other cultural organisations. However, Teatro Valle Occupato went beyond the DIO and “pro-sumer” stance of centri sociali, managing to open up to a wide group of people beyond activists. In fact, many productions of TVO were not only enjoyed by people who were not communards, or even activists, but by simple theatregoers. The key people making things happen at the TVO were in fact professional theatre makers, which is also an important difference from standard occupied space where a more diverse set of people with different background and professional skills come together. Moreover, many of those productions were reproducible cultural products that could survive outside of the occupation context.

After the occupation

The official deadline for the evacuation was set on July 31 2014. However, the occupants eventually left the building on August 10: this period of prolongation of the occupation is usually referred to by the occupants as “32-40 July”: by virtually adding days to the month of July, the occupants ironically underlined the precariousness of that time, but also their will to extend that period to be able to leave the building when they wanted to.

The end of the occupation was not the result of a forceful action by the local government, but the product of a negotiation between the local council, TVO and Teatro di Roma. Teatro di Roma is a cultural organisation is a publicly funded association that manages two famous theatres, Teatro Argentina and Teatro India, both in Rome. Whereas Teatro Argentina is a historical theatre, built in 1732, Teatro India was inaugurated in 1999 as part of a project of urban regeneration: it is located in the former Mira Lanza soap factory, close to the river Tevere. The organisation has its historical location in Teatro Argentina but for the period between 1964 and 1972, it had a provisional location exactly in Teatro Valle. This organisation was appointed by the local council to take charge of the management of Teatro Valle jointly with the former occupants. However, the independency of the communards in managing the theatre with respect to the authority of Teatro di Roma was a matter that had to be negotiated: the local council was not clear in stating what the role of the ex-communards would be.

Another important point of the agreement reached by the occupants with the local council stated that the city of Rome would be in charge of the much-needed restoration works in the 18th century building, thus exempting TVO from spending money for this renovation process. According to the municipality, Teatro Valle needed some urgent restoration works; in its current state, the building was not compliant with current health and safety regulations. However, during an inspection ordered by the city council a few days after the occupation, the surveyors found a building in excellent condition. On the one hand, the former communards received the praise of the authorities for having kept the theatre in such an exemplary way; on the other hand, some of the ex-occupants were unhappy with the result of the inspection. If the theatre did not pose any serious health and safety issues, why were the communards being pushed to leave the building? If the building’s foyer did not need any work, why could not they use it for

their activities while the rest of the theatre was being refurbished? On the other hand, internal tensions had also begun to appear: some of the communards still resist the idea of TVO as a legal association and prefer to stay loyal to its countercultural nature. Legalising the association is even harder now that they no longer have a physical location.

I had the chance to have J.'s phone number from a friend who had interviewed her during a radio program. J. is both an activist and a lawyer, and started her cooperation with Teatro Valle on the occasion of the first "round tables" held by TVO; she worked on the statute of the foundation, and later continued to provide help for all the legal issues faced by the organisation. She played a fundamental role in shaping the statute in a legally sound way, and she took care of the daunting task of organising the workers' contracts and the theatre's competition announcements. According to J., Teatro di Roma played a key role in the forcing TVO to an ultimatum, as Teatro di Roma's cooperation with the local council was one of the determining factors in this decision. Managing Teatro Valle is not an easy task: it requires dedication, expertise and money. During this interview, J. explained to me that Teatro di Roma was interested both in the experience of Teatro Valle Occupato with forms of "alternative" theatre-making, in which the communards had been extremely successful, and in its funds: in fact, as a foundation *in potentia*, the communards had raised around €150,000. TVO had no interest in being considered an exploitable project, but instead aimed to gain a concession on the management of the theatre. Despite the initial good relationship between the two organisations – the director of Teatro di Roma, Marino Sinibaldi, was a member of the foundation Teatro Valle – the lack of a common ground and the difference between each organisation's specific interests set the scenario for a long period of negotiation.

Once the communards left the building, Teatro Valle went back to be an empty heritage site and a forgotten cultural organisation. However, the communards decided to keep the legacy of Teatro Valle Occupato alive and to keep working together. This process, however, did not happen without internal fractures and lengthy periods of discussion.

The former occupants, that still use the name "Teatro Valle" as a brand for their work, continued their activities, although in a new, nomadic way. Several organisations, both

in Rome and in the rest of Italy, offered their space to the communards to continue their work, but, quite interestingly, none of them was a publicly funded theatre. In fact, it is thanks to organisations such as centri sociali and independent cultural organisations that TVO continued to exist in its new dislocated form. This confirms how TVO was not embedded in the system of Italian theatres, but was more akin to autonomous spaces and small independent cultural associations. The autonomous and illegal nature of Teatro Valle was a constant cause for criticism during the occupations and continued to be an element of disagreement between the communards after the evacuation. Teatro Valle Occupato went on existing also as a foundation or, at least, a would-be foundation. The communards continued to have meetings after the occupations and, on two separate occasions, invited the public to a popular assembly.

The first, evident difficulty in the aftermath of the occupation was to bring back together the former communards without a stable location. TVO's success was also due to the fact that it was a cluster for activists and artists that functioned twenty-four hours a day: in such circumstances, it is very easy to meet and work without major logistical problems. After leaving the building, the occupants who used the theatre as a living space had to relocate elsewhere, and not always in Rome. The lack of a physical space determined a strong decrease in the number of active members of TVO: besides the twelve soci fondatori, a small group of communards continued to work under the name of Teatro Valle Occupato; moreover, the communards that remained in the group engaged with projects outside of TVO as well.

Another of the main difficulties faced by the communards was the internal division brought by the decision to leave the building and cooperate with the city council. This issue determined a definitive split between those activists who believed that Teatro Valle Occupato was a countercultural organisation completely opposed to the State and mainstream culture, and those who instead considered the experience of TVO as an important work that was worth legalizing and expanding in an official context. The decision of leaving the building, therefore, was not unanimous, and had repercussions on the activities that followed the evacuation. This division was perfectly clear during the evacuation itself: while some communards quietly left the building, others were

holding a protest outside of the theatre, addressing the mayor Ignazio Marino (elected in 2013 as the Democratic Party candidate) as the person responsible for the evacuation.

One of the key reasons why the legalisation of the Foundation Teatro Valle Bene Comune would benefit the communards is that it would make it possible for them to apply for funding from national and international bodies, such as the Ministry for Cultural Assets and Activities or the European Union. This would give communards the chance to find a new space and to continue their activities in a much more unrestricted way, compared to the agreement with Teatro di Roma. Should they obtain legalisation, they would be able to aspire to complete decisional power over the management and the artistic program of their foundation. However, such a way to work would imply a connivance, if not a cooperation, with the official Italian cultural policy agencies. Competing for state funding and observing the rules imposed by the Ministry or the Assessorato would entail TVO's de-radicalisation and embedment in the very system the activists were criticising. Thus, TVO would cease to be a political force and become instead a strongly committed, but not radical artistic foundation.

Before leaving the theatre, TVO held an assembly to develop a proposal in preparation for the upcoming discussion with Teatro di Roma about the future of their organisation. The final document was published on the Facebook page of Teatro Valle Occupato, under the name "Assemblea del 33 Luglio 2014". The date "33 July" actually refers to 2 August 2014, according to the previous denomination of the period 31 July – 10 August. The communards' proposal for a dialogue between TVO and the city council touched on several crucial points. First, they demanded that nature of the commons should be respected in guaranteeing access to everyone. Secondly, in the document, the communards proposed to clarify Teatro di Roma's position on the subject of a possible co-management of Teatro Valle in partnership with the activists. Another relevant point regarded the educational projects of TVO that they wanted to see maintained in the collaboration with Teatro di Roma (TDR). The educational projects were not only aimed at students, but also at artists and theatre technicians. These projects are both a form of support for theatre professionals and a way to preserve the important body of knowledge of the theatrical professions.

Another crucial point of the proposal regarded the economic and managerial aspects of the collaboration with Teatro di Roma. First, TVO aimed to guarantee a fair retribution for artists and technicians working in the theatre, avoiding so-called “atypical” and precarious forms of contracts. Furthermore, they wanted the price of tickets to TVO theatrical productions not to exceed €10 (£7,60), in order to maintain an inclusive access policy. They proposed that the income generated from the shows should be used to fund other TVO productions.

TVO also wanted to guarantee transparency both in the management of the theatre, making its economic and social appraisal public, and in the decision-making process of the organisation.

Lastly, the communards aimed to clarify the distinction between TDR and TVO. The question was centred on the existence of TVO as a separate organisation from TDR. The level of independence of TVO from TDR was a crucial factor in determining the freedom of the former communards in the management of the theatre and their future as an independent organisation.

In January 2015, TVO used an online platform to create a first draft of an agreement with TDR (Teatro Valle Occupato, 2015). Users could access the platform and add their comments to the convention, indicating topics that should have been included and, most importantly, any legal fallacies the draft could present. In this document, TVO uses a new name: “Fondazione Teatro Valle Bene Comune”, thus presuming that the communards would officially constitute a foundation. The online agreement written by TVO states that the property of Teatro Valle should remain public, whereas the management of the theatre would be entirely in the hands of TVO; this agreement would have a 97-year validity. The necessity of a restoration of the building was acknowledged by the former occupants, but they reclaimed the possibility to continue to use the foyer, which does not need such works, for the continuation of their activities. Furthermore, the revenue of TVO’s productions should be managed exclusively by the foundation, preventing TDR from using them for other activities.

Many of the online comments underlined the possible points of misunderstanding, such as the confusion between foundation, committee and association, and the likely opposition of TDR and the Rome municipality to the idea of a single-handed management of the theatre by the foundation. Moreover, one of the problems that

persisted both in the statute and the convention is the lack of a fixed location for the foundation. The discussion on these issues was later reprised during the public assemblies held during the series of events “Respiro” (Breathe) organized by the former occupants of Teatro Valle in April 2015.

The activities of Teatro Valle Occupato continued outside of Teatro Valle itself under the name “Carovana Valle” (Valle Caravan). The name evokes a nomadic activity and the exploration of new spaces, giving a new, playful meaning to the erratic life of TVO productions after the end of the occupation.

The first show presented by Carovana Valle was “Il Macello di Giobbe” (Job’s slaughterhouse). The play, written and directed by Fausto Paravidino, premiered in Brussels on 15 October 2014. Originally, the play was meant to premiere in Teatro Valle in 2014; however, the evacuation of the building caused it to be moved to Brussels. “Il Macello di Giobbe” was the only theatrical production of this new chapter of TVO’s life: the other Carovana Valle projects were workshops that took place in Rome, Riccione and Genova.

“Respiro” (Breath) was a week-long series of events held in various location in Rome, Campobasso, Paris and Sevilla in 2015. The aim of this initiative was to give new life to the debate on the future of Teatro Valle and its former occupants, allowing supporters to share their thoughts in public assemblies, and to continue with some of TVO’s most successful workshops, such as Crisi. The ten days long program took place in different centri sociali in Rome. “La Strada” is located in Garbatella, a former working-class neighbourhood, and offers a modest, but functional theatre room; it is one of the oldest centri sociali in Rome.

I had the opportunity to attend a public assembly held in April 2015 during the event “Respiro”. When I arrived at the location of the meeting, the atmosphere was very relaxed: former communards were sharing the garden of the occupied space Angelo Mai with families with children, having light refreshments and waiting for the technical staff to set up the streaming broadcast of the assembly. The assembly space was a large theatre with some chairs on the stage. Some of the assembly members expressed their concern about the possible legalisation of TVO and the collaboration with TDR that this would have entailed: one activist said that he was more concerned with preserving the

radical nature of TVO, than with the legalisation of the foundation. Another member of the assembly seemed displeased with the idea that an external organisation could take advantage of their work and completely delegitimise all the artistic efforts of TVO. This divisions did not make for a smooth day: the main point of discussion was the future of TVO as a foundation, and what would have happened to its funds and productions. One of the key points was the official relocation of TVO: the Italian law requires any association to have an official location, and with Teatro Valle still under reconstruction, the activists did not have a space of their own to gather in. One of the possible solutions was to use the home address of one of the twelve founder associates, but this way of resolving the problem was considered quite simplistic. At that point, it was clear that the fracture between the ex-communards who wanted the Foundation Teatro Valle Bene Comune officially recognized and those who did not was still unresolved. The discussion went on for over three hours, but the communards were not able to reach an agreement. This assembly was a perfect example of what it means to take decisions based on consensus, and not on votes. When the opinions of different members of the organisation differ so much, it is nearly impossible to arrive at a shared conclusion.

This chapter has shown that TVO was a site of experimentation with arts, culture and politics. The resulting idea of cultural value is different from the definitions one can encounter on official cultural policy programmes. For TVO, culture has value per se; this value is unquestionable as the value of water, air or other commons. The idea of culture as a commons allows to restore the centrality of intrinsic cultural value and to redefine the questions on its instrumental merits as a matter of access. The concept of cultural commons explained by Santagata et al. (2009) is based on the fact that culture is a resource that is non-rival in consumption; it can be consumed without any limit. In the case of TVO, the creative process of the occupants and their activities can be seen as resources that are non-rival in consumption: everybody could enjoy them freely. It is necessary to stress, however, that this case illustrates a further understanding of cultural commons, based on the management of a physical space, a tangible commons that requires maintenance and upkeep. Furthermore, the appropriation of the commons happened outside of a legal context; this fact complicates the relationship between the appropriators and the local authorities. The commons were a fundamental inspiration for the management of the theatre, and for the management of its finances

too. TVO charged for many of its productions; however, this income was redistributed to the artists who were working that night. This practice addresses directly the problem of the right to a fair pay for artists on a collaborative, non-rival basis. These methods were not very lucrative but guaranteed the sustainability of most projects and allowed a larger public engagement with the theatrical work. One of the recurring criticisms to TVO was, in fact, the issue of sustainability; it is legitimate to wonder if the fundraising methods used by the communards would have been sufficient for running the theatre regularly should they have been allowed to manage it.

The work of TVO was continuously scrutinized by activists, scholars and artists, each of them with different expectations about the nature and the mission of the occupation. The desire of the occupants for an official recognition of their work and the possibility of continuing it in a legal, competitive context is legitimate and responds to the initial stances of the artists who occupied Teatro Valle. However, the official recognition of TVO as a foundation, and the partnership with another cultural organisation, might weaken the political charge of the occupation that attracted the activists in the first place. Lastly, the very idea of Teatro Valle as a cultural commons might be threatened by bureaucratic fallacies: in Italy there is no official laws on the commons, and this lack of regulation might affect the way the foundation is able to bring about its objectives.

Whatever the future of TVO pans out to be, it is going to be difficult to maintain the same multitude of voices, ideas and creativity in a new form. The organisation has struggled to regain the momentum it had reached during the years of the occupation and is going through a very hard phase of extenuating decision-making, compromising and finding a balance. Being outside of the governmental funding scheme enables this project to eschew the “measurement” problem; in fact, not reporting participation, sales and impact gave the communards freedom to operate according to their preferences and needs. However, this lack of interest towards quantitative measurements later created some difficulties. When having to negotiate with the local council and with TDR, TVO’s lack of official documentation for budgeting and participation provoked some friction between the two organisations.

In February 2014, the Prefect of Rome, Giuseppe Pecoraro, rejected the statute that would have officially determined the legalization of Fondazione Teatro Valle Bene

Comune (Giannoli, 2014). The main problem with this document was that the official location for the future foundation was listed as Teatro Valle; this caused a bureaucratic conundrum, as the theatre is officially under the management of the local council. In order to regain the right to access the theatre, TVO needs to be recognised as an official foundation; and in order to do so, it needs to find a new, stable location. Another problematic point of the statute is the paragraph that states the solidarity of TVO towards centri sociali and other occupied spaces. The Prefecture did not accept this open reference to TVO's antagonistic past and the promotion of illegal protest practices. TVO, in order to acquire the Prefecture's trust, had to comply with these mandatory changes and reshape its statute. The city council of Rome has announced that Teatro Valle will open at the end of 2016; the works actually started in December 2016, and the re-opening date of Teatro Valle has yet to be announced (Costantini, 2016). Besides the 1.5 million euros programmed by MiBACT, the restoration works will benefit from another 1.5 million allocated by the city council. The foyer will be the first place to reopen and will be in use as a place for screenings and gatherings (Serloni, 2015). However, the role of the former communards in this new chapter of the life of Teatro Valle is still unclear. The city council has not released any official statement about the new management of the theatre.

As it is described by Mitchell (in Mitchell, Harcourt and Tassig, 2013, p.102), the occupation of a space can be seen as a strategy that anticipates the reaction of the authorities. However, what is curious in the case of Teatro Valle, is that the anticipated reaction of the council arrived three years after the beginning of the occupation. If we analyse the long time between the anticipation of the action and the real action under Mitchell's rhetorical perspective of *occupatio*, we can infer something about the nature of the occupation: it did not anticipate the authority's action, but it actually filled a void where action was not planned. If we use the metaphor of the dialogue between activists and governance, one must think that, in reality, the authorities had nothing to say. TVO proved that it is possible for a grassroots activity group to build a successful cultural organisation and that the existence of cultural commons is also possible. However, it also proved that a model based on the illegal occupation of a state-owned building is not sustainable in the long run. In order to survive, the communards eventually had to open a dialogue and find a compromise with the local council. The communards' three-

year experience serves as an occasion to reflect upon the possibility of shaping a cultural commons as a legally defined entity, and the key factors that can make such a possibility real. The first issue we need to reflect upon is the very nature of the commons as a real-life model and not as a mere dream or theoretical construct. As Ugo Mattei states, one of the greatest perils faced by the idea of commons is that it is considered a mere utopia (Mattei 2015). Nevertheless, the lack of interest from Italian institutions not only in the subject of the commons, but also in creating an effective dialogue with grassroots movements advocating the commons, shows how distant systems of official governance are from grassroots organisations and how keen they are to defend the private/public model of cultural development. Furthermore, it also shows how Italian cultural policy is resistant to innovation in the sphere of participatory practices: indeed, despite the constraints imposed by their illegal status, the activists of TVO developed participatory governance forms that were unprecedented in Italian cultural organisations of that scale. The local authorities did not recognize the value of this wealth of knowledge and practices, missing an opportunity for developing new directions in Rome's cultural sphere and to expand the governmental notion of cultural value.

It is necessary to point out that the issues faced by Teatro Valle Occupato in dialoguing with the city council were not a common experience of all occupied spaces. In fact, in the last chapter the case of Asilo Filangieri, an organisation that was born as an occupied space and eventually gained official recognition in Naples, will be analysed in the conclusions. The next chapter will instead present the case study of Rebeldía, another organisation that used the occupation of buildings to promote a commons-oriented agenda.

Chapter Five

Rebeldía

This chapter analyses the work of the Pisa-based activist organisation Rebeldía. This organisation provides an interesting example of a grassroots approach to the re-utilisation of abandoned buildings in an urban context: Rebeldía occupied and planned the re-utilisation of two buildings, a former military district owned by the city council and a historical palace owned by a private investor. In both cases, the activists' work focused on bringing out the social and cultural value of these buildings, showing the potential impact they could have on the everyday lives of Pisa's citizens and on attracting external visitors. Rebeldía adopted a participatory approach, in one case, for the planning of the new use of the military district, and, in the other, for the re-discovery of an important architectural heritage site. This organisation, thus, has implemented an alternative method for the recovery of abandoned buildings which, as pointed out in chapter Two, is a serious concern for Italian cultural policy, especially for what concerns heritage sites.

This chapter will present the history of Rebeldía, exploring its connection to the geographical context of the city of Pisa and the way it interacted with the city council before 2011. It will then move onto the analysis of two specific actions led by Rebeldía: the participatory planning process for the conversion of the ex-military district Curtatone e Montanara (re-named Distretto 42 by the activists) and the re-opening of Palazzo Grassi-Boyl, an abandoned historical palace.

Rebeldía is an informal network of environmental, cultural and social activist groups and associations. Established in Pisa in 2003, over time it has changed its base from one occupied space to another. Its core values are democracy, social justice, anti-fascism, anti-racism and anti-sexism. It is the main promoter of the Municipality of the Commons, which is a large entity that includes associations, student-led groups, collectives, trade unions and political parties that are interested in safeguarding the commons.

Rebeldía, over the course of its life, has implemented forms of occupation that are quite common in the Italian context in terms of mission, activities and organisation. It has provided a common ground for students, migrants and local citizens alike, and offered a wide range of services, including a cinema and a library of its own. What distinguishes

it from the classic idea of *centro sociale* is its ability to provide a network for different associations and organisations that share common core values. With a radio station, several social media pages and a website, they aim to connect and unite associations that are different in mission and location, but that can support each other and campaign for the same causes. This conception of *centro sociale* is radically different from the traditional one, which usually is strongly connected to a building and the people that occupy it: this virtual space, instead, connects people who share the same ideals and provides a platform where small associations can unite and find support. This virtual space is crucial in those periods of time when Rebeldía is not occupying a building, as it provides a space where its activities can be organised and advertised.

Another key aspect of Rebeldía is its work in representing the cause of the commons, as it is officially the only “Municipality of the Commons” (Municipio dei Beni Comuni) in Italy. This larger body was born in 2011, after the activists were forced by the city council to leave the building they had occupied for nearly 8 years. During this time of practical and political reorganisation in which Rebeldía attempted a negotiation with the city council for the assignment of a new space, the organisation decided to unite those organisations that wanted to contrast profit-driven building construction and urban decay and turn abandoned buildings into spaces available to everyone.

This organisation has always been based in occupied locations. Its status has always been on the edge of the legal and, over the course of its life, there have been positive and negative interactions between Rebeldía and the city council. For the purpose of this chapter, the occupation that will be taken into consideration is the one of Palazzo Grassi-Boyl, an important heritage site in the heart of Pisa.

Rebeldía used the tactic of occupation for different purposes. First, as analysed in the previous chapter, occupying a space anticipates and elicits the reaction of the state (Mitchell, in Mitchell, Harcourt and Tassig, 2013, p.102); the second and more pragmatic reason is the fact that the organisation needed a physical location in order to arrange meetings, activities and be more efficient.

The history of Rebeldía’s occupation is narrated on their website (Rebeldía, 2014). In 2003, Rebeldía occupied a building that used to be the headquarters of the local public waste management company, and the year after moved to an abandoned space that

was property of the University of Pisa; this building was temporarily granted to Rebeldía but, after three years, the University decided to use the building as a new teaching space. The local council, thus, granted Rebeldía the use of the ex-depot of the local public transportation company, CPT. During that time, thanks to the size of the building, its central location and to the momentum gained by the activist group, many people started to be interested in the activities organised by the activists, and many volunteering associations started to use those spaces for their own projects. Rebeldía became an established alternative organisation that started to leave its mark on the social and cultural life of Pisa.

Despite the initial agreement, the activists had to leave the building in 2011, after the decision of the local council to reuse the building as a location for new shops and for a new bus depot. In January 2011, a joint agreement between the University, the local council and the *Province* local authority stated that Rebeldía could relocate to a building that used to host the municipality's archives. Following this decision, the activists left the ex-deposit at the end of February 2011, but the council eventually decided not to grant any space to Rebeldía, breaking the agreement made in January. Until then, Rebeldía had only occupied abandoned public buildings, as their aim was to give new life to public properties that nobody could access anymore, and give them back to the local community. Moreover, some of these occupations were recognised by the local council: in fact, by granting Rebeldía a space, it was possible for Pisa's local government to reach an agreement that satisfied both the activists' need for a space for their activities, and the necessity to cater for the needs of various groups, from children to migrants.

Rebeldía decided to implement a new strategy and not to occupy a public building, as it had done in the past, but to occupy an abandoned private property. In 1995 *Colorificio Toscano*, a paint manufacturing factory, was bought by JColors, a multinational company that produces paint, based in Lombardia. The occupation of a privately-owned building had not been considered before, but the ex-factory resonated with Rebeldía's political visions for several reasons. First, the factory represented one of those "ghost buildings" that characterised the city's urban layout. Secondly, the progressive downsizing of the personnel of *Colorificio Toscano* and eventual closing down of the factory was a

significant loss to the city of Pisa: before its closing, it employed around 20 people, but it used to employ more than twice as many before being bought by JColors. This occupation, then, meant a theoretical expansion of the concept of “common property” for Rebeldía, as in this case it included the right to work and the repossession of urban soil. The ex-factory was occupied by Rebeldía in October 2012 and since then, it has hosted a variety of associations and activities and quickly became a meeting point for volunteers, migrants, children and students. However, after a few months, the position of Rebeldía got complicated: this time, the activists were openly challenging a private subject, with all the complications that this implied. JColor’s representative, Carlo Junghanns, severely condemned the occupation of the company’s property, accusing Rebeldía of simply wanting to avoid paying taxes for its activities, being “hostile” and illegal and, most importantly, of having lied about the history of JColors (Global Project Info, 2013). According to Rebeldía’s activists, the ex-factory was closed as a tactical move aimed at bringing the production outside of Pisa, thus favouring the factories in Lombardy and China. The activists claimed that thanks to this move, JColors was able to take advantage of the good reputation of *Colorificio Toscano* and to keep the brand even after moving production outside of Tuscany. JColors replied that these were not their intentions and that the activists had lied in order to get the sympathy of the 2000 citizens that demonstrated in Pisa’s streets to support Rebeldía’s request to turn the building into a social space. The activists engaged in a legal battle with the company, which led to an official resolution of the Tribunal of Pisa which favoured JColors. The ex-factory was forcibly evacuated on 26 October 2013; at the time of writing, it is still abandoned.

Between 27 October and 16 November 2013 Rebeldía occupied the *Mattonaia*, a building that was designed as a social housing space, but was never put into use. The occupation was ended not by a forced evacuation ordered by the city council, but by the will of the activists themselves: the aim of this occupation was not to use the Mattonaia as a location for the organisation, but to attract the attention of the local community on the housing crisis issue (Pisa Today, 2013).

The strategy of occupation of Rebeldía continued in 2014, with the occupation of the ex-military base Curtatone e Montanara, and of Palazzo-Grassi Boil, an artistic heritage site on the river Arno.

The city of Pisa has a population of circa 89000 inhabitants, 13,1% of whom are foreigners (ISTAT, 2011); about 50000 students are enrolled at the three city universities, *Università di Pisa, Scuola Normale Superiore e Scuola Superiore Sant'Anna*, many of which live in the city centre (Università di Pisa, 2015). The city also hosts circa 458 asylum seekers (Una città in comune, 2016).

The town has one of the most famous tourist attractions in Italy, the Leaning Tower. However, only few tourists venture outside the Piazza Dei Miracoli area, where the Tower and the Duomo are located; most tourists visit Pisa just for a day, as a part of longer tours in Italy. Another famous artwork is Keith Haring's *Tuttomondo*, a large graffiti in the main train station area.

The recent political history of Pisa has been characterised by the governance of Partito Democratico (PD), Italy's main centre-left-wing party: all the mayors elected over the last 15 years were representatives of PD; even previously, the mayors elected after the fall of Fascism had been either from the left-wing or centrist parties. One of my interviewees, S., who has been an activist of Rebeldía for a long time, said: "In Pisa, they are in charge (...) this is how PD is perceived by the population". She added: "in Pisa, there is no other perspective, nobody else, no other political power in charge". This almost fatalistic perception of political power is a common sentiment in Pisa and many other areas in Tuscany, a region that has a long history of left-wing local government; S. describes this feeling as a quiet resignation, as if there were no other possible alternatives. This political stagnation permeates all aspects of life in Pisa: the issues faced by the town have been the same for years, such as the problems related to alcohol and drugs that characterise the city's nightlife or, as it will be explained in more detail later, its long period of housing crisis, but no solution has been found yet.

The presence of three universities, including the prestigious Scuola Superiore Normale and Scuola Superiore Sant'Anna, and many other educational institutions, enlivens the cultural life of the town with events and debates; Scuola Superiore Normale, in particular, organises a rich calendar of cultural activities that range from classical music concerts to public talks. In addition, there are many student-led groups and associations that organise social, political and cultural activities, some of them with a radical agenda. Activist and volunteer associations also characterises the political and social life of Pisa:

events and initiatives that target disadvantaged groups are frequent, as are political demonstrations.

Opera Primaziale Pisana (OPA), is the organisation in charge of the management and the maintenance of the group of monuments in Piazza dei Miracoli, and also runs the adjacent museum. This organisation was born as a religious institution in 1064, when the first stones of the cathedral were laid, and was recognised as a non-profit organisation in 1999. Pisa is characterised by the presence of a successful private museum, Palazzo Blu. Palazzo Blu is administered by Fondazione Pisa, a philanthropic association, and specializes in “blockbuster” exhibitions of famous artists, usually as one of the popular stops of European tours.

The city’s 9 cinemas and two theatres mainly specialise in mainstream productions, with a few exceptions. *Teatro Rossi Aperto* (TRA), an occupied theatre in the city centre, represents one of the few established countercultural forces in the area. The theatre, build in 1771, was declared unfit for use in 1966; since then, multiple proposals for its restoration have been made. Yet, the theatre remained closed: from 2006 onwards, visitors could only access it again on special events organised by FAI (Environmental Italian Fund). The theatre was occupied in September 2012; since then, after a series of negotiations with the local council, the informal organisation that runs the theatre, now called “Open Teatro Rossi”, did not become a legally recognised cultural association but achieved sufficient stability for it to continue to organise its activities and shows.

During one of the interviews with a member of Rebeldía, I also was told that Rebeldía’s was not really focusing on the arts; for them, the notion of culture was to be intended as a practice of social inclusion. Rebeldía’s mission also makes no reference to the arts, underlining instead Rebeldía’s focus on the commons, environmentalism and social justice. Several of the associations belonging to the Rebeldía network focus their work on the integration of migrants and their inclusion in the social fabric of Pisa. The association *Africa Insieme*, for instance, organizes free Italian classes for migrants of every age, and also gives them legal and practical advice. Every year, Rebeldía organizes the football tournament “Mondiali Rebeldi”, an alternative, small scale version of the UEFA World Cup. The teams playing in this competition are composed by migrants, no-profit organisations or small local teams. This event, which is followed by a large part of

the population, aims to eradicate racism and to build integration and mutual respect. When I interviewed F., one of the main promoters of Rebeldía, he told me that, for the organisation, culture is a very inclusive concept. First, the main concern of Rebeldía is to make no distinction between “high” and “low” or “good” and “bad” culture: culture must be intended as a spontaneous practice, not as an imposed value. Furthermore, everyone should be guaranteed the right to express themselves artistically, in particular in the case of street art: F. underlined the hypocrisy of the local council that tries to exploit the work of street artists by allocating them a wall and, at the same time, punishes everyone who does not stay in the margins decided by the local council. It must be noted, however, that Rebeldía has also a strict internal policy when it comes to the preservation of heritage sites: when they occupied Palazzo Boyl, the activists would check that the people entering the building were not carrying markers or spray paint. This idea of culture as grassroots, spontaneous activity that should not be defined by a governmental authority is concretised by Rebeldía’s Do-It-Ourselves practices, that include artistic activities. By a closer analysis of Rebeldía’s practices, it emerges that not only has Rebeldía offered, and still offers, many opportunities to develop creative skills both for children and adults, but also that this association has a special attention towards literature, music, theatre and dance. A fundamental part of Rebeldía’s cultural work is its educational and recreational activities for children, which often involve the use of scrap material to build recycled or upcycled objects. Furthermore, the organisation has a rich library available to all users. Rebeldía is also very active in the promotion and distribution of artistic products. Radio Roarr, Rebeldía’s radio channel, hosts local bands. Lastly, Rebeldía has its own theatre group, called *Spazio di Autoproduzione Teatrale*, or *SDAT*, that organises workshops and plays. Since its early days, Rebeldía’s interaction with the artistic sphere has grown and taken several different directions; its culmination can be represented by the occupation of Palazzo Grassi-Boyl, an artistic heritage site, which will be discussed later in this chapter.

Riutilizziamo Pisa (*let’s re-utilize Pisa*) is a part of the World Wide Fund for Nature’s campaign “RiutilizziAMO l’Italia⁶”. This initiative was aimed at researching and identifying abandoned spaces all over Italy and included private and public buildings,

⁶ The name is a wordplay of the Italian verbs “Riutilizziamo” (let’s reutilize) and “amo” (I love).

rural areas and heritage sites. The aim of this campaign is to stop land use in Italy and to reconvert abandoned building and rural areas into public spaces such as parks, nature sanctuaries, playgrounds or social spaces instead of building new structures. Indeed, the Italian land has become more and more urbanized, and this tendency is not slowing down (ISPRA, 2016, p.10). This urbanization process is characterized by the abandonment of existing buildings in favour of the construction of new ones; this is often the cause of pollution and damage to the landscape. In Pisa, this research project produced a dossier and an interactive map available on Google Maps (2016); this tool allows all users to modify and include new places, making it a continuous work in progress. The dossier, instead, features photos and descriptions of the abandoned buildings in the city of Pisa, specifying their size, their conditions and if they are public or private property.

This attitude towards urban planning responds to a broader concept of “landscape” as a commons. The concept of landscape, in Italian *paesaggio*, appears in the Italian Constitution as one of the elements that the State is in charge of preserving for the sake of the common good. This idea has been analysed and developed by Salvatore Settis, one of the most influential Italian theorists on the theory of the commons. Settis (2012) describes how the Italian Constitution takes into account the preservation of the natural environment, which is considered a common property of the whole nation. Moreover, as underlined by the author, the Code of Cultural Heritage and Landscape associates heritage sites to the landscape, making a strong connection between natural assets and man-built works of art and architectural excellences. The concept of landscape can also be intended as “environment” or “territory”, as these terms belong to the same discourse on the interaction between natural resources and human land modification. Settis (ibid.) argues that the landscape is, indeed, the most neglected part of the national commons: years of poor urban planning, illegal constructions, pollution, bad management of rural areas and deforestation have radically changed the appearance of the Italian landscape. It is therefore not only the use of natural resources that needs to be regulated, but also how humans intervene on these resources, in order to prevent private interests from damaging something that belongs to everybody. The main objective of WWF’s campaign is thus to reconvert abandoned urban and rural spaces

into areas that can be enjoyed by the whole community, a sort of modern day commons that can oppose the enclosures dictated by urban sprawl and speculation.

Palazzo Grassi-Boyl

Palazzo Grassi-Boyl is a historical building located on the bank of the river Arno. It dates back to the 16th century, when the Grassi family acquired it; however, interior artworks suggest that it might be even more ancient. The interior of the building presents decorations from different eras: the visitor can see decorative patterns that appear to date back to the late Middle Age and frescoes painted around the beginning of the 19th century. One of the most interesting features of the interior is the “Great Olympus fresco”, which has been attributed to the local artist Annibale Marianini (1814-1864). The building later became property of the Boyl family and remained property of the aristocratic family until 2008, when the heirs could no longer sustain the maintenance of the building, and had to sell it to the Tognozzi Group, a local private firm. According to one of the activists interviewed for this research, the Tognozzi Group had made many successful tenders for public construction contracts in the area of Pisa but, after being paid, they usually left the work unfinished. In the case of Palazzo Grassi-Boyl in particular, the interaction between the construction company and the local government was quite unusual: the Tognozzi Group had requested authorisation for urgent restoration work, in order to turn the building into luxury flats. The local council approved the request without imposing any restrictions. This is uncommon in Italian historical city centres, as construction companies are usually required to respect a protocol in order to maintain a building’s original design and so as not to disrupt the city’s aesthetics. Between 2008 and 2014, the company only worked for three months; it then declared bankruptcy in the summer of 2014. The company never paid for the council’s authorisations and the bill for the scaffolding’s occupation of public space was never paid, nor authorised. Over the six years of its abandonment, some of the building’s windows broke, and Palazzo Grassi-Boyl became the home of mice and pigeons.

Rebeldía occupied Palazzo Grassi-Boyl for several reasons. First, the activists wanted to valorise a heritage site that had been neglected by the local administration and tourist guides. This occupation follows Mitchell’s model of the performance of *occupatio*: on the one hand, occupying the building was a way to attract the attention of the local

council to it, therefore eliciting and pre-empting a response from the adversary. On the other hand, Rebeldía filled a conceptual space that had been left empty by the local cultural policy agencies: it managed to take care of an abandoned heritage site and make it available to the general audience. Palazzo Grassi-Boyl is only one of several abandoned cultural sites in Pisa's city centre; another example can be found in Palazzo Mastiani-Brunacci, built in the early 19th century, which was occupied by the student collective Tijuana in 2011. Similarly, this historical building where the Mastiani-Brunacci family used to welcome important guests, such as Paolina Bonaparte, still features its original frescoes and part of the antique furniture. This building is officially property of the University of Pisa and is currently up for sale (Unipi, 2017).

This negligence towards the city's artistic heritage is in sharp contrast with the image of Pisa promoted by the local council. Pisa is one of the most popular tourist attractions in Tuscany and it is one of the cities that aspired to become the Italian European Capital of Culture in 2019. As stated by the website dedicated to its candidature to the European title, the local council takes pride in promoting Pisa's cultural heritage in a sustainable way. Arguably, the presence of abandoned heritage sites in the heart of the city's centre puts the local council's image of a sustainability-oriented approach to cultural heritage into question. Pisa's effort in expanding its cultural offer outside Piazza dei Miracoli, where the Leaning Tower and the Duomo are located, has been quite weak. Tourists tend to concentrate around the Tower, as there is little information available about the rest of the town's cultural heritage.

Furthermore, occupying Palazzo Grassi-Boyl was a tassel in a mosaic of more than ten years of protest practice. Rebeldía occupied several different buildings in the past: an abandoned factory, the empty offices of the local public transport company, an ex-military district. Occupying a cultural heritage site represented a new challenge and a new opportunity for the activists; despite the fact that culture represents an important part of Rebeldía's idea of commons, this was the first time that the activists embarked in the occupation of such an artistically relevant building.

On 22nd November 2014, the activists managed to open the palace's main entrance. First, they cleaned all the rooms and assessed the health and safety hazards caused by years of abandonment. Secondly, they asked for the help of sympathizing professors and

experts, who analysed the frescoes and the decorations. This team managed to reconstruct the history of the palace and its artworks and passed down this information to a group of volunteers. Lastly, the activists organized free tours of the palace for external visitors. On 30th November 2014 I carried out a participant-observation on the site, taking a tour of the palace. The volunteers guided small group of tourists and locals through the discovery of this long forgotten artistic treasure, while other activists took care of organisational issues.

The cooperation with the art historians led to gathering interesting information about the palace. The team of experts not only reconstructed the history of Palazzo Grassi-Boyl, but also found some clues about its life before it was bought by the Boyl family in the 17th century: some decorations suggest that it might have been built around the late Middle Age. Moreover, these experts also trained other volunteers to be the palace's tour guides, so that more than one group could visit the building at any one time.

In my participant-observation of the guided tour, the activist who volunteered to be a tour guide explained the history and the artistic value of the building, stopping by to analyse the frescoes that decorate many of the rooms; the guide, though, also explained how long the building had been abandoned and why, and talked about the work of the activists.

The city responded with enthusiasm to the opening of Palazzo Grassi-Boyl. During an interview, one activist esteemed that, during the period of the occupation, the building had been visited by about fifty people per day. The guided tour would take place once a day, and the visitors could give voluntary donations that were used to fund the maintenance of the building. The organisers also collaborated with the nearby San Matteo Museum, which displays local works of art, by organising a tour to both Palazzo Grassi-Boyl and the museum.

Besides guided tours, the occupants also organized chamber music and acoustic concerts, and vernacular poetry readings inside Palazzo Grassi-Boyl. The frescoed rooms provided a unique setting for these small events, which can also be considered an attempt at a grassroots cultural program. The idea of Palazzo Grassi-Boyl as a commons is not limited to its artistic heritage, but also includes its potential as a cultural venue.

Opening this heritage site and giving it back to the city represented the activists' will to provide an alternative to official cultural policy: cleaning the building and opening it to the public was a bottom-up initiative that fulfilled a role that should have been the responsibility of the local government and overturned its decisions. While the local council had abandoned Palazzo Grassi-Boyl in the hands of an unsuccessful private company, Rebeldía organized a sort of temporary house-museum with guides and keepers open to everyone. In this sense, Rebeldía acted as a cultural policy agency, bringing about a short lived, yet interesting program that included the maintenance of the heritage site, in-depth research on its artworks, outreach to a large audience, and the basis of a long-term project. Most interestingly, what lies behind Rebeldía's work is the public denunciation of the Tognozzi Group's negligence and of the local council's complicity; however, the activists did not only protest against the situation, they also provided a constructive example of a possible way to preserve a heritage site and make culture accessible to everyone.

The work of Rebeldía in opening Palazzo-Grassi Boyl to the public was an unprecedented experiment of grassroots and illegal cultural policy in the context of Pisa's cultural heritage management. It represented a gateway to one of those many secret artistic treasures that lay forgotten in the urban area, often overlooked and hardly ever explored by the local community. However, the activist's effort did not affect the local council's resolution of not intervening in the building's restoration. This attitude was not unprecedented: Rebeldía's several attempts to change the look of the city of Pisa have always been ignored, or openly ostracized, by the local council. The occupants were forced to leave the building at the end of December 2014: this determined the end of the life of Palazzo Grassi-Boyl as a publicly accessible heritage site, and the start of a new period of abandonment. The building, whose value was estimated around 7,000,000 €, was put up for legal auction for the first time in March 2015, with a starting price of 4,900,000 €. There were no offers for it, so the tribunal put it up for auction again for half its value, the same year in August. On 16th October 2017, Tognozzi group announced its official bankruptcy; the minimum offer for Palazzo Grassi-Boyl has been reduced to €2.175.000,00 (Tognozzi Group, 2017) It is still not clear whether the new buyer will be expected to assume responsibility for the maintenance of Palazzo Grassi-Boyl's frescoes.

In the case of Palazzo Grassi-Boyl, the city council, led by mayor Marco Filippeschi has adopted a policy of “laissez-faire”: in order not to interfere with the market, the municipality has let a heritage site decay. The city council never asked the Tognozzi group to take responsibility for the poor state in which Palazzo-Grassi Boyl was left, neither had it ever tried to find an alternative solution to the situation. Besides this political attitude, according to Rebeldía’s activists, there also might be other reasons behind the city council’s choice: in an interview, an activist claimed that the links between the Tognozzi Group and the city council are far from transparent, as, before its bankruptcy, the estate company had managed to get public commissions with suspicious frequency.

Finally, the city council clearly seemed not to take on board Rebeldía’s several cues on the potential value of Palazzo Grassi-Boyl: the activists demonstrated that the building could be a popular tourist attraction and a beautiful venue for acoustic concerts and other cultural events. The council, that is now able to buy the building for about a third of its original value, seems not to be interested in enriching Pisa’s cultural offer with a multifunctional artistic venue and touristic attraction, despite its bid for the title of Italian Cultural Capital of 2019.

Distretto 42

The case of Distretto 42 is an example of how Rebeldía, along with its larger network, Municipio dei Beni Comuni, managed to develop a participatory approach to urban planning. The activists opposed the city council’s plan for the conversion of the abandoned military district Curtatone e Montanara into luxury flats, as its original purpose was for it to be destined for public use; therefore, they ran a series of activities to design a new plan in collaboration with the local citizens. The project for the re-utilization of the district developed by the activists and the citizens who took part to the planning activities includes several spaces dedicated to cultural and artistic activities, responding to the city’s needs for libraries, affordable rehearsal rooms for musicians, and theatre groups and activities for children. Furthermore, the administrative and managerial style envisaged by Rebeldía for this space is explicitly based on the theory of the commons: the activists, in collaboration with about 200 local citizens, designed a self-managed space based on mutual co-operation between users. However, the city

council rejected Rebeldía and Municipio dei Beni Comuni's proposal, giving no possibilities for further negotiation. The case of Distretto 42 shows how a grassroots organisation was able to develop a participatory, commons-based approach to urban regeneration with a special attention for cultural and social needs, and how the local council was not able or interested in developing a dialogue with said organisation.

Distretto 42 is an abandoned military district in Pisa's San Martino neighbourhood. Its name used to be "Military base Curtatone and Montanara" (Caserma Curtatone e Montanara), but Rebeldía changed its name as a symbolic gesture to indicate its new usage. The complex was built around 1331 by Bonifacio Novello della Gherardesca, known as Count Fazio, who gave the building to the Order of Saint Clare. In 1786, the Grand Duke Leopold I abolished all monastic orders; as a result, the building was used for public utility services. At the beginning of the 20th century, the former monastery was converted into a military base (Municipio dei Beni Comuni, 2015). It is an area that measures 12,100 square metres, including 4,500 square metres of buildings. The complex includes housing facilities that can cater for the needs of several families: the building used to host military barracks until the 1990s, when they were abandoned in favour of smaller ones in other areas in Pisa.

The ex-military complex is composed of five buildings, most of them still in a usable state. The main three buildings will be referred to as A, B and C. The two-floor building A used to host offices and only has bathrooms on the top floor: building B is a three-floor structure that used to host the military dormitories; building C has three large rooms and two large common bathrooms, and was presumably used as a gym. The destiny of this complex is strongly connected to Pisa's *Progetto Caserme* (Project Barracks), a project designed by the city council in 2007 to reconvert ex-military facilities into private properties; this project includes the construction of a new €70ml military base in Pisa's outskirts, and the reconversion of older barracks and police stations in the city centre into luxury flats. When the economic crisis hit Italy between 2007 and 2008, local councils were forced to undergo a strict spending review that led to the deferment of many expensive projects. Progetto Caserme was not abolished, but it was not implemented either. The quiescent state of the project, on one hand, led to the

complete disrepair of the ex-military base; on the other, it prevented the approval of any new project involving Distretto 42.

The problem with the city council's project for the former military base does not only lie in the large investments it calls for. As a matter of fact, Pisa has faced a period of housing crisis that has severely affected the poorest parts of the population: cases of evictions and problems with social housing are quite common. Therefore, in this scenario, it is possible to imply that luxury flats are not the most requested properties in the current housing market. What Pisa lacks, instead, is an affordable or social housing provision that can cater for students, low-income families and minority groups. Furthermore, the house market in Pisa has been characterised by a strong downward trend over the last few years (Immobiliare.it); if this trend continues, the perspective of covering the cost of the reconversion of Distretto 42 into luxury flats from their sale seems not very realistic.

The ex-military area was occupied in 15th February 2014. The activists managed to open its gate and started their work of refurbishment of the park and the buildings. The area had already been researched by the activists during the creation of the dossier "Riutilizziamo Pisa" (let's re-utilise Pisa), so Rebeldía was already aware of the characteristics of this particular site.

The main result of the first occupation was the renovation of the park of Distretto 42, which was named after Don Andrea Gallo, a priest famous for his commitment to people in need, for his progressive ideas and his lifelong dedication to the most marginalised social groups. The activists cleaned up the park, tended its plants and opened it to the public. One of the initiatives concerning the safeguard of Parco Don Gallo was the campaign "Adopt and defend a tree": this campaign was not only aimed at raising funds for the upkeep of the park, but also at involving the citizens in promoting its public usage. Tree adopters were invited to take pictures with their tree, providing thus a photographic archive of the public support for Rebeldía's occupation. This action, however, was a short lived one: the city council ordered the forcible evacuation of the area on April 22nd, 2014.

The day of the evacuation was a long and eventful one, live reported on an independent news website (Comune Info, 2014). The police surrounded the park at 6:30 in the

morning, but the activists eventually left the area at 20:30 in the evening. In order to prevent the police from removing them from the park, the activists climbed onto the trees and refused to come down. This gesture is reminiscent of the practice of tree sitting, a protest method generally used by environmentalists in order to prevent the deforestation of an area: this strategy is based on sitting on a tree to prevent it from being cut down, sometimes for long periods of time (Lester, Hutchins, 2009). In a similar fashion to tree sitting, this gesture aimed to protect a common resource, in this case not from imminent destruction, but from privatisation or neglect. The police tried to negotiate with the activists and to convince them to leave the trees, but they only received refusals – one of the activists even said “We’ll stay until we’ll carry out photosynthesis”. In the meantime, other activists and the local community had gathered around Distretto 42, demonstrating against the forcible evacuation. At that point, the police had no choice but to call on the help of firefighters, who could use their escalators to bring the activists down. Upon the arrival of the firefighters, who were struggling to enter the narrow gates of the park, the activists released some colour bombs, similar to the ones used during Holi Festivals. Once the firefighters had managed to reach the park, something unexpected happened: despite the instructions of the police, some of the firefighters refused to take the activists away from the trees. The decision of these conscientious objectors was a signal of the community’s support for the activists and also caused further delay in the eviction. Despite the refusal of some of the firefighters to intervene, however, the activists eventually climbed down the trees, only to continue to demonstrate in the park. By 20:30 in the evening, the operations were concluded, and 18 activists were reported to the police.

In 2014, Municipio dei Beni Comuni (Municipality of the Commons), a network of grassroots, voluntary and activist organisations led by Rebeldía, published a booklet called “Riconversioni urbane” (urban reconversions), which contains the first draft of a plan for the re-use of the military district Curtatone e Montanara. This plan was designed by Municipio dei Beni Comuni and is a commons-inspired approach to the design of a multifunctional space in the city centre. The autonomously published volume collects the history of Rebeldía’s work on Distretto 42 and also the experience of other associations with experiments in urban planning and community participation all over

Italy. It also includes a first idea of the activities that, according to the activists, the new Distretto 42 should include, and a key idea for its sustainability.

The plan includes areas for several different audiences. For children, the park features a playground, the urban garden “Banane e baobab”, which is also available to everyone for the organic cultivation of decorative plants and to small quantities of fruit and vegetables (p.100). Furthermore, the plan includes “Aggeggificio”, which can be translated with “Thingamabob factory”: it is a creative workshop for children. Here children imagine and design fairy tale-like objects, and professional artists and artisans teach them how to realise their projects using scrap materials (p.105). Some spaces were designed especially for migrants (pp.109-111). Africa Insieme, a volunteering association, which is part of Municipio dei Beni Comuni, designed a space to teach Italian to migrants. Another space dedicated to migrants is Mezclar, a day healthcare centre: illegal migrants are often scared to use the national health systems, as they often think they would be automatically reported to the police if they do so. Mezclar provides healthcare services for migrants and gives them information on how to access the national health system as foreign citizens without a visa. The draft also includes a space where migrants can organize events, meet the locals and build a dialogue between different groups, and the football club Futbol Rebelde (p.113), which organizes “Mondiali Rebeldi”, a local “World Cup” tournament in which teams formed by local clubs and associations and groups of migrants, organised by nationality, compete against each other in an anti-racist environment. The plan also included a self-managed outdoors study area for high school and university students (p.102). Pisa is characterised by the strong presence of high school and university students; however, these two groups tend to remain separate. This outdoors study area is designed to provide a space in which to study in the summertime and encourage knowledge exchange and socialisation between students of different ages and specialisations. Babil Library, Rebeldía’s permanent library collection is another important resource for students; it has more than 10000 books, magazines and journals, and it is officially registered in local and international databases (idem, p.105).

A special series of initiatives and spaces is dedicated to those who are looking for a job, who want to learn new skills or who are underemployed. Some initiatives focus on

teaching people to work with scrap materials, such as Recycle/reuse/recover, a workshop addressed to disseminating knowledge about recycling practices, offering training for children and adults (p.103). “Ingegneri Senza Frontiere” (Engineers Without Frontiers) offers “trashware” services, meaning recycling practices for any kind of hardware, from computers to mobile phones. ISF will provide training for people who are interested in knowing more about fixing technological devices and use old components to build new ones (idem). Ciclofficina, a bicycle workshop, not only fixes bikes, but also teaches people to build their own bike from parts of old ones. This activity also encourages people to use bicycles to move around the city, in order to save energy, reduce smog and pollution and have a healthy lifestyle (p.104). The Arts and Crafts Workshop (p.127) represents perhaps the most ambitious part of Rebeldía’s project for Distretto 42, and the one that requires the most funding and long-term planning. This project is based on the right to work and the right to have an income; according to the activists, the production of goods should be based on these rights, rather than on the concept of property. This approach to work is based on sharing not only the means of production, but also ideas and work processes. This project wants to use the commons as a space for co-working, knowledge sharing and cooperation. This space could also be used as an “incubator” for start-ups and small independent business, who would benefit from the shared resources and different kinds of knowledge available on the site. One of the key ideas of this project, however, is that everyone should be fairly compensated for their efforts and also work under conditions of safety. It is evident here that this approach to business has its roots in the experiences of social centres, but is developed on a more organized level that takes into account issues of legality, workers’ rights and long-term sustainability. This business model would contribute to the maintenance of Distretto 42 as an independent space and would also ensure a source of income and/or training for unemployed and underemployed people.

The draft of Municipio dei Beni Comuni also caters for local actors and musicians. Rebeldía connects its existing project, a permanent theatre lab, to the creation of a new space, called “Space for Theatrical Self-Production” (SDAT) (p.107). SDAT would represent a support for self-produced theatre works, with a special attention for those theatre professionals who want to use theatre as a political medium and for projects that aim to a critique of society. The plan also includes Rebel Music Studio (p.124), which

will be both a rehearsal room for musicians and a studio for independent musical projects. Rebeldía's media outlet too found a place in the draft (pp.125-126): Rebeldía Media Crew, the informal group of media activists runs Rebeldía's website and documents Rebeldía's activities, and ROARR: Rete Occupata Autogestita Radio Rebeldía, a radio station that offers independent information, local and world music and entertainment programs, have their own spaces in the activists' plan.

According to the draft, Distretto 42 would serve also as a location for some of the associations that are part of the Municipio dei Beni Comuni Network (pp.118-121). These are "Un ponte per...", an association born in 1991 to express solidarity to the Iraqi population and to promote Arab culture in Pisa and its spin-off project Hakawati Café, a space where people can learn more about the Arab culture while having a cup of mint tea accompanied by typical Arab cakes; Fratelli dell'Uomo, a Ong Onlus born in 2008 that promotes international cooperation projects and runs Development education projects in the area of Pisa; BDS Pisa, the local division of "Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions", a coalition of Palestinian groups against the occupation of Palestinian soil by Israeli forces; *Chicco di Senape* (mustard seed), an association that promotes critical consumption and offers information about the ethical sourcing and quality range of everyday products; Gruppo Rifiuti Zero, an environmentalist group; Osservatorio Antiproibizionista, an association that researches and disseminates scientific and legal issues connected to the use of psychoactive substances.

The draft outlines a wide range of spaces and activities available to everyone. For what concerns sports and wellbeing, the plan includes a field for *bocce*, an Italian traditional game very much enjoyed by senior citizens (p.101); an indoor climbing gym ran by the association Equilibri Precari (Precarious Equilibria) that is open to anyone, including schools; a capoeira school; a self-managed belly dance collective based on inclusion and peer to peer exchange of knowledge; a basketball court; a skate park and a parkour path (pp.112-115).

Other spaces are planned for activities linked to ethical consumption. The plan includes a weekly local farmers' market and communal wood-fired oven where everyone can produce their own bread, as an anti-crisis strategy, and Macchu Picchu Café (p.122), a coffee shop serving ethically-sourced products and provide free Wi-Fi. Lastly, the plan

includes Klub Epikurus (p.123), a philosophical club that would organize meetings where people can exchange knowledge and discuss the great philosophical questions of our time, often in the presence of famous scholars.

The idea expressed in the last point is connected to the concept of “entrepreneurial squatting” described by Hans Prujit (2012). Prujit describes entrepreneurial squatting as “the setting up almost any kind of establishment without the need for large resources or the risk of becoming mired in bureaucracy” (2012); he quotes Italian social centres as the perfect example of this type of squatting, as they often host a variety of small entrepreneurial projects, from cafes to concert venues. For the purpose of this doctoral work, this definition of entrepreneurial squatting cannot be applied to centri sociali at large, however, as, contrarily to what is stated by Prujit, they tend to have strong ideological framing. Furthermore, I argue that the nature of centri sociali cannot be simply seen as entrepreneurial, as the mission of centri sociali is, in fact, primarily social and political: they want to be a meeting point for people interested in radical politics, alternative music, arts and lifestyle. Entrepreneurialism, in this case, is not the end, but the means to make these informal organisations sustainable. Prujit argues that entrepreneurial squats risk losing their “oppositional edge” when they try to become embedded in a legal system; on the other hand, he adds, no form of entrepreneurial squatting is sustainable on the long term. However, the notion of entrepreneurial squatting can be useful to analyse this specific aspect of the planning of Distretto 42. Rebeldía aims to reconvert part of Distretto 42 into a shared working area, where people can receive free training, share experiences and take part to different projects. In general, this space would be a place for DIY or, more correctly, DIO experimentations with recycling. This approach tackles the two main issues identified by Prujit in his analysis of entrepreneurial squatting: it allows the permanence of an oppositional edge in Rebeldía’s work, as it would represent an experimental, community-based approach to co-working; on the other, it would grant a legal framework and long-term sustainability to Distretto 42. However, as it can be easily understood, the implementation of such an ambitious project would require years of work and substantial funding; Rebeldía points out that this would only happen after a long period of co-research, network building and upcycling, and work aimed at building connections between producers, consumers and artisanal shops.

If we analyse this preliminary project, it is possible to conclude that, despite considering the needs of the local community, it was developed from the point of view of volunteering associations. Many of the activities described in this draft are managed by activists and volunteer associations; most of this commons is shaped like a co-working space, featuring areas where the various groups can work and cooperate. This is consistent with the commons-oriented approach of Municipio dei Beni Comuni and offers an alternative to the profit-driven plans of the city council: opposing the city council's plan for luxury flats, which provide little or no benefit to the local population of the San Martino area, the network of activists designed a space that could help tackling some of the most pressing social issues of Pisa and also provide a place for cultural and leisure activities. However, this version was only a preliminary blueprint that tried to address the various needs of the different voices that make up Rebeldía and that tried to set a base for the development of a community-based project.

One of the problems with the idea of commons is the legitimacy of the appropriators in reclaiming a resource and using it. The model adopted by the activists can be compared to Elinor Ostrom's model of collective decision, based on rationality and exchange. People were invited to express their needs and preferences, but also to discuss them with others and to reach an agreement based on consensus.

Chapter One presented Elinor Ostrom's theory of the commons and the basic principles that regulate the collective management of a common pool resource; Ostrom's framework is particularly useful here to analyse the work of Municipio dei Beni Comuni and Rebeldía. These organisations' approach to the creation of a commons is consistent with Ostrom's theory of the commons, in particular with the strategy of contingent commitment (1990, p.185). According to Ostrom, a group of appropriators is able to manage a common pool resource in a complex and uncertain environment (hence the contingency of the commitment) if a series of rules is set:

Such individuals can be expected to make contingent commitments to follow rules that:

- define a set of appropriators who are authorized to use a Common Pool Resource (design principle 1),

- relate to the specific attributes of the CPR and the community of appropriators using the CPR (design principle 2),
- are designed, at least in part, by local appropriators (design principle 3),
- are monitored by individuals accountable to local appropriators (design principle 4) (...). When individuals are presented with rules meeting these criteria, a safe, advantageous, and credible commitment can be made. The commitment is to follow the rules so long as (1) most similarly situated individuals adopt the same commitment and (2) the long-term expected net benefits to be achieved by this strategy are greater than the long-term expected net benefits for individuals following short-term, dominant strategies (1990, p.185).

Of course, an ex-military district cannot be used in the same ways as a natural common pool resource. In the case of natural CPRs, as in Ostrom's example of fisheries, the appropriators need to decide the rules that determine the access to that resource. In this case, instead, appropriators need to define the very nature of the commons they want to build. The decision-making process that led to the agreement on what Distretto 42 would look like as a shared urban space followed Ostrom's theory of contingent commitment. Indeed, the same principles that, according to Elinor Ostrom, should be applied to the design of a shared CPR regulation in order to convince the appropriators to make a commitment, can be also applied in the case of a radical, grassroots approach to urban regeneration inspired by the commons. Rebeldía's definition of the set of appropriators (design principle 1) was very inclusive, as Distretto 42 was designed to cater for a variety of social groups. In order to let the community involved in the project make informed decisions, the activists gave them extensive information about the history of Distretto 42, and let them discuss their own experiences and needs at round tables (design principle 2). The most important feature of this project was its being designed directly by the appropriators themselves (principle 3); the activists of Rebeldía, by facilitating the discussion and summing up what the different groups had suggested, were directly accountable to the appropriators (principle 4).

The main issue in the design of a project for Distretto 42 was to include the inhabitants of the San Martino neighbourhood where the buildings were located, and who, in Ostrom's terms, represented the ideal 'appropriators' group. Urban regeneration

processes are often characterized by a power imbalance between local communities and public and private stakeholders that often results in the underestimation of the community's needs. Ivan Turok (1992) points out the limitations of property-led urban regeneration, underlying how the economic and social benefits for the local population are often lower than estimated, and how unrestricted market-led development can even worsen the locals' quality of life. However, even those cases in which urban regeneration projects are designed in partnership with local government, private stakeholders and local communities, the power of these different agencies is not always equal. Rob Atkinson's research, based on the analysis of an official guide published in 1995 by the UK Department of the Environment, points out that the discourse that characterises this kind of partnerships implicitly creates a top-down view that hinders the community representatives' intentions and makes them observe a form of self-censorship that aims to comply with the interest of "strong powers", meaning private stakeholders and local government (1999). Both authors call for a more holistic, community-friendly approach to urban regeneration planning that can actually empower the communities involved, and is not merely profit-oriented. In this sense, urban regeneration policies often risk not only failing to significantly improve the daily life of a community located in a disadvantaged or run-down area, but even being economically and socially detrimental to them.

This risk becomes crucial for bottom-up project of urban regeneration. Even when activist organisations act in the interest of the inhabitants of an area, chances are that the locals might perceive the presence of activists as a nuisance, or even as a threat. This often happens with occupied buildings, as the continuous presence of activists can cause a disruption of the everyday lives of the people who live in the surrounding areas (Bologna Today, 2016). In the Italian context, especially, occupied spaces such as *centri sociali* are often accused of causing problems to their neighbours, for example by organising events at night with loud music, having troublesome users, having graffiti that clash with the appearance of the neighbourhood, or even by attracting drug dealers (Il Giornale, 2017; Rocca, 2017). The last accusation was confuted by a study led by Vincenzo Ruggiero (2000) and by a report by Consorzio AAster et al. (1996), who explain that the average attitude of *centri sociali* towards drug dealing is hostile; in fact, *centri sociali* tend to prohibit any drug-dealing activity on their premise, especially in the case

of hard drugs. Occupations of public spaces can also cause tensions between activists and locals: when protesters paralyze urban traffic, railway stations or even airports they can encounter more difficulties in winning the sympathy of the local population. This reputation as “troublemakers” can affect the relationship between activists and local population. Rebeldía had previously been active in other areas of Pisa, but it was the first time that it had intervened in the area of San Martino. Therefore, it was necessary for Rebeldía to build a strong relationship of mutual trust with the locals, to design creative and efficient ways to interact with them and to be completely aware of their needs and preferences. As a result, the activists organized a year-long series of actions dedicated to get to know better the local population and work with them to design a new life for Distretto 42.

The first part of this ambitious project aimed at raising the local population’s awareness of Distretto 42 and of the local council’s plans for its future. Indeed, the ex-military district, despite its size, is well protected from sight by walls and other buildings; therefore, not many people were aware of its existence, and even fewer knew about the *Progetto Caserma*. This might be due to the fact that, in a time of economic crisis, spending of 70ml€ on a new military barrack could damage the image of the local council and, therefore, this project was never advertised to the local population. This information campaign included the distribution of leaflets and the installation of information points along via San Martino, the area’s main street.

The second strand of the work consisted in identifying the needs of the people inhabiting the San Martino neighbourhood. The activists circulated a questionnaire that invited the citizens to describe the problems they encountered living in the neighbourhood, and to list their needs and their priorities. The results showed that the locals felt the need to have more services for students, who represent a substantial part of Pisa’s population, children and senior citizens.

These are some sample questions of the questionnaire handed out by Rebeldía’s activists, filled in by 164 respondents, and some of the results they gathered.

Question 1 Do you think that the involvement of local inhabitants in projects that significantly affect the neighbourhood is useful?

YES – 164/164.

Question 2 What kind of spaces and/or services do you think that would be useful or well received? (multiple choice)

Spaces and/or services for young people - 115/164

Spaces and/or services for children - 114/164

Spaces and/or services for families - 107/164

Spaces for elderly people - 89/164

Question 3 What kind of activities do you think should be valorised or proposed? (multiple choice)

Cultural activities - 98/164

Political activities - 98/164

Information desks for citizens' rights – 83/164

Recreational opportunities – 96/164.

One of the most interesting results of this questionnaire is that the citizens valued being involved in urban planning projects. This idea openly challenges a theme that has characterised the discourse on Italian politics over the last few years: the supposedly individualistic, uninterested attitude of the Italians towards collective decision-making and politics. Other key issues identified by the questionnaires were directly connected with Pisa's local context. First, Pisa had been facing a long period of housing emergency. The economic crisis put many families in the condition of not being able to pay their rents anymore; social housing in Pisa was not sufficient to cater for the needs of all families affected by this emergency. Furthermore, the migration of people from Northern Africa and the Middle East towards the Mediterranean significantly increased between 2008 and 2014; as a consequence, many Italian cities have had to manage an unprecedented flow of immigrants, providing housing and other aid. Pisa received a large number of migrants, but the housing arrangements for them were not adequate (Pisa Today, 2013, 2017). For instance, one of the accommodation sites for migrants was a group of containers in San Rossore park, a natural reserve far from the city centre. The

containers lacked hygienic services and ventilation systems; during the Summer they were placed in an area without shade where the temperature reached 46 degrees Celsius (Lacroce, 2015). One of the other consequences of the economic crisis was the increase in the unemployment rate; unemployed people often do not have the economic resources to retrain or to start a small-scale entrepreneurial activity. The arts and craft workshops and the various training and exchange activities based on recycling contained in Municipio dei Beni Comuni's plan were designed to address this issue and to provide a space for knowledge exchange, training, co-working and resources sharing. Furthermore, severe public budget cuts to research and education caused another problem in Pisa: the shortage of studying spaces for university students. The neglect of buildings in the city also affected university properties, such as Palazzo Feroci and Palazzo Mastiani-Brunacci. These spaces are officially property of the University of Pisa and are located in the city centre, within easy reach of the majority of the university students. However, both these buildings have been abandoned and neglected, despite not only their possible use as study areas, but also their artistic value, as will be mentioned later. The questionnaire also showed that the inhabitants of San Martino felt the need for new spaces of social aggregation, and that the majority of the people who answered the questionnaire thought that Pisa lacked in spaces dedicated to activities such as recycling and creative labs (97/164). In times of crisis, the importance of DIY and DIO practices becomes increasingly important, as the purchasing power of the population decreases and there is a stronger need to prevent wasting resources.

Another important part of the activists' work was to organize informal events that could serve an opportunity for socialising for the locals. Events such as the carnival street party, where Rebeldía's members entertained the local children with games, mask-building workshops, music and snacks were important occasions for the activists. These events attracted people who usually did not engage with activism or volunteering, two sectors that are very close to Rebeldía; here these people could discover more about the organisation's project, talk to the activists and meet other neighbours, thus reinforcing the sense of community of the area.

The activists also organised a series of small gatherings, called "Tea Project", to present their work on Distretto 42 to whomever wanted to know more about it. These events

were advertised on Facebook and anyone could join them without an invitation; I attended one of them as a participant-observer. On some occasions, these gatherings were held in the house of one of the activists, who happened to live close to Distretto 42; on others, the owners of a bar and of a restaurant in Via San Martino offered their spaces to the activists. Here the guests were offered a cup of tea and biscuits, in order to create a relaxed and informal atmosphere: this simple detail was very important for the activists, in order to establish a connection with the attendees and to build a sense of community and make everyone feel free to join the conversation. In this setting, the activists presented the project, starting from the history of the ex-military district, and updated the attendees on the development of Rebeldía's work. The attendees were able to offer their insight and talk about their own background; for example, during the session I attended, a representative of an association that helps migrants talked about her experience both on the Sicilian coast and in Pisa, explaining what the major problems were with the current state of migrant care in Italy, and how Distretto 42 could cater for migrants in Pisa.

This bottom-up approach to urban policy-making is an alternative approach to urban regeneration and participation. In stark opposition to the local council's failure to communicate its project for the ex-military base effectively and to open a dialogue with the local population, the activists created several opportunities to present their proposal and listen to the residents' needs.

During the first phases of the project, the activists encountered suspicion among the local community. At first, the communication between the two groups was not very easy. The attitude of the people of San Martino can be explained by the novelty of the project and by the fact it was the first time the locals had the opportunity to collaborate with a grassroots organisation. The project for a new usage of Distretto 42 significantly changed after a 2-days workshop that was attended by over 200 people including activists, volunteers and members of the local community between January 31 and February 1 2015. The event was called "Di' per di' = 42", a wordplay based on the name of Distretto 42, "multiplying" and "saying". "Multiplying" was the buzzword of the whole campaign, as the aim of this project was to "multiply" common and green spaces, rights, voices and opportunities to socialise, learn and work.

Great attention is given to the problem of the housing crisis in the area of Pisa. The plan of Municipio dei Beni Comuni and Rebeldía includes the creation of a permanent observatory in charge of tracking the social demographics of the urban area, with a special focus on those situations that often spark negative reactions from the locals, such as the presence of the Roma and Sinti community, small illegal markets run by migrants in the city centre, evictions etc. This idea is opposed to the current local policy which usually treats migrant flows, evictions and other issues as “emergencies”, providing many temporary, often inadequate solutions but no stable strategy. Instead, the proposed alternative features a permanent information point where citizens could find out more about issues of housing, work, health and migration. This service would include the presence of linguistic-cultural mediators, who can facilitate the dialogue between migrants and volunteers; in order to have such an important feature in Distretto 42, however, it would be necessary to train both operators and mediators in order to give them the necessary knowledge to solve common issues. In this sense, the main new idea in the project co-designed by activists and local communities is the plan to include a space for social housing in the former military dormitories: building B, one of the largest in the Distretto 42 complex, has appropriate housing spaces and hygienic services to host a number of evicted families, migrants and refugees. This idea of commons as a living space resonates with the tradition of shared housing that has its roots in the 1960 commune and has evolved into a variety of legal definitions, experiments and practices all over Europe (Di Campli, 2014).

In the final version of the project, the large presence of volunteering associations is coordinated with the creation of two main centres: the “Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Solidarity” and the “Centre for a Fairer Economy”. These sites of activity unite different organisations according to their scope, so that they can work on common objectives. The first pole focuses on campaigns for: non-violent civil defence; reconversion of those areas of Camp Darby, a USA military base close to Pisa, that have been recently reassigned to Italy by the USA government; the cancellation of militarist activities for children, such as school visits to military bases; solidarity with the people of Palestine. The second one instead focuses on: STOP TTIP, opposing the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership; a campaign that opposes the mandatory balanced budget in the Italian Constitution, and a campaign against corruption.

Socialisation is one of the themes that emerges from the final draft of Distretto 42's project. In this version a large outdoor space is dedicated to spontaneous socialisation, a place where people can sit, read a newspaper, relax and talk with other users.

The final blueprint that emerged during the two-day workshop in January envisages several different uses for each space. The park would contain "Agorà" socialisation space, a public garden and a space for educational activities. Building A would host educational and cultural facilities: a library, a study room, teaching spaces for the School of Italian Language and for the People's University, and reading rooms. It would also include a cinema and visual arts lab, spaces for temporary exhibitions, meeting rooms for associations, a space for the Controcanto lab, a musical association that preserves the memory of protest songs of the past, and a space for ethical enterprises and start-ups. Building B, instead, would host most of the social provisions of Distretto 42. These include social housing; artisanal and recycling workshops; an indoor gym for parkour, free climbing, juggling and streets arts; a common firewood oven and barbecue; playrooms and educational spaces for children; the studio of Radio ROARR and a recording studio. Building C is the location designated for the activities that require the most room: social meals, cultural events, concerts, public assemblies and temporary exhibitions.

When defining the managerial structure of this project, Rebeldía remained coherent with Distretto 42's vocation as a commons. Distretto 42 is designed to be run by the users themselves according to practices of self-management, with the help and the coordination of groups of volunteers that follow the different activities that take place in the complex. The importance of self-management is crucial: children as well would be taught to be responsible and to be autonomous in their activities. In fact, all the projects that target children have been designed according to the principles of mutual exchange, dialogue, participation and self-management. These principles are aimed at building up the children's civic conscience, their confidence and their independence as part of a coherent educational project. Moreover, part of the activities would be designed following the inputs of children and their families, creating the first children-led activity centre in Pisa. Quite interestingly, the plan designed with the participation of the citizens of San Martino depicts a site that corresponds to Richard Sennett's idea of urban

“planning without planning” (1970). If this project had been implemented, Distretto 42 would have become a place where people with different backgrounds could meet, interact and exchange ideas and knowledge. The multi-purpose nature of Rebeldía’s project defies the local council’s gentrification plan of San Martino: instead of attracting a bourgeois group of professionals, the new Distretto 42 would become a meeting point for a variety of groups. Children, elderly people, migrants, unemployed and undertrained people, volunteers, students and evicted families were the main target groups of Rebeldía’s projects, stressing the important social nature of Distretto 42’s new mission. Moreover, the presence of social housing in Distretto 42 contributes to its characteristic of “place of disorder”, where people with different backgrounds and needs find themselves sharing and managing a space together. In this version, the “ideal users” of Distretto 42 are not a homogeneous group, nor they are necessarily people who would normally be familiar with the world of activism and volunteering.

This version of the work is clearly not only the result of the coordination of several different volunteering and activist associations, but the product of the discussion between local community, activists and volunteers. In comparison with the first version of this plan, which was designed only by the activists, community-oriented initiatives have more space, whereas associations are organised in centres and working groups. In the participatory version of the plan, Distretto 42 is more than a location of a number of associations: it is a living space, a place where people can go every day to socialize, learn and use different kinds of facilities.

The result of the work with the local community was presented during a one-day public event in Giardino Scotto, a communal garden in Pisa, on 28 February 2015; I attended the event as a participant-observer. The event included an exhibition that featured photographs and descriptions of the abandoned building observed during the *Riutilizziamo Pisa* project and the posters resulting from the two-day debate. Moreover, the activists presented the case of Distretto 42 during a conference-style talk and all the associations that are part of Rebeldía had their own stalls with information material, petitions and fundraising activities. The style of this event was quite different from the informal, recreational nature of the events that Rebeldía had organised prior to the finalisation of the project as, instead, it had a distinctively professional arrangement.

The presentation of the project for Distretto 42 in Giardino Scotto was designed to underline how the work of Rebeldía was supported by a long period of research and how the activists had managed to carry out a high-quality community project using only their resources. This presentation, therefore, was an occasion to demonstrate the professionalism and the commitment of Municipio dei Beni Comuni and to give a positive image of the organisation to the local council, the press and the local community, beyond the circle of grassroots associations and sympathizers. However, this objective was fulfilled only in part: in fact, in the audience there were journalists, activists and members of the local community, but the representatives of the city council were absent. The activists saw this event also as an opportunity to have a public dialogue with the city council and to gain its trust, so the absence of its representatives was disappointing. This was another episode of the long history of distrust of the local council towards the organisation; the difficult unfolding of the dialogue between Rebeldía and the city council will be analysed in the following section.

Some of the city council members had publicly showed their support to Rebeldía either by directly taking part in the activists' work, or by publishing press releases on the local newspapers.

One of the key figures in the dialogue between the city council and Rebeldía is Francesco Auletta, the leader of the local party "Una città in comune" who also ran for the administrative elections in 2013. The list is a coalition of *Rifondazione Comunista* (the heir of the dissolved Italian Communist Party) and a local civic list. Francesco "Ciccio" Auletta is an active member of Rebeldía and a city council member; his position allows him to be a gatekeeper for the activists, but as he does not make part of the ruling party, this offers not many practical advantages to the organisation. Furthermore, Rebeldía could count on the sympathy of the representatives of the left-wing party "*Sinistra Ecologia e Libertà*" (Left, Ecology and Freedom); but, quite surprisingly, also the right-wing opposition force of the local council voted in favour of Municipio dei Beni Comuni's proposal. This curious attitude of political parties towards the activists' proposal comes as no surprise, despite the fact that Forza Italia and Lega Nord have historically always opposed grassroots informal organisations such as *centri sociali*. It is typical of Italian politics to adapt any possible strategy to cause obstacles and delays in the activities of

antagonist parties, even when this means to take positions that go completely against the party's values or make useless amendments to law proposals, as in the recent case of the law on civil unions (Rubino, 2016).

However, neither the support of the far-left wing of the local council, nor the sudden sympathy of some of their sternest opponents was sufficient to grant success to Rebeldía's proposal. The majority of the city council commented that Rebeldía's project was "unrealistic" and hardly sustainable; it was also added that "Progetto Caserme", the original project that planned to reconvert the former military district into a luxury apartment complex, was still considered valid, despite being on a hiatus for economic reasons. Nevertheless, the mayor made no reference to the possibility of implementing "Progetto Caserme" in the near future, nor did he mention possible amendments that could make it less expensive and more sustainable. Once again, the activists found it impossible to establish a dialogue with the local council and their project, that involved more than 200 members of the community, was completely ignored.

When facing the failure of their proposal to the city council the activists had to think about a follow-up strategy that could be consistent with their views and not waste the months of work with the community of San Martino. The hypothesis of occupying the site a second time, this time including the buildings, was not well received by the majority of the activists. In fact, after a long experience in political occupations in Pisa, Rebeldía knew that this would have been only a temporary solution that would have inevitably lead to another forcible eviction. As pointed out earlier, the act of occupying a building is aimed at eliciting and anticipating a response; in this case, Rebeldía did not want to elicit a reaction from the city council, or demonstrate their dissatisfaction with the current state of the things. This time, they wanted to build an alternative model of shared space specifically tailored for the local community. Unlike the previous occupations, which had a radical nature, this project wanted to be a legally recognised model for grassroots management of public spaces that could significantly improve the conditions of the people living around Distretto 42, and to cut down the waste of space that characterises Pisa's urban planning. If successful, this project could have been seminal for other organisations all over Italy, creating a legal precedent that could have influenced urban planning on a national scale. Starting the project in an occupied

building could have also meant the loss of months of work, once the occupiers were evicted; furthermore, as this project included social housing, this could have meant putting the people living in Distretto 42 in an extremely vulnerable position. In the end, the activists decided not to occupy Distretto 42; instead, they dedicated themselves to the larger campaign *Riutilizziamo Pisa*, mapping waste of urban soil all over the city. This decision was a way to continue the conversation about Pisa's abandoned spaces without incurring into the problems that an occupation would have caused; instead of occupying buildings, the activists created walking tours of Pisa's abandoned spaces. This form of "alternative tourism" is a form of protest that is often practiced by activists group that want to show their disapproval of urban planning and regeneration policies: some examples are the "Ruta del despilfarro", a proper "Citizen Route of Cultural and Heritage Neglect" organised by the journalistic collective Xarxa Urbana de València (Xarxa Urbana de València, 2016), and "Tour de Neglect", a cycling tour to the forgotten areas of Buffalo organised by blogger and photographer David Torke (Ethan Powers, 2014).

Nevertheless, the disappointing result of their proposal led the activists to reflect upon their own attitude in the negotiation with the local council. Indeed, as it was explained to me during an interview with one of the activists, the decision was taken by the city council, but the activists felt that, after a long time of defeats, they were lacking the necessary motivation to go on fighting, and they had lost faith in the possibility of winning over the city council.

As stated earlier, Rebeldía's proposal for a reconversion of the ex-military district in San Martino was supported by the local council's representatives of Sinistra, Ecologia e Libertà, a left-wing party that has showed its support to the grassroots organization via a series of press releases. In 2014, the Pisa division of SEL asked for a parliamentary interrogation on the issue of Progetto Caserme, in order to discuss its feasibility and also consider other possibilities. The Ministry of Defence replied that the main issue with Progetto Caserme were the recurrent "difficulties" faced by the local council in building a new military district, declining any responsibility in the failure of the project. Secondly, the Ministry suggested that Distretto 42 could still be used for military purposes, therefore suggesting that Progetto Caserme might not be feasible at all (Ghezzani and Bucci, 2015). As the members of SEL point out in their press release, the suggestion of

the Ministry does not meet the current necessities of Pisa's population: the word "emergency" appears regularly on the local newspapers, often in relation to the flow of migrants into the city, or to the housing crisis, or to the local nightlife, but there is no urgent need for a new military space. Furthermore, creating a new military district not only is not a priority, but also clashes with the local council's original plan to move all the military spaces out of the city centre.

Pisa's political history has been characterised by the persisting influence of the left/centre-left wing: indeed, the town has been governed by a left-wing council since 1971. This political stability coincides with a very conservative approach to the government of the city. In particular, the election of mayor Marco Filippeschi in 2008 was the start of a different attitude of the city council towards Rebeldía: if the previous mayor, Paolo Fontanelli, had tried to reach agreements that could both benefit the activists and the local population, Filippeschi instead did not even attempt to initiate a dialogue with them, removing one of the major grassroots forces of Pisa from the discussion on the city's social life. The attitude of the city council towards Rebeldía's projects, therefore does not only represent the increasing neoliberalisation of Italy's urban policies, but also the hostility of consolidated powers towards grassroots organisations.

In the case of Palazzo Grassi-Boyl, the Filippeschi council has adopted a policy of pure "laissez-faire"; in order not to interfere with the market, the municipality has let a heritage site decay. The city council never asked the Tognozzi group to take responsibility for the poor state in which Palazzo-Grassi Boyl was left, nor did it try to find an alternative solution to the situation.

The dialogue between the city council and Rebeldía for a new use of Distretto 42 has been a long and frustrating one. The activists started their campaign in 2013 with the occupation of the ex-military district's park, an action of civil disobedience that included the cleaning of the park and the organisation of events inside it; the activists were forced to leave the area after a few weeks. The part of the campaign that concerns Distretto 42 as an architectural complex, instead, was not based on an occupation, but was a work of planning and cooperation with the local community. The sustainability of Rebeldía's project is based on a long-term plan that can only work with initial investments, effective

cooperation and the full involvement of all the volunteers that took part in the project design; this point was the one that was considered the most far-fetched by the city council, which eventually rejected the whole proposal as “unrealistic”. However, it must be noted that the city council’s original plan was even more ambitious, as it included a 70m € investment just for the building of a new military district; furthermore, the reconversion of the military buildings into luxury flats would have implied many additional costs. Rebeldía’s plan, instead, kept the costs of refurbishment and re-adaptation to a minimum, as it prescribed to maintain the original layout of the buildings and to use recycled and scrap materials for all the necessary restoration works. The attitude of the city council towards the project was not only hostile towards the organisation, but towards the very idea of participation in urban planning, as rejecting this project tout court also meant to ignore the voices of a part of Pisa’s electorate that took part to Distretto 42’s project design.

The case of Rebeldía illustrates how grassroots organisations can oppose the neoliberal logic of local councils by developing their own participatory plans to urban regeneration and the reutilisation of abandoned heritage sites. The local council showed they were sensitive to the potential economic value of the abandoned buildings in the city of Pisa; it is necessary to underline that this value remained potential as, at the time of writing, both Palazzo Grassi-Boyl and the military district Curtatone e Montanara are still abandoned, losing economic value year after year. In both cases, the activists used the rhetoric of *occupatio* (Mitchell, in Mitchell, Harcourt and Tassig, 2013) so that they could elicit a response from the city council and frame it in advance by proposing alternatives for the use of urban spaces. Most importantly, they occupied a symbolic gap that had been left empty by the institutions. This case study is particularly relevant to the purpose of this doctoral thesis for several reasons. First, it illustrates how the theory of the commons constituted the basis for a counternarrative to the neoliberal logic of the policies of urban regeneration designed by the city council, opposing a collaborative, bottom-up approach to the profit-oriented strategy of the city council. Secondly, it demonstrates that neoliberal policies are not do not always follow a profitable market logic. In both the examples used in this case study, the market-driven choices of the city council for the regeneration of abandoned buildings were largely unsuccessful: the reconversion into luxury flats planned for these buildings has not taken place yet

because of a lack of funding and a lack of external investors. Furthermore, the city council's plans do not seem to cater for the needs of the city of Pisa, which has been facing a housing crisis for a long time: given the city's need for affordable housing, the construction of new luxury apartment might not bring the expected return of investment to the city council. Lastly, this chapter shows the potential of grassroots-led initiatives in the urban context. The activists of Rebeldía and Municipio dei Beni Comuni were able to run for a brief time a heritage site as a commons, working together for its maintenance and consulting the History of Art experts of the University of Pisa to offer an informed guided tour of the building. Furthermore, they designed a series of participatory initiatives to plan the new use of ex-military district and a collaborative management model that could sustain it on the long run, acknowledging that it would require effort and funding to implement. The skills and the knowledge of the activists, if recognized by the city council, could be the driving force for innovative participatory initiatives in the city of Pisa. From what we can understand from the attitude of the city council, it is clear that Pisa's ruling party does not want to engage with Rebeldía, nor give them any recognition of the work they have done. Indeed, we can see a pattern similar to the one of TVO: an activist organisation that used occupation as a method of protest and organisation is tolerated for a certain amount of time and after they leave their building, the local authorities are not interested in offering them the opportunity of continuing their activities, nor in learning from their participatory experiences. On the battleground of cultural value, status quo gets defended more passionately than the interest of a community and their cultural life. Rebeldía's main success, despite the scarce recognition from the city council, was to demonstrate that the city has an appetite for participation. Georgina Blakeley states that "Those participating in local governance projects in their respective cities recognize that they are involved in a power struggle where the odds are stacked against them. That they continue to participate is not due to any 'false consciousness' on their part, but is rather testament to their belief that their participation does make a difference, however small that difference might be" (pp.142-143, 2010); while this motivation might be sufficient for the activists and the citizens to keep on with participatory practices in the future, it will be necessary to address issues of communication and trust between them and local councils to see major change.

Conclusions

For the purpose of this doctoral work, before addressing its conclusions, it is necessary to include a brief account of the case of the Asilo Filangieri in Naples. The occupation of the Asilo unfolded whilst I was already working on my case studies, and it went in unexpected directions when it was already too late for me to incorporate it in my PhD project. However, it is a very interesting case of cultural commons created by a protest group and adds an interesting and distinctive possibility for an effective settlement between protesters and authorities.

This 16th century complex is located in the city centre of Naples, in the area that in 1995 was ascribed to the UNESCO World Heritage List and it belongs to the city council. In 2007, Naples was selected to host the Universal Forum of Cultures, and the Asilo was selected as a venue for this event. The geography scholar Pascale Froment provides a full account of the occupation. Previously, the city centre of Naples had been the home of various collectives of cultural workers who occupied empty buildings and transformed them into centres of artistic productions, such as Officina 99 or Lanificio (The Wool Factory) (Froment, 2016). On March 2nd, 2012, the Asilo Filangieri was occupied by the collective La Balena (The Whale) for several reasons: first, it was a way to denounce the delays in the restoration works that would have made the complex fit to host the Universal Forum of Cultures: when the occupants entered the building, they found it in an unsafe condition. Secondly, it was a way to protest the organisation of mega-events as a form of municipal cultural policy that cared little for establishing a continuous cultural provision in the area and instead focused on festivals and similar event-based strategies. The occupants, therefore, started a series of cultural and artistic events inside the Asilo (which was renamed Ex-Asilo) to give new life to a building that seemed to have been forgotten by the local administration. Furthermore, the protesters' way of managing the space as a commons and organising a series of exhibitions, plays, readings, concerts and workshops, was a way to provide a space where citizens could enjoy cultural events and feel part of a community, as opposed to the large, remunerative and one-off events preferred by the city council (idem). In this sense, Asilo Filangieri was able to offer a different kind of cultural provision from the mainstream one, catering especially for the local community.

In a similar fashion to Teatro Valle, the occupants organised the management of the organisation by using consensus as a decision-making tool. Occupants divided their work by organising seven thematic round tables: the various groups take care of the library, the garden, the cinema, theatre and drama, visual arts, music, and self-government. Furthermore, all the occupants and the citizens who are interested in the Ex-Asilo's activities, meet up once a week to discuss future projects and current activities (Ex-Asilo Filangieri, 2017). Their organisation not only managed to be a long-lived one, but also manage to engage in a fruitful dialogue with the city council. In fact, what is unique to the experience of Ex-Asilo Filangieri is that, after almost four years of occupation, the position of the occupants has been regularized with a deliberation of the local council assigning to the occupants the formal right to manage the building. This happened thanks to collaboration with the city council led by Luigi De Magistris, who has been elected mayor of Naples in 2011 and re-elected in 2016. The city council's interest in the commons has led to the creation of the "Assessorato ai Beni Comuni" (Department for the Commons) in 2011, that has implemented a variety of initiatives aimed at encouraging the participation of the citizens in the management of public spaces. One of the most important experimental policies of this city council was the recognition of seven urban commons, among which Asilo Filangieri (Comune di Napoli, 2016): with council deliberation in January 2016, the city of Naples has officially recognised the merits and the social importance of these spaces, and the right of the occupants to carry on their work legally.

The case of Asilo Filangieri is not the only example of how Italian city councils have embraced experimental policies for the promotion and the construction of the commons. Indeed, the Italian struggle for the recognition of the commons expanded beyond the sphere of occupied spaces and encompassed the urban dimension both in its tangible and intangible dimensions. The city of Bologna created a regulation that allows forms of collaboration between the city council and the citizens for safeguarding tangible, intangible and digital commons (Comune di Bologna, 2014). This initiative has inspired other cities to follow Bologna's footsteps and to create their own regulation on the commons, such as the cities of Genova and Torino. These regulations allow forms of collaboration between citizens and local councils for the safeguard of the urban commons; these activities entail the spontaneous, free and voluntary offer of skills and

resources of citizens who want to pursue the common good (*idem*). The success of Asilo Filangieri, therefore, is not only to measure on the account of its participatory cultural practices, but also on the fact that it has set a precedent for the legal recognition of occupied cultural spaces. By establishing a legal framework for the activities of organisations born out the illegal occupations of heritage sites and culturally relevant buildings, the municipality of Naples and Asilo Filangieri have opened new directions for local cultural policies.

The key findings of this thesis indicate that an economic crisis and the austerity measures adopted to counteract it can accelerate neoliberal trajectories of cultural value and exacerbate divisions between policy-makers and cultural workers who are pushed in an increasingly precarious position. On the cultural policy side, the economic crisis encouraged the Italian state to “looking for money where the money is”, strengthening its relationship with private funders, but often failing to address issues of unequal distribution of funding between different regions and institutions. On the side of those who resisted austerity measures, that is, cultural workers and activists, the crisis encouraged them to build grassroots alternatives inspired by ideological positions that do not fit in the neoliberal discourse. This thesis demonstrates that the interaction between these two apparently antagonist agents has potential for innovation in cultural policy, urban planning and arts management. Despite the specificity of the Italian context, these learnings can be applied to other European settings, in particular to those countries that belong to areas that were strongly affected by the economic crisis and that have similar concerns for artist’s welfare and the preservation of heritage sites and culturally relevant buildings.

This doctoral work has provided a contextual account of the history of economic and political instability of Italy that has affected the country since the 2008, and it has looked at how this has influenced both the sphere of cultural policy and the sphere of activism related to culture and the arts in Italy. Furthermore, this thesis has analysed the different concepts that have characterised the Italian discourse on cultural value since the start of the 2007/2008 economic crisis. In order to make sense of the prevalent interpretation of the Italian cultural value discourse, I have considered it against the backdrop of the main ‘grand narrative’ (Lyotard, 1980) that has shaped it: neoliberalism.

In the words of F.S. Michaels (2011), neoliberalism is “monoculture”, a dominant perspective that replaces alternatives ones. Neoliberalism is “a theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can be best advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterised by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade” (Harvey, 2005, p.2). However, it is more than a political theory, it is a philosophy characterised by individualism, economic rationality and the belief that, as said by Margaret Thatcher in 1987, “there is no such thing as society” (Keay, 1987). As pointed out by F.S. Michaels (2011), the philosophy of neoliberalism affects many aspects of our life, including relationships and education. The monoculture has also affected the rationale for cultural policies: as stated by Gray (2007), the target of public policy is no longer society as a collective, but the individual. Furthermore, economic growth is the main rationale for public policies; economic value has substituted use value in assessing the usefulness of public policies. As a result, cultural policies have become “attachments” to more politically relevant policies, such as health or economic policies; their value lies in their instrumentality to other, non-art related policy goals (Gray, 2007). It is therefore unsurprisingly that neoliberalism, its philosophy and its goals should also have affected the sphere of Italian cultural policies. From the early 2000s onwards, Italy has set the legal basis for the decentralisation and the privatisation of the management of cultural assets. The economic crisis of 2007/2008 only exasperated this trend; the austerity measures implemented by the Berlusconi government during the crisis resulted in severe cuts to public spending for culture, justified by the slogan “culture does not put food on the table”. Interestingly, though, the investments in culture brought about by Minister for Cultural Assets and Activities and Tourism, Dario Franceschini, were justified by an economic rationale (much like in most other Western countries at this time): according to the Minister, culture is “Italy’s oil” and as such it deserves the attention of national and international investors. However, the politics of austerity and privatization brought about by the Italian government during the crisis were not accepted uncritically by activists and cultural professionals. Indeed, since 2010, the concept of commons gained an increasing popularity in Italy. The climax of this interest was reached in the occasion of the referendum of June 2011 on the privatization of services and water supplies, which included also other important topics such as the

use of nuclear energy in Italy and the abrogation on the law on *legittimo impedimento*, which was one of the *ad personam* strategical laws designed by ex-Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi. The result of the referendum was an enormous success for the activists who had campaigned against the privatisation of water supplies; “*Acqua bene comune*”, “Water is a commons”, became more than a mere slogan. Indeed, it was the starting point for several other initiatives regarding the commons: a project for a law for the legal recognition of the commons had already started in 2007, but after 2011 the theory of the commons gained momentum in politics, environmental activism and culture. For example, the network Municipio dei Beni Comuni, led by Rebeldía, unites a large group of organisations that promote the safeguard and the legal recognition of the commons; these include environmentalist activist groups, but also social and political activists and cultural organisations. Between 2014 and 2015, their work for the construction of urban commons in the city of Pisa through participatory practices showed how the Italian struggle for the commons was able to produce new grassroots approach to urban planning. Furthermore, the concept of commons was fundamental for the organisations created by the occupation of culturally relevant buildings in Italy. Teatro Valle constitutes the most famous example of these organisations: its location in the capital of Italy, its success and the international resonance it gained made it a symbol of the concept of culture as a commons. The case of Asilo Filangieri, included in the last chapter, illustrates cultural value is not only a battleground, but also a possible common ground where different political forces can collaborate to produce innovation in cultural policy.

The occupation of theatres and other culturally relevant sites in Italy represents a peculiar case of progressive stratification of meaning that includes culture, social justice, economics and politics. The practice of occupation evolved from being an instrument for political protest to the basis for the management of cultural spaces, with immediate effects on the redefinition of the political and artistic scope of the occupation. Furthermore, the organisations that were created by these occupations implemented socially inclusive practices both in terms of enjoyment of the commons and of the decision-making process that regulates the management of it. Lastly, these spaces were able to attract the attention of Italian jurists, who collaborated with them to the design of a national law on the legal recognition of the commons. The practice of occupation

was crucial to the construction of these alternative cultural spaces. Indeed, one of the possible meanings of occupying is also filling a void, taking the space that someone has left empty. What these organisations did with their occupations was to offer something that was not in line with mainstream cultural provision: they provided a space where to experiment with arts and democracy, extending the right to access those spaces to the public. They also tried to implement direct democracy as a tool to build cultural value and to use the commons as a management model for arts and culture. Moreover, their mission also included the promotion of the value and the independence of artists and rethinking access strategies to cultural heritage. By escaping the public/private dichotomy, these organisations did not only make the case for the cultural commons, but also reclaimed the independence of culture from the neoliberal values of competition, individualism and commercialism.

As analysed in chapter One, a wealth of literature has been written on the influence of neoliberalism on culture and cultural policy. These works have been an important influence for this thesis; however, whilst accepting the power and pervasiveness of the neoliberal understanding of value, this work focused on the attempt to articulate alternative possibilities to understand and perform value. This thesis looked at radical experiments in cultural value and how people in different case studies have attempted to forge a way of doing arts provision and arts management adopting radical values that go against the *doxa*. I wanted to consider these case studies because I wanted to test whether they could withstand the test of reality. I wanted to explore the possibility of a cultural policy outside the neoliberal *doxa* and to understand whether neoliberalism is eventually going to prevail or not: in order to provide an answer to this question, this doctoral work analysed the activities of two cultural organisations created by protest groups and their interaction with the local authorities. My two case studies represent two different ways of experimenting with radical, grassroots and anti-capitalist cultural policy: they have followed different approaches to participatory practices and to the interaction with the local council; each of them showed a strong potential for success, which went unrecognized by the city council. Furthermore, the case of Asilo Filangieri represents a successful third alternative which is still unfolding as a form of experimental collaboration between the city council and the activists. Lee Anne Fennel (2011) summarised Ostrom's empirical research findings with what she called "Ostrom's law":

‘A resource arrangement that works in practice can work in theory (emphasis in the original, p.1)’. Despite all the odds, Italian occupied spaces that were managed as commons demonstrated that they could work independently, to establish a form of self-governance and to provide cultural activities on the territory for several years. What we can conclude from these case studies is that the search for viable compromises still a welcome development in these times of cultural crisis where culture is increasingly commodified and cultural policy is characterised by managerialism, instrumentality and austerity measures (Hewison, 2014). In order to foster this development, however, it is necessary to explore new legal and economic solutions to reinforce the sustainability of these new approaches to cultural policy.

This thesis fills a vacuum in the field of cultural policy studies, which has been focusing on the critique of neoliberalism and the way it affects culture and cultural policy, but has been unimaginative in going beyond this critique and exploring possible alternatives. This work wanted to explore possible ways to address this situation and find out about the strategies that people have implemented to try to understand culture beyond the market values imposed by the *doxa*. The most important contribution of this thesis to the field of cultural policy studies is that it focuses on practical ways in which the values of protest might offer new cultural policy rationales and new model of cultural administration deriving from a commons-oriented approach to culture. This attempt at exploring practical ways to create forms of cultural policy beyond profit-driven and instrumental rationales not only has scholarly value, but is also of interest for practitioners, arts administrators and policymakers in terms of advancing the debate on the quest for fresh policy rationales when the old ones, even the instrumental ones are not really holding anymore. Indeed, if the instrumental approach of Italian cultural policy had been successful, there would have been no need for the dramatic cuts to public funding for the arts it has implemented after 2008.

This thesis demonstrated that the concept of cultural value can be a battleground for different political values. The activists of Rebeldía and Teatro Valle Occupato expressed radical anti-capitalist, socially inclusive and political stances through their activities and they had to confront local councils which, despite their different political connotations, refused to engage with them, as their only concern was the economic exploitation of

the spaces occupied by the activists. The commons analyzed in this doctoral work respond to the characteristics of the urban commons identified by Efrat Eizenberg: they are both a way to redistribute rights, in particular the right to work and the right to participation in culture, and an alternative to hegemonic neoliberal practices (2011, p. 779). In these experiences, cultural practice and political struggle are deeply interconnected: culture represents a perfect battlefield for political struggle as “culture, in its diverse manifestations from religion to apparently scientific discourse, is to some extent a product of conflict and the different desires of different social groups” (Wall, 2015, p. 70). In order to understand the possible pathways for collaborative and participatory approaches to the construction of cultural value in Italian cultural policy, we need to go back Ostrom’s 7th principle for the success of a commons: a state that is willing to recognise the rights of the appropriators (Ostrom, p. 90, 1990). These interactions give us a portray of an Italian ruling class that, regardless of political affiliation, resists social and cultural innovation, especially when these come from bottom-up initiatives. The interaction between a grand narrative and the resistance to a grand narrative, however, is not always purely antagonistic, but it can generate interesting new pathways to the understanding of the role of cultural policy and of the concept of cultural value. As showed by the example of Asilo Filangieri, the dialogue between grassroots and institutional cultural agencies resulted with an experiment in cultural policy, based on the legal recognition of the work of the activists who occupied the Asilo and, most importantly, of the cultural impact of their activities.

The concept of cultural value in Italy after the economic crisis has been strongly debated both by cultural-policy makers and those who fought against them. The grand narrative of neoliberalism was not defeated by the crisis of global capitalism that happened between 2007 and 2008; economic values still dominate the discourse on any other form of value, including the cultural one. In Italy, the effects of this grand narrative on cultural value were evident both in the cultural policies implemented after the economic crisis and in the rhetoric used by policy-makers when speaking about the value of culture. However, the hegemonic concept of cultural value promoted by the Italian government met the resistance of activists all over Italy, who occupied theatres, heritage sites, cinemas and other culturally relevant buildings in order to reclaim the value of culture. The protest of cultural workers united political stances with the re-

appropriation of the dignity of cultural work; the union of these causes resulted with the creation of new informal cultural organisations. My research supports the view that the protesters were not only able to call out the fallacies of Italian cultural policies, but were able to build an effective, although frail, alternative to the mainstream conception of cultural work. Their work was inspired by the theory of the commons, which offers techniques and strategies to build forms self-government that are based on the democratic creation and implementation of sets of rules. Despite the popularity of the idea that the market system is the most effective way to create innovation in culture (Cowen, 2008, p.69), this thesis argues that a market-driven approach to cultural value is not always an effective way to foster innovative practices in culture and cultural policy. The interplay between mainstream and alternative cultural forces can produce new approaches to understand cultural value from an institutional perspective which is not only based on economic standards, but includes social, political and artistic values. The work of some Italian local councils in the promotion and recognition of the urban commons based on the partnership between the local authorities and the citizens is a perfect example of how cultural value is subject to change and contamination: the radical positions of activists were embraced, but not absorbed, as in the case of counterculture and “cool capitalism” described by McGuigan (2009), by institutional policy makers, opening new avenues for an approach to the construction of cultural value shared by citizens and institutions. Furthermore, this thesis shows that the economic crisis was an accelerating factor in the neoliberalisation of Italian cultural policy’s notion of cultural value. The idea of culture as an exploitable economic resource was not novel in Italy before 2008, but after the crisis, the whole rhetoric of Italian cultural policy became polarized between two opposite views about the value of culture, but that both belonged to the neoliberal, market oriented *doxa*: “Italy’s oil” or nothing. Interestingly, Italian cultural policy tried to find the solution to austerity not outside of the neoliberal system that had generated it, but inside of it. This shows that neoliberalism is, indeed, a form of *doxa*, and does not allow an understanding of reality outside of itself, even when it fails. However, the economic crisis, and most importantly, the austerity measures that were implemented after that, played an important factor in the formation of alternative notions of cultural value that radically challenged the neoliberal *doxa*: the idea of culture as a commons, something that can be not only

accessible to everyone but that can be managed by a community, not by the state or by a private agent.

My research shows that the value of grassroots approaches to culture and cultural policy are particularly effective in the urban context. This project's case studies have shown that it is the dimension of local cultural policy, and more specifically urban cultural policy, that can benefit the most from the immaterial wealth of knowledge and practices of grassroots associations inspired to the model of the commons. Participatory practices such as round tables, participatory statute-writing, participatory cultural programming and self-regulation are areas that deserve the attention of cultural policy-makers and that can bring about innovative partnerships and models of management. My argument is that these innovative practices would benefit enormously the sphere of Italian cultural policy: indeed, Italian cultural policy is a highly centralised system that is mainly focused with the preservation and the restoration of heritage sites, leaving little space for innovation in culture. However, in order to be successful in the long run, these artistic practices must be supported by a government that is open to experimentation and is willing to recognise the efforts of informal artistic communities.

Lastly, this thesis provided an original attempt at of bringing a discussion of theories of the commons into the sphere of cultural policy studies. This application of the theory of the commons is an unprecedented work, especially for what concerns the area of Anglo-Saxon cultural policy studies. In particular, this application of the concept of the commons looks at practical examples from the Italian cultural sphere, with strong implications for the field of arts administration and cultural policy. This novel approach to the theory of the commons opens up a new strand of research that encompasses the theoretical challenges of the application of Ostrom's framework to the field of cultural policy and arts administration, and the identification of good practices implemented by the cultural professionals that use the theory of the commons as an inspiration for their work. Moreover, this thesis put the concept of cultural commons, which, as explained in the Introduction, is usually related to systems of values, philosophies, working practices and shared space, in the context of cultural management. My analysis suffers from the constraints explained in the Methodology chapter, but indicates that some key characteristics of the cultural commons analysed could be transferred to other cultural

organisations; these are participatory governance practices; shared working and living spaces; making the theatre/cultural space accessible to the audience most of the time; delivering a variety of activities, from conferences to workshops; making access easier by pay-as-you-will ticketing policies or low ticket prices. The evidence from my research strongly suggests that this is a research strand that is worth pursuing in the field of cultural policy, as it can explore of cultural policies and practices that follow rationales that oppose and provide an alternative to the neoliberal *doxa*.

The findings of this doctoral thesis are relevant to several audiences. First, the case studies analysed in chapter Four and Five provide a series of insights that can help activist cultural organisations in developing good practices, but also in being aware of some important caveats. TVO and Rebeldía have developed participatory governance practices that involved large group of people and to deliver high quality cultural experiences. However, both organisations had to face issues of mutual trust between them and the local residents and the local authorities, and to find an internal balance between political and professional aspirations. Therefore, this thesis provides a series of lessons learned from these experiences. More broadly, this thesis can inspire cultural practitioners to rethink about the value of their work and the potential of plural performativity in collaborative artistic practices.

Secondly, this thesis can provide a starting point for cultural policy makers who are willing to implement new approaches to decision-making in cultural policy and urban planning. The idea of participation has been debated for a long time in the cultural policy sphere, and more broadly, in public governance (Jancovich, 2015). As mentioned in the Introduction and in Chapter Two, and as demonstrated by the recent success of parties of Lega and M5S, whose rhetoric is imbued with anti-political sentiment, the Italians' trust towards political institutions is particularly low, in particular for what concerns the power of democracy to bring about change. It is necessary for Italian public institutions to rebuild a relationship of trust with citizens: local participatory governance practices, as shown by these case studies, are valuable opportunities to establish a dialogue with local communities.

Furthermore, the findings of this thesis can serve as a starting point to reprise the discussion on an Italian law on the legal recognition on the commons, which has

potential to be applied to other national contexts. This thesis shows that grassroots organisations have put in place collaborative and collective practices for the management of a shared cultural resources and strategies to prevent “the tragedy of the commons”, in Hardin’s words. Therefore, following Ostrom’s Law, these arrangements that have worked in practice can be theorized and generalised in the context of a legal infrastructure.

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