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The archive as a cognitive artefact. An analysis of the complex relationship between culture and business*

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Abstract: The research work aims at investigating the company archive phenomenon by considering its original cultural dimension and analysing it through a parallel empiric research carried out in two different contexts: in a manufacturing design company and in a cultural institution. In both cases, the archive is an “*in fieri*” project. In the first case, it is the *desired* tool to boost the brand communication, while it will end in identifying the absence of a coherent product strategy. In the second case, it is conceived as a process of revision of the existent archive, meant to re-organise the cultural asset of the foundation in a period of change and new acquisitions, and it will become the opportunity to revise the relationship between temporary exhibitions and permanent collection. The present work then aims at analysing the complexity of the process of archive construction and interpretation, and adopts a perspective which is intrinsically interdisciplinary, both because of the researchers involved and because of the process of investigation which is based on a qualitative work of analysis where all the documentation are analysed in parallel and adopting different perspectives, in order to make sense of the archive safeguarding its complexity.

Key words: archives, exhibitions, museums, identity, quality

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1 Introduction: archives as historical places, communication tools and sense making processes

The quantitative and qualitative growth that over the past twenty years has featured the investments made to enhance the *historical archives of companies*, which involved both economic and human resources, allows to recover the historical memory by supporting the company's identity and connecting it to the communication of the products and the brand. Therefore, history becomes the guarantor of the quality and the originality of a product, it supports its aesthetic, cultural and social dimensions and it feeds a *different type and high-level* communication. Many companies then consider the archive as an essential marketing and communication tool, but this is just the first dimension of its value. The archive is increasingly approached for its value in terms of knowledge that can be exploited for its potential in terms of generation of new ideas and in the definition of the identity of the organization.

The most recent literature has dedicated numerous, even though somehow limited, interventions to such a dimension and to the communication strategy implemented through the archive, thus creating its own space within the macro-theme *company museums* (Montemaggi, Severino, 2007; Bulegato, 2008; Martino, 2013; Ferrari, 2014; Liggeri, 2015), yet feeding that semantic confusion that is often typical of the use of *culture-based* concepts that are applied to managing contexts. More than for its knowledge content, thus, archives are seen as places of external communication and as physical spaces devoted to tell the story of a company, using its artefacts as pieces of a permanent collection exhibiting the cultural heritage connected with its origins.

The research work aims at investigating the company archive phenomenon by considering its original cultural dimension and analysing it through a parallel empiric research carried out in two different contexts: in a manufacturing design company and in a cultural institution. In both cases, the archive is an "*in fieri*" project. In the first case, it is the *desired* tool to boost

the brand communication, while it will end in identifying the absence of a coherent product strategy. In the second case, it is conceived as a process of revision of the existent archive, meant to re-organise the cultural asset of the foundation in a period of change and new acquisitions, and it will become the opportunity to revise the relationship between temporary exhibitions and permanent collection.

The concept of archive as a subject of investigation starts from the preservation dimension, which is typical of the historical archive, and it is enriched with all the aspects that are bound to the enhancement of the knowledge processes as well as to their communication and dissemination. Indeed, the archive, before being a resource to be communicated, it is a virtual and/or a physical space whose purpose is to track down, select, codify and reintroduce a knowledge that otherwise would disappear. The knowledge preserved in the archive asks for an interdisciplinary process of interpretation, in reason of its layered richness in terms of physical objects, documentations, and links with the history of the organization and its context. The present work then aims at analysing the complexity of the process of archive construction and interpretation, and adopts a perspective which is intrinsically interdisciplinary, both because of the researchers involved and because of the process of investigation which is based on a qualitative work of analysis where all the documentation are analysed in parallel and adopting different perspectives, in order to make sense of the archive safeguarding its complexity.

Investigating such a complexity entails to start again from the definition of two concepts: the *archive* and the *company's archive*.

The first concept recalls the image of a place devoted to preservation, which coexists with the image of a diversified set of documents. The meaning attributed to the verb (to archive) identifying the process through which the archive is built is double, both in a negative sense, since it means “setting aside” (deposit-archive) and in an ordering sense, since it recalls the

first codification intervention and the activation of the knowledge process (catalogue-archive). Therefore, the expression *company's historical archive*, for which the literature does not provide an official definition, includes both the process of cataloguing objects (physical or conceptual) originally created by the company itself and objects “created” through a process of acquisition of other materials, hence defining the term *collection-archives*. Starting from its etymological origin, and putting aside the formal defect arising from the inappropriate use of the adjective *historical* – considering the presence of evidences that are not always older than thirty years, as set forth by the statutory legislation about archives (Bonfiglio-Dosio, 2007) – as far as the theme of the company's archive is concerned, the current status depicts an image that is still blurry.

If the core of the archive features a process of knowledge construction, we certainly cannot disregard the question of the heterogeneity of the materials in the *company's archives* (from family to accounting documents, from photo collections to machines, to various types of artefacts). As it translates the “variety of the entrepreneurial path” (Bilotto, 2003), the diversity of sources is a characterising element in both the codification process, namely in the cataloguing and arrangement of different objects, and in the decoding phase, in the involvement of different users. The company's archives indeed cannot be ruled applying the methodological tools of archiving or museology-museography only, if a museum is considered as a concrete derivation of the archive, and not even of the entrepreneur only, but they shall be governed by means of a multidisciplinary view (Baglioni, Del Giudice, 2012). The *polysemic* term of archive is therefore inclusive, when considered as the product of the archivist's action, as the conceptual place where specialist scholars derive their knowledge, and as a source of inspiration for the designer or a means to boost the marketing strategy (Pino, 2017).

Dealing with business archives means embracing the world of fashion, interior design as well as the wine and food industry, and all their different aspects inside, like the choices regarding the investments made to host them, or the approach to exploit them in terms of communication.

At a first glance, a research about the current situation of Made in Italy confirms this complexity and the key role of the business archive for brands like Ermenegildo Zegna, Alessi, Lavazza, Pirelli, Olivetti, Benetton¹. Here the archive is the repository of the corporate identity; it is source of inspiration for the production process; it is knowledge to share and communicate; it is the enhancer of a range of business activities including events and socio-cultural contexts.

This acknowledgement leads to the very turning point of the survey. In this way the archive becomes the entity where knowledge is produced. The historical memory, both documental and physical, is acquired, defined but most of all re-perceived. Thus, the corporate archive cannot be simply reduced to a collection of artifacts, but must enable a process of development organized in different stages.

The two case studies proposed in the present paper are both used to analyze this point.

The design of the research then responds to the need to make sense of the concept of archive, analysing how it is imagined in a business context as a marketing tool and how it is “given for granted” as the repository of documents to be catalogued and protected in a cultural institution. The resulting evidences give back the right significance to the archive that otherwise would be ironed out on two separate dimensions.

¹ The Archives and the Museums visited in the first stage of the research are: Ermenegildo Zegna Archive and Museum, Salvatore Ferragamo Archive and Museum, Gucci Archive, Molteni Archive and Museum, Snaidero, Antinori Museum, Petra Wine, Campari Museum, Martini Museum, Loison Museum, Lanificio Paoletti Archive, Rubelli Archive, Benetton Archive, Zucchi Collection.

2 A methodological approach: being interventionist

The world of business has been so far interested by a deep process of culturalization (author's citation; Pratt, 2005; Pratt and Jeffcut, 2009), which forced management scholars to enter in a complex interaction with contexts and concepts that ask for a rigorous approach in the methodology of research. The word of culture is highly attractive thanks to an immediate and strategic connection with the aim of being creative (Pratt and Jeffcut, 2009; Goldoni, 2012) and innovative, which represents a top issue for managers and entrepreneurs (Berry and Meisiek, 2010; Jones et al., 2016).

Many companies live this inevitable attraction, experiencing projects and processes that explicitly refer to the cultural domain. The same is true for manager scholars looking for a deeper renovation of their set of theoretical and investigative tools. In entering this new context, the risk is that of reducing the complexity and diversity of a context where the content plays a central role in defining the rules and the organisation of processes.

This research, which is based on a qualitative process of investigation through the analysis of two case studies case studies (Siggelkow, 2007; Yin, 2014) is based on three major choices.

The first choice refers to the selection of the case studies analysed. The extensive use of the archive is at the centre of the communication strategy of many firms, typically in the fashion and design industries but also in other manufacturing contexts.

On the other side, cultural institutions traditionally built their archives as libraries of documental knowledge, used more to preserve their inner identity than to define their external communication. We then decided to analyse to typical situations embodying the two opposite approaches, in order to verify the real nature of the archive.

The second choice is that of adopting a multidisciplinary perspective, reached through the combination of art historical and managerial competences embodied by different

researchers. Each stage of the process of investigation involves then different languages and processes of sense making that are used to interpret all the data collected in the analysis.

The third choice is that using an interventionist approach *interventionist research* (Jonsson e Lukka 2006; Dumay, 2011), adopting the methodology of *action research* (Coghlan e Brannick 2001; Myers 2009, 2013; Mcniff e Whitehead 2011) to combine the process of investigation with the will to take a position and to support the actors involved in the research in finding a possible solution to their needs. Instead of remaining neutral, limiting ourselves to observe the reality, we then decided to assume a position and enter the process of change lived by the two organisations analysed.

Given these choices, the research was organised in two rounds in parallel:

- 1- a first round based on a preliminary observation of company archives and museums at a national level. From this observation we identified a set of dimensions characterising the archives and museums and their exploitation as communicative and organisational tools;
- 2- a second round based on an in-depth analysis of two case studies: Pianca with its company archive under construction and Fondazione Querini Stampalia with a huge historical archive to be revised. In both cases, we adopted an interventionist approach (Jonsson e Lukka 2006; Dumay, 2011), adopting the methodology of *action research* (Coghland e Brannick 2001; Myers 2009, 2013; Mcniff e Whitehead 2011).

3 Archives of entrepreneurial stories: Pianca case study

The first story is a story of entrepreneurial success. Pianca presents itself with a series of numbers: 65 years of history; exports to 50 countries; a 75,000 m² plant; 250 employees working in the factory of Oderzo (Treviso); continues participation in 50 *Salone del Mobile*

fairs, ever since the very first edition; 500 colors of lacquer to choose from; 5 weeks maximum to deliver the orders; 1,000 stores in Italy; 500 retailers around the world.

A long tradition of several generations of carpenters fostered the establishment of Pianca, a company situated in the Livenza furniture district, in the wealthy province of Treviso, back in the 50ies, and specializing in classic furniture, specifically in bedrooms. After two decades, the introduction of new materials and products manufactured as part of a series, also for kitchens and living-rooms, allowed to turn craft into industrial production. The industrial turn let the company expanding abroad, from Arab countries to China, from the United States to Latin America, thus experiencing some significant moments, mainly in recent times.

In the 90ies of the past century, Aldo Pianca, the son of the first owner, Enrico, took the lead the company and fostered the *specialization* of the production, thanks to the technological innovation of the coating and packaging processes. Meanwhile, on the creative side, the brand acquired further *recognition* thanks to new collaborations with famous external designers and the launch of significant communication campaigns.

The turn of the century is marked by the goal of environmental *sustainability*, which was achieved thanks to the experimentation of new *technologies* and the use of *alternative messages*. According to the company's spokesman, the company has always stood out for "the quality of its products, thus highlighting a reputation and a competence that were gained over time".

Based on such preconditions, it has started a research project aimed at *understanding* and *enhancing* the historical-entrepreneurial evolution of the brand, starting from its identity-giving historical memory, whose major custodian was identified in the development of the corporate archive.

The work consisted of two main phases: an initial research dedicated to the collection and the cataloguing of the archive material required to roughly understand the contents of the

research; a second phase involving an intervention of action research and targeted to the development of a project to enhance the corporate *heritage* brand through the integration of the results of the first historic observation on corporate processes².

The first phase included the analysis of the documentary and non-documentary heritage preserved at the company's headquarters and specifically, the collection and the digitalization of the information material, consisting of pictures, catalogues and components taken from the product sample collections, if available. When documents were missing, specifically for the 80ies, external sources were used, such as the private archives of the former suppliers of the company, starting from communication companies in charge of running its advertising campaigns.

The information collected was then analysed and interpreted by means of empirical observations made at the headquarters, as well as interviews to employees and former collaborators. Six specific interviews (involving the administration office, sales office, marketing office, catalogue office, communication office and the factory) were made, for a total of approximately ten hours, to get the information required to understand the significance of the empirical analysis of the first phase.

The most important aspects emerged from these interviews were the perceived relevance of the technological dimension of the products combined with the need to improve the communication. For all the people interviewed the company stands out for being “the first one in his market segment to automate production” and “the first to introduce lean production and a just-in-time service that is “time to order”, customizable and flexible, shifting from the production of pieces of furniture to the design of furniture systems” (A. P., administrator) while it is also “important to invent honeycomb protective packaging” (technical manager, factory). In the same way, the technological dimension remains central also for the process of

² For the Action Research, the multidisciplinary team made up of an art historian, a management researcher, and a corporate advisor.

design and development of the product: “the design should be improved to rethink the finishes of the products.” (A. P., sales manager). Instead, the aspect on which the company must work is the communication “starting from what the retailer communicates to the customer” (A.P., administrator). This need seems to find a possible answer in the connection with the long tradition which the company is based on. as C.T.P., marketing manager, says, communication starts from “the knowledge of the tradition of carpenters of family Pianca”.

The emerging question is then: is the product success based on only technological dimensions? Is the communication of the historical identity something what could be add to the products as a communication tool? Or shall we consider the product as knowledge artifact made of both its technological dimensions and its cultural a historical characters? And if this is the case, what is the role of the archive? Is it just a communication tool for exhibiting the company or is it a means to re-think the product starting from the archive itself?

Even though the collection of memories is significant to outline the historical-cultural profile of a company, it also opened up a second matter of investigation, in which the history of the company has been connected to the management of the image, the brand identity and the relationship of the company with the surrounding area. Leaving aside the idea of an archive reconstruction aimed at celebrating the entrepreneurial history of the family owning the company, it was possible to connect the historical reconstruction with the managerial choices that marked the strategic evolution of the company.

Starting from the results of the archive research, the second phase then focused on the identification of the strategic connections between the history of the company and its competitive dimensions, enhancing the construction of the archive, not only as a marketing and communication tool, but also as a strategic tool to interpret and make sense of the choices made in the the product and process development. This second investigation phase adopted a process of action research, in which the multidisciplinary research team has worked together

with the entrepreneurial family, specifically with Aldo Pianca, the founder's son and responsible for Operations and Carla Pianca, the entrepreneur's wife and Marketing director. Such members, indeed, not only represent the backbone of the company, but they are also in charge of two strategic areas for the construction of the archive.

The goals identified during the action research process have been the focus of two projects: an *editorial project* for the external communication of the brand through the illustration of the evolution of the home concept based on social changes; a project of internal representation and communication about the company's history through the creation of a *timeline*.

In the first project, the identification of the innovative solutions designed by Pianca to meet the people's new requirements allowed to interpret the furniture design systems by means of the brand's products, thus contributing to highlight the identity of the company.

In the second project, the timeline was used as a representation of a story divided into three different levels: the first concerning the Pianca family, the second portraying the evolution of the product design and the third outlining the company's organization.

Therefore, the intervention model was not a mere potential communication tool, which starts from the inside, thanks to the construction of the archive, but it was mainly an occasion to understand the company's identity thanks to the visualization of its historical evolution and the product design choices connected to it, as well as the technological innovation of processes and the changes in the organization.

The focus of the research and action process was therefore the concept of *process* and the relationship among the identity of the brand, the semantic aspects of the product and the functional components of the company.

Starting from this intervention model, the results of the research permitted to identify new issues that still need to be tackled.

Among the aspects that came out from such an interpretation, with a specific focus on the production of the past decades, there is the lack of correspondence among the three levels presumed. Specifically, there is an imbalance between the functional-technological dimension of the product and the semantic one, where the first two are more significant and independent, whilst the semantic aspect is compromised, since the cultural and identity-giving potential of the company's archive cannot be fully expressed, which was the first goal of the project.

The current production is always connected to the efficiency and organizational choices of the supply chain, which have little to do with the company's culture recalled in the archive. The result is that the product identity seems to be weak, and the narration of the historical memory seems to be inconsistent, since it does not seem to be connected to the current history of the product. The company can not stand out by means of a product bearing the meanings connected to the history of the brand and capable of facing the challenges of the environmental sustainability, but it prefers to keep a homogenisation of the material design dimension, also making use of external designers. Therefore, a research of the historical memory to celebrate the Pianca's family and the company connected to it is perceived as a mere communication and promotion tool, whilst the productive processes and the product choices, also during the creative phase, are targeted to the reduction of the production costs. Therefore, the peculiarity of the Pianca experience and its historical-cultural uniqueness are not connected with the real processes of value construction and the product follows those efficiency structures that impose the choice of models that do not embody the company's identity, but that permit to reduce the production costs. The outcome is a product that is homologated and that can be replicated, similarly to what happens with other brands operating in the design industry.

This specific case meets the requirement to reconsider the role of the archive by going beyond the concept of a glorious past and fostering its recognition as a tool to preserve and

valorise knowledge, boosting the strategic values of the company. In other words, the self-celebration of the Pianca brand's memory does not seem to feed a conscious observation on the contribution that such a memory may have when guiding the management of real processes. The actual meaning of the archive is still connected to the intangible side of the knowledge process, thus evoking a charming image, yet viewed as an end in itself, of a document designed to tell the successful story of a family and its company.

4 Identity and historical archive in cultural institutions: Fondazione Querini Stampalia

Fondazione Querini Stampalia is a multifunctional hub: home to a permanent collection, historical dwelling of the 18th century, space for temporary exhibitions of contemporary art, tangible evidence of contemporary architecture, but also library, meeting place and historical archive. All of these functions have turned the Foundation into a multi-faceted venue, rich in history and at the same time future-oriented, designed to host tourists looking for an authentic image of Venice, but also citizens and young students looking for a place where to study and carry out their researches.

The complex nature of the Foundation is the result of multiple interventions that have been made over time, even though it is also deeply rooted in its origins.

This Venetian institute was established in 1869 and commissioned by Giovanni Querini to serve the purpose of a place of preservation as well as of study and research. Thanks to its long-term vision, the institution has become mouthpiece of a modern concept of public use, which can be seen in the incorporation deed of the library; indeed, thanks to its three-hundred and fifty volumes, it should have granted the “constant opening in all of those days and times in which public Libraries are shut as well as in the evenings, so it can be used by scholars,

who will not stay in the Library, but in a Room next to it, which will be beautiful, comfortable, with stoves and rugs for winter” (G. Querini’s will, 1868).

Considered nowadays as one of the major examples of historic house museum globally (Mason Rinaldi, 2014), this rich 18th-century dwelling, which is embellished with sumptuous stucco and fresco decorations, houses ancient collections of furniture, textiles, globes, porcelains, sculptures as well as numerous paintings, including the pictorial series of Pietro Longhi and Gabriele Bella. The estate, whose origin dates back from mid-15th century, has been radically transformed and restored over time, especially in the second half of the 20th century, thanks to the intervention of famous architects, such as Carlo Scarpa, Valeriano Pastor and Mario Botta (Trevisan, 2010; Pastor, 2016).

The Foundation is currently committed to the promotion of knowledge, as well as to the participation and dissemination of the cultural heritage, also by means of a constant educational and training activity, which further extends the exhibition programmes. As to the exhibitions set up in the spaces of the ground-floor and the garden, the recent programmes mainly focused on contemporary art, which ranges from photography, to figurative art, to performing arts. However, if contemporary art is the main focus of temporary exhibitions, the Foundation’s core is its historical archive.

Witness of the prosperity and the history of the institute is its historical archive, as it gathers together the cultural, social and administrative memory of the Foundation since the 19th century. The archive is located on three floors, along 180 linear metres, and it is divided into multiple sections: Administration, Heritage, Library, Art Gallery and Show (manifestazioni). Out of its rich heritage, the present research analysed the fund dedicated to the temporary exhibitions set up at the institute (within the filing plan “cultural events, shows and exhibitions hosted”), for a period included between the 60ies and the 90ies of the 20th century. The decision to favour a specific section was taken to both limit a research that

otherwise would have been too extended, based on the chronology and the amount of material, and to meet the requirements of the institute, which was interested in temporary exhibitions as a tool to understand and enhance its identity, by means of two variables, namely cultural and economic development.

For the first time, the plentiful material, which was often invisible due to various reasons, could be fully decoded and investigated, thus going beyond the usual talks about people and episodes mentioned in the critical literature of this sector (in particular Busetto, 2014). From the analysis carried out on the documents, it was possible to find out a vast heritage of evidences that portrays the history of the long and detailed development process of an exhibition; after checking thirty envelopes and more than one-hundred files, it was possible to outline a story made up of venues, works, ideas, as well as of different stakeholders, from art historians to curators, from architects to editors and journalists. Files contained materials from the different stages of the process:

- pictures of the installations
- letters of curators and artists (and sometimes dealers)
- lists of works with shipping bills
- cuttings of press releases
- adverting brochures
- texts of the exhibition catalogues (in the luckiest scenarios)

After reading all of these sources, it was possible to outline the identity of the exhibition policy adopted by the museum, as well as the enhancement of the historical collections and the promotion of contemporary artists, in parallel with an intense research activity.

The history of Querini Stampalia's exhibition started becoming popular in 1963, when Scarpa's works were completed, which were organized by Manlio Dazzi, but supervised by Giuseppe Mazzariol, the directors of the institute from 1926 to 1974, and aimed at creating a

space for temporary exhibitions. The first years of the activity were marked by a set of proposals dedicated to contemporary art, organized on an annual basis and lasting a whole month, and involving living local and international artists. This first group of exhibitions was designed by the director, who was a full professor of contemporary art at the University of Venice, “a real unicum in the current jumble of exhibitions and small shows of Venice” (Mazzariol, 23 June 1966). The need to stand out for the quality of its exhibitions from the broad Venetian cultural production brought the management of the museum to opt, between the 70ies and the 80ies, for the development of an exhibition and thematic strand aimed at enhancing the permanent collections of ancient art, on the occasion of editorial, research or restoration projects. Evidence of that is its first exhibition on the core of a historical collection, featuring various Bella’s paintings renovated after being restored (1978), under the curatorship of the expert Giorgio Busetto. Therefore, this date marked the establishment of a more aware need to re-design its historical-artistic identity. From here, the events became more and more regular, also playing a significant role, which was typical of the “great exhibitions”, such as the famous exhibition “Querini Stampalia’s: the portrait of a family of the Venetian 18th century” (1987).

On the occasion of some structural works on the upper floors, in the 90ies, a series of dossier-exhibitions were organized and dedicated to the works and the documents coming from the depositories and the library, which were studied also thanks to the researches and congresses that were programmed at that time.

In parallel to that, a constant and rich planning fed the calendar with events on contemporary art, which became the recipient of new spaces and broader resources in the following decade, in a national scenario, namely the exhibition system, featuring deep changes mainly due to the introduction of external private stakeholders in the production of

events after the crisis of the public sector (authors' citation 2017). This choice started a trend that still seems to guide the institute's exhibition policy.

The picture that came out from the first archive investigation confirms the commitment embraced by the Foundation in the first fifty years of its exhibition activity, of which this first critical interpretation permitted to highlight the nature and the managing tools of this complex content and organizational machine. What is clear is the strength of the cognitive contribution of Querini's exhibitions, which were not only a business phenomenon, but also a place and an opportunity to share historical researches, scientific discoveries, restorations. This trend is witnessed by the intense dissemination and communication activity that was carried out by the press (newspapers and magazines), public lectures and congresses, which permitted to such a heritage to become part of the collective memory of the Venetian intellectuals, and by other tools, thus highlighting the social role of the museum. The choice of a profile involving different users was granted by a broad offer that ranged from events dedicated to the history of ancient art, to the exhibition of living artists, who believed the museum could be an important promoting tool, thus reflecting the vast interest and competence of its directors. An opening that would have not compromised the quality of each exhibition, which was supposed to be "as charming as possible, according to Querini's tradition" (Mazzariol, 22 August 1968), to further highlight the exclusive character of the exhibition programmes of the institute. Also, the heritage that Scarpa left to the Foundation imposed, and it still does, to enhance the "exhibiting" discipline, which is based on the installation choices and on the contents, mainly.

Considering the first outcome of a research that is still in progress, there is a major question to answer: how does the Foundation connect and experience its current exhibition methods and its cultural strategy compared to the history contained in its own archive? In other words, the Foundation, likewise other cultural operators, has long expressed the need to

redefine its own role within a particularly rich, yet complex, cultural context for the mass tourism flows invading the city. As far as such a need is concerned, the Foundation is questioning its identity, also following some recent donations that will allow some new collections and a new photographic archive to be housed in its spaces. Nowadays, the Foundation is trying to imagine its own future, also looking for an ideal connection with its own past and identity. How can the new projects be supported, yet balancing the vocation to contemporary art with the history of an institute that was established with specific scopes and objectives? How can the vastness of an archive that seems to be known exclusively to a few technicians in charge of managing it be shared and become part of a shared identity and? How can the prosperity of its past be communicated to the city and its users without sinking into the image of a dusty cultural institution far away from the needs of the present? In actual facts, can the knowledge of the archive become the start of an innovation process?

The question finds an answer in the awareness of the Foundation's management concerning the value of such knowledge, of its rediscovered identity and of the need to share the planning, designing and communication process relating to the exhibition-product to all the stakeholders, since different professional profiles are required to foster it.

Considering Fondazione Querini Stampalia as a venue of production (of exhibitions) leads to think about the internal processes, and therefore about the various products generated, of which temporary exhibitions offer a significant example. As to the production of exhibitions, the historical identity of the Foundation is waiting to be enhanced during the planning phase, even before the communication phase. Therefore, the process of product development should be revised starting from the knowledge of the institute's heritage, with a view to the enhancement and the competitive strategy. Also, a more virtuous connection between temporary and permanent exhibitions shall be revised, thus creating an ancient art heritage that is still not considered in terms of distinctive contents and innovation or as a tool to

enhance the scientific research activity promoted and proclaimed by the Foundation, in line with its original role of culture-developing institute.

To conclude the first phase dedicated to the recognition and the analysis of the archive materials, the final steps of the research will be targeted to the external communication and the enhancement of the results through two different ways:

1. creation of an editorial product telling the story of the Foundation's exhibition activity with an overview on the major fifteen events it has curated;

2. the design of an exhibition project aimed at narrating the history of the all exhibitions that took place at the Foundation, reading and interpreting the documents archived and the connected catalogues.

5 Conclusion and further investigations

At the beginning of the research we had the idea that the (ab)use or the *archive* could be one of the many examples through which the culturalization of the firm was producing its effects. The decision to compare archives of two radically different organisations - a design company celebrating its entrepreneurial story and a cultural institution revising its history in search for the ideal combination of rigorous preservation and marketable valorisation of its own cultural heritage - was then driven by the underlying idea that the first one represented the "bad company" while the second one could identify the ideal target to reach.

The evidences emerging from the observation of both cases and from the process of action research tell us something different, even though these are preliminary results of a research in progress.

The first case represents the typical example of a manufacturing firm operating in the design industry, approaching the aim of building its own archive as a means to give value to its history through the valorization of its brand. The archive is seen here as a place, both virtual

and physical, devoted to host and take care of the memory of the founders, while its process of construction opens new issues: is the archive just the first step to build a permanent exhibition of historical products? Or shall we use it as a means to revise the company market position and make sense of our strategic choices? The process of research and codification of documents to be preserved in the future archive opens new questions but the change is not easy to embrace and the archive construction is substantially reduced to a communication tool.

The second case study is still open, but it clearly exhibits a set of opposite characters. Fondazione Querini Stampalia is a cultural institution, endowed with its own archive, a library and a museum devoted to host both its permanent collection and some temporary exhibitions. In this second case, while the archive represents a codified memory and the cultural capital of the organization, the issue is how to mobilize the capital, sharing the knowledge outside the borders of the archive itself. In a moment of possible future changes, where the celebration of an important date (the 150 years since its foundation) is coming, working on the archive means trying to find new connections between the rich cultural story of the institution and its future changes, reaching the necessary sustainability in term of market reach, even though maintaining the capability to differentiate themselves from the competitors. As a result new questions emerge. What is the identity of a cultural institution, with its museum, a library, the space devoted to host temporary exhibitions and representing a piece of the Venetian history and many other things together? Are they conscious of their story? How to give value to the past, communicating it to the visitor?

All these questions are driving the research in its final stage and make sense of the process of archive revision which is now ongoing.

The two case studies, then, represent radically different examples of archives, but they both converge towards a common idea of the process of “archiving”.

They differ because of the actors involved – a private company and a public institution – and the initial aims – connecting the brand to the story of the entrepreneurial family and re-organizing a historical archive - but they both converge towards the idea of archive as a continuous process of knowledge regeneration (Nonaka, 1994; Hargadon and Sutton, 1997). A concept which is partially perceived in both cases, where the marketing policies seem to prevail on the strategic use of the knowledge preserved in the archive, while the same product (be it a design object or a new exhibition) seems to be detached from the valorization of this knowledge.

The observation and the intervention experienced in these two case studies offers then an interesting and critical image of the territory of arts and business (DarsØ, 2004), where the two key words are the pillars of multiple processes of experimentation, entrepreneurial inspiration and cultural entrepreneurship. Nevertheless, the rhetoric still prevails on the substance of a possible change, often evoked, necessary condition to gain success, but not yet realized.

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