A Political History of the Valorisation of Cultural Heritage in Italy: Conflicts in a Controversial Social Process

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Abstract

Valorisation is one of the two functions used by institutions in the transmission of cultural heritage in Italy. While valorisation is a polysemic concept with an uncertain use and wide-ranging implications, the relationships that have been forged between protection, management, realisation, and valorisation are the subject of a controversy that is in conflict with both scholars and the two different aims of social life: social and cultural progress and economic growth. Through a critical approach and from a sociological perspective, this article shows how these two dimensions are in a conflict that touches both the social purposes attributed to cultural heritage and the cultural process through which heritage is produced.

Keywords: cultural heritage, valorisation, values, Italy.

1. Introduction

In his *Recherche du temps perdu*, Proust counts valorisation[1] among the 'Arts du Néant', knowing how to bring together, understand how to to get along in a

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[1] The English translation of the Italian term 'valorisation' is a conundrum for the author and the translators with whom she has worked with on several occasions. For the sake of consistency and clarity for the reader, the author has chosen to unambiguously use the term 'valorisation', which reflects the original Marxian perspective (Smith, 2017) and the critique of culture and cultural labour as commodities in the approach of Boltanski and Esquerre (2017). However, this choice does not reflect the inherent ambiguity contained in the term, which could necessitate the use of other terms such as enhancement (widely used), exploitation, and development, from time to time.

group, how to vanish, and how to serve as an intermediary (Proust, 1919: 216). In literary fiction, these abilities to 'blur the non-existent' and to 'sculpt the void' are attributed to a social climber who, through grief and fate, gets what she desires. However what happens when the ability to value, in other words, valorisation, is understood as one of the two functions that, according to the *Codice dei beni culturali e del paesaggio* (translated: Code of Cultural Heritage and Landscape and henceforth CBCP) institutionally 'contribute to preserving the memory of the national community and its territory and to promoting the development of culture' (2004: Art. 1, section 6)? This article examines the political history of heritage valorisation in Italy as a social and cultural process which illustrates the divergence between two models of social development: economic growth and social and cultural progress. Through the notion of valorisation, a latent conflict between economics and the human and social sciences and their respective regimes of justification can be shown, linked to a consideration of the moral or economic motives that animate different social actors (Boltanski, 2002).

Cultural heritage with regards to the dynamics connected to tourism (Battilani, 2017; Bendix, 2018; Palmer, Tivers, 2018; Zhu, 2021) is an important part of an economy that places culture and creative industries in a virtuous circle directed towards the regeneration of places (Fusco Girard, Vecco, 2021; Watson, González-Rodríguez, 2015; Throsby, 2012). In many countries, including Italy, this process has taken on the characteristics of an enrichment economy and the emphasis on the valorisation of cultural heritage has become an unequivocal indication of this (Boltanski, Esquerre, 2017). On the other hand, cultural heritage is a powerful force for social cohesion and inclusiveness that is acted upon at various levels of national (Paltrinieri, 2022; Cetorelli, Guido, 2017; Gelosi, 2013), European (Lähdesmäki et al., 2020) and global (Coombe, 2012) governance. In the spread of this concept and its related practices, cultural heritage therefore becomes an implicit or explicit guarantor of a collective memory (Migliorati, 2021) that through objects, places and social practices, ensures continuity, and guides the present (Pocecco, 2019). In Western societies, interest in the transmission of material culture in its heritage form has been structured over a long period and its turning point came at the end of the eighteenth century (Babelon, Chastel, 1980), while reflection on the humanities is mainly linked to the birth of nation states during the nineteenth century (Adell et al., 2015; Harvey, 2008). In Italy, it originates in the pre-unitary states (Emiliani, 2011) and is rooted in the discovery of the other (Verde, 2019). This developed at a political level starting after the Second World War, when the desire to collect and above all to preserve the various material (but also immaterial) aspects of a people's social history grew. In the context of the preservation of monuments, objects, works of art, customs, knowledge,

landscapes, and more recently practices, cultural heritage is a complex expression indicating a process, both normative and social (Smith, 2006), whose importance is unequivocally linked to the present and its moral and economic interests.

The prevalence of an economic or axiological dimension inherent in cultural heritage transmission is a classic dialogue on the subject of its different social uses, which has been explored internationally for some time by historical, anthropological and museographic disciplines (Bondaz, Isnart, Leblon, 2012; Bendix, 2018; Choay, 2009; de la Torre, 2002; Desvallées, 2003; Harrison, 2009; Harvey, 2001; Heinich, 2009; Robinson, 2010; Smith, 2006; Vandesande, Van Balen, 2016). Particular to Italy is the social use of the notion of valorisation, both at an institutional and social-political level (Golinelli, 2012), as well as in the acceptance of several international documents on the orientation of cultural policies (Zagato, 2015), developed in collaboration with international bodies such as UNESCO using its conventions on cultural heritage (1972) and intangible heritage (2003). The local translations and cultural appropriation involved in the process of inscription onto the World Heritage Lists constitute a lively terrain for discussion with the regards to the participation of local communities, as has been shown by anthropologists who have studied Italian cases where the impact of international classifications have clashed with local principles (Palumbo, 2003; Ballacchino, 2012; Padiglione, Broccolini, 2016).

In Italy, valorisation possesses a multiplicity of meanings that have long remained implicit in the patrimonial question conducted by Italian economists and art historians (Montella, Toscano, 2010; Tosco, 2014) and they remain rather ambiguous with regards to their relationship with the different types of actors involved in local development projects (Della Torre, 2013; Cerquetti, 2015). A division has emerged in the Italian development of the meanings and practices of cultural heritage valorisation: on the one hand, there is a classically economic orientation where the value of the cultural asset and the marginal utility derived from its social use (Rositi, 2018) have a linear relationship (Moscati, 2013). On the other hand, another orientation has been developed to guide cultural heritage valorisation towards a relational (Donati, 2021) and prosocial value (Casalini, Tavano Blessi, 2013; Zamagni, 2014; Paltrinieri, 2022) from the perspective of social capital (Matteucci, 2019; Murzyn-Kupisz, Działek, 2013) and common assets (Bertacchini, 2021; Gonzalez, 2014; Marotta, 2016; Cominelli, Cornu, Tornatore, 2021).

This article is put forward as a critical contribution in the field of Heritage Studies (Winter, 2013): its arguments will be constructed from secondary sources and institutional documents, while the interpretative hypothesis on which the analysis is based, concerns the emergent character of the political initiatives concerning this sector during the phase of the push towards cultural

democracy and competition between the various disciplines that have contributed to interpreting the meaning of valorisation and use of cultural heritage in Italy.

The construction of the 'authorised dialogue' (Smith, 2006) on the valorisation of cultural heritage starting from its various meanings in Italian policies during the crucial period for its institutionalisation will be examined, followed by an outline of the problems caused by emerging conflicts and the prospect for change that sociology is able to bring about.

2. Cultural heritage between values and valorisation

A definition of cultural heritage is beyond the scope of this article. However, its breadth and ubiquity in many historical, sociological and economic disciplines can be noted. Archaeologist L. Smith begins by stating 'There is, really, no such thing as heritage.' (2006: 11). When we approach cultural heritage, we are in fact referring to a process through which the past, its objects, and its material and immaterial legacies, are reworked.

Linguistically, the notion of valorisation derives from value and, in Italian usage, has its origins in politics that the *Dizionario italiano dell'uso* (translation: *Italian Dictionary of Usage*) attributes to a young journalist and intellectual, Piero Gobetti, who used it in a political speech in 1919. Looking at the multiple interpretations, one can detect at least two different meanings of valorisation. The first performs a redeeming role by emphasising the granting of importance to a situation, an object, or a fact, while the second gives the notion of valorisation as belonging to a sphere of action, undertaken in a deliberate manner in order to make an asset useful, such as in the production of surplus value, which follows the Marxian idea of valorisation (Carreri, 2012: 81-83; Smith, 2017). Valorisation thus covers two potentially conflicting spheres of meanings and whatever the original semantic field, this conflict persists: one leads back to economics, while the other has relevance to morality, to virtues and qualities, to an ideal interest as opposed to a practical interest.

In all cases, at the root is the notion of value, central to sociological reflection precisely because it inspires individual conduct and the norms of social life (Boudon, 1997). The relationship with social norms lies in the content of values, which not only describe but also direct actions through the development of a belief of the desirable that expresses approval or disapproval of a certain action (Sciolla, 1998). On the basis of value, one judges the correctness, appropriateness, effectiveness, and worthiness of one's own actions and those of others. Whatever is considered objectively important or

subjectively desired *is*, or *has*, value (Sciolla, 1998): for individuals, values incorporate both noncognitive and cognitive elements (Anheier, 2020).

Recently, Heinich (2017) in establishing an axiological sociology, notes that the term value has basically three meanings that refer to the measure, the object, and the principle. These three meanings are part of a mindset with which the sociologist traces 'the value of the object as it is [collectively and specifically] attributed (first sense) to the objects to which a value is attributed by actors (second sense), to arrive at the fundamental principles underlying this valuation (third sense)' (Heinich, 2017: 184). According to the art sociologist, attributing value goes through the three actions of measurement, attachment, and judgement that with the three operators being the subject, the object, and the context that define a process identified as creative (2017).

The particular context on which this analysis on the uses of the concept and the development of valorisation practices was conducted, is a context that is both institutional and social: the same action is interpreted in different ways. In Italy, the capacity to enhance the value, i.e. the valorisation, of cultural heritage is understood as one of the two functions that institutionally 'contribute to preserving the memory of the national community and its territory and promoting the development of culture' (CBCP, 2004: Art. 1, section 2). In the legal sphere, the discussion has been conducted mainly by Casini (2014)[2], according to whom the notion of valorisation is applied in all its complexity when referring to cultural assets and activities, both within and outside the sphere of cultural heritage conservation. Economics in the field of culture (Golinelli, 2012; Montella, 2009), but also architecture and urbanism, as well as social planning, employ this notion extensively (Trupiano, 2005). Both Anglo-Saxon and Francophone circles emphasise the importance of practices that lead to the public realisation of cultural heritage which certainly involve the past, but are directed towards looking at the interests and values of both the present (Harvey, 2001) and the future (Davallon, 2006; Harrison, 2020). This perspective questions the most recent aims of conservation practices that take a part of culture out of obscurity (Migliorati, 2010), such as everyday use, precisely from the perspective of reusing, appropriation or re-appropriation that operates in spaces that expand from a local to an international level (Gravari-Barbas, Ripoll, 2010).

According to the now vast literature on the subject, valorisation is not so much about practices related to heritage-making through preservation and conservation initiatives alone, as it is about all those activities that respond to the next level. This would include the most diverse activities ranging from exhibitions held inside and outside museum structures, to popular events and

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[2] Minister of Culture Chief of Staff until the Summer 2022.

festivals, through the appropriation and re-appropriation of heritage resources for cultural animation and the promotion of tourism.

Different national contexts have resulted in different approaches and ways of realising cultural heritage, as shown by reflections in the field of history and museography: the communication of cultural heritage relies on actions with different names. These differences reflect different ways of understanding cultural identities (Jadé, 2006) and, on a sociological level, also the manifest and underlying functions attributed to cultural heritage. While in France public fruition of heritage is called cultural mediation (Aboudrar, Mairesse, 2016), in the Anglo-Saxon countries the role of interpretation is preferred (Tilden 1977), but in Italy the notion under consideration here, i.e. valorisation, has been consolidated. These differences are particularly visible when looking at the UNESCO Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (1972): the official translations of Article 4, which defines the terms of ratification and the commitment of each State, show terminologies and concepts that refer to different museographic and conservation approaches in different languages. For example, Italian, French and Portuguese approaches are forged on 'value', while English favours 'presentation' and German uses both linguistic connotations.

This ambiguity applied to cultural heritage leads to a reflection on the historical origins of this social practice in the Italian political context.

3. The prosocial perspective on valorisation

With regards to historical and artistic heritage and landscape, the notion of valorisation first appeared with the so-called Franceschini Commission in the second half of the 1960s. Established by a law in 1964, the findings of this Commission were substantial and were published in 1967 with a very evocative title, symptomatic of a climate of concern about the conservation and transmission of Italian heritage. The three-volume text, entitled *Per la salvezza dei beni culturali* (translation: *For the salvation of our cultural heritage*), did not contain an explicit definition of the word valorisation, but inaugurated, according to a scholar who took part in it, a brief period 'of attention, of tension, of hope' towards the mandate entrusted to all participants, who were both scholars and politicians (Pallottino, 1987: 9).

Other historians note how heritage is a resource for the community that should keep culture, at the centre of both public and private policies and initiatives that promote its widest dissemination. The Minister of Education, Gui, in his inaugural speech for the Commission of Inquiry for the protection and valorisation of the historical, archaeological, artistic and landscape heritage

in 1964, stated: it is a 'heritage that (...) represents a priceless asset above all in terms of the testimony of civilisation, of cultural value; and, therefore, it is part of those assets that are history and a source of progress for all humanity' (*Per la salvezza*, 1967/I: XXIII).

While it is true that the combination of valorisation and cultural assets was inextricably established at that time, from a chronological point of view the relationship between territories and the promotion of their resources, both tangible and intangible, dates back to an earlier period. In particular, between the 1930s and 1950s 'it was used in legislation from the beginning in relation to tourism, to landscape or nature reserves, or all of these areas together' (Casini, 2014: 386-387).

When architectural historian Tosco focuses on cultural heritage as resources for development, he explicitly asks the question 'how many governments, left or right, have looked greedily at our heritage in the hope of "cashing in"?' (Tosco, 2014: 134). The scholar briefly traces this path starting from the unification of Italy and recalls the many voices that have periodically been raised to complain about the dangers of dismantling our heritage. Assuming that "the cultural value of an asset is superior to any other value, even its economic value" (Tosco, 2014: 128), the loss of a cultural heritage does not only mean the loss of historical memory. Indeed, it has been known since proto- and pre-touristic times that protected monuments, works of art, and archaeological artefacts are an attraction for foreign visitors, artists, and intellectuals (Settis, 2007). Valorisation also passes through narrative and communicative transmission which depends on the interest of the general public: the intangible value would not only be linked to communication or dissemination, but also to the potential a benefit generates for the community. From this point of view, the archaeologist Manacorda defines valorisation as the 'socially useful transmission' of the meaning of the protected asset (Manacorda, 2010: 138)

With regards to cultural heritage, this relational dimension constitutes both a crucial characteristic and a problematic knot in the interpretation of all these material and immaterial objects, knowledge, and values. The well-being of individuals can also be found in the participation in cultural projects and thus in cultural assets (Casalini, Tavano Blessi, 2013). These relationships connected to the assets are indeed affected by time and space, but above all by the interests with which the present intends to lead them (Harvey, 2001; Smith, 2006; Migliorati, 2010; Pocecco, 2019). As the sociologist M.A. Toscano has pointed out, there is a mass phenomenon of complaints to which the saviours of the motherland in their search for notoriety respond that this phenomenon "has been repeating itself for over half a century now without ever finding an answer" (Toscano, 2016: 4). However, it must be acknowledged that

environmental and heritage protection associations have played an important role in the process of creating heritage awareness. The whole of civil society continues to be summoned into all different types of heritage environments and to participate in cultural heritage. Without such involvement - whether forced or participatory - the cultural value of heritage would not meet the full range of underlying social values.

Social values also include economic values, especially from the perspective of the sustainability paradigm, where cultural heritage can become elements of development for the communities that own it.

4.   The economic function of valorisation

Italy's economic approach to cultural heritage and cultural activities has been late when compared to the international scene. An initial interest in this field which had been met by disdain by classical economics, dates back to the period between the 1970's and 1980's, when a cultural heritage and arts economy was set up (Throsby, 2012). The idea that cultural assets could constitute an economic resource is not linked to their market value, as in buying and selling in an exchange market such as the antiques market, but a representation of this heritage can already be considered in market terms (Baldacci, 2014). In recent decades, increasingly sophisticated methodologies have been applied to calculate the benefits of those assets that - indeed – don't fall under classic market laws but produce positive externalities or a certain social utility. Initially applied to the environmental assets sector, the contingent valuation (McFadden, Train, 2017), has been explored by some scholars since the early 2000's for measuring cultural resources (Carson., 2011; Noonan, 2003; Choi et al. 2009). This technique is one of the many used to measure the value of culture (Snowball, 2008) and in Italy it was initially applied to museum institutions (Bravi, Scarpa, Sirchia, 2002).

With regards to Italy and from the specific perspective of this article, it is also interesting to reconstruct the political roots of this process that recognises not only the economic impact of cultural heritage, but also a predictable profitability. At a conference organised by the Communist Party in 1986, the then Minister of Labour, De Michelis, clearly underlined the relationship between cultural heritage and economic development: 'there is not the slightest doubt that Italy is a country rich in cultural resources, probably richer than any other, we really are a sort of "Saudi Arabia" in this field' (De Michelis, 1986: 71). Here the minister links the 'new' conception of cultural heritage as an economic resource to the employment problem afflicting Italy: the "cultural reservoir" operation was aimed at establishing the conditions so that in the

short and medium term there was the possibility of creating additional employment with the maximum return, albeit deferred, in terms of national economic interest' (De Michelis, 1986: 72). De Michelis goes on to explain, among other things, that a similar direction could also be taken for the valorisation of environmental assets and therefore the landscape.

The idea of using a metaphor linked to geology such as that of oil or reservoirs has not stood the test of time well in terms of analysis. The archaeologist Settis complained: 'to liken our cultural heritage to family jewels is in fact to consider it as a "resource for times of need"' (2007: 7). Monetary value is thus associated with affective value, but this may lead to their disposal and/or sale. Such a metaphor is also semiotically unacceptable: U. Eco notes that mere fact that cultural assets are widespread, do not imply consumption in the same way as other assets. On the contrary, they belong largely to the tertiary sector and are in fact flows of communication that, as such, are not subject to the same forms of consumption as the primary and secondary sectors (Eco, 1988).

The so-called doctrine of cultural reservoirs and the oil of Italy was probably just a mere stop-over in the progressive estrangement between the needs of cultural heritage dictated by economists and technicians and the complex (and at times moral and ethical) conception of it held by humanists (Manacorda, 2014: 117-120). From the perspective of the economics of culture, an *ex post* evaluation would always be desirable and should be based on a multiplicity of criteria. Cecchini explicitly proposes these with analytical methods acquired with the 'growing awareness of the importance of the use value of cultural heritage from an economic perspective as well' (Cecchini, 2008: 197). In tracing the formation of the field of cultural economics Santagata, Segre and Trimarchi recognise: 'that many historic monumental centres besieged by mass (cultural) tourism were abandoned due to erroneous evaluations and hasty strategies, that still lead to confusion between class *circenses* and territorial marketing which reject the development of cultural work policies in the presence of a clot of privileges and taboos that are completely unjustified' (2007: 416).

Rather the problem becomes the need to understand where to place cultural policies and their development in harmony with specific local needs (Leon, 1986), while at the same time respecting the value of heritage itself that many scholars in the humanities have always claimed it had. At the same time, the possibility of generating innovation that also produces wealth is always advocated by economists and marketing experts. Certainly, the economic viewpoint has produced dismissive interpretations of the social uses of cultural heritage, however, over time, the possibility of measuring cultural added value has been recognised within economics from the perspective of positional

objectivity (Zamagni 2014). According to the perspective outlined by the economist, 'the theories of value developed by economic science are all functional to market price theory and are therefore of little help in assigning a value to activities that are not placed on the market' (Zamagni, 2014: 4). This is especially true in the case of cultural assets and products which are the subject of a largely symbolic market, but have non-symbolic value too.

Cultural activities and the pursuit of profit meet in cultural policies whose purpose must be realised in the light of constitutional rules. The difficulties lie in being able to balance freedom and development, along with autonomy from public authorities but with their adequate support (Montanari, 2013). In this sense, action has been taken on different levels by developing cultural opportunities from the perspective of an offer aimed above all at tourists, who are in fact represented as consumers of Italian culture (Becheri, Micera, Morvillo, 2018).

The cultural proposal from a holistic viewpoint has only relatively recently been considered relevant for the overall well-being of citizens. The problem seems to lie at the start of the process, i.e. in the enhancement model, which is completely based on tourism and this 'produces an economy based solely on income' (Sacco, 2005: 26). The expansion and spread of participatory forms of appropriation and re-appropriation of cultural heritage has moved in the direction of bringing a cordiality to the relationship between cultural heritage and landscape. We can find here, then, a cultural process that took place over a period of several decades using the sociological approach embraced here.

5. Valorisation as a cultural process

From a sociological perspective, cultural heritage (of which cultural assets are a part) has an institutionalised constellation of meanings (Volonté, 2000). Its valorisation, however, implies an epistemological issue that touches upon the social purposes attributed to cultural heritage and the cultural process which produces it, and here the problem of a double hermeneutic level emerges (Giddens, 1990). In fact, in the case of cultural heritage, social classification overlaps with a 'natural classification' i.e. a classification that recognises the cultural-historical and patrimonial value of an asset and/or landscape is in addition to the classification that makes cultural heritage an economic operator or cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1979; Throsby, 1999).

In Italy, the use of the expression cultural assets – instead of cultural heritage – is a response to precise political and socio-historical choices, dictated by a historicist approach to both material and immaterial products of culture placed under legal protection (Cossu, 2005). However, the pervasiveness of

cultural heritage and the multiplicity of regimes that regulate it (De Cesari, 2012), and in which the safeguarding of cultural objects and practices has been developed, have progressively naturalised and globalised this concept even in the Italian context (Satta, 2013). In spite of some linguistic resistance, the Italian ratification of the Council of Europe's Faro Convention (2005) in 2020 finally led to the use of this expression[3], without actually achieving a general or real consensus regarding the notions of heritage or cultural tradition (Montella et al., 2016).

The expression cultural heritage valorisation suffers, as a whole, from an indefiniteness that encompasses the importance of both the material and immaterial components of the values involved in defining the processes of the exchange of an asset, whatever its nature. Valorisation as a process and as an institutional action therefore also encompasses the recognition of the intangible value of cultural heritage and the mobilisation of social representations that touch individual and collective mechanisms, such as feelings and passions, the sense of belonging and identity, as was noted at the time by Demarchi (1989) on the occasion of pioneering research into the value of cultural assets. As has briefly been shown in the previous paragraph, while is certainly true that valorisation owes one of its most straightforward explanations to the economy of culture, the operation of valorisation in its polysemic complexity involves not only the institutions of protection, but above all the values and emotions we use as a way to look at the past, especially in the West.

In this conversation between an art historian and an economist, 'the need to give valorisation a very broad and varied epistemological basis' is emphasised (Montella, Toscano 2010: 160). The most significant aspect of this comparison is the attempt through dialogue to free valorisation from its purely economic meaning. It is thus configured as an entirely intrinsic process, which is rooted in the communicative space, and through the idea of the democratisation of knowledge relating to cultural heritage and, in particular, historical-artistic heritage. Partly thanks to these disciplinary comparisons, the evolutionary process over these forty years during which various scholars have legislated and reasoned is evident: by fuelling public debate, political choices have been made, some of which have been very important.

The Italian debate of the 1970's on the problem of the democratisation of culture considered concepts such as the subaltern classes and popular culture

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[3] Italian Law No. 133 of 1st October 2020 on the Ratification and Execution of the Council of Europe Framework Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society, signed at Faro on 27th October 2005, published in Gazzetta Ufficiale (GU). no. 263 dated 23-10-2020 https://farovenezia.org/2021/01/13/faq-6-patrimonio-culturale/. see Pinton and Zagato (2017).

(Barbano, 1980). In the affirmation of the need to broaden the epistemological basis of valorisation, however, we find the basic problem of appropriation, re-appropriation and transmission of cultural heritage: the double hermeneutic level on which the social classification of cultural heritage is based through the idea and practices of valorisation, has only multiplied the gaps between a symbolic and an economic use of cultural heritage. Cultural heritage and landscape are not simply objects to be observed, but are involved in social life as all-round social actors. They are 'a community of things that receive other things and together form a growing volume of assets, i.e. values, which are protected but which in turn protect the community, precisely as tutelary deities of ancient dignity' (Toscano, Gremigni, 2008: 14). In fact, unlike ordinary consumer objects or goods, cultural heritage is strongly influenced by the definition given to it, as well as by the level of representativeness (local or universal) attached to the asset.

Cultural assets precisely because they are valued also have - normally - costs and not only benefits (Toscano, Gremigni, 2008). These costs coincide with the costs of the existence in the world of those objects, the bearers of their own identity and history. In short, it recalls the social responsibility of dealing financially with a country's history, even when that country has 'too much' of it. Over the last few decades, interest in cultural heritage and historical and artistic heritage has remained high both at the level of public opinion and among the specialists and scholars involved in it. However, the problems under discussion have changed in the meantime: the investments of the 1980's to stimulate youth employment have given way to the problems of public finances which has led to the fear that State assets would be transferred (Settis, 2007). Cultural heritage is socio-historical evidence and objects that are consigned to the present from the past for future enjoyment. Cultural heritage places and memories also have, and can acquire, a recreational duty which both the local authorities in charge of cultural and tourist promotion, and the broad sector of civil society act on with a view to pro-social activities (Pocecco, Pascoli, 2021).

In a conference dedicated to the communication of the cultural asset, Alberto Abruzzese argues that valorisation is an ambiguous word that falls between the abstraction of the institutional world and the social meaning of 'taking care of the phenomenon of the consumption of the cultural asset' (Abruzzese, 2005: 20). A cultural asset should enter into a process of socialisation and this socialisation always implies a commitment to training and research, especially on the part of professionals. The other aspect that deserves attention is that of dissemination, which the sociologist more generally calls translation (Abruzzese, 2005: 22) and which is part of the institutional function

of valorisation[4]. In all cases, a series of actions are implemented that place cultural heritage in relation to its public which, in the case illustrated by this sociologist, includes the consumer of the cultural products more than the citizen.

Valorisation has a general and lasting value and a particular and contingent one. The notion is part of the treatment of cultural assets as social relations that move from the object to the subject. Valorisation of cultural assets would be a public action that is aimed at the fruition and, thus, sharing at a social level. When valorisation is challenged with the present situation and the difficulties concerning the budgets of the bodies and organisations in charge of its management, it necessarily leads to questions about their immediate profitability, with regards to the best conservation and transmission to future generations. One of the problems on which to reflect concerns the metaphorical (or literal) pedagogical function that is recognised in cultural heritage and this has a long-term, a times very long-term, return on investment. This fact introduces dilemmas concerning the recognition of the action of valorisation in the present: one acts with aims that are axiologically relevant and therefore outside an instrumental rationality as found in a utilitarian logic applied to cultural heritage. However, the economy, by introducing the category of positional assets (Montella, 2009), places itself in the rationale of a 'cultural welfare' that can lead to a person's greater psychological well-being that would derive more from culture than from income or employment (Paltrinieri, 2022; Zamagni, 2014). This is inherent in the ability to assign value to assets with a high symbolic content, such as cultural experiences.

In considering the sociological implications of valorisation, the value of cultural assets is not in doubt, precisely because they are already within an ambit that recognises the value of their material testimony of civilisation with regards to their value to the nation. In particular, this applies to all those assets under legal constraint that are recognised as cultural assets. This is interpreted in different ways by sociologists. Volonté emphasises that the significance of cultural assets can add or subtract from the daily exchange of meanings found in collective life: the legal constraint of the cultural asset 'removes it from use, from the forms of production, social negotiation of meanings, it fixes it in a

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[4] This process of communicating cultural heritage has different meanings in other national contexts: in France, for example, the notion of cultural mediation is used (Aboudrar, Mairesse, 2016) and in the Anglo-Saxon context the role of interpretation is preferred (Tilden, 1977). It is therefore very significant that in Italy we have chosen to call the whole range of institutional actions that refer to the transmission of cultural heritage as 'valorisation'.

somewhat sacralised condition, that is, separated from the intangible world' (2001: 36-37).

In other cases, the reference is to the allure of things and objects in the Weberian sense. This leads to the interpretation of the object as a repository of meaning (Maniscalco, 2005: 236), which becomes more intersubjective when it becomes an object or practice of social use and fruition than when it is placed under historical-artistic constraint. This happens with a particular urgency when these objects and practices are in danger and risk being lost forever. In this case, mobilisation is triggered at a social level to try to remedy it, precisely because cultural heritage, among other functions, can symbolise identity, unity and dignity of a community.

Cultural assets are relevant both at the level of individual conscience and social consensus. There is also an awareness however that the processes of defining cultural assets, as well as their multiple social uses, are subject to time and as such always involved in a change that through the social consideration of these assets goes on to identify both the contents of the values conveyed and the interpretation and understanding of the signifiers and meanings.

When an institutional operation of constraint or registration on a particular lists is missing[5], it is more problematic to recognise the value of what falls under the broad category of heritage as cultural inheritance, which may include the cultural asset, but may also be a more complex, such as a set of objects, crafts, or knowledge, that are not recognised as such but constitute the heritage of a given community or social group, as in the case of ecomuseums (Moëllo, 2020). For this reason, their value and valorisation are not self-evident, but are recognised by a specific group also known as the heritage community. In this regard, the Council of Europe through the Faro Convention, signed by Italy in 2013 and ratified in 2020 (Carmosino, 2013: no. 3), reaffirms the value of cultural heritage as an individual right and as a right of local communities. A heritage community must include participation. In this last juncture we find the whole meaning of heritage valorisation as a cultural process. In the acquisition of a heritage identity, the object, the monument, practice, and traditional knowledge are all subject to negotiation to understand the risk of final dispersion or oblivion and the objective and increasing cost of conservation, management and use.

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[5] Reference is made to the census of cultural heritage for the tangible part and the demo-ethno-anthropological census for the intangible part, but also to supra-national operations such as the inscription in the UNESCO World Lists of cultural, natural or intangible heritage. The literature is extensive: see for example Palumbo (2003).

6. Conclusions

On one level, valorisation questions the definition of competences and functions concerning cultural and landscape heritage (institutions, jurists, supervision authorities, experts on laws, agreements, and treaties). On a second level, valorisation shows the different instrumental connotations of cultural heritage that are inherent in the purposes attributed to it from a social point of view. The sociological analysis of these purposes shows how some purposes are socially valued and desirable, while others are the subject of criticism or disapproval.

One model aims at social and cultural progress and the other at economic growth. In the first meaning, the valorisation of cultural heritage concerns the process of establishing a symbolic core identity that is important for defining social belonging, which is divided into national, regional, local, family and personal. In the second interpretation, the possibilities of economic development are considered which, in different spheres, can activate economic processes such as employment or the wealth that tourist exploitation of cultural heritage can bring to a territory. However, valorisation, even when it directly involves the production of wealth, is not a purely economic operation, but questions and stimulates a debate that directly involves the core values of the communities that consider themselves custodians of those particular assets.

The polysemy inherent in valorisation and cultural heritage results in a double analytical and epistemological level whereby one can equally consider the objectivity and subjectivity of cultural heritage. This means that cultural heritage can either be the *object* of valorisation (and thus, in a sense, endure it) or the *subject* of valorisation on both a symbolic and literal level. Cultural heritage as a subject of valorisation generates value in a moral and immaterial sense within the society that protects, preserves and transmits it. However, if one interprets these purposes in a utilitarian sense, then it brings (or should bring) value that translates into wealth to the society that protects, preserves and transmits it. In the sociological sphere, the link with values and social norms leads back to the question of the explanation of human behaviour and the utilitarian or non-utilitarian social theories underlying it. It is an area in which all institutional, associative and individual actors involved in the protection, preservation and enjoyment of heritage can be found in the management and use of cultural heritage and landscape.

Present-day society is directly involved in the use, in the present, of a particular site or cultural asset. What is conveyed, however, is the sense of the protected asset, within the framework of a utility aimed at today's society. The asset must communicate with the present-day society, explaining its characteristics and meaning with an approach that could be described as

'hermeneutic', where the semantic value of that asset can be emphasised. In this way, valorisation is considered as a process within that ideal orientation that expresses the actions of knowledge, conservation, and fruition from the perspective of the transmission of cultural heritage as a social imperative, but this does not come without ideological and political implications.

In the case of the valorisation of cultural heritage, the interpretative frameworks of common sense and shared knowledge (Giddens, 1990) are mixed. In the social negotiation of the value attributed to cultural heritage, the jurist (Giannini, 1976) refers to an *auctoritas* of the scholars of the sciences of man, but in the public debate the economic-financial concern has had a greater hold. Instrumental and axiological actions overlap and, in recognising the source of the epistemological conflict, the respective levels of analysis shown here highlight an inversion in the means-end chain of the value attributed to heritage. In the case of social and cultural progress, the valorisation of heritage can be an end in itself: cultural and landscape assets are valuable in themselves and their importance lies in their transmission from one generation to another. They may be a moral and symbolic legacy or an economic legacy, but their perpetuation is at stake because of the intrinsic value they possess. In the case of economic growth, valorisation can be a means or an instrument for cultural and landscape heritage to be brought to greater public awareness, and to be better enjoyed in the economic sphere, such as tourism for example. From both points of view, cultural heritage is a social value and valorisation operations are part of a cultural process that is changing and continuously, endlessly, adjusting.

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