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PARTICIPATORY GOVERNANCE FOR THE SUSTAINABLE MANAGEMENT OF CULTURAL HERITAGE.

Pathways to Social, Cultural, and Civic Value Creation.

Titolo della tesi

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Pathways to Social, Cultural, and Civic Value Creation.

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Maria Antonietta

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

(CCIs) – Cultural and Creative Industries

(CH) – Cultural Heritage

(CHCfE) – Cultural Heritage Counts for Europe

(CWC) – Civic Wealth Creation

(ECOC) – European Capitals of Culture

(EU Industrial Strategies) – European Industrial Strategies (European Commission, 2020)

(ICCROM) – International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property

(ICOM) – International Council of Museums

(ICOMOS) – International Council on Monuments and Sites

(NGOs) – Non-Governmental Organisations

(PA) – Public Administration

(PNRR) – National Recovery and Resilience Plan

(UDHR) – Universal Declaration of Human Rights (United Nations, 1948)

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ABSTRACT:

Over recent decades, participation has become a central principle in debates on the governance and management of cultural heritage, both in academic scholarship and in international and European public policies. Despite the growing recognition of its importance, however, conceptual ambiguities and theoretical limitations persist in understanding how participatory governance models operate in practice and how they contribute to value creation for communities. This doctoral thesis engages with this debate by analysing participatory governance models for the sustainable management of cultural heritage, with the aim of examining how collaboration among public institutions, cultural organisations, and local communities can generate social, cultural, and civic value. The research adopts an interdisciplinary perspective that integrates cultural heritage studies, management and governance research.

The study is structured around three overarching interrelated research questions: (RQ1) **Who** are the actors involved in the governance of cultural heritage within an historic urban district?; (RQ2) **What** dynamics emerge from their interactions, and how do these influence processes of value creation?; and (RQ3) **How** is cultural, social, and economic value produced and sustained through participatory governance arrangements?

The research unfolds in two phases. First, a scoping review of academic and institutional literature is conducted to systematise key concepts and theoretical approaches related to participatory governance, cultural commons, and community involvement. Second, by adopting a qualitative and exploratory single-case study design, focuses on the Celio district in Rome, allowing an in-depth exploration of complex and context-specific phenomena empirical investigation. It is a historic neighbourhood of high cultural significance located near the Colosseum, characterised by a dense concentration of heritage assets alongside limited coordination among local cultural actors.

An essential aspect of the Celio case study concerns its *"spatial context"*, understood as the set of material, relational, and symbolic conditions that shape how cultural governance unfolds in the district.

In this study, space is not conceived as a static or neutral backdrop but as a *relational construct*—a social and cultural fabric produced through the interactions among institutions, communities, and organisations. In this sense, the concept of *territorial embeddedness* helps to explain how governance and cultural initiatives are grounded in their specific socio-spatial environments. In fact, recent research underlines the importance of *contextualised perspectives* that account for neighbourhood networks, local embeddedness, and the social fabric of urban environments as key arenas for innovation and collective action. Celio exemplifies these dynamics: its dense network of associations, cultural organisations, and residents transforms spatial proximity into *relational proximity*, creating the conditions for participatory and place-based governance. In cultural heritage settings, where actors often operate under different logics—administrative, cultural, economic, and civic—relational proximity plays a crucial role in mediating these differences and enabling cooperation across heterogeneous worlds.

Empirical data were collected through semi-structured interviews with institutional representatives, cultural operators, educators, entrepreneurs, and civic associations, complemented by the analysis of public and internal documents.

The conceptual framework combines three theoretical perspectives: the Cultural Ecosystem lens is employed to map the constellation of actors, initiatives, and arrangements developed within the heritage context; Art Worlds theory is subsequently mobilised to examine the relational, symbolic, and organisational dynamics through which these actors interact, and co-produce meaning, thereby shaping patterns of collaboration, fragmentation, and innovation. Finally, the Civic Wealth Creation framework provides an interpretative lens to understand how participatory mechanisms may spur into pathways through which cultural heritage contributes to social, cultural, and civic value at the territorial level.

The research develops three complementary empirical contributions. In more detail, the thesis (i) maps the local fragmented cultural ecosystem and the roles of main cultural actors, (ii) analyses collaborative and conflictual dynamics among cultural actors, and (iii) identifies the mechanisms through which participatory mechanisms enable civic wealth creation, namely engaged participation, collaborative innovation, and resource mobilisation, supported by forms of public orchestration.

Overall, the thesis conceptualises cultural heritage as a living cultural common whose functioning depends on governance arrangements capable of transforming fragmented institutional settings into relational and networked forms of coordination. In doing so, it advances a theoretical understanding of how participatory governance may enable the translation of social interaction into collective cultural and civic value within historic urban contexts.

In conclusion, this thesis demonstrates that participatory governance of cultural heritage is not a technical solution, but a social process that requires time, care, and mediation capacity. The Celio case shows how heritage can become a lever for civic regeneration only when it is recognised as a common good and when institutions are willing to share vision, responsibility, and power with communities. In this sense, the main contribution of the research lies in demonstrating that the sustainability of cultural heritage inevitably depends on the quality of the relationships surrounding it, and that the creation of civic value is, first and foremost, a matter of governing relationships.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

The participatory dimension in the governance of Cultural Heritage (CH) has become an increasingly prominent topic in academic discourse and in the fields of public policy and management. This doctoral thesis contributes to this evolving debate by exploring the role and implications of participatory governance in the management and valorisation of CH. Heritage conservation and valorisation have emerged as key priorities for numerous cities and regions across Europe (UNESCO, 2011; Echter, 2015; Ertan & Eğercioğlu, 2016).

International frameworks, particularly those developed by the United Nations and UNESCO, have laid the groundwork for a broader recognition of participation in CH governance. At the international level, the right of participation in culture is rooted in Article 27 of the UN Human Rights Declaration of 1948 (UDHR). The term participation in cultural life may well be read in the wider sense as to encompass the concept of Cultural Heritage. Participatory approach has been advocated in the UNESCO's 2003 Convention on Intangible Cultural Heritage (UNESCO, 2003) where local groups, communities, or even individuals are granted a central role associated with intangible CH (Blake, 2008). In its Article 15, the Convention states that the parties *"shall endeavour to ensure the widest possible participation of communities, groups and, where appropriate, individuals to create, maintain and transmit such heritage, and to involve them actively in its management".* Similarly, the Hangzhou Declaration "Placing Culture at the Heart of Sustainable Development Policies" (UNESCO, 2013) acknowledges the role of culture as a system for the recognition of culture as part of the global and local commons as well as a wellspring for creativity and renewal.

In 2015, International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property (ICCROM) published the guidance document promoting a people-centred approach to cultural heritage management through inclusive community participation (Court & Wijesuriya, 2016). Within this framework, residents are

identified as the core community while governments, experts and developers are identified as a group of broader facilitators (Poulios, 2014).

This emphasis on community involvement aligns with international standards set by leading heritage organisations. For example, in 2022, the International Council of Museums (ICOM) updated its official definition of museums to explicitly include community participation as a foundational principle. Museums are now described as:

> *"...institutions that operate and communicate ethically, professionally and with the participation of communities, offering varied experiences for education, enjoyment, reflection, and knowledge sharing." (ICOM, 2022)*

These institutional definitions reinforce a global consensus: community participation is no longer optional but essential to the sustainable governance of Cultural Heritage.

At the same, the importance of the participatory dimension in CH governance has emerged over time in EU policies. This is highlighted by Decision No 445/2014/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing a Union action for the European Capitals of Culture (ECOC) for the years 2020 to 2033, which states that one of the ECOC general objectives is "to safeguard and promote the diversity of cultures in Europe and to highlight the common features they share as well as to increase citizens' sense of belonging to a common cultural area" among the specific objectives, we could mention "to widen access to and participation in culture". The involvement of citizens has thus become a crucial issue also in the ECOC project, in terms of local political commitment, audiences and participants engagement, volunteering and activities for specific targets.

1.1.1 A lack of integrated disciplinary lenses in CH studies

In the past, cultural initiatives have been analysed and studied mainly through specific disciplinary lenses and approaches, to scrutinise specific themes associated with various disciplines, such as humanities, economics, management, architecture and sociology. While these perspectives have generated valuable insights, they tend to

address issues in isolation. As a result, there is still a lack of studies that systematically integrate these disciplinary perspectives to address the complexity of cultural heritage in a holistic way. This highlights the need for an integrated perspective and an interdisciplinary approach capable of responding more effectively to the multifaceted nature of cultural phenomena.

In Academia, interdisciplinarity has emerged as a new approach to tackling complex problems, as it integrates knowledge and methods from different disciplines to generate new frameworks of analysis (Zait et al., 2021). As Klein (2017) notes, interdisciplinarity involves a process of interaction that may range from the simple exchange of ideas to the full integration of concepts, methodologies, procedures, epistemologies, and organisational models of research and education.

Interdisciplinary research is (Aboelela et al., 2007): *"any study or group of studies undertaken by scholars from two or more distinct scientific disciplines".* Interdisciplinary research can be defined as research cooperation, which calls for the integration of theories, concepts, techniques, and data from diverse bodies of knowledge (Porter et al. 2006; Rafols & Meyer, 2010). Interdisciplinary involves more than just a shared research topic because it also relies on varying degrees of synthesis or integration of methods, theories and concepts originating from different disciplines (Aagaard, 2003).

Managing such complexity requires new insights and new approaches that can be achieved only through collaborative work of researchers coming from different academic fields (Stacey, 2001; Stacey et al., 2000). Implementing collaboration across disciplines has therefore become increasingly indispensable. Each discipline brings its own lens and methodologies, and studies show that such collaborations can expand theoretical perspectives and enable broader, more nuanced analyses (Gupta, 2025). In the context of CH, interdisciplinarity allows for a more comprehensive understanding of the complex interplay between heritage, communities, institutions, and governance frameworks, capturing its social, economic, cultural, environmental and political dimensions.

This approach also strengthens the capacity to identify between stakeholders, reveal hidden dynamics of value creation, and design governance models that are both inclusive and context sensitive. Ultimately, it supports the development of holistic and sustainable strategies for managing and valorising cultural heritage, aligning academic research more closely with real-world needs and challenges.

1.1.2 A shift toward citizen participation in the management of cultural heritage

Within this context, participation and participatory approaches in culture have gained increasing importance, as they foster socio-economic development, urban regeneration and capability building through art and culture (Biondi et al. 2020). Such approaches require the collaboration and the active involvement of a wide range of different actors and stakeholders, who contribute commitment, passion, expertise and/or their knowledge to processes in the cultural and creative sectors. However, while the value of participation is widely acknowledged, its practical meaning, scope, and implications have been subject to ongoing debate. Aiming to increase public engagement in decision-making and empower citizens rather than accept non-participation or token participation, the concepts of citizen participation and community involvement have been subjects of controversy within the literature since the 1960s (Arnstein, 1969). In the management heritage field and urban studies, community participation is often framed as driver of inclusive and dynamic process that seek to mediate interests between various stakeholder groups (Dormaels, 2016).

So, community participation has been recognised as a topical issue within heritage management theories, policies and practices worldwide: a phenomenon that seeks to facilitate an inclusive and dynamic process contributing to sustainable urban development (Landorf, 2009). Research has demonstrated that a more participatory approach that involves the local community in the decision-making process regarding CH valorisation could generate effective results (Hribar et al., 2015; Sacco et al., 2019; Rakitovac et al., 2021) and contribute to pursue the so called ‘common good’ (Spence & Schmidpeter, 2003). Participation, community involvement, territorial integration, local sustainable development, are all recurring words in the European documents.

Community participation is, therefore, essential in Cultural Heritage management practices (Ripp & Rodwell, 2015). In fact, current approaches to Cultural Heritage management increasingly emphasize the importance of community engagement not merely as a consultative step, but as a fundamental and continuous element of the entire management process. Communities, indeed, are now seen as possible and strong allies of public institutions in the design and delivery of social services and/or goods, and in the governance of cultural assets at the local level, especially considering the value of cultural heritage for society as emphasized by the Council of Europe's Framework Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society, the so-called the Faro Convention (2005), that later will be discussed.

The ultimate aim is to embed a sustainable and meaningful relationship between cultural heritage and the everyday lives of residents, ensuring that heritage protection is embedded in lived experience rather than isolated from it (Court & Wijesuriya, 2016). This shift reflects a broader paradigm change towards inclusive and integrated governance models in which heritage is co-managed through shared responsibility between institutions and people.

Cities are the settings where participatory governance takes place (Kazepov, 2005; Piattoni, 2010). According to the literature, participatory practices of urban renewal enacted through cultural and artistic projects may generate positive and lasting impacts over time (Sacco et al., 2019). Supporting a participatory approach in culture and creative contexts requires gathering diverse actors, ranging from public to private, industrial associations, local communities, as well as citizens (Abraham & Platteau, 2004; Stern & Seifert, 2009). A participatory approach to cultural and creative initiatives entails civic engagement and strong support for creating and sharing cultural projects, events, and experiences (Biondi et al., 2017). Current heritage management processes are shifting from a centralised and exclusionary process to a participatory and holistic process, integrating heritage resources into local wider urbanisation contexts (Guzmán et al., 2017; Landorf, 2011). Community-based approaches are proven to support better integration between cultural heritage management, urban planning and socio-economic development agendas (Ripp & Rodwell, 2017; Wang & Zan, 2011). Therefore, through public participatory practices, local communities can

gain a sense of satisfaction in both decision-making and benefit-sharing in cultural heritage management processes (Fan, 2014).

1.2 Addressing Research Gaps

Within this broader research landscape, two main research gaps become evident.

The first is an ontological gap related to the definition and conceptualisation of key terms that revolve around the core topic of *Participatory Governance for the Sustainable Management of Cultural Heritage*. The literature demonstrates a rich diversity of interpretations for concepts such as: *Cultural Heritage*, *Cultural Commons, and Citizen Science for Cultural Heritage.* Defining and clarifying these concepts is therefore essential, not only to provide an interdisciplinary analytical lens capable of bridging the humanities, social sciences, and cultural management studies, but also to position this doctoral research clearly within the broader field of cultural management.

Therefore, a scoping review of academic and policy literature was conducted across multiple databases (Web of Science, Scopus, Google Scholar) and institutional repositories (UNESCO, ICOM, ICOMOS, ICCROM). This review enabled the identification of key theoretical frameworks — Cultural Ecosystem lens (Borin & Donato, 2015), which emphasises the systemic interactions among cultural actors; Art Worlds Theory (Becker, 1982), which frames culture as collective action shaped by networks of collaboration; The Civic Wealth Creation framework (Lumpkin & Bach, 2019), which connects cultural heritage to community-led value creation and local development —that form the conceptual basis of the thesis.

The second gap concerns how communities can actively participate in the governance of cultural heritage, both to enhance and protect it and, at the same time, to foster cultural, social, and economic value. While there is a growing body of work on participatory governance in heritage contexts, there remains a lack of integrated theoretical perspectives that connect community engagement with broader socio-economic and cultural outcomes.

This doctoral research addresses this gap by:

- Offering multiple theoretical perspectives to analyse the phenomenon, including The Cultural Ecosystems lens, Art Worlds Theory, Civic Wealth Creation (CWC) framework;
- Focusing on stakeholders' collaborations, network and relational dynamics as central mechanisms in participatory governance;
- Grounding the analysis in empirical case studies – notably focusing on Celio, a historical district in Rome– to examine how participatory governance models operate and function in practice and how they foster CWC;
- Bridging theory and practice to propose more inclusive, sustainable models for CH governance.

This research adopts a qualitative, exploratory single case study design (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2018). The choice of methodology is driven by the study's aim: to investigate how participatory governance models can foster cultural, social, and economic value in the management of Cultural Heritage.

The district of Celio in Rome offers a paradigmatic and underexplored case study. Despite its strategic location adjacent to one of the most visited landmarks in the world—the Colosseum— the Celio district remains marginal within dominant tourist itineraries and undervalued by its own residents. The district is distinguished by a rich mosaic of cultural resources: a layered archaeological heritage, historic churches, green sceneries, and artistic assets that collectively form a microcosm of Rome's broader historical and cultural landscape. Yet, paradoxically, while the surrounding Colosseum area is often saturated with mass tourism, Celio itself suffers from poor inter-institutional coordination/governance, and a lack of integrated cultural policy/strategy.

Numerous actors from the public, private, and third sectors are actively engaged in the area, developing independent cultural interventions and social initiatives. However, these efforts often unfold in isolation, without effective dialogue or collaborative mechanisms to harness the potential synergies stemming from the area's rich cultural

diversity. This has resulted in an uncoordinated use of cultural resources and missed opportunities for sustainable development. The absence of a shared governance framework has contributed to a limited valorisation of the district's tangible and intangible heritage, weakening both community participation and broader civic engagement.

The current research situates Celio as a key case study through which to examine participatory governance models in practice. It explores how diverse stakeholders can be mobilised to co-manage cultural heritage, align interests, and create shared value. In doing so, it seeks to understand how community-based cultural governance can shift Celio from a peripherally engaged neighbourhood into an active heritage community—transforming latent cultural capital into a dynamic source of civic and cultural regeneration.

Data collection combined semi-structured interviews with 13 key stakeholders (including public institutional actors and authorities, cultural operators, educators, entrepreneurs, and civic and grassroots associations) and the analysis of public and internal documents (statutes, strategic plans, meeting records, and social media outputs).

Data were analysed following a process of manual coding, theme development, and synthesis, with cross-validation to ensure reliability. This methodological strategy enables the reconstruction of the relational dynamics among actors and the mechanisms of value creation, thereby addressing the study's three broad queries:

1. *Which actors are involved?*
2. *What relational dynamics emerge?*
3. *How can value be effectively created?*

This doctoral thesis is organised to progressively explore the role of participatory governance in the sustainable management of Cultural Heritage, with a strong emphasis on community engagement, interdisciplinary approaches, and Civic Wealth Creation.

The structure reflects the theoretical depth and empirical grounding of the research and is articulated across nine chapters:

- **Chapter 1** introduces the research background, outlining the central problem, the significance of the study, and the dual ontological and theoretical gaps addressed. It formulates the core research questions — *Who are the actors involved? What relational dynamics emerge? How can value be effectively created?* — and defines the main objectives and methodological orientation of the work.
- **Chapter 2** addresses the ontological gap of the study. It focuses on the definition and conceptualisation of the key terms that form the foundation of this research: *Cultural Heritage*, *Community*, *Cultural Commons*, and *Citizen Science for Cultural Heritage*. Given the diversity of interpretations across disciplines, this chapter clarifies these concepts to establish a shared interdisciplinary vocabulary and to position the research within the field of cultural management.
- **Chapter 3** presents the theoretical frameworks used to investigate the processes through which participatory governance fosters cultural, social, and economic value. A meta-analytical approach justifies the selection of three key perspectives:
    - The Cultural Ecosystem (Borin & Donato, 2015) lens, which emphasises the systemic interactions among cultural actors;
    - Art Worlds theory (Becker, 1982), which frames culture as collective action shaped by networks of collaboration;
    - The Civic Wealth Creation (CWC) framework (Lumpkin & Bacq, 2019), which connects cultural heritage to community-led value creation and local development.
- **Chapter 4** outlines the research methodology, explaining the qualitative and case study approach, the use of both internal and external data sources, and the rationale behind the selection of the empirical case. This chapter also

introduces the paradigmatic case study: the Celio, a historic district located in centre of Rome, near the archaeological area of the Colosseum.

- **Chapter 5** provides an in-depth contextual analysis of the Celio case, examining its historical, institutional, and socio-cultural dimensions. It highlights the role of local communities and actors in shaping governance processes, setting the stage for theoretical application.
- **Chapter 6** Contribution no.1: Understanding the Cultural Ecosystem. The first contribution applies the Cultural Ecosystem lens (Borin & Donato, 2015; Holden, 2015) to identify and map the network of actors engaged in the management of cultural heritage within the Celio district. It explores the composition and functions of this "ecosystem", revealing a complex and fragmented landscape of public institutions, civic associations, cultural operators and entrepreneurs, and residents. Using the SoPHIA model as a mapping tool, and the Gioia methodology (2013) to structure the data, the chapter develops a typology of stakeholder roles illustrating how each of them contributes to the cultural vitality and social sustainability of the neighbourhood. This analysis lays the foundation for understanding participatory governance as a living system of relationships, where collaboration and innovation depend on the balance between diversity and cohesion.
- **Chapter 7** Contribution no.2: The Dynamics of Art Worlds. The second contribution draws on Becker's (1982) Art Worlds Theory and its later development by Patriotta and Hirsch (2016) to analyse the relational and symbolic dynamics among the actors identified in the previous chapter. It investigates how collaboration, conflict, and innovation emerge within Celio's cultural ecosystem, interpreting it as a dynamic "art world" where creativity and governance are collective achievements. The chapter employs the typology of roles—Mainstreamers, Mavericks, Amphibious actors, and Outsiders—to examine how different stakeholders negotiate conventions, share meanings, and mobilise resources.
- **Chapter 8** Contribution no.3: Creating Civic Value through Cultural Heritage. The third contribution addresses the Civic Wealth Creation (CWC)

Framework (Lumpkin & Bacq, 2019; Aureli, Del Baldo & Demartini, 2021, 2023) to explore how participatory governance arrangements generate and sustain value—economic, social, and symbolic—within heritage-rich urban contexts. The analysis focuses on the role of public orchestration in engaging local communities and supporting collaborative innovation through the case of Celio's Archaeological Park and Museum. By identifying the mechanisms of engaged participation, collaborative innovation, and resource mobilisation, the chapter demonstrates how cultural heritage can act as a driver of civic regeneration and collective well-being**.** It thus redefines cultural heritage not merely as a resource to preserve, but as a catalyst for inclusive, community-led development and long-term civic wealth creation

- **Chapter 9**, the final chapter, draws the conclusions of the research. It summarises the theoretical and practical contributions of the study, provides recommendations for future policy and practice, and outlines directions for further research, especially regarding the transferability of participatory models to other cultural and territorial contexts.

CHAPTER 2: GLOSSARY- SCOPING REVIEW

This section lays the conceptual foundation of the research by defining the key terms and concepts that underpin the study. These definitions are essential to clarify the scope of the research, avoid ambiguities, and establish a shared interdisciplinary vocabulary. Given the complexity and variability of the concepts involved—such as *Cultural Heritage*, *Community*, *Cultural Commons*, and *Citizen Science for Cultural Heritage*—this chapter adopts an atomistic approach. Each concept is analysed individually, before being positioned within the broader framework of participatory governance and cultural management.

To ensure conceptual rigour and relevance, the definitions presented here are the result of a scoping review — a methodological process and a technique used to map existing and relevant literature in the field of interest (Arksey & O'Malley, 2005), identify key concepts, theoretical positions, and areas of consensus or divergence. Scoping reviews have been defined as "*a form of knowledge synthesis that addresses an exploratory research question aimed at mapping key concepts, types of evidence, and gaps in research related to a defined area or field by systematically searching, selecting and synthesizing existing knowledge*'" (Colquhoun et al., 2014). The process is not linear but iterative, requiring researchers to engage with each stage in a reflexive way and, where necessary, repeat steps to ensure that the literature is covered in a comprehensive way (Arksey & O'Malley, 2005).

Researchers have identified scoping reviews, as an effective means of capturing a range of literature on a topic (Davis et al., 2009) and for our purpose it was a useful approach to mapping existing literature in a summary coherent format that would be useful for policy makers and practitioners. Scoping reviews differ from systematic reviews, in that the focus is to capture a broader range of literature including all types of study designs (Arksey & O'Malley, 2005).

The scoping review was selected over a systematic review due to the exploratory and conceptual nature of the research questions. As per Munn et al. (2018), scoping reviews are most appropriate when the aim is:

- To clarify conceptual boundaries;
- To identify the types and sources of literature available on the topic;
- To map the key definitions and understand how they are constructed across disciplines.

The overarching question in order to conduct the scoping review was:

- *How are the concepts of Cultural Heritage, Community, Cultural Commons, and Citizen Science for Cultural Heritage defined and understood in academic literature?*

And the relative sub-questions were:

- *What are the dominant disciplinary framings of these concepts?*
- *How do definitions vary across cultural policy, heritage studies, and participatory governance literature?*

The literature was identified through a targeted keyword-based search strategy**,** applied across major academic databases (including Scopus, Web of Science, and Google Scholar), complemented by manual searches of reference lists from key publications.

Search terms were organised around the four core domains of the review and included combinations of the following keywords:

- *"cultural heritage"*, "*heritage management";*
- *"cultural commons"*, "*commons governance", institutional and/or normative arrangements";*
- *"community"*, "*types of community"*, "*community engagement";*
- *"citizen science"*, "*participation"*, "*co-production".*

The final corpus includes:

- Peer-reviewed journal articles;
- Academic books;
- Books chapters;
- Institutional documents and charters (e.g., ICOM, ICOMOS, ICCROM);
- Policy reports and white papers;
- Seminal theoretical works

No restrictions were applied regarding publication date. Sources were limited to English and Italian. A comprehensive search strategy was developed, comprising academic databases and grey literature repositories:

- Academic databases**:** Scopus, JSTOR and Google Scholar;
- Institutional databases: UNESCO Digital Library, ICOM/ICOMOS archives, ICCROM resources.

Using the before mention research criteria a total of 84 (n. 17 studies on Cultural Heritage; n.33 studies on Cultural Commons; n.11 studies on Community; n.23 studies on Citizen Science) studies were systematically selected and classified according e.g., types of research, contributions, authors and affiliations, and publication venues, to pinpoint significant themes, theoretical constructs, and contextual knowledge. This phase helped establish the study's conceptual foundation, particularly aligning it with cultural heritage management. Full text versions of the articles were obtained and, as a key parameter for reduce bias of this scoping review, each paper was reviewed by my supervisor.

Rather than constituting a unified field of inquiry, this literature spans multiple disciplinary fields, each contributing distinct conceptual lenses. While many sources engage with multiple fields, this classification was adopted to identify dominant epistemic orientations rather than to impose rigid boundaries.

The analysis reveals that this purposeful literature is structured around five main fields of study. First, Cultural Heritage Studies and Heritage Management constitute the core part. These works focus on definitions of cultural heritage, governance and

management models, heritage communities, and international normative frameworks. They include both critical heritage scholarship and management-oriented approaches, as well as institutional charters and conventions. This field provides the normative and conceptual foundation for participatory heritage governance.

Second, a substantial share of the literature originates from Management, Governance, and Organisational Studies. These sources introduce analytical tools for understanding coordination, stakeholder interaction, ecosystems, and value creation within complex cultural systems.

Third, this literature includes a significant body of work rooted in Commons Theory, Normative Studies, and Political Economy. These contributions address shared resources, collective stewardship, and legal frameworks for common goods. Within the scoping review, they play a crucial role in reframing cultural heritage as a common good governed through collective responsibility rather than exclusively through bottom-up mechanisms.

Fourth, Sociology and Community Studies provide theoretical grounding for the analysis of community, identity, belonging, and social cohesion. This field spans classical sociological theory as well as contemporary organisational and territorial approaches, supporting a relational and processual understanding of community participation in heritage governance.

Finally, Citizen Science and Participatory Studies contribute a methodological and epistemic perspective on participation. These sources conceptualise participation not only as involvement in decision-making but also as co-production of knowledge, evaluation, and civic engagement, extending participatory governance into the domain of research and impact assessment.

Taken together, the disciplinary diversity of the 84 sources demonstrates that participatory governance in cultural heritage emerges at the intersection of heritage studies, management and governance research, commons theory, sociology, and participatory science.

By grounding the research in clearly defined and critically selected conceptual references, this chapter aims to provide a stable analytical framework upon which the subsequent theoretical and empirical analysis will be built. Each of the following sub-sections will address one core concept, presenting its definitional variations, its use in the academic literature, and its relevance to participatory governance in the context of Cultural Heritage.

2.1 Approaching Cultural Heritage from a Management Studies Perspective

In recent decades, the definition of Cultural Heritage (CH) has evolved beyond its traditional understanding as a static collection of monuments, artefacts, and expert-curated traditions.

In this section, through the lens of the scoping review, I will outline a definition of Cultural Heritage derived from the selection and analysis of scientific articles. This scoping review was conducted following the five-stage framework proposed by Arksey and O'Malley (2005), further refined by Levac et al. (2010):

Identifying the research question:

> *How has the concept of cultural heritage been defined in academic and institutional literature, and what are the implications for its management and governance?*

In identifying relevant studies, a purposive search was conducted across academic database (as Google Scholar). Additionally, policy and normative texts (e.g., UNESCO, ICOMOS Conventions) were included. For this dissertation, the review also incorporated a set of core references provided by the research corpus, including monographs, book chapters, and journal articles (2000–2024).

Inclusion criteria:

- Explicit attempt to *define* or *theorise* the core concept of cultural heritage.
- Engagement with *management* or *governance* practices.

- Relevance to international frameworks (UNESCO, ICOMOS, EU) or critical approaches (e.g., sustainability, inclusivity, intersectionality).

Data extraction was performed for: (a) definition(s) of heritage, (b) normative framework, (c) proposed management/governance model, (d) thematic emphasis (e.g., sustainability, identity, participation).

The concept of *Cultural Heritage* has undergone profound transformations over the last century. Once restricted to monumental and tangible assets, it now encompasses intangible practices, cultural landscapes, and even broader socio-political and identity-related dimensions. This evolution reflects the increasing recognition that heritage is not a static object but rather a dynamic, socially constructed process embedded in local, national, and global frameworks of meaning (Smith, 2006; Harrison, 2013).

Given this diversity, there is a need to map systematically how Cultural Heritage has been defined, framed, and operationalised in academic literature and policy. Furthermore, the aim is to map recent literature on the conceptualization of CH and its connections to participation, governance, and communities, with particular attention to the principles set out in the Faro Convention.

The codification of cultural heritage has been profoundly shaped by the interventions of international organisations, whose frameworks have progressively expanded the conceptual and normative scope of the term. Before Faro Convention, The UNESCO World Heritage Convention (1972) defined Cultural Heritage in terms of *monuments, groups of buildings, and sites of outstanding universal value*. This definition privileged tangible, monumental heritage, often associated with elite, national, or universal narratives of culture. Later, the 2003 Convention on Intangible Cultural Heritage expanded the scope. Here, heritage is defined to include oral traditions, performing arts, social practices, rituals, festive events, and knowledge concerning nature and the universe. This evolution marked the recognition that heritage resides not only in material artefacts but also in living practices and collective identities, emphasizing its *processual* and *dynamic* character.

Thus, one of the most significant institutional definitions of this shift is provided by the Council of Europe's Faro Convention (2005), which reframes CH as a set of resources inherited from the past that individuals and communities identify with, regardless of ownership, as reflections of their values, beliefs, and evolving practices. With the recognition of the need to put people and human values at the centre of an expanded, Faro Convention was launched by the Council of Europe in the Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society, introducing new notions of CH and its management.

Within the framework of the Faro Convention, Cultural Heritage is conceived in an expansive sense, encompassing cultural and historical environments alongside both tangible and intangible expressions. This breadth reflects the Convention's central objective: to embed the diverse values and requirements of cultural heritage into all domains of policy formulation and public deliberation. The definition advances three interrelated principles. First, inclusivity, recognising that the scope of heritage is dynamic, continually shaped by reinterpretation and expansion. Second, non-exclusivity, affirming that heritage value may be legitimately acknowledged by individuals or communities regardless of ownership or control. Third, interactivity, acknowledging that cultural heritage often intersects with elements conventionally perceived as natural, such as landscapes. Together, these principles underscore the Convention's commitment to a holistic and evolving understanding of heritage as a shared societal resource (Fojut, 2009).

The Convention establishes heritage as an action, a product, a process for society (Fairclough, 2009) rather than a product and for itself. As a dynamic interaction between people and their environment that is embedded within broader social, cultural, and political contexts. It encompasses the material and immaterial legacies—objects, places, landscapes, cultural expressions, and the associated ideas and values—transmitted from the past, whether or not they are preserved. Equally, it includes the dynamic processes through which these legacies are interpreted, contextualised, valued, managed, adapted, transformed, or relinquished. In this sense, heritage is not a static archive of the past, but a living, evolving arena where societies continually negotiate the significance and future of what they inherit.

This approach shifts the emphasis from the conservation of selected monuments by expert authority toward a more democratic, participatory process in which heritage is continually reinterpreted, adapted, and integrated into the fabric of contemporary life.

The Faro Convention was published in 2005. At the end of 2009, it was further promoted through a conference in Faro (Portugal) and was accompanied by the publication of a book entitled "Heritage and Beyond" (2009). This volume is a key text in understanding the Convention's mindset and its implications, particularly the two introductory chapters by Daniel Therond and Noel Fojut, who together provided the guiding inspiration behind the work of the Council of Europe's committee of members and experts that wrote the Convention (Fairclough, 2009, 2012).

The main actors undertaking this action are citizens, operating under the Faro notion of *"Heritage Community".* In fact, community become the subjects of action. A Heritage Community is characterized by awareness of the resource value of its cultural heritage, a sense of belonging, inclusiveness, collaboration at all levels, a common interest in heritage-led actions, shared civic responsibility towards cultural heritage (Fabbricatti et al., 2020). Cultural heritage's significance thus becomes a socially determined process, defined by a group of people with a particular interest in working for and with an inherited past. This community is not a legal entity, but a flexible, transversal and open group, spontaneous but rather united by a shared interest in heritage (Colomer, 2023).

Within the academic debate, several scholars have contributed to deepening this reconceptualization:

- **Gültekin (2012),** an academic scholar who the focus of her research is on Cultural History, identifies the terminological and symbolic transition from "property" to "heritage," which reflects a shift from notions of *ownership* (with legalistic and connotations) towards *shared inheritance*. In this framing, heritage belongs not solely to states or institutions, but to communities as a collective legacy.
- **Barile & Saviano (2015),** academics in the field of Management studies, take this further, interpreting heritage as a relational system of values, rather than a

fixed set of assets. From a systems-thinking perspective, Cultural Heritage is embedded in networks of social interactions, continuously generating cultural, social, and symbolic capital. This view challenges preservationist models by situating heritage within value co-creation processes, where meaning emerges from interactions between institutions, communities, and individuals.

- **Golinelli (2015)** approaches heritage as an intangible asset for value creation. Drawing on management theory, he positions heritage within the knowledge-based economy, stressing its capacity to generate innovation, attract investment, and foster sustainable territorial development. Here, Heritage is not a passive inheritance but an active driver of socio-economic growth, providing competitive advantage when properly managed.
- **Smith (2006),** from the field of *Critical Heritage Studies*, critiques what she terms the Authorized Heritage Discourse (AHD): the institutional narrative that privileges monumental, material heritage while marginalising alternative forms of memory and identity. For Smith, Heritage should be understood as a cultural and political process that actively constructs social meanings.
- **Harrison (2013)**, Professor in Heritage Studies, similarly underscores heritage as a social practice, emphasising its inherently contested and negotiated nature. For him, Heritage is less about the preservation of "things" and more about the *social relations* and *political struggles* that imbue places and objects with meaning.

Taken together, these perspectives highlight the progressive object-focused definitions of heritage. The field has moved towards conceptualising heritage as:

- *Dynamic*: continuously reinterpreted by communities and institutions;
- *Relational:* constituted through networks of values and meanings;
- *Constructed*: not a neutral inheritance but a socially and politically mediated discourse;
- *Instrumental*: capable of generating cultural, social, and economic capital in contemporary societies.

So, key insight that derived are: *Cultural Heritage*, over time, has evolved from a static, object-centred category into a dynamic, relational, and processual construct, whose meaning and value are continuously negotiated within social, institutional, and economic frameworks. This conceptual shift lays the foundation for rethinking heritage management not as mere preservation, but as a form of governance of cultural processes embedded in broader agendas of sustainability, inclusivity, and value creation.

From the perspective of critical management studies, the management of Cultural Heritage can be understood not only as a set of normative principles or expert-led procedures, but as an ongoing practice of *organizing*. As Czarniawska (2008), academic in the field of management studies, argues, every activity within a heritage organization — for instance, an archaeological excavation — is in some sense "managed," regardless of whether it is profit-seeking or not. Moreover, management is always shaped by its local contexts and conditions, resisting any universal "one best way." For heritage governance, this implies that organizing practices must be carefully reconstructed in their relationship to specific cultural, institutional, and community environments. Such contextualist approaches resonate strongly with the Faro Convention's emphasis on inclusivity and with contemporary participatory governance models, where management emerges as a negotiated, dynamic, and locally grounded process.

Moreover, the most recent stream of scholarship in Cultural Heritage management has been characterised by the rise of participatory governance models, which aim to rebalance authority between heritage experts and the communities that inhabit, use, and reinterpret cultural resources. This participatory approach is not merely a technical adjustment but represents a deeper reconfiguration of how heritage is defined, managed, and legitimised. It resonates strongly with the democratic principles articulated in the Faro Convention (2005), which recognised heritage as a *right* and as a *resource for community development*, and with broader cultural policy movements towards transparency, inclusivity, and co-creation.

Research in this area demonstrates that participatory governance is far from a uniform practice but instead reflects a diversity of approaches tailored to different social and cultural contexts. Grahn (2011), academic researcher in Gender and Heritage, introduces an intersectional lens, showing how narratives of heritage are rarely neutral but are shaped by axes of gender, class, ethnicity, and nationality. This perspective underscores the risk that heritage governance, if left unchallenged, can reproduce inequalities by privileging certain voices while silencing others. Participation, in this sense, must be more than formal inclusion: it requires confronting the power structures embedded within heritage discourses.

In African contexts, Keitumetse (2011), an international scholar and heritage expert in multi-disciplinary background that encompass Archaeology, Environmental sciences, Museums and Education, offers a complementary vision by stressing the role of local communities as both custodians and producers of heritage. For the author, heritage is embedded in everyday practices, rituals, and local knowledge systems, which themselves constitute sustainable and resilient cultural frameworks. This perspective challenges Western preservationist paradigms that often separate heritage from daily life, demonstrating instead that in many societies, heritage and sustainability are not external goals but lived realities.

Building on these perspectives, more recent scholarship has explored the role of underrepresented groups, particularly the young generation. Zhang et al. (2024) propose a conceptual framework for youth participation in heritage governance, articulated along four dimensions: purpose, positioning, perspectives, and power relations. Their model goes beyond tokenistic involvement, presenting youth as active co-creators of heritage futures. By engaging younger generations, heritage management ensures intergenerational continuity and fosters innovation in the ways cultural memory is mobilised and transmitted.

Taken together, these contributions indicate that participation is no longer peripheral but central to the field of Cultural Heritage management. The challenge is not only to "open up" heritage to new actors, but to reconceptualise it as a common: a dynamic cultural process sustained through negotiation, inclusivity, and shared stewardship. In

this sense, participatory governance is not simply a management strategy but a political and ethical project, one that redefines the meaning of heritage in contemporary societies.

2.2 Defining and Managing Cultural Commons: A Multidisciplinary Perspective

The concept of "cultural commons" has emerged at the intersection of cultural heritage studies, economics, law, and Public Administration. Given the diversity of disciplinary approaches and definitions, this section applies a *scoping review* method (Arksey & O'Malley, 2005; Colquhoun et al., 2014) to map the main ways in which cultural commons have been theorised and operationalised.

The guiding question is:

- *How have cultural commons been defined in academic and institutional literature, and what implications arise for their management and governance?*

The review draws on peer-reviewed journal articles, books, institutional reports, and normative documents published between 1968 and 2024. The inclusion criteria were:

1. Explicit engagement with the definition of *commons* or *cultural commons*;
2. Relevance to cultural heritage governance or management;
3. Contribution to conceptual, legal, or policy frameworks.

Key sources were identified through targeted searches in Google Scholar and cross-referencing in existing literature, including seminal works on commons theory (Hardin, 1968; Ostrom, 1990), cultural economics (Montella, 2009; 2020), cultural management (Santagata et al., 2021), and normative debates (Rodotà, 2012; Nivarra, 2017).

2.2.1 Conceptualisations of Cultural Commons

The literature reveals a broad and heterogeneous understanding of commons. Montella (2009; 2020) states that expression "common goods" refers to a varied set of natural

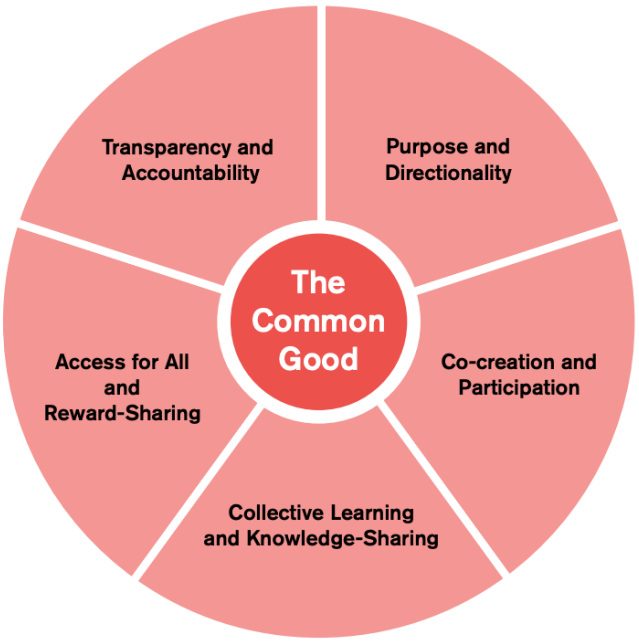
and cultural resources inherited from the past and accessible to all members of the community. Arena (2020) explains that common goods can encompass both tangible assets—such as parks, green areas, public spaces, squares, schools, cultural heritage, beaches, fields, forests, rivers, and lakes—and intangible assets, including legality, health, safety, collective memory, local dialects, traditions, music, and oral heritage. They are organised systems of functions and meanings that are the product of evolutionary learning, realised in the past, sedimented over time and transmitted to us (Hess & Ostrom 2007; Riganti & Nijkamp, 2016) for the future generations (Hodkinson, 2010). Common goods are intrinsically linked to specific subjects, such as groups of individuals, territorial communities, or communities of meaning, who not only share their use but have also contributed to constructing their history and significance (Ansari et al., 2013).

In line with these perspectives, an additional theoretical contribution that enriches the understanding of cultural commons governance comes from the Common Good approach developed by Mazzucato (2024), academic in the field of Economics studies of Innovation and Public Value. This framework offers a systemic vision of how public policies and collective action can be oriented toward shared social and environmental goals. Rather than treating the public good as a corrective response to market failures, Mazzucato redefines it as a proactive mission-oriented agenda that places the *common good*—the welfare of society as a whole—at the centre of value creation. Her model identifies five core pillars (see Fig. 1) shaping economic and governance policies: *(1) Purpose and directionality; (2) Co-creation and participation; (3) Knowledge sharing and collective learning; (4) Benefit and reward sharing;* and *(5) Transparency and accountability*. Together, these pillars provide an integrated framework that links economic innovation with democratic participation and ethical responsibility.

Applied to the field of Cultural Heritage and Cultural Commons, this perspective highlights that governance for the common good is not limited to managing resources efficiently, but to aligning institutional, civic, and creative capacities toward the collective well-being of communities. The five pillars can thus be interpreted as guiding principles for participatory cultural governance: ensuring that heritage-related

initiatives are purpose-driven, co-created with local actors, and grounded in open, transparent processes that redistribute cultural and social value. In this sense, the *Common Good Dashboard* (Figure 1) can serve as a conceptual bridge between economic and cultural policy frameworks, supporting a vision of heritage as a shared mission—a living, evolving resource that fosters inclusion, civic responsibility, and sustainable development. This approach reinforces the idea that cultural commons are not only assets to be preserved but dynamic platforms for co-creation, reciprocity, and collective learning, where the process of governing itself becomes an act of public value creation.

Fig. 1 *A Common Good Dashboard with five pillars. Reproduced from: Governing the economics of the common good: from correcting market failures to shaping collective goals (Mazzucato, 2024).*



2.2.2 Governance and Management approach

Drawing on these theoretical constructs, it becomes evident why Cultural Heritage qualifies as a form of common good, since they belong to a community of people that bear the right to enjoy the cultural content of those assets regardless of their ownership

(Dameri & Moggi 2019, Del Baldo & Demartini, 2021). When members of a community engage in the care and stewardship of a public asset, a community forms around that asset. It is through this active involvement and assumption of responsibility that a public good is transformed into a common good. Caring for common goods generates a sense of belonging, civic responsibility, and social cohesion. In this context, "active citizens" become community-builders: by engaging in the care of shared heritage, they generate social capital and cultivate trust, demonstrating through their practices that an alternative, participatory model of citizenship is possible (Arena, 2020). A key distinguishing feature is that the management of common goods requires cooperative and participatory approaches aimed at enhancing their conservation, economic development, and cultural accessibility. Effective management involves the active engagement of multiple stakeholders—including public institutions, for-profit and non-profit organisations, local communities, citizens, and volunteers—and demands an encounter between diverse cultural perspectives (Capello & Perucca, 2017; Dubini et al., 2012), as well as an interdisciplinary approach.

Cultural heritage thus embodies "shared meanings" that belong to a community—and in some cases, to all of humanity, as in the case of assets listed on UNESCO's World Heritage lists (Council of Europe, 2005; UNESCO, 1968). The distinctiveness of managing common goods lies in the interaction between the specific nature of the asset and its shared governance, aimed at ensuring its long-term preservation (Viola, 2016). However, cultural commons are inherently vulnerable to degradation, particularly through misuse or neglect by those who benefit from them. This dilemma was famously theorised by ecologist Garrett Hardin (1968) as the "tragedy of the commons," where individual interests can undermine collective resources.

Based on the analysis of numerous empirical case studies, Ostrom (1999) has scientifically demonstrated that the *"Tragedy of the Commons"* is not inevitable. In fact, Elinor Ostrom and her colleagues at the International Association for the Study of Commons (IASC) were the first to articulate the argument that 'commons' implies community or some form of social organisation. Their work, spanning several decades, suggests that commons have been successfully managed and sustained for centuries

thanks to some form of social organising (e.g. Ostrom, 1990, 2002, Vollan & Ostrom, 2010).

Communities can overcome the traditional dichotomy between bottom-up and top-down approach and outline a "third way" as a prerequisite for implementing new models of cooperative management, based on the "empowerment" of the local community (Santagata et al., 2021). The importance of Santagata's contribution to the definition of "Cultural Commons" is related to the identification of a close relationship among culture, space, and community interpreted as the three dimensions that, when combined together, allow to define all the possible states of cultural commons: "*Culture represents the resource that is produced and managed in a commons-like framework […] The spatial dimension reflects the environmental characteristics wherein interactions take place between community members […] The community, built upon an identity and symbolic dimension, takes into account the cohesiveness of its members and their involvement in the cultural process"* (Richerson & Boyd, 2008).

Cultural Heritage is especially susceptible to this paradox. On one hand, excessive or inappropriate use—such as over-tourism (Higgins, 2020) or gentrification processes (Atkinson & Bridge, 2005)—can damage the socio-cultural and environmental balance of heritage sites. On the other hand, abandonment and lack of maintenance (Micelli & Pellegrini, 2018) equally threaten the survival and vitality of cultural goods. Both extremes—overexploitation and neglect—are detrimental to heritage value and community engagement. What is needed instead is a holistic and sustainable approach that treats conservation and valorisation as complementary processes. This perspective aims to ensure not only the physical preservation of cultural assets, but also their regenerative and meaningful use within society (UN-Habitat, 2014; CHCfE Consortium, 2015).

2.2.3 Legal and Normative Frameworks

To conclude, a significant stream of literature focuses on the legal recognition of cultural commons. Establishing a legal framework for commons is not merely a semantic exercise; it has significant implications for how cultural resources are governed, protected, and accessed. Without a clear legal status, these assets risk being

subjected either to market forces or public neglect—both of which undermine their long-term sustainability and social value. A legal recognition of cultural commons can instead institutionalise their collective ownership and reinforce responsibilities for their stewardship (Aureli at al., 2024). In this regard, a pivotal—although not yet operationalised—definition comes from the 2007 in the Rodotà Commission, which stated:

> *"Common goods are those things that express utility functional to the exercise of fundamental rights and to the free development of the person. Common goods must be protected and safeguarded by the legal system also for the benefit of future generations. The holders of common goods may be public or private legal persons, but their collective use must always be guaranteed within the limits and modalities prescribed by law."*

This definition highlights the inalienable link between common goods and fundamental human rights, positioning cultural heritage as a resource to be preserved and democratically accessed over time. However, framing a good as "common" also implies a series of legal constraints tied to the social function of property (Nivarra, 2017), particularly its intergenerational responsibility. As Rodotà (2012) explains, commons are "diffusely held"—they belong to everyone and to no one, in the sense that everyone has the right to access them, and no one may exercise exclusive control.

Cultural Heritage, therefore, fits squarely within this legal-ethical vision—not only because of its widespread use, but also because of the broad array of social interests it engages. As Cammelli (2017) observes, the current legal instruments have proven inadequate in accounting for the subjective and collective nature of the communities involved. Redefining cultural assets as commons enables a reconnection between these goods and their reference communities, shifting away from ownership and toward stewardship based on shared responsibility (Marotta, 2017).

This shift also reflects a growing transformation in public administration (PA): from top-down governance models to bottom-up and partnership-based approaches, in which public institutions, private actors, and civic organisations collaborate for the common good (Iaione, 2015; Mabellini, 2017). Zamagni (2014) underscores that an

effective management of commons cannot be reduced to either public or private logic alone—it must instead be rooted in community-based governance, driven by reciprocity and mutual care. Recent legal developments in Italy echo this vision. The Third Sector Code classifies the protection and valorisation of Cultural Heritage and landscape (under Legislative Decree 42/2004) as an "activity of general interest—to be pursued with no profit motive, but with civic and social purpose". This shift has prompted a reassessment of public-private roles: with the public authority responsible for removing barriers to access, and private citizens or associations empowered to take part in maintenance, regeneration, and even co-management of shared heritage.

This model is rooted in Article 118, paragraph 4 of the Italian Constitution, which affirms the principle of horizontal subsidiarity, empowering citizens to take autonomous initiative in matters of general interest. A practical application of this principle is found in the widely adopted "pacts of collaboration" between municipalities and citizens, first formalised in the *Regulation on the Collaboration Between Citizens and the City for the Care and Regeneration of Urban Commons*, developed by the City of Bologna in 2014 and promoted by Labsus – Laboratory for Subsidiarity.

These pacts define urban commons as:

> *"Tangible and intangible goods that citizens and the administration recognise as functional to the well-being of the community and its members, to the exercise of fundamental rights, and to the interests of future generations. The parties commit themselves, pursuant to Article 118(4) of the Constitution, to guarantee and improve their individual and collective use."*

As Marella (2012, p. 187) concisely writes:

> *"There is nothing more common than the space in which the flow of our lives is shaped."*

So, the scoping review demonstrates that cultural commons are understood not merely as assets, but as *relational constructs*: resources whose meaning and sustainability

derive from community practices, legal frameworks, and shared governance. Across disciplines, three recurrent dimensions emerge:

1. ***Resource dimension***: cultural and natural assets embodying shared meanings;
2. ***Community dimension***: groups that identify with and steward these assets;
3. ***Governance dimension***: cooperative and participatory arrangements ensuring long-term preservation and accessibility.

Together, these dimensions position cultural commons as both a theoretical construct and a practical governance challenge. Defining Cultural Heritage as commons requires not only conceptual clarity but also legal recognition and institutional innovation, in order to guarantee their sustainability and democratic accessibility over time.

2.3 The Evolving Concept of Community in Cultural Heritage

The notion of *Community* has become central in debates on Cultural Heritage (CH) governance and participatory models. The term has been theorised in sociology, organisational studies, and heritage literature in multiple ways. To clarify its meanings and applications in the CH field, this section applies a *scoping review* (Arksey & O'Malley, 2005; Munn et al., 2018), guided by the core question:

- *How is "community" defined and conceptualised in Cultural Heritage literature, and what implications does this hold for governance and participation?*

The review includes peer-reviewed articles, books, institutional declarations, and reports from 1887 to 2023. Inclusion criteria were:

1. Explicit attempt to define or theorise the concept of *"Community";*
2. Engagement with Cultural Heritage governance and participatory processes;
3. Relevance to contemporary societal and policy debates. Key sources range from classical sociological theory (Tönnies, 1887/2017) to heritage charters (Council of Europe, 2005; ICOMOS, 2017) and recent organizational research on community logics (Georgiou & Arenas, 2023).

The notion of *"Community"* is central to contemporary discussions on participatory governance and cultural heritage management. ICOMOS (International Council on Monuments and Sites) in the New Delhi Declaration (2017) proposes an advancement in the interpretation of community participatory process, characterizing it with planning and operational aspects. Furthermore, identifying the continuity of "living heritage" (Poulios, 2014) as a condition for sustainable development based on "*a close relationship between nature, culture and people*" (New Delhi Declaration, 2017), it opens up a new perspective on the two-way relationship between Cultural Heritage and communities: it is important to consider not only the value it has for a society and the extent to which it improves quality and living conditions, but above all, to understand how communities can play an active role in its protection and promotion. In the context of accelerating societal, ecological, and technological transformations, the notion of community is undergoing a profound redefinition. No longer confined to stable, geographically bounded groups, communities today are increasingly dynamic, fluid, and context dependent. As Andrea Carandini (2017) suggests, it is precisely the *"force of context"* that shapes the evolution of community—embedding it within particular social, cultural, and environmental landscapes. This recognition invites a more nuanced understanding of community: not as a fixed category, but as a living process, responsive to local realities, global pressures, and shifting identities.

2.3.1 Historical Foundations

The conceptual and theoretical roots of community trace back to the foundational work of German sociologist Ferdinand Tönnies, who, in "*Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft"* (1887), articulated a distinction between Gemeinschaft (community) and Gesellschaft (society). He was one of the first sociologists to claim that there was a shift in social relations from Gemeinschaft (community) to Gesellschaft (society). In his seminal work, he defined Gemeinschaft as living in the same place and being *"intimate, private and exclusive"* (p. 33). He explained that communities are based on natural will, where shared liking, habit, and memory are the guiding principles for action and interaction, and are usually inhabited by small numbers of people, who commit to common ways of life and beliefs. By contrast, Gesellschaft was described as a set of contractual and superficial interactions, in which the rational will dominates

(Tönnies, 1887). In fact, according to Tönnies, community is characterised by close, enduring bonds among individuals—relationships that are "intimate, private and exclusive" (p. 33)—rooted in shared values, habits, and memories, and often tied to spatial proximity or common heritage. In contrast, society is conceived as a realm of impersonal and utilitarian interactions, typical of modern and urbanised contexts. This foundational dichotomy continues to shape how communities are theorised, particularly in relation to their role in social cohesion and collective agency. More recent scholarship builds on this by framing communities not merely as bounded geographic or affective units, but as relational networks in which members engage in "thick" interactions—dense and multilayered relationships embedded in mutual trust and shared purposes (Georgiou & Arenas, 2023).

Conversely, Georgiou and Murillo (2023) offer a helpful counter-definition by clarifying what does not constitute a community. Groups lacking clear boundaries, those formed solely for instrumental or temporary purposes, or where positive interdependence is weak, fail to qualify as true communities. Similarly, groups with minimal shared practices or limited physical interaction are more accurately described as loosely associated collectives or networks rather than communities. These distinctions help to sharpen the analytical lens through which we understand community-based participation, particularly in cultural heritage governance.

Adopting the definition of Bacq et al. (2022), community may be defined as an aggregation of individuals who share place, identity, fate, interests, and/or common practices. This understanding is particularly relevant in examining how communities contribute to and engage with local entrepreneurship and regeneration processes.

2.3.2 Typologies of Community

Considering these developments, the following question arises:

- *What types of communities are forming today, and how are they responding to the complex challenges they face?*

Recent literature (Georgiou & Arenas, 2023) in organizational field identifies a growing academic interest in the intersection of community and purpose-driven enterprise, with 172 studies published between 1991 and 2020. Drawing on Georgiou and Arenas' (2023) typology, we can understand contemporary communities. In fact, four main types of communities that dominate organizational research are identified by the authors: communities of place, communities of practice, communities of users, and communities of firms. Each type is structured around a distinct variant of what they call the "community logic"—that is, the institutional principles, sources of legitimacy, and forms of identity that govern how communities' function.

- **Communities of place** are the most intuitive form, often geographically anchored in neighbourhoods, villages, or regions. These communities rely heavily on trust, reciprocity, and shared cultural norms. Their organizing logic is grounded in mutual care and place-based identity, often reinforced through democratic decision-making or collective rituals. In such communities, emotional ties to place and heritage play a crucial role, and members are typically motivated by a desire to support one another and preserve collective well-being.
- **Communities of practice,** formed not by geography but by shared expertise and professional engagement. These communities coalesce around a common repertoire of tools, language, routines, and knowledge. Membership is earned through contribution and recognized competence.
- **Communities of users** that represent a more fluid and contemporary form, often emerging around shared consumption or use of a product, platform, or service. These communities may form online or offline, and while their boundaries are more porous, they nonetheless exhibit strong internal cohesion through shared values, trust-based interactions, and democratic norms. Members often identify emotionally with a cause, product, or brand, and they engage collaboratively in co-creation, problem-solving, and meaning making.
- **Communities of firms** are organizational networks bound by mutual interest—such as shared industries, technologies, or strategic goals. While they may appear more transactional, these communities also exhibit a

communal logic rooted in collaborative problem-solving, shared standards, and coordinated action. Authority often resides with central or influential firms, but mutual dependency and alignment of organizational principles foster a sense of community.

Taken together, this typology demonstrates that the "community logic" is neither singular nor static. Rather, it varies across contexts, manifesting different sources of legitimacy (e.g., trust, expertise, brand alignment), forms of authority (e.g., democratic participation, peer recognition, firm dominance), and strategic orientations (e.g., mutual support, innovation, market access). What unites these diverse community forms, however, is their emphasis on belonging through boundary-making and on cultivating relationships that are deeper than mere transactions.

2.3.3 Current Challenges

These conceptualisations are particularly relevant within the CH field, where community participation has become a cornerstone of sustainable and inclusive governance models. For CH governance, this insight is particularly salient: it suggests that community engagement cannot be approached uniformly but must be accustomed to the specific type of community involved—whether rooted in place, knowledge, use, or institutional collaboration. As the Faro Convention (Council of Europe, 2005) articulates, communities are no longer passive beneficiaries of heritage policies but active agents— "heritage communities"—who co-construct the meaning and management of cultural assets. This shift demands a relational and processual understanding of community: not as a static entity, but as a dynamic and self-defining collective, capable of activating cultural heritage as a shared resource for social and civic value creation. However, current trends pose significant democratic and cultural challenges. One of the most pressing is the overall decline in cultural participation across the European Union, particularly following the COVID-19 pandemic. According to Eurostat (2022), the share of EU citizens who engaged in at least one cultural activity (such as visiting museums, attending performances, or going to the cinema) dropped from 57% in 2015 to 48% in 2022. More strikingly, specific activities saw even sharper declines: cinema attendance fell from 52% to 32%, live

performances from 44% to 28%, and visits to cultural sites from 44% to 32% over the same period. In Italy, cultural engagement was even lower: only 35% of people participated in any cultural activity in 2022, ranking among the lowest in the EU. This signals not only a crisis in cultural access but a broader erosion of the social fabric that connects communities to their heritage. The disengagement from cultural life weakens the collective ownership of shared spaces and values, raising urgent questions about inclusion, relevance, and sustainability.

The complexity of defining community is also reflected in its intrinsic diversity: there is no monolithic community, but rather a heterogeneous set of sectors, groups, and individuals with distinct perceptions and interests (Chirikure et al., 2010). This heterogeneity requires not only special attention in the management of internal relations but also the capacity to interact effectively with government and other institutions in order to respond to diverse needs (Cavaye, 2004). In this sense, the community can be seen as a dynamic and self-regulating entity which, through active participation and the continuous engagement of its members, sustains and strengthens the sense of belonging and identity (Charles & Samples, 2004).

In this evolving landscape, the composition of "community" is also being questioned. Who constitutes a community today? Are tourists' part of the community when they temporarily engage with a place's heritage? Can external publics, such as digital followers or temporary residents, claim partial membership in a community of heritage or practice? These questions reflect a growing recognition that communities are no longer closed or locally anchored; instead, they are shaped by mobility, hybridity, and layered belonging.

So, overall, the scoping review reveals three main insights:

1. ***Historical continuity****:* the Gemeinschaft/Gesellschaft distinction continues to inform debates, framing community as the locus of cohesion and shared values.
2. ***Processual turn****:* contemporary literature stresses community as relational, dynamic, and context-dependent rather than fixed or bounded.

3. ***Governance implications****:* Heritage governance must account for diverse community forms (place-based, practice-based, user-driven, organisational) and adapt participation strategies accordingly.

For CH governance, these insights confirm that community engagement cannot be assumed as uniform. Instead, recognising the plurality and evolving nature of communities is essential to design inclusive, context-sensitive, and sustainable participatory models.

2.4 Citizen Science and Cultural Heritage

Citizen Science (CS) has emerged in recent decades as a key bridge between academic research and civic engagement. It represents not only a methodological innovation but also a profound rethinking of the relationship between science, society, and governance. This section applies a *scoping review* approach (Arksey & O'Malley, 2005; Munn et al., 2018) to map how CS has been conceptualised and operationalised, with the guiding question:

- *How has Citizen Science been defined, structured, and applied in relation to cultural heritage and participatory governance?*

The review includes scholarly articles, books, institutional guidelines, and network frameworks from 1969 to 2021. Inclusion criteria were:

1. Explicit engagement with the concept or definition of CS;
2. Discussion of participation, governance, or civic engagement;
3. Relevance to Cultural Heritage and knowledge co-production.

Key sources include foundational works on CS (Irwin, 1995; Bonney, 1996, 2015; Haklay, 2015), meta-reviews (Hecker et al., 2018; Vohland et al., 2021), typologies of participation (Arnstein, 1969; Cornwall, 2016), and institutional frameworks such as the *Ten Principles of Citizen Science* (ECSA, 2015).

2.4.1 Origins and Definitions

The term Citizen Science (CS), in its most common use, was first introduced in 1989 in an article published in the *MIT Technology Review* curated by the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (Kerson, 1989). The article, titled *Lab for the Environment*, described an acid rain monitoring program conducted across all 50 U.S. states by 225 members of the Audubon Society as "a Citizen Science Program." It highlighted some key features of CS: voluntary participation, data collection, dissemination, and political dimension. Since then, other definitions have been formulated (Lewenstein, 2022; Bonney et al., 2016), and two main research strands have emerged. Since then, two main traditions have emerged:

- **Irwin tradition** – emphasizes democratization, justice, and the opening of research agendas to citizens (Irwin, 1995; Irwin & Horst, 2016).
- **Bonney tradition** – focuses on collaboration between citizens and professionals in data collection and analysis (Bonney, 1996).

While the Bonney model has dominated the last two decades, recent work (Eitzel et al., 2017) integrates both strands into an expanded definition highlighting CS's social and political dimensions. In fact, other authors have sought to combine these two strands into a more comprehensive framework (Ceccaroni et al., 2017): Eitzel et al. (2017) proposed an expanded definition to highlight the social and political aspects of CS projects:

> *"The practice of CS involves the public in generating new scientific knowledge. It promotes public engagement with science, democratizes research processes, and bridges gaps between academic researchers and local communities."*

This definition highlights the collaborative nature of CS, not only as a data collection tool but as a means to open science to the public and democratize knowledge production.

2.4.2 Institutionalisation and Best Practices

The rapid growth of CS has led to the development of shared frameworks. For this reason, numerous research networks and associations have been established, including the European Citizen Science Association (ECSA), founded in 2013. Its working group *Sharing best practice and building capacity* developed a list of ten key principles (Robinson et al., 2018; Hecker et al., 2018). The *Ten Principles of Citizen Science*, adaptable to all fields in which CS operates, are:

1. CS projects actively involve citizens in scientific activities that generate new knowledge.
2. CS projects produce an original scientific outcome.
3. Both professional scientists and participating citizens benefit from CS projects.
4. Participants may, if they wish, be involved in multiple stages of the scientific project.
5. Participants receive feedback.
6. CS is considered a research methodology like any other, with limits and margins of error that must be acknowledged and managed.
7. Data and metadata from CS projects are made publicly available and, whenever possible, results are published in open access.
8. The contribution of participants is acknowledged in project results and publications.
9. CS programs are evaluated for scientific outcomes, data quality, participant experience, and breadth of social and policy impact.
10. CS project leaders take into account legal and ethical issues related to copyright, intellectual property, data-sharing agreements, confidentiality, attribution, and environmental impact (ECSA, 2015).

These *Ten Principles* are now applied in a wide variety of contexts, not only for the development and systematization of best practices but also for outreach to the public and government institutions. In summary, CS engages the public in scientific research, aiming for reciprocal benefits, robust scientific results, and open data sharing.

However, challenges remain in terms of inclusivity, data quality, and project evaluation, which require ongoing attention for continuous improvement.

2.4.3 Emerging Challenges

Participation, as noted, is one of the fundamental pillars of CS. Today, participation is an almost indispensable element in scientific literature, conferences, meetings, strategic documents, and projects (Golobic, 2014). CS is sometimes referred to using terms that highlight this concept, such as *crowd science*, *civic science*, or directly *participatory science*. Each emphasizes civil society engagement and participation (Bonney et al., 2009).

Yet in academic literature there is no consensus on what *participation* means. It is a broad concept, conceived in different ways over time and across disciplines (Claridge, 2004). Between 1969 and 2020, at least 60 theoretical models were developed to define public participation processes (Hussey, 2012), beginning with Arnstein's (1969) *Ladder of Citizen Participation*, a seminal framework describing participation as a continuum from non-participation through tokenism to citizen control. Over the past fifty years, many typologies of participation have emerged from this foundation. Participation varies depending on where it takes place, whose visions it follows, and whether it accommodates dissent, conflict, confrontation, and bottom-up initiatives (Kesby, 2005; Staeheli et al., 2008).

Haklay (2012) developed a model that identifies four levels of participation and involvement:

- *Crowdsourcing*, the simplest level, in which participants provide only labor for data collection, with minimal cognitive engagement.
- *Distributed intelligence* differs from the first one, here participants both observe and interpret the data collected, drawing on cognitive skills.
- *Participatory science* involves deeper participation, where citizens interact with experts in defining research questions and during data collection and interpretation.

- *Extreme citizen science, here* participants are involved in all stages of the project—including research design, policy proposal, dissemination of results—becoming equal partners with scientists.

Despite its promise, literature identifies critical challenges: inclusivity, uneven data quality, and limited evaluation mechanisms. Moreover, while CS has expanded globally, its integration into cultural heritage remains uneven, raising questions about how heritage professionals and citizen scientists can effectively collaborate in governance.

To conclude, the scoping review highlights four main insights:

1. ***Dual origins****:* CS developed from both democratization and data-driven traditions; today, hybrid definitions combine these dimensions.
2. ***Institutionalisation***: the codification of principles (e.g., ECSA) demonstrates the maturation of CS as a recognized methodology.
3. ***Participation diversity***: participation is neither uniform nor unidirectional but spans a spectrum from data collection to co-production of policy.
4. ***Implications for Cultural Heritage***: applying CS to CH requires adapting participatory models to heritage-specific contexts, balancing scientific rigor with inclusivity and local knowledge.

CHAPTER 3: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORKS GUIDING THE RESEARCH

3.1 Research Design

The research design provides the conceptual and operational framework for conducting a study, specifying how research questions are addressed, how frameworks are selected, how data are collected, and how findings are generated. As Saunders et al. (2019) note, the research design determines the logic that align research objectives, theoretical frameworks, data collection, analysis and interpretations to achieve valid conclusions.

The research design of this doctoral study is driven by the central aim of understanding how governance models can contribute to the sustainable management of Cultural Heritage. As clarified in Chapter 2, the literature on cultural commons, community engagement, and citizen science highlights both the potential and the challenges of participatory approaches. Previous insights highlighted in the literature point to the need for an investigation able to capture the *multi-actor*, *contextual* and *processual* nature of cultural heritage governance arrangements in historic urban districts. Accordingly, research questions have been addressed, and coherent conceptual frameworks have been identified.

3.1.1 Research Questions

Three overarching research questions guide the inquiry:

1. **Who** are the actors involved in the governance of cultural heritage within an historic urban district?
2. **What** dynamics emerge from their interactions, and how do these influence processes of value creation?
3. **How** is cultural, social, and economic value produced and sustained through participatory governance arrangements?

These research questions are logically progressive: from identifying actors (RQ1), to examining their interaction dynamics (RQ2), and finally to analysing outcomes in terms of value creation (RQ3). This sequential structure aligns directly with the three main contributions of the dissertation. Each of them addresses a different research question: the first investigates the constellation of actors within an urban historic district referring to the Cultural Ecosystem lens; the second analyses the dynamics of their interactions through the lens of Art World theory; and the third evaluates the processes of cultural, social, and economic value creation using the framework of Civic Wealth Creation. Together, these three contributions form a cumulative inquiry into collaborative governance, moving from mapping actors, to understanding relationship processes, to assessing outcomes for society.

3.2 Conceptual frameworks

This doctoral thesis draws on three interrelated bodies of literature used to investigate the processes through which participatory governance fosters cultural, social, and economic value. These frameworks are aligned with the above-mentioned three research questions and were selected through a meta-analytical review (Chapter 2) because they converge on the core issue of this research: the relationship between cultural heritage, communities, and collaborative governance, and the ways this relationship generates cultural, social, and economic value.

1. The Cultural Ecosystem lens, which emphasises the systemic interactions among cultural actors (Borin & Donato, 2015; Holden, 2015);
2. Art Worlds Theory (Becker, 1982; Patriotta and Hirsh, 2016), which frames culture as collective action shaped by networks of collaboration;
3. The Civic Wealth Creation (CWC) framework, which connects cultural heritage to community-led value creation and local development (Lumpkin & Bacq, 2019; Aureli, Del Baldo & Demartini, 2021, 2023).

3.2.1 Cultural Ecosystem Lens

Over the last 20 years the concept of "Ecosystem "stemming from the biological field, has become increasing popular and adapted to several contexts and domains (Costanza et al., 1997). In fact, in their seminal article, Costanza et al. (1997) developed a systemic understanding of ecosystems that has since become foundational for transdisciplinary research. By linking ecological functions directly to human well-being, they introduced the framework of ecosystem services, showing that ecosystems generate a continuous flow of goods and services—such as food, climate regulation, waste treatment, and cultural values—that are essential for sustaining life. To operationalize this, they identified and grouped ecosystem functions into 17 major categories of services, ranging from regulating services (e.g., gas regulation, disturbance control, nutrient cycling) to provisioning services (e.g., food, raw materials, genetic resources) and cultural services (e.g., recreation, aesthetic and spiritual values). This framework underscored the interdependent nature of ecological processes, where the provision of one service often depends on the functioning of several others, together forming an ecological "infrastructure" that underpins human welfare.

The reinterpretation of the concept has been taken up in management and business studies, which have adopted the ecosystem metaphor (Basole, 2009; Iansiti & Levien, 2004; Peltoniemi, 2006; Stam, 2015), transferring the core features of biological ecosystems to organizational and economic contexts. Building on advances in network theory from biology and physics, Basole (2009) emphasizes that viewing interfirm structures through an ecosystem perspective provides a valuable complement to traditional understandings of economic organization. One of the most cited definitions comes from Moore (1996), who described business ecosystems as networks of interconnected actors—customers, suppliers, financial institutions, trade associations, labour unions, NGOs, governmental organizations, and other stakeholders—whose activities mutually reinforce each other.

Moore (1996) also stresses that actors within ecosystems are not passive entities but intelligent agents who make deliberate choices, assess possible outcomes, and plan

strategically for the future; in this sense, they actively shape the system rather than merely adapting to it. Extending this view, Iansiti and Levien (2004) note that ecosystems themselves compete for members, highlighting the dynamic and selective nature of these networks. Within such systems, firms often compete and cooperate simultaneously, a dynamic captured by the notion of "co-opetition" (Brandenburger & Nalebuff, 1997), since the viability of individual actors depends on the overall development and resilience of the ecosystem. A key feature of these ecosystems lies in their adaptive capacity: unlike hierarchical structures, they evolve through the distributed influence of participants are able to self-organize in response to internal and external changes, often generating emergent behaviours (Rouse, 2007).

A considerable body of literature has since developed around entrepreneurial ecosystems (Isenberg, 2014; Spigel, 2017a; 2017b; Spigel & Harrison, 2018; Stam, 2015) and more recently (Cho et al., 2022; Hess et al., 2022, Wurth et al., 2023) with scholars examining not only how such ecosystems are defined but also which factors underpin their success. For instance, Isenberg (2014) and Stam (2015) portray entrepreneurial ecosystems as dynamic, living networks composed of diverse yet interdependent actors who collaborate to stimulate virtuous cycles of entrepreneurship. Closely related to the broader notion of ecosystems is the concept of entrepreneurial ecosystems, which emphasize the importance of "place" and offer a framework for understanding processes of regional economic transformation driven by entrepreneurial activity (Audretsch et al., 2015; Feldman & Lowe, 2018). Entrepreneurial ecosystems are generally conceived as sets of interdependent actors and contextual factors that are organized and coordinated in ways that foster productive entrepreneurship within a given territory (Stam, 2015; Stam & Spigel, 2018; Stam & Van de Ven, 2021). This perspective highlights the territorial embeddedness of entrepreneurial activity, stressing that the effectiveness of entrepreneurship depends not only on individual firms or entrepreneurs but also on the broader socio-economic and institutional environment in which they are situated. Within this framework, the territorial dimension emerges as crucial: ecosystems are inherently place-based, reflecting the broader socio-economic environment in which they are embedded (Aage & Belussi, 2008; Cohendet et al., 2010; Drake, 2003).

The ecosystem metaphor has since been embraced well beyond business studies, becoming central to European industrial strategies (EC, 2020) and extending into the cultural and creative sectors. Although these fields were relatively late adopters, the ecosystem framework has proved especially valuable for capturing their diversity and complexity. In cultural and creative domains, the metaphor has facilitated new understandings of collaboration and interdependence among organizations and stakeholders (Borin & Donato, 2022).

The study of cultural ecosystems is an emerging field of research (De Bernanrd et al., 2022). The notion of cultural ecosystems (Borin & Donato, 2015;) emerges as an attempt to overcome the traditional *"silos"* approach to cultural heritage management by rethinking governance systems and organizational models in terms of interconnections and interactions among diverse actors, often situated within a territorial perspective. Within this framework, cultural ecosystems operate inside the broader ecosystemic logic to unlock the potential of cultural heritage (Borin & Donato, 2015; Borin & Jolivet, 2018).

A cultural ecosystem in an environment in which different actors (i.e. public and private organisations, associations, communities, artists, creative people, citizens), interested in producing and consuming arts and culture, interact (Florida,1999). Scholars such as Borin (2015) have emphasized the positive spillovers generated by networks of cultural actors (Dameri & Demartini, 2020), ranging from the creation of social capital to enhanced innovation potential. More recent scholarship has further shown how local cultural ecosystems are increasingly shaping the relationship between culture, creativity, and territory (Borin & Donato, 2015; Holden, 2015). In fact, scholars as Guintcheva and Passebois-Ducros (2012), studying cultural alliances in France, demonstrated how collective identity can emerge when institutions collaborate. These perspectives highlight the interdependence of cultural institutions and the importance of networked forms of governance for fostering regional development.

Due to the variety of scholars this concept has been examined through various perspectives. Scheff and Kotler (1996) emphasized that forming cultural ecosystem

can serve as an effective strategy to foster collaboration among arts organizations. Other research has explored ecosystems, networks and partnerships within the cultural sector, encompassing both private and public cultural institutions (Bagdadli, 2003; Scrofani & Ruggiero, 2013; Guintcheva & Passebois-Ducros, 2012). Furthermore, the significance of cultural ecosystems has also been linked to the growth of tourism (Jackson & Murphy, 2006) and regional development (Burrows et al., 2007).

Within such ecosystems, the involvement of cultural actors is particularly heterogeneous. It includes cultural entrepreneurs and professionals who operate directly in the cultural sector, small and medium enterprises active in the cultural and creative industries (CCIs), and third-sector organisations such as associations and cooperatives that pursue cultural and social objectives simultaneously. Alongside these, an important role is also played by grassroots initiatives that often emerge informally from local communities (Moser & Bader, 2023). Although modest in scale, these initiatives contribute significantly to community engagement (O'Meara, Pendergast & Robinson, 2007), memory preservation, and the regeneration of social ties. Taken together, this diversity of actors illustrates that cultural ecosystems are not merely collections of institutions, but complex and multi-layered networks in which economic, symbolic, and social dimensions intersect.

As Littoz-Monet (2013) observes, cultural networks serve not only as vectors for integration but also as platforms for addressing social inequalities and promoting sustainable development. When aligned with urban renewal and sustainability initiatives, these networks create synergies that enhance both cultural and economic outcomes.

3.2.3 Art World Theory: from Becker to Patriotta and Hirsch framework

Within the sociology of art, cultural production and consumption are understood as collective processes embedded in social networks (Becker, 1982; Bourdieu, 1993; Jones, 2010). Howard Becker (1982) introduced the concept of the *Art World* to describe the cooperative networks of people whose activities, organized through shared knowledge of conventions, produce the types of artworks recognized within a given cultural field. An Art World is thus a social organisation encompassing artists,

assistants, dealers, critics, curators, collectors, and audiences who are bound together by common tastes, practices, and aesthetic norms.

Becker conceives the *Art World* as a self-regulating entity: it establishes conventions, mobilises resources, and determines both membership and legitimacy. In doing so, it delineates the boundaries of acceptable art—granting recognition and benefits to those whose work aligns with its conventions while excluding those it cannot assimilate (Becker, 1982). His framework rests on three interdependent elements: networks, conventions, and resources. Conventions—defined as "earlier agreements now become customary" (Becker, 1982, p. 29)—enable coordination among participants; networks emerge from and facilitate collective artistic action, shaping and diffusing conventions while also being constrained by them; and resources circulate through these networks, defining their limits by determining who has access to legitimacy and material support.

Within this system, Becker (1982) identifies three positions through which actors reproduce, challenge, or transform conventions: mainstreams, mavericks, and misfits.

- *Mainstreams* (or "integrated professionals") are trained within the industry, perform with conventions and use existing art worlds. Hence, they are connected among themselves and to conventions. As a result, they produce innovations in creative products. They are also distinguished in status, stratified from low to elite positions, and tend to match their collaborations to their status orderings (Faulkner & Anderson, 1987). Some of them may become mavericks, violating some conventions. That happens when they propose innovations that the art world does not accept within its boundaries (Becker, 1982). However, initiation of new practices by insiders does not necessarily entail subversion of extant conventions and can build on their position in the field (Gomez & Bouty, 2011). They may also act as drivers of innovation by engaging in path creation (Garud & Karnøe, 2001) and initiating *"wakes of innovation"* when they are prominent actors in the field, as in the case of the renowned architect Frank O. Gehry adopting new digital 3-D representation (Boland, Lyytinen & Yoo, 2007).

- *Mavericks* are creative actors, who may or may not be trained within the industry, but feel constrained in their work by existing conventions and embark on challenging some of them, while keeping others, in order to avoid incomprehensibility and lack of collaboration (Becker, 1982). Avant-garde represents the most radical manifestation of this position, functioning as a *"research and development arm of the culture industry"* (Crane, 1987). For mavericks, success depends on mobilising support by persuading collaborators and audiences to adopt their innovations (Caves, 2000; Jones & Massa, 2013).
- *Misfits* operate outside established art worlds, lacking the networks and resources necessary to secure legitimacy. By breaking or ignoring conventions (Becker, 1963), they may exercise greater freedom in developing new forms, sometimes giving rise to what Cardinal (1972) termed *outsider art*. Their disconnected position embodies the role of the *"authentic outsider"* (Fine, 2003) and illustrates how absence of ties can foster novelty (Phillips, 2011). Yet, their recognition often depends on discovery and endorsement by mainstream patrons or dealers (White & White, 1965). As Becker (1963, p. 15) explains, they are regarded by others as "deviant" and positioned outside the circle of "normal" group members. Intellectually, outsiders are driven by radical, non-conformist ideas that challenge prevailing norms. Many are self-taught, and their art reflects the absence of professional training and the conventions typically internalised by established artists (Fine, 2004). This lack of conformity, combined with their marginal position, can generate highly original and unconventional outputs that resist easy categorisation (Phillips, 2013). However, outsiders often struggle to gain visibility or recognition because they lack the conventional vocabulary and communicative tools needed to situate their work within established evaluative frameworks. As a result, their contributions are frequently misunderstood, dismissed, or ignored by critics and the wider public, precisely because they fall outside familiar parameters of assessment.

Ultimately, Becker's framework underscores that networks and support are central to success in the art world, since they determine access to resources, legitimacy, and visibility (Jones, Svejenova, Pedersen & Townley, 2016). By highlighting the

interplay of conventions, networks, and resources, *Art World Theory* provides a valuable lens for understanding how collaboration, innovation, and exclusion operate not only in the arts but also in wider cultural governance contexts.

While Becker's (1982) *Art Worlds* remains a foundational account of cultural production as a cooperative endeavour structured by conventions and networks, later scholars have sought to extend his framework to better explain how innovation is generated and institutionalised. Becker's (1982) framework, the boundaries of an Art World are always situated within broader social structures*: "Art Worlds are part of a larger social organization, notwithstanding the impression conveyed about how everyone involved understands and respects the distinctions which keep them separate"* (Becker, 1982, p. 36). While Becker recognises this embeddedness, his account tends to treat boundaries as relatively stable markers of inclusion and exclusion, maintained through conventions and cooperative activity.

By contrast, Patriotta and Hirsch (2016) propose a more fluid conception of boundaries, emphasising that their permeability and interconnectedness intensify particularly during periods of change, when the relationship between cooperative links and conventions is being renegotiated. This perspective is consistent with both (a) network approaches that highlight the interdependence of ties in moments of transition, and (b) institutional theory, which explains how shifts in artistic styles emerge through redefinitions of categories and conventions (White & White, 1965). In more stable times, boundaries tend to remain more rigid and clearly demarcated, except where they are strategically bridged by amphibious artists or institutional entrepreneurs.

Building on Becker's seminal contribution, Patriotta and Hirsch (2016) extend the analysis of Art Worlds by showing that innovation emerges, gains legitimacy, and eventually becomes mainstream through changes in both cooperative links and conventions. They distinguish between four types of change:

(1) reproduction (continuity of practices and conventions),
(2) artistic innovation (novel work within established conventions),
(3) organisational innovation (new ways of producing or distributing art),

(4) art world innovation (novel work combined with novel conventions and cooperative arrangements). It is this last, most radical form— *"doing new things in new ways"*—that alters the very structure and meaning of an art world.

Importantly, Patriotta and Hirsch refine Becker's typology of mainstreams, mavericks, and misfits by introducing two additional roles:

- *Conventional Novices:* are socially marginal, but intellectually integrated. They operate from the fringe, but within formats that imitate mainstream genres. This category may comprise amateur artists with no professional training as well as trained artists at the beginning of their careers who often work in the mainstream because they lack resources.
- *Amphibious Artists*: social actors capable of moving across boundaries and inhabiting multiple positions within the art world. Unlike mainstreamers, who reproduce conventions, or mavericks and outsiders, who challenge them from the margins, amphibious artists operate in both spheres simultaneously. They maintain legitimacy within the mainstream while also engaging with peripheral or experimental practices, thereby serving as translators between established conventions and novel forms of expression. This dual positioning allows them to mobilise resources, audiences, and institutional support in ways that outsiders and mavericks often cannot. In doing so, amphibious artists facilitate the process of mainstreaming innovation**,** ensuring that new practices can be integrated into the core of the art world rather than dismissed as incomprehensible or deviant.

A prominent example is Robert Redford's role in the rise of American independent cinema well described and introduced in their work (Patriotta & Hirsch, 2016)**.** As an established Hollywood actor, Redford possessed mainstream recognition and legitimacy, yet he simultaneously engaged with experimental and marginal filmmaking practices. By founding the Sundance Institute and Festival, he created institutional platforms that gave visibility, resources, and credibility to independent filmmakers, many of whom occupied maverick or outsider positions. Redford's amphibious role thus bridged the gap between the Hollywood mainstream and the

independent sector, enabling innovative cinematic practices to gain legitimacy, circulate more widely, and eventually reshape the conventions of the film industry itself.

Through this lens, Art Worlds appear as dynamic socio-symbolic spaces, rather than static structures. Boundaries are fluid, and actors move across positions over time—outsiders can become mainstreamers, novices can become mavericks, and innovations may be hybridised into existing conventions. Innovation is therefore not merely the result of radical breaks, but often a process of boundary crossing, hybridisation, and negotiated legitimacy. This approach enriches Becker's original model by demonstrating that Art Worlds evolve through the interplay of cooperation and contestation, in which institutional entrepreneurs and amphibious actors play decisive roles in sustaining artistic diversity and fostering systemic change.

These categories of actors are social types (see Fig.2). Participants in Art Worlds do not occupy a fixed social space. Rather, forms of participation by social actors in art worlds intersect, interact and essentially depend on each other throughout the participants' cooperative efforts to produce art- works. It follows, therefore, that the social and symbolic boundaries of an art world are dynamic, which fosters movements between core and periphery and opens opportunities for the generation of new ideas. The process of social and intellectual exchange among participants in art worlds takes place precisely because insider and outsider groups are in interaction (Merton, 1972). Changes in art worlds occur when certain relevant social actors mobilize others to cooperate in innovative forms of agency (Becker, 1982).

Fig. 2 Social Types and Innovation trajectories (Patriotta & Hirsch, 2016)

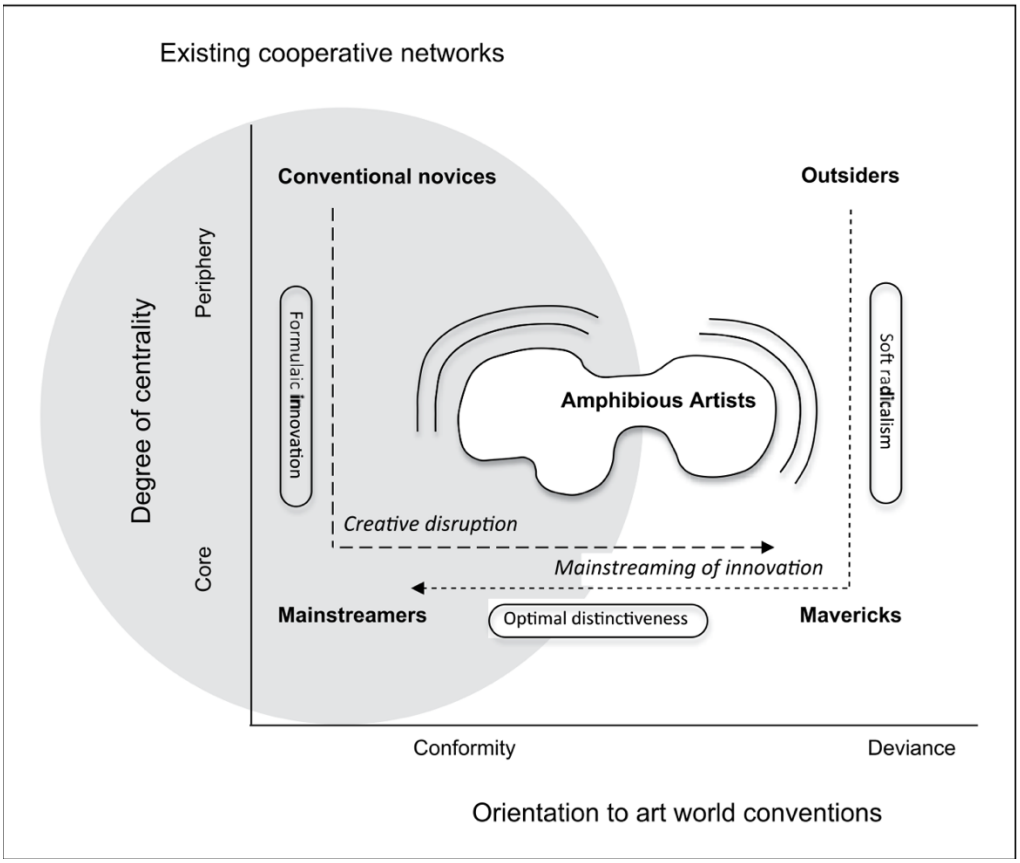


Figure 2 illustrates the dynamic interactions among different social types within an art world and highlights the trajectories through which innovation is generated and incorporated. The bulk of artistic production occurs along the axis between mainstreamers and conventional novices. While novices typically produce unoriginal work that remains marginal, mainstreamers generate outputs that balance familiarity with a degree of novelty, making them accessible to mass audiences. Novices often work under the guidance of mainstreamers, acquiring technical, social, and conceptual skills that allow them to professionalise. With adequate mentoring and access to platforms for showcasing their work—such as field-configuring events—novices may gradually transition into the mainstream. This process corresponds to what the model identifies as *formulaic innovation*.

The figure also shows that both mainstreamers and mavericks pursue what Patriotta and Hirsch (2016) call *optimal distinctiveness*—the attempt to reconcile the competing pressures of assimilation and differentiation (Alvarez et al., 2005). Mainstreamers achieve this by selectively incorporating elements of maverick innovation, while mavericks, conversely, bring familiar elements into their experimental practices to render their work more comprehensible. In this way, both groups strive to be recognised as innovative without overwhelming audiences. Mavericks also draw inspiration from outsiders, whose marginal and non-conformist practices sometimes gain recognition as *soft radicalism* when they are reinterpreted within more established frameworks.

Overall, the model conceptualises the Art World as a nexus of cooperative links and conventions that are continuously reshaped as actors reposition themselves. It identifies two principal trajectories of innovation. The first one, named *creative disruption*, runs from novice to maverick. For instance, Ferran Adrià began as a peripheral actor working within conventional culinary practices before becoming a maverick who radically challenged gastronomic traditions through his deconstructivism cuisine (Svejenova et al., 2010). Similarly, the nouvelle cuisine movement emerged when trained insiders shifted from mainstream to maverick positions, creating new organisational forms to support their avant-garde culinary ideas (Rao et al., 2003). These examples illustrate that innovation emerges through the interplay between conformity and rebellion, where actors move between established and alternative positions. Art Worlds thus evolve through a continual process of negotiation between stability and change, convention and innovation. The second trajectory, termed *mainstreaming of innovation*, moves from outsider to mainstreamer. A key example is the rise of American independent cinema, which, through the institutional entrepreneurship of Robert Redford and the creative agency of outsider filmmakers, gradually shifted from the periphery of the film industry to its core.

Furthermore, a central insight of Patriotta and Hirsch's (2016) contribution is that innovation in Art Worlds is not a single disruptive act but a process of mainstreaming. Novel practices or works initially emerge on the periphery but, in order to be sustained, they must be translated, adapted, and legitimated within the existing structures of

cooperation and conventions. This process highlights the importance of intermediaries, audiences, and institutions in supporting or resisting change. Innovation is thus framed not only as a matter of artistic creativity but also as a collective achievement that requires negotiation, sponsorship, and the alignment of networks with evolving symbolic boundaries.

Equally important is the role of boundary work in shaping the trajectories of innovation. Patriotta and Hirsch emphasise that Art Worlds are continuously engaged in the making, crossing, and redrawing of both social and symbolic boundaries. These boundaries determine which practices are considered legitimate, who has access to resources, and how categories of art are defined.

Through this lens, Art Worlds appear as dynamic socio-symbolic spaces, rather than static structures. Boundaries are fluid, and actors move across positions over time—outsiders can become mainstreamers, novices can become mavericks, and innovations may be hybridised into existing conventions. Innovation is therefore not merely the result of radical breaks, but often a process of boundary crossing, hybridisation, and negotiated legitimacy.

3.3 Civic Wealth Creation

The Civic Wealth Creation (CWC) framework, first articulated by Lumpkin and Bacq (2019), represents a significant advancement in the understanding of how communities generate and sustain societal impact. It reframes traditional theories of value creation by shifting the analytical focus from the firm or organisation to the civic level—the social, cultural, and territorial space where citizens, enterprises, and institutions collectively enact change. CWC emphasises that positive societal transformation occurs when community members, supporters, and entrepreneurially minded agents collaborate intentionally to aggregate resources, build capacities, and produce multidimensional wealth.

Unlike purely economic frameworks that equate wealth with financial accumulation, the CWC model recognises three mutually reinforcing forms of wealth—social, economic, and communal—that together constitute civic wealth. These forms

of wealth include tangible and intangible assets such as education, health, trust, social justice, belonging, and wellbeing. The central proposition of CWC is that sustainable societal impact arises when diverse stakeholders cooperate to generate and distribute these endowments in ways that strengthen the civic fabric of communities.

At its core, the framework responds to a growing need in management and social innovation research to address change beyond organisational boundaries. Traditional social enterprise literature often treats the organisation as the primary unit of analysis; however, many meaningful societal changes emerge from networks, alliances, and collective initiatives that operate within communities rather than within firms. CWC therefore calls for a conceptual "zoom-out" that captures the complex interdependence of actors engaged in community-level transformations. This civic orientation resonates strongly with contemporary discourses in cultural heritage governance, which emphasise community participation, co-creation, and shared responsibility for cultural resources.

A key innovation of Lumpkin and Bacq's framework is the introduction of the civic level of analysis. This level exists between the micro (individual or organisational) and macro (societal or institutional) levels. It refers to the local settings—neighbourhoods, districts, towns, or communities—where collective initiatives take place and where the beneficiaries are directly involved in shaping the outcomes. In this civic arena, the boundaries between public, private, and third sectors blur, giving rise to hybrid networks that combine citizen engagement, governmental support, and entrepreneurial activity. The civic level thus becomes a space of experimentation and co-production, where the conventional roles of "beneficiary," "donor," and "entrepreneur" are re-negotiated into a shared process of value creation.

Furthermore, CWC emerges through the interaction of three primary stakeholder categories: Community, Regimes of Support, and Enterprise (see Fig. 3). Each operates under distinct logics of action, yet all are necessary for generating sustainable civic wealth.

- ***Community. Logics of Kinship and Citizenry:***

The Community category comprises the citizens, local associations, neighbourhood groups, and informal networks that share a sense of belonging and responsibility toward their environment. Lumpkin and Bacq (2019) describe their underlying motivation as the *logics of kinship and citizenry*—an affinity based on shared history, geography, or collective identity that drives individuals to act for the common good.

At this level, communities possess assets that are often intangible yet critical: social capital, local knowledge, trust, and cultural memory. Their participation transforms external interventions into locally grounded and context-sensitive processes. In the cultural heritage field, these communities correspond to the "heritage communities" defined by the Faro Convention (Council of Europe, 2005): groups that value specific aspects of cultural heritage and wish, within the framework of public action, to sustain and transmit them to future generations.

- ***Regimes of Support. Logics of Influence and Control:***

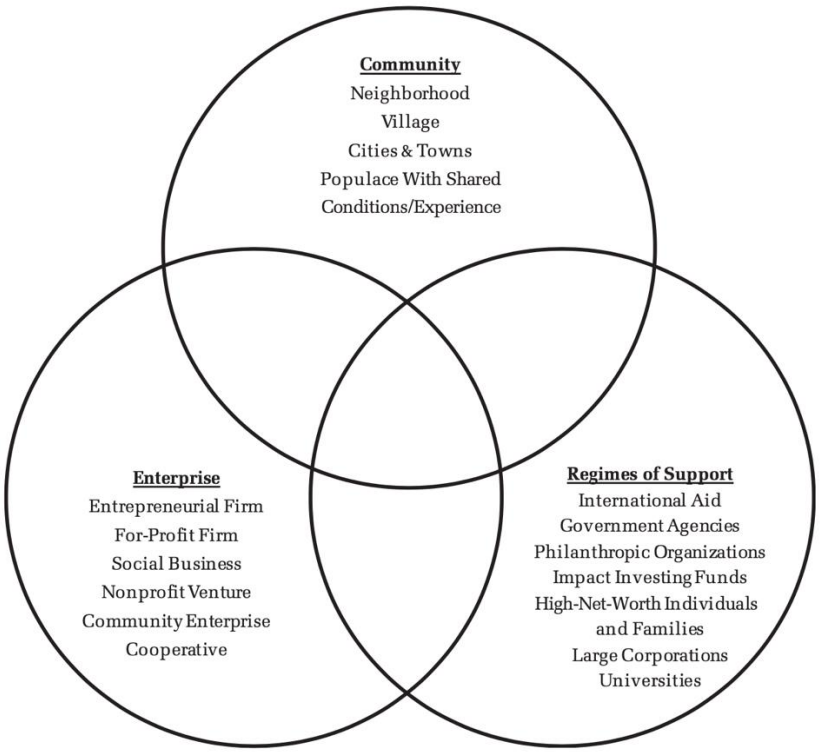
The Regimes of Support category includes the public institutions, governments, philanthropic organisations, universities, and NGOs that provide financial, political, or technical resources to enable civic initiatives. Their actions are shaped by the *logics of influence and control*. Supporters use their authority, legitimacy, and resources to direct efforts, establish priorities, and monitor progress. Although these logics may appear hierarchical, they can also serve to stabilise civic initiatives by offering structure, accountability, and long-term vision.

In participatory heritage governance, regimes of support correspond to the institutional frameworks—municipalities, ministries, EU programmes, or cultural foundations—that legitimise community initiatives and provide the regulatory or financial scaffolding needed for sustainability. Effective governance depends on balancing their control functions with inclusive mechanisms that allow community autonomy and creativity.

- ***Enterprise. Logics of Business and Entrepreneurship:***

The Enterprise category encompasses the organisations and initiatives that apply entrepreneurial principles to generate financial and social value. These may include social enterprises, cooperatives, creative industries, and local businesses that anchor economic activity in community wellbeing. Their *logics of business and entrepreneurship* revolve around opportunity recognition, innovation, and resource mobilisation, but within the CWC framework, these logics are directed toward civic goals rather than private profit.

FIG. 3 Examples of Civic Wealth Creation Stakeholders (Lumpkin & Bacq, 2019)



Within the Civic Wealth Creation framework, Lumpkin and Bacq (2019) identify three interrelated forms of wealth—social, economic, and communal—that together constitute *civic wealth*. These categories capture the multiple dimensions of value that civic initiatives can generate:

1. Social Wealth: Social wealth refers to the improvement of wellbeing, equity, and opportunity within a community. It encompasses gains in education, health, justice, and access to cultural life. Lumpkin and Bacq (2019) argue that social wealth is created through collaborative relationships between communities and regimes of support, especially when external assistance empowers local actors rather than creating dependency.

2. Economic Wealth: Economic wealth comprises the tangible financial and material benefits that sustain civic initiatives. It arises from the interaction of enterprise and regimes of support through mechanisms such as social entrepreneurship, impact investment, or public-private partnerships. Importantly, CWC reframes economic wealth as a means to achieve social goals, not as an end.

3. Communal Wealth: Communal wealth refers to the collective assets of identity, trust, and self-governance that enable communities to act together. It emerges primarily at the intersection of community and enterprise, where local actors engage in entrepreneurial or cooperative initiatives. This dimension embodies the soft infrastructure of social cohesion—the intangible yet enduring capacities that allow communities to adapt, innovate, and sustain themselves.

Lumpkin and Bacq conceptualise the above-mentioned stakeholder categories as overlapping circles whose intersections generate distinct but interrelated forms of wealth (See Fig.4):

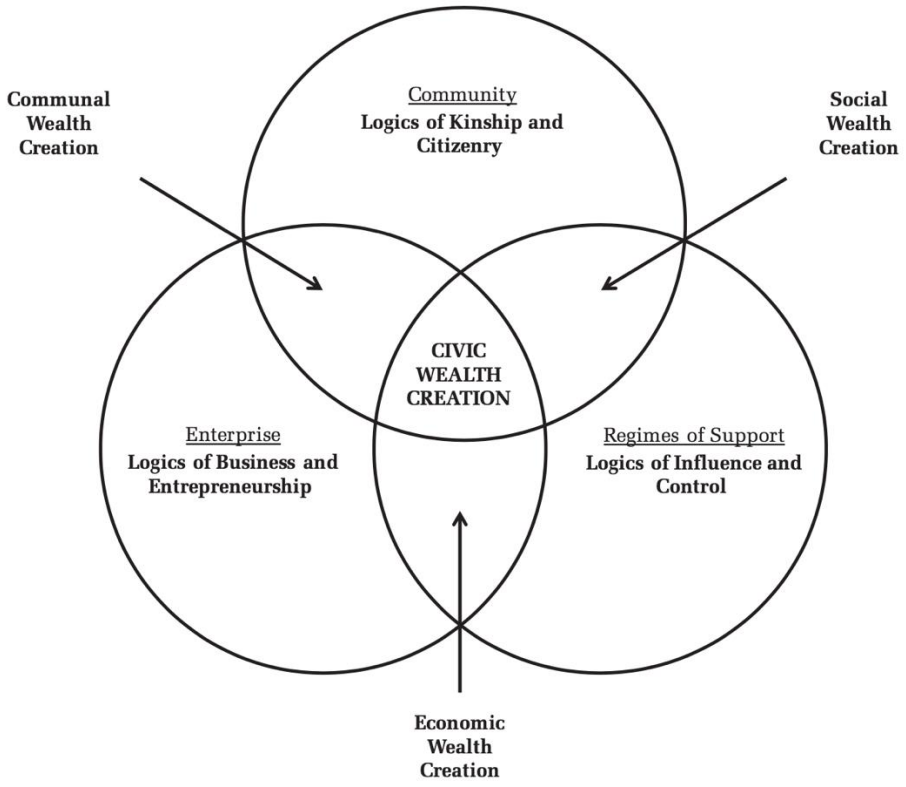
1. **Community × Regimes of Support → Social Wealth:** Social wealth arises when communities collaborate with supportive institutions to address social needs—such as education, health, justice, or inclusion. Institutional assistance enhances community capacity, while community participation ensures that interventions remain locally relevant and culturally sensitive.
2. **Enterprise × Regimes of Support → Economic Wealth**: Economic wealth emerges from partnerships that link entrepreneurial ventures with supportive policies and funding. Institutional actors facilitate access to capital and

legitimacy, enabling enterprises to scale operations and deliver sustainable benefits. In heritage terms, this corresponds to the creation of sustainable business models around heritage assets—cultural clusters, local crafts, or creative hubs.

3. **Community × Enterprise → Communal Wealth**: Communal wealth develops through cooperative ventures where community members engage directly in entrepreneurial activity. This process strengthens local identity, fosters collective ownership, and enhances self-sufficiency. Heritage co-operatives, community museums, or volunteer-run cultural initiatives exemplify this form of wealth creation.

At the convergence of all three intersections, the system produces Civic Wealth—a holistic outcome that integrates social, economic, and communal dimensions. This synergy illustrates that no single actor can generate civic wealth independently; it is the *interaction* and *alignment* of diverse logics that produce transformative results.

FIG. 4 Civic Wealth Creation Framework (Lumpkin & Bacq, 2019)



The process of Civic Wealth Creation unfolds through several interrelated mechanisms:

1. Engaged Participation

Engaged participation is the foundational mechanism through which multiple stakeholders become committed to the process of civic wealth creation (Lumpkin & Bacq, 2019). It involves not only the inclusion of community members in decision-making but their active engagement throughout all phases of social and civic initiatives—conceptualising, designing, implementing, and sustaining them (Bovaird, 2007).

Lumpkin and Bacq (2019) argue that initiatives that attempt to "help" communities without their involvement in developing and maintaining solutions tend to fail, often undermining the very conditions they seek to improve. In contrast, high levels of engagement empower community members to take ownership of outcomes, fostering agency, responsibility, and continuity. Research in asset-based community development (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1996) and community-based enterprises (Ring et al., 2011) confirms that effective participation draws on local insights, relationships, and capacities. Such engagement enables communities not merely to receive benefits but to co-create them, thereby reinforcing social cohesion and long-term wellbeing.

Engaged participation also extends to the commitment of key external stakeholders—including public institutions, funders, and entrepreneurs—who bring legal authority, technical expertise, and resources to support civic ventures. As Di Domenico et al. (2010) demonstrate, the active involvement of these actors in the creation, management, and governance of initiatives is present in nearly every successful civic project. Stakeholder theory further supports this view, emphasising mutual interactions

that improve both community life and environmental sustainability (Sachs & Rühli, 2011).

In participatory heritage governance, engaged participation materialises when local communities collaborate with heritage institutions to co-design preservation strategies, interpret cultural meanings, and co-manage heritage sites. Such involvement generates trust, legitimacy, and empowerment—fundamental conditions for civic intentionality and sustained value creation.

2. Collaborative Innovation

The second mechanism, collaborative innovation, refers to the process through which stakeholders jointly pursue new ideas, models, and practices that address shared challenges and produce civic value. As defined by Ketchen, Ireland, and Snow (2007, p. 371), it involves *"the pursuit of innovations across firm boundaries through the sharing of ideas, knowledge, expertise, and opportunities"*. Lumpkin and Bacq (2019) view collaborative innovation as a critical source of CWC, particularly because it generates new forms of exchange among public, private, and community actors. Examples include philanthropic foundations investing in social enterprises (Van Slyke & Newman, 2006) or communities rallying around local entrepreneurial projects that promote social inclusion and regeneration (Tracey, Phillips & Haugh, 2005).

Drawing on stakeholder theory, collaboration enhances CWC by fostering communication, negotiation, and trust among participants (Wicks, Gilbert & Freeman, 1994). Through these interactions, stakeholders develop shared understanding, mutual identification with civic goals (Scott & Lane, 2000) and long-term relational capital (Harrison et al., 2010).

Empirical research on multi-sector partnerships (Savage et al., 2010) identifies three factors that enhance collaborative advantage:

1. A common sense of mission, which aligns diverse actors around a shared civic purpose;

2. Power sharing and joint decision-making, ensuring all participants exercise agency;
3. Supportive communication, which facilitates trust and coordination.

These elements are crucial for resolving the tensions that arise when actors with different logics—economic, political, or social—work together toward a higher-order societal goal.

In the governance of cultural heritage, collaborative innovation manifests when museums, civic associations, creative industries, and public authorities jointly develop inclusive cultural programmes, digital platforms, or regeneration projects. These initiatives combine creativity, entrepreneurship, and civic intent to reimagine heritage as a driver of social cohesion and sustainable urban development.

3. Resource Mobilisation

The third mechanism, resource mobilisation, addresses the capacity of civic networks to gather, align, and deploy diverse forms of resources—financial, human, technological, and symbolic—to advance shared objectives. Lumpkin and Bacq (2019) identify resource mobilisation as a core enabler of civic wealth creation, given that most societal challenges are constrained by limited resources (Desa & Basu, 2013). Effective mobilisation allows stakeholders to pool assets and overcome structural limitations, turning scarcity into opportunity (Alvord et al., 2004; Haugh, 2007).

Corner and Ho (2010) argue that successful societal change depends less on finding an ideal solution than on creatively leveraging available resources. CWC, therefore, provides a catalyst for resource acquisition and coordination (Van de Ven, Sapienza, & Villanueva, 2007). Depending on context, resource mobilisation contributes to civic wealth in several ways:

- *Financial resources*—such as grants, donations, or impact investments—directly increase the material stock of civic wealth.
- *Human and social resources*, including volunteer time, expertise, and networks, strengthen community capacity and resilience.

- *Physical and technological resources*, such as shared spaces or digital infrastructure, expand accessibility and connectivity within the community.

Importantly, resource mobilisation itself builds cohesion and interdependence among stakeholders. The act of pooling resources reinforces collaboration, shared purpose, and reciprocity—key social conditions for sustaining civic wealth. When civic wealth creation becomes a collective aspiration, it incentivises stakeholders to align efforts and sustain cooperation over time.

In participatory heritage governance, resource mobilisation is evident in hybrid funding arrangements that combine public support (municipal, national, or EU funds) with private sponsorship, community crowdfunding, and voluntary labour. These practices not only ensure the viability of cultural projects but also nurture a sense of shared ownership, transforming resource coordination into an exercise of civic empowerment.

The theoretical perspectives outlined above—Cultural Ecosystem, Art Worlds, and Civic Wealth Creation—jointly form the analytical foundation for the empirical investigation that follows. Each provides a distinct yet complementary lens: the ecosystem approach emphasises systemic interdependence, Art Worlds Theory explains collaborative practices, and CWC links these dynamics to civic value creation.

CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The present chapter describes the research methodology of the Doctoral Thesis. Also, it explains the qualitative and case study approach, the use of both internal and external data sources, and the rationale behind the selection of the empirical case. This chapter also introduces the paradigmatic case study: the Celio, a historic district located in centre of Rome, near the archaeological area of the Colosseum.

4.1. Research Methodology

Research methodology is the path through which the researchers need to conduct their research. It shows the path through which these researchers formulate their problem and objective and present their result from the data obtained during the study period (Sileyew, 2019).

The study adopts a qualitative, exploratory, case study methodology (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2018). Case study methodology (Johansson, 2007; Schwandt, 2018) is particularly suited for research questions that seek to explain *how* and *why* complex social phenomena occur in specific contexts. Cultural Heritage governance involves a multiplicity of actors, values, and practices, making it an inherently complex field of study. A single, in-depth, case provides the opportunity to reconstruct the interplay between institutions, communities, and practices, and to understand the situated logics that underpin governance. This design is located within an interpretive paradigm, which privileges the meanings, practices, and narratives constructed by actors.

A single case setting was chosen because it allows an in-depth exploration of complex and context-specific phenomena (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2018). This research also follows the recent *"doing context"* perspective developed within contextualisation studies (Ben-Hafaïedh et al., 2024; Baker & Welter, 2020), which views context as something that is actively constructed rather than passively observed. From this standpoint, spatial context is not simply a geographical location but an *enacted environment*,

continuously co-produced through the practices, relationships, and negotiations of the actors involved.

Space is not conceived as a static or pre-defined background, but as a living and dynamic construct that emerges through the interactions among institutions, communities, and cultural actors. In this sense, "*spatial context*" operates both as a structural condition and as a product of situated practices, linking physical proximity with shared meanings and collective identity.

This perspective resonates with the idea of relational proximity, where geographical closeness evolves into shared trust, commitment, and collective identity (Tremblay & Cecilli, 2009; Vestrum, 2014). Within this framework, the spatial context represents the meso-level in which governance, entrepreneurship, and social practices intertwine, linking individual agency and institutional frameworks (Stam & Van de Ven, 2021; Ben-Hafaïedh et al., 2024). The notion of territorial embeddedness highlights how cultural and creative initiatives are rooted in specific socio-spatial ecosystems, where proximity, collaboration, and belonging foster processes of co-creation and innovation (Borin & Delgado, 2018; De Bernard et al., 2022; Lelo, 2025). Through these place-based dynamics, local spaces can evolve into cultural commons—enabling structures that sustain participation, inclusivity, and collective stewardship (Colasanti, Frondizi & Gulluscio, 2025).

Cultural Heritage governance is inherently multi-actor and multi-layered, requiring a methodology that captures:

- **Actors Complexity** – the interplay of institutional, civic, and private actors;
- **Contextual embeddedness** – the relevance of historical, cultural, urban and other contextual factors;
- **Processual dynamics** – how governance unfolds through practices over time.

A case strategy was adopted (Brown, 2008), with Celio, a historic district of Rome, selected as a perfect site to answer our three different questions. The Celio district was chosen for its features:

- *Cultural and historical significance:* Celio is in the centre of Rome, adjacent to the Colosseum, and contains a dense concentration of archaeological and architectural assets. This makes it a critical node in the heritage landscape, where global and local interests intersect.
- *Institutional complexity*: The area is governed by multiple layers of authority (national heritage agencies, municipal government, ecclesiastical institutions, and private operators), generating overlapping competences and contested management practices.
- *Community engagement:* In this area there are several and active civic associations, cultural operators, and grassroots initiatives, which makes it a fertile ground for analysing participatory governance in practice.

Celio serves as a strategic site to answer our RQs with the aim to investigate how heritage governance may evolve overtime to create value for society. This will be done through three different theoretical lenses applied to the same unit of analysis.

4.2 Data Source

Although the overall research pursues a shared general objective—to explore how participatory governance can enhance the sustainable management and valorisation of cultural heritage—this aim has been articulated into three distinct Research Questions (RQs), each examined through a different theoretical lens. Consequently, while the empirical setting remains unique—the Celio district in Rome—and the data sources are consistent across the study, the processes of data collection, interpretation, and analysis were adapted to each theoretical framework. This methodological design led to the development of three distinct yet complementary case studies, each corresponding to one research question. Together, these cases provide a multifaceted understanding of the participatory dynamics underpinning cultural heritage governance at Celio.

Given the exploratory nature of this inquiry, a qualitative case study approach was adopted as the most suitable approach for examining the complex dynamics of governance and value creation in Cultural Heritage contexts. This approach allows for an in-depth, context-sensitive analysis of actors, practices, and interactions that cannot be captured through quantitative methods alone.

The central aim of this research is to understand *how* and *why* cultural, social, and economic value is created through participatory governance in cultural heritage contexts. These "how" and "why" questions (Yin, 2018) require in-depth investigation of processes, relationships, and meanings, which qualitative methods are best suited to capture.

Within the case study design, semi-structured interviews were selected as the primary method for data collection. This choice reflects the study's interpretative orientation, which seeks to understand how actors involved in the governance of cultural heritage perceive, interpret, and enact participatory processes within the Celio district. For the case study, a purposive sampling strategy was employed to select diverse stakeholder representation and their perception. Purposive sampling, commonly used in qualitative research (Patton, 2002), is particularly suitable when the objective is not statistical representativeness but the inclusion of participants who hold specific knowledge, roles, or experiences relevant to the research questions. In this study, the rationale for purposive sampling was twofold. First, the governance of cultural heritage in Celio involves a heterogeneous constellation of actors—including public institutions, cultural associations, educators, entrepreneurs, and private operators—whose interactions collectively shape the dynamics of value creation. Capturing this diversity was therefore essential to reconstruct how participatory governance unfolds in practice. Second, the study sought to elicit multiple and potentially conflicting perceptions of cultural, social, and economic value, ensuring that both institutional and community-based voices were represented.

Primary data were gathered through semi-structured interviews conducted between the end of 2023 and 2025 with key stakeholders selected. The interviews lasted about 90

minutes each and have been addressed to no.13 informant people, selected as key representatives of the main organisations involved.

These interviews were organised into two main groups:

- *Institutional actors*: particularly three representatives of the PA and cultural authorities. These interviews explored their strategic vision, objectives for urban regeneration.
- *Local stakeholders*: including cultural operators, educators, and entrepreneurs active in the district. Participants included: a person in charge of a large civic association based in the district; two small social entrepreneurs who organise cultural initiatives and events for artists; representatives of four cultural associations located in the area; an educator who represents the network of public and private organisations that provide primary education in the area; the responsible for a research centre involved in project of digital transformation of an archaeological site and, finally, the representative of a large private cultural tourism operator granted the management of a well-known archaeological site located in the area; the responsible and curator of a newly open museum in the archaeological area. These interviews focused on stakeholder perceptions (see the Annex for the completed coding of each semi-structured interview and the main takeaways).

In addition, the author gathered public and internal documents of the organizations/associations interviewed. The latter included information retrieved from official websites, organizational statutes, strategic planning documents, records of public meetings, and content shared via social media platforms. These materials were analysed to complement and triangulate the data collected through interviews, ensuring a richer and more reliable interpretation of the case.

Interview transcripts were analysed using inductive thematic analysis (Clarke & Braun, 2006). This included familiarization with the data, generation of initial codes, theme development, review and refinement, theme definition, and final synthesis. Coding was conducted manually, with cross-validation by the research group to ensure consistency and reliability.

4.3 Introduction of the Contextual Analysis: The Celio District

The Celio is a historic district located in the centre of Rome, adjacent to the Colosseum and embedded in a dense archaeological and cultural landscape. Its significance lies not only in its material heritage—monuments, archaeological remains, and historic urban fabric—but also in its living heritage, expressed through local communities, cultural practices, and civic associations.

Celio is a paradigmatic case for participatory governance because it embodies the tensions and opportunities that characterise heritage management in contemporary urban contexts:

- A high concentration of cultural assets with global visibility.
- Strong institutional presence, given the proximity to major archaeological authorities and municipal bodies.
- Active local communities engaged in heritage care, social initiatives, and contestation of urban development pressures.
- Ongoing negotiations between top-down governance logics and bottom-up civic initiatives.

These conditions make Celio an ideal context for investigating how participatory governance unfolds in practice, how communities and institutions interact, and how cultural, social, and economic value is co-produced in a contested urban heritage environment.

This preliminary overview positions Celio as a paradigmatic case for the investigation of participatory governance in cultural heritage. Its strategic location in the historic centre of Rome, the coexistence of monumental and living heritage, and the interplay between global visibility and local community practices make it a particularly fertile ground for examining governance processes. The district condenses, within a relatively small geographical space, many of the tensions that characterise contemporary heritage management: the negotiation between preservation and urban transformation, the balance between institutional authority and civic engagement, and the search for sustainable models of cultural, social, and economic value creation.

In this chapter, Celio has been introduced primarily to justify its methodological selection as the empirical focus of the study. However, this brief framing does not exhaust the richness and complexity of the case. The following chapter will therefore present an in-depth contextual analysis, tracing the historical development of the district, its socio-economic and demographic composition, and the institutional landscape within which governance unfolds. Particular attention will be devoted to the ways in which local communities, cultural associations, and public authorities interact, collaborate, and sometimes conflict in the stewardship of Celio's heritage. By situating the case within its broader historical and institutional environment, the analysis will provide the necessary foundation for interpreting the empirical findings that follow.

CHAPTER 5. CONTEXTUAL ANALYSIS OF THE CELIO CASE STUDY

5.1. Introduction: The Celio within the Urban Fabric of Rome

The Celio district represents one of the most historically and morphologically distinctive areas of Rome's urban core. Situated on one of the seven ancient hills, *Mons Caelius*, the district forms a key component of the city's UNESCO World Heritage buffer zone, located immediately adjacent to the Colosseum and the Palatine Hill. Its position places it at the intersection of Rome's monumental heritage and its living urban fabric — a space where historical stratification, institutional presence, and residential life coexist in continuous negotiation (*Roma Capitale, 2024*).

As an urban organism, the Celio embodies the overlapping layers that define Rome's identity: archaeological remains from antiquity, medieval and Renaissance ecclesiastical complexes, 19th-century residential architecture, and 20th-century civic infrastructure. This stratification is not only material but also social, reflecting transformations in demography, economy, and governance that have shaped the area's contemporary profile.

The district belongs administratively to Municipio I (Centro Storico), which encompasses the city's most significant heritage zones. Within this framework, Celio occupies a transitional position between the touristic magnet of the Colosseum and the more residential quarters of San Giovanni and Monti. Its small territorial extent — roughly 0.5 km² — hosts an extraordinary density of heritage assets, religious institutions, educational facilities, and civic associations (*Lazio Innova, 2023*).

In policy terms, the area is classified as "*tessuto storico consolidato"* (consolidated historical fabric), which subjects it to specific planning and conservation regulations. However, it remains an almost lived neighbourhood, home to a permanent resident population and a fluctuating presence of visitors, tourists, students, and professionals linked to its cultural and institutional functions (*Ufficio Statistica Roma Capitale, 2023*).

The purpose of the following contextual analysis is to examine the Celio as a socio-cultural and spatial system — a microcosm of Rome's broader tensions between heritage preservation and urban life. The chapter investigates demographic dynamics, urban morphology, socio-economic indicators, cultural infrastructure, and governance frameworks, highlighting the district's specific challenges and opportunities for sustainable and participatory management.

5.1.1 Spatial Context of Celio District

An essential aspect of the Celio case study concerns its *"spatial context"*, understood as the set of material, relational, and symbolic conditions that shape how cultural governance unfolds in the district.

In this study, space is not conceived as a static or neutral backdrop but as a *relational construct*—a social and cultural fabric produced through the interactions among institutions, communities, and organisations (Tremblay & Cecilli, 2009; Vestrum, 2014). In this sense, the concept of *territorial embeddedness* helps to explain how governance and cultural initiatives are grounded in their specific socio-spatial environments (Borin & Delgado, 2018; De Bernard et al., 2022; Lelo, 2025).

Recent contributions to contextualisation research (Ben-Hafaïedh et al., 2024) further extend this view by conceptualising context as something that is *enacted* rather than merely *given*. From this perspective, spatial context is not a fixed setting but the outcome of ongoing processes of *doing context* — the making, unmaking, and remaking of sites for action (Baker & Welter, 2020)

Actors do not merely operate *within* space; they *co-produce* it through their everyday practices, negotiations, and collaborations. Space therefore emerges as a dynamic and evolving structure that connects material settings with social relations and institutional arrangements. In Celio, these interconnections are particularly visible. The district's proximity to the Colosseum and its overlapping historical, civic, and religious layers creates a unique territorial ecosystem where global and local interests converge.

At the *meso-level*, spatial context functions as an *enabling structure* that links individual and collective agency to institutional frameworks (Stam & Van de Ven, 2019; Ben-Hafaïedh et al., 2024). In Celio, multiple governance layers—national heritage authorities, municipal departments, ecclesiastical institutions, private operators, and civic associations—share the same territory, often negotiating overlapping responsibilities and priorities.

Recent research underlines the importance of *contextualised perspectives* that account for neighbourhood networks, local embeddedness, and the social fabric of urban environments as key arenas for innovation and collective action (Vestrum, 2014; Summatave & Raudsaar, 2015; Borin & Delgado, 2018; Ben-Hafaïedh et al., 2024). Celio exemplifies these dynamics: its dense network of associations, cultural organisations, and residents transforms spatial proximity into *relational proximity*, creating the conditions for participatory and place-based governance.

5.2. Demographic and Socio-Economic Profile

5.2.1 Population Trends and Structure

According to data from *ISTAT (2023)* and *Ufficio Statistica Roma Capitale (2024)*, the Celio district has a resident population of approximately 4,300 inhabitants, distributed across roughly 2,100 households. This represents a relatively small but dense community compared to other central Roman districts, with a population density of around 8,600 inhabitants per km².

Demographically, Celio exhibits an ageing population structure: about 27% of residents are aged over 65, while only 12% are under 18 (*ISTAT, 2023*). This reflects a broader trend in Rome's historic centre, where high housing costs and limited availability have reduced the number of younger families. Nevertheless, the district also hosts a notable number of students and young professionals, owing to its proximity to major universities, research institutions, and cultural organisations.

The population composition is increasingly multi-ethnic. Approximately 13% of residents are foreign nationals, with the largest communities originating from Eastern

Europe, North Africa, and Latin America (*Roma Capitale, 2024*). This diversity contributes to the area's cultural vibrancy but also introduces challenges related to social integration, housing access, and equitable participation in local governance. Migration flows within the district show a dual pattern: while long-term residents tend to remain anchored to the neighbourhood due to strong social ties, short-term mobility linked to tourism, cultural work, and academia introduces constant population turnover.

5.2.2 Household Composition and Living Conditions

The typical household in Celio is relatively small — averaging 2.0 persons per household — with a predominance of single or elderly residents (*ISTAT, 2023*). Homeownership remains relatively high at around 58%, though the proportion of rented dwellings has increased over the past decade, particularly due to the expansion of short-term tourist rentals (*Roma Capitale, 2023*).

Data from *Lazio Innova (2023)* indicate a median income level slightly above the municipal average, reflecting the area's central location and professional demographic. However, the cost of living — especially housing — is considerably higher than in peripheral districts, generating affordability challenges that risk accelerating demographic substitution.

5.2.3 Employment, Economy, and Functional Composition

The economic profile of the Celio district is heavily influenced by its central location within Rome's historic core and by its concentration of cultural, educational, and religious institutions. Employment is distributed primarily across three sectors:

1. Public administration, education, and research – approximately 32% of local employment;
2. Tourism, hospitality, and retail services – approximately 28%;
3. Cultural and creative industries – approximately 18% (*ISTAT, 2023; Lazio Innova, 2024*).

The remaining employment is distributed among healthcare, religious institutions, and small-scale commerce. Notably, the district lacks industrial or large-scale commercial activity, reinforcing its identity as a service- and culture-oriented neighbourhood.

The creative and cultural economy constitutes a significant pillar of local employment. Numerous small enterprises, studios, and associations operate in the fields of art, heritage interpretation, design, and cultural mediation. This creative micro-economy benefits from proximity to major cultural institutions such as the *Colosseum and the Archaeological Park*, and various international academies.

However, the district's dependency on tourism renders its economy vulnerable to fluctuations in visitor flows. During the pandemic period (2020–2021), Celio experienced a sharp contraction in local income and employment, revealing the fragility of its service-based economy (*Roma Capitale, 2022*). Since 2022, the recovery of tourism has revitalised the local market but has also intensified pressures on housing and infrastructure (Celata, 2024).

5.2.4 Social Cohesion and Community Wellbeing

Despite socio-economic pressures, the Celio maintains high levels of social capital and community interaction, as evidenced by qualitative studies and civic engagement indicators (*Fondazione Charlemagne, 2023*). Residents report strong attachment to place, frequent participation in cultural and religious events, and widespread informal mutual aid networks. The presence of long-established families, active parish communities, and local associations contributes to a sense of continuity and belonging. However, social cohesion is increasingly tested by the fragmentation of public space, the transience of short-term residents, and the declining availability of affordable services.

Indicators of wellbeing show a mixed picture. Access to education, healthcare, and cultural services is high relative to the city average, but the quality of public space and environmental comfort (green areas, noise, and air quality) ranks lower due to heavy tourist traffic (*Roma Capitale, 2024*). The district's resilience, therefore, depends on

the capacity to balance heritage-related pressures with community needs — a challenge that defines much of Rome's historical centre.

5.3 Urban Morphology and Accessibility

Geographically, the Celio district rises on the southern period of the ancient *Caelian Hill*, bounded by the *Colosseum Valley* to the north, *Via di San Gregorio* to the west, *Via Labicana* to the east, and *Via della Navicella* to the south. The area's topography — characterised by elevated vantage points — shapes both its visual relationship with the monumental landscape and its urban development patterns (*Roma Capitale, 2023*).

The district's urban structure reflects a layered evolution. Archaeological remnants from the Roman Empire coexist with medieval ecclesiastical complexes, Renaissance villas, and late-19th-century residential blocks.

Unlike other parts of the Centro Storico, Celio retains a predominantly residential scale**,** interspersed with small public squares, gardens, and religious precincts. The architectural language is marked by modest three- to four-storey buildings, characterised by ochre and terracotta tones, contrasting with the monumental whiteness of adjacent archaeological areas. This morphological continuity sustains the district's perception as a *village within the city*, reinforcing social proximity and local identity (*Roma Capitale – Piano Regolatore Generale, 2020*).

5.3.1 Land Use and Functional Zoning

Land-use analysis indicates a mixed functional composition, with approximately 45% of the built environment devoted to residential purposes, 20% to religious and cultural uses, 15% to educational and research functions, and 10% to hospitality and commercial activities (*Ufficio Statistica Roma Capitale, 2023*). The remainder includes public facilities and small-scale green spaces.

Within this configuration, the *Basilica of San Giovanni e Paolo*, the *Basilica of Santo Stefano Rotondo*, and the *Monastery of the Passionists* constitute major institutional and spatial anchors. Their courtyards, gardens, and enclosed complexes act as buffers

between residential areas and the archaeological landscapes of the Colosseum and Palatine Hill. The district's compact form and high permeability encourage pedestrian movement, although accessibility is constrained by the lack of large open public spaces. Small piazzas — such as *Piazza Celimontana*, *Piazza San Giovanni e Paolo*, and *Piazza della Navicella* — serve as local social nodes. These spaces, often associated with parish life or neighbourhood gatherings, are critical for maintaining everyday sociability and informal participation.

5.3.2 Accessibility and Mobility

From a mobility perspective, the Celio benefits from its central location yet faces significant challenges related to congestion, limited parking, and the dominance of tourist flows. The district is served by Metro Line B (Colosseo Station) and multiple bus routes connecting it to *Termini Station* and *San Giovanni*. However, the lack of direct east–west public transport links within the neighbourhood limits accessibility between adjacent zones (*Agenzia della Mobilità Roma, 2023*).

Pedestrian accessibility is generally good, reflecting the compact morphology of the area, but is hindered by uneven pavements and steep gradients — issues that particularly affect elderly residents and persons with disabilities. Cycling infrastructure remains minimal, though recent pilot projects under the *Piano Urbano della Mobilità Sostenibile (PUMS)* have proposed expanded pedestrian zones and micro-mobility connections around the Colosseum (*Roma Servizi per la Mobilità, 2024*).

Vehicular restrictions implemented through the *Zona a Traffico Limitato (ZTL)* aim to protect the heritage environment from excessive traffic, but also complicate deliveries and access for residents. These constraints illustrate the tension between heritage preservation and functional mobility, a recurrent theme in heritage districts globally (*UNESCO, 2019*).

The district's accessibility challenges underscore the need for integrated planning that reconciles conservation imperatives with residents' everyday mobility — a precondition for sustainable living in heritage environments.

5.4. Cultural and Institutional Landscape

5.4.1 Heritage Assets

The Celio is embedded in one of the richest cultural and archaeological contexts in the world. Within a radius of one kilometre, the area contains an exceptional concentration of heritage assets representing multiple historical periods: Roman, Medieval, Renaissance, and Modern (*Ministero della Cultura, 2023*).

Key monuments and sites include:

- **The Basilica of San Giovanni e Paolo**, built on the remains of Roman houses and martyrs' shrines, representing a unique synthesis of archaeological and religious heritage;
- **The Basilica of San Clemente,** a multi-layered complex comprising a twelfth-century basilica built over a fourth-century church and first-century Roman structures;
- **Santo Stefano Rotondo**, an early Christian Basilica of the 5th century, notable for its circular plan and extensive fresco cycles;
- **The Villa Celimontana**, a Renaissance villa and public park that functions as one of the few green lungs of the central city;
- **The Arch of Dolabella and Silanus**, the *Claudian Aqueduct*, and remnants of imperial domus integrated into later structures;
- **The Ospedale Militare del Celio**, a historic military hospital complex that continues to operate as a medical and institutional presence;
- **Temple of Claudius (Templum Divi Claudii)**, a vast temple complex built by Emperor Claudius and completed by Vespasian, whose remains are visible within *Villa Celimontana*. Its monumental substructures still define the topography of the hill.

These sites collectively contribute to the area's cultural density and to its identification as a core component of Rome's *archaeological continuum*. The coexistence of religious, civic, and recreational spaces generates a polycentric cultural landscape where multiple identities intersect.

5.4.2 Institutional Actors

The management of cultural assets in the Celio involves a plurality of institutions at different levels. At the national scale, the *"Soprintendenza Speciale Archeologia, Belle Arti e Paesaggio di Roma"* oversees protection, conservation, and authorisation of heritage interventions. The *"Parco Archeologico del Colosseo (PArCo)"* manages adjacent monumental areas and coordinates interpretation, and visitor flows that directly affect Celio's boundaries.

At the municipal level, the "*Dipartimento Attività Culturali di Roma Capitale and Municipio I"* implement local cultural programming, public space maintenance, and community outreach initiatives. Collaboration with ecclesiastical entities remains crucial, as many of Celio's heritage sites — including churches and monasteries — remain under canonical ownership (*Roma Capitale, 2024*).

5.4.3 Cultural Institutions and Organisations

The Celio's cultural offer extends beyond monumental heritage to include small museums, libraries, and creative venues. Among the most relevant are:

- **Museo della Forma Urbis**, dedicated to the ancient marble map of Rome, located in proximity to the *Villa Celimontana* area;
- **Biblioteca Centrale Militare**, hosting a significant collection of historical and medical archives;
- **Case Romane del Celio** *(Roman Houses on the Caelian Hill*), are an underground archaeological complex located beneath the Basilica of Saints Giovanni e Paolo in Rome. The site preserves a series of well-preserved Roman domestic spaces dating from the 2nd to the 4th centuries CE, later incorporated into early Christian structures. Today, the Case Romane del Celio function as a museum and cultural site managed in collaboration between ecclesiastical authorities and heritage institutions;
- **Associazione Geografica Italiana,** founded in 1867 is one of Italy's oldest learned societies, dedicated to the advancement of geographical research and the promotion of cultural and environmental knowledge. Its headquarters are

in Villa Celimontana, within the Celio district of Rome. The historic villa, surrounded by a public park, houses the society's library, cartographic collections, and archives, serving as a centre for scientific study and cultural dissemination;

- **Fondazione Changes – "Doors of Change" Project**, The *Doors of Change* initiative, promoted by Fondazione Changes with the support of CoopCulture, is an innovative cultural-infrastructure programme that re-activates historic spaces through community participation and creative reuse. Financed by the Italian Ministry of University and Research and the Next Generation EU programme, it embodies the principle *"Attraverso il patrimonio, aprirsi al futuro"* ("Through heritage, opening to the future"). From a spatial-context perspective, the project aims to demonstrate how heritage sites can become relational hubs within the Celio district: by linking institutions, professionals, and residents, it transforms physical proximity into networks of collaboration and shared meaning.
- Small-scale art studios and cultural associations distributed along *Via dei Normanni*, *Via Celimontana*, and *Via Claudia, as* "Galleria D'Arte Arca di Noesis".

Cultural activities are reinforced by proximity to Rome's major museums and theatres, including the *Colosseum Archaeological Park, Museo Palatino,* and *Teatro Eliseo*. The district thus benefits from both endogenous and exogenous cultural flows, making it an integral node in Rome's broader cultural ecosystem (*Lazio Innova, 2023*).

However, limitations persist. The scarcity of multifunctional cultural spaces restricts opportunities for contemporary artistic production, while the dominance of heritage tourism often overshadows local cultural expression. Efforts to diversify the cultural offer remain a priority within municipal strategies for the Centro Storico (*Roma Capitale – Dipartimento Cultura, 2024*).

5.5 Educational and Religious Institutions. Public Spaces and Green Areas

5.5.1 Educational Institutions

Within its limited area, the district hosts multiple educational facilities that serve both residents and students from adjacent neighbourhoods. These include:

- Scuola Primaria "Giovanni Lanza", a public primary school;
- Several early childhood education centres (e.g. Celio Azzurro) and nursery schools;
- Institutions affiliated with religious orders providing integrated educational programmes (*MIUR, 2023*).

The proximity of major universities — *Sapienza University of Rome*, *Roma Tre University*, and *Pontificia Università Lateranense* — enhances the district's academic environment, attracting students and researchers. These institutions frequently collaborate with local organisations on heritage education, urban studies, and community engagement projects.

The district's educational infrastructure thus contributes not only to social reproduction but also to knowledge exchange and cultural innovation, linking local heritage to academic research and experiential learning (*Lazio Innova, 2023*).

5.5.2 Religious and Charitable Institutions

Religious institutions continue to play an important role in the social infrastructure of the Celio. Parishes such as *San Giovanni e Paolo* and *Santo Stefano Rotondo* not only maintain liturgical functions but also operate social programmes, food assistance, and educational initiatives for children and the elderly. These activities contribute significantly to the district's social welfare ecosystem.

Monastic communities — notably the *Passionists*, *Camillians* and *Suore di Calcutta* — provide healthcare and spiritual support services, often extending their

reach beyond the resident population. Their presence reinforces the district's identity as a space of care, historically rooted in its ecclesiastical heritage.

5.5.3 Public Spaces and Green Areas

Green space within the Celio is limited but highly significant. The renovated Archaeological Park of Celio and Villa Celimontana Park remains the principal public green area, providing recreational space for residents and hosting cultural events such as open-air concerts and educational activities. Smaller gardens and courtyards within religious complexes contribute to the district's microclimatic and aesthetic quality.

However, the overall availability of public green space per capita remains below the municipal average, estimated at 4.8 m² per inhabitant, compared to 9.2 m² citywide (*Ufficio Statistica Roma Capitale, 2024*). Enhancing accessibility and maintenance of existing green areas thus remains a strategic priority for urban liveability and environmental resilience.

5.6 Cultural Events and Participation

Celio hosts a range of cultural events that animate its public spaces and reinforce community identity. These include:

- **Seasonal parish festivals** such as the *Festa di San Giovanni e Paolo*, combining religious celebration with community fairs and concerts;
- **Performing arts events** in *Villa Celimontana*, including jazz concerts, theatre, and open-air cinema, often organised in collaboration with municipal cultural departments;
- **Educational workshops** in collaboration with local schools and cultural institutions;
- **Commemorative initiatives** linked to heritage anniversaries and civic memory (*Roma Capitale – Dipartimento Cultura, 2024*).

The *Villa Celimontana Jazz Festival*, established in the late 1990s, remains one of the district's most recognisable events, attracting both residents and visitors. Its

integration within a historic park exemplifies how cultural programming can activate heritage spaces sustainably.

Beyond organised events, Celio supports a modest yet resilient creative ecosystem**,** rooted in small studios, art workshops, and independent cultural initiatives. Artists and artisans occupy ground-floor spaces along *Via Celimontana* and adjacent streets, maintaining continuity with the area's artisanal past. These micro-enterprises engage in visual arts, design, restoration, and cultural mediation.

Data from *Lazio Innova (2023)* identify approximately 25 active creative businesses within or near the Celio area, predominantly micro-enterprises generating local employment and cultural value. Their output often intersects with heritage, producing site-specific art, educational materials, or crafts inspired by the district's history.

Levels of cultural participation among residents are significantly higher than the city average. According to *ISTAT (2023)*, 72% of Celio residents attend at least one cultural event annually, compared to 56% citywide. This high participation reflects both accessibility to cultural venues and strong community participation.

5.7 Tourism and Hospitality Economy

5.7.1 Overview of the Tourism Landscape

The Celio district occupies a pivotal position within Rome's global tourism geography. Bordering the Colosseum, one of the world's most visited monuments, Celio is both a residential enclave and an extension of the city's primary heritage visited place (*Roma Capitale, 2024; Ufficio Statistica Turismo, 2023*). Its location within the UNESCO World Heritage buffer zone ensures constant exposure to visitor flows, while its more intimate scale and local atmosphere differentiate it from adjacent high-intensity tourist zones such as Monti and Piazza Venezia.

Tourism in Celio is primarily cultural and heritage-based, reflecting the concentration of archaeological, religious, and architectural landmarks. However, the district also attracts visitors seeking experiential and slow tourism alternatives — small-scale

hospitality, and thematic walks that connect monumental and everyday heritage (*Lazio Innova, 2023*).

Visitor statistics indicate that approximately 30% of tourists visiting the Colosseum area traverse the Celio district, either as part of guided tours or informal exploration (*Roma Servizi per il Turismo, 2023*). This corresponds to an estimated annual footfall of over 3 million individuals, though only a small fraction engage directly with local businesses and institutions. The challenge, therefore, lies in transforming the district from a transit zone into a lived cultural destination.

5.7.2 Hospitality Infrastructure: A Portrait of the Accommodation Landscape

As far as the hospitality infrastructure, I have extracted the data on the official municipal dataset *"Strutture Ricettive di Roma Capitale (updated in January 2025)"*, published through Rome's Open Data Portal and indexed on the Italian national open-data platform (*dati.gov.it*). This dataset constitutes the most authoritative and updated registry of registered tourist accommodation structures in the municipality. Using this source allows us to construct an accurate and nuanced picture of the tourist accommodation system as of early 2025.

Since the dataset doesn't specify the administrative district (e.g., Municipio or Rione) for each accommodation structure, it therefore becomes necessary to reconstruct the Celio's boundaries using both toponymic criteria. From a toponymic perspective, the streets traditionally and administratively recognized as belonging to the Celio—such as Via Marco Aurelio, Via Capo d'Africa, Via Ostilia, Via Claudia, Via Celimontana, Via Labicana, and Via di San Giovanni in Laterano—provide an essential filter. These streets represent the morphological backbone of the district and collectively form a coherent spatial framework.

In doing so, the report counts and identifies 236 tourist accommodation structures within the boundaries of the Celio. This is a striking figure when one considers the limited size of the district and its primarily residential built environment. The dataset indicates a total of 747 beds, which translates into an average of just

over three beds per structure—a figure that underscores the predominance of highly fragmented, small-scale accommodation units.

Drawing on the official municipal data (Roma Capitale, 2025), it becomes evident that the Celio is not characterized by large hotels or extensive hospitality complexes. Instead, it is marked by a diffuse constellation of micro-accommodations that have increasingly appropriated private housing stock for tourist use. This is consistent with broader patterns in Rome's historic centre, but the intensity in Celio is particularly pronounced due to its proximity to the Colosseum and its role as a gateway to the archaeological heart of the city.

One of the most salient findings concerns the typological analysis of these 236 structures. More than 80% fall within the extra-hotel sector:

- 114 units classified as "alloggi per uso turistico" (tourist-use apartments),
- 81 units categorized as "case e appartamenti per vacanze" (holiday apartments),
- 28 guest houses or "affittacamere",
- 8 Bed & Breakfasts

Hotels constitute a marginal presence: only three are listed in the entire district. Even within this small subset, the dataset reveals that two hotels carry a 5-star rating, and another operates as a 4-star facility, suggesting a niche, high-end market embedded within the broader landscape of short-term rentals.

The overwhelming dominance of extra-hotel structures corresponds to what scholars increasingly describe as a model of tourism-led residential conversion, in which apartments originally intended for long-term inhabitants are progressively repurposed for tourist flows. This transformation is made particularly visible in official datasets such as the one provided by Roma Capitale (2025), which meticulously catalogues every registered accommodation structure and thereby renders tangible the scale of this phenomenon.

The conversion of apartments into tourist accommodations—registered officially and captured in the dataset—contributes to what scholars call "touristification": a

structural shift in which the needs of visitors increasingly predominate over those of long-term inhabitants.

The implications are manifold. First, the expansion of short-term rentals exerts upward pressure on housing prices and rental markets, making it more difficult for residents to remain in the district. Second, the increase in tourism-oriented activities (restaurants, bars, souvenir shops, and services) gradually alters the commercial ecosystem, reducing the availability of everyday stores and amenities essential to stable local communities. Third, the intensification of visitor flows—especially in streets adjacent to the Colosseum—modifies patterns of mobility, noise levels, and the lived experience of public space.

5.7.3 Tourism Economy and Local Enterprises

The tourism economy supports a range of local enterprises, including cafés, restaurants, artisanal shops, and cultural tour operators (*Camera di Commercio di Roma, 2023*). Many adopt hybrid models that combine cultural mediation with commercial activity — for instance, guided tours, craft workshops, and gastronomy experiences linked to local history. However, the economic impact of tourism is uneven. While it sustains local employment and visibility, it also generates externalities such as noise, crowding, and service saturation. Residents express growing concerns about "touristification" — the transformation of local culture into consumable spectacle (*Roma Capitale, 2024*).

Efforts to promote responsible and sustainable tourism have emerged in recent years, supported by the *Municipio I* and *Roma Capitale's Sustainable Tourism Strategy (2023–2026)*. Measures include encouraging cultural itineraries beyond major monuments, supporting community-led interpretation, and fostering the participation of local businesses in heritage enhancement.

5.8 Administrative Governance, Cultural Policy and Strategic Plans

The governance of the Celio district is embedded within the broader multi-level framework of Rome's urban and heritage management system. Three principal administrative levels operate concurrently:

1. **National Level:** The *Ministero della Cultura (MiC)* and its territorial offices (*Soprintendenza Speciale Archeologia, Belle Arti e Paesaggio di Roma*), responsible for conservation, restoration, and authorisation;
2. **Municipal Level:** The *Comune di Roma Capitale*, through the *Dipartimento Patrimonio e Politiche Abitative* and *Dipartimento Attività Culturali*, coordinates urban management, housing, and cultural programming;
3. **Sub-Municipal Level:** *Municipio I (Centro Storico)*, which manages local services, social initiatives, and participatory processes (*Roma Capitale, 2023*).

The area is governed by the *Piano Regolatore Generale di Roma (PRG)*, which designates Celio as "*tessuto storico consolidato"* — a consolidated historical fabric subject to strict conservation norms. Building interventions require authorisation from the *Soprintendenza*, ensuring compatibility with heritage values (*PRG Roma, 2020*).

At the same time, municipal regulations promote adaptive reuse of underutilised buildings for cultural or social purposes, in line with Italy's evolving concept of *beni comuni* (common goods) and the *Regolamento per l'Amministrazione Condivisa* (2019). These instruments allow public-civic partnerships for managing heritage spaces collaboratively.

The *Faro Convention* (Council of Europe, 2005), ratified by Italy in 2020, further encourages community participation in heritage governance. Although its implementation remains partial, it has influenced local discourse and policy experiments within Municipio I (*MiC, 2023*). Several strategic frameworks shape Celio's cultural management context:

- The **Strategic Plan for Culture of Roma Capitale (2020–2030)**, which emphasises decentralisation, community participation, and integration between heritage and contemporary creativity;
- The **Piano di Gestione del Sito UNESCO di Roma**, outlining conservation priorities and sustainable tourism guidelines;
- The **Piano Urbano della Mobilità Sostenibile (PUMS)**, addressing accessibility and environmental sustainability;

- The **Piano Clima Roma 2030**, which includes heritage adaptation and green infrastructure within the city's climate strategy.
- **The CArMe Project (Centro Archeologico Monumentale di Roma)**, an ambitious strategic and operational framework promoted by Roma Capitale, aims to redefine the relationship between the archaeological heart of the city and its contemporary urban fabric. It consists of a *Piano Strategico* for long-term transformation and an *Operational Programme* aligned with PNRR and Jubilee 2025 investments. Within this framework, the Celio area plays a pivotal role, hosting interventions such as the restoration of the Antiquarium as a multifunctional cultural hub, the reopening of the Casina del Salvi as a study and social space, the opening of Forma Urbis Museum, and the environmental recovery of the Parco del Celio to reconnect pedestrian pathways toward the Colosseum, Palatine, and Caracalla (CArMe Report, 2023, pp. 59–60). The project embodies the principles of the Faro Convention on shared heritage, fostering public participation, civic engagement, and the "re-enchantment" of citizens with the ancient city
- The district of Celio is among the areas targeted by the **CHANGES project** (Cultural Heritage Active Innovation for Next-Gen Sustainable Society), a nationally coordinated research and innovation partnership (CHANGES Annex, 2022) that gathers 25 different Italian partners including Universities, Research Institutions, Schools of Advanced Studies, and companies. CHANGES aims to develop a transdisciplinary and technologically integrated ecosystem for cultural heritage management, with the goal of transforming heritage assets into engines of sustainable development, social cohesion, and civic empowerment. Through the promotion of green and digital transitions, experimental governance models, and inclusive community-based approaches, CHANGES represents a paradigm shift in how cultural heritage is managed and valorised. These investments offer an unprecedented opportunity to reimagine Celio as a living heritage district—capable of fostering inclusive participation, civic wealth creation, and a more balanced cultural tourism model.

Together, these plans provide a framework for balancing protection and development. However, their operationalisation at the district scale often faces resource constraints and administrative inertia (*Roma Capitale, 2024).*

Like many historic urban centres that attract intense tourism and mobility flows, the Celio district's governance system experiences structural challenges rooted in the broader dynamics of managing a living heritage environment. Balancing Celio's role as a world heritage attraction and as a residential community imposes conflicting demands on its spatial organisation and administrative systems. As in other major heritage cities such as Florence, Venice, or Barcelona, governance complexity arises from the tension between conservation imperatives and everyday urban functionality (UNESCO, 2019; Roma Capitale, 2024). Within this context, Celio's administrative framework must balance the protection of archaeological and monumental assets with the provision of services for residents, visitors, and institutions—a task complicated by overlapping competencies and fragmented responsibilities across national, regional, and municipal levels. The cyclical nature of local politics, combined with demographic change and gentrification pressures, adds to institutional discontinuity. In sum, Celio exemplifies the governance dilemmas common to historic cores worldwide: how to sustain heritage authenticity and liveability while accommodating the economic and social realities of a global city.

The district also suffers from limited integration between cultural policy and urban planning, which prevents a coherent vision for heritage-led development. Financial constraints continue to limit ordinary and extraordinary maintenance and restrict opportunities for innovation.

Administrative discontinuity and unstable coordination among offices further weaken policy implementation and long-term governance consistency. Meanwhile, social change driven by tourism and the real-estate market accelerates processes of depopulation and social replacement, reinforcing gentrification and the erosion of resident communities.

Addressing these issues requires a systemic and integrated approach capable of uniting institutional and territorial actors around shared objectives of protection, inclusion, and

sustainable development. Such an approach would align the Celio's governance framework with contemporary models of participatory heritage management advocated in European policy instruments like the Faro Convention (Council of Europe, 2005).

5.9 Challenges and Opportunities

5.9.1Urban and Environmental Challenges

Despite its exceptional cultural and historical value, the Celio district faces pressing urban and environmental challenges that threaten its long-term sustainability. First among these is the pressure of mass tourism, a structural phenomenon that affects the entire historic centre of Rome but has particularly acute effects in proximity to the Colosseum and the Palatine Hill. The continuous inflow of millions of visitors each year generates congestion, wear on public spaces, and environmental degradation (*Roma Capitale, 2024*). While the *Zona a Traffico Limitato* (ZTL) mitigates vehicular impact, pedestrian overcrowding and noise remain persistent issues.

The second major challenge concerns housing affordability and gentrification. The rapid increase in short-term rentals and speculative real estate investment has led to a decline in permanent residency, especially among younger and lower-income groups (*ISTAT, 2023; Lazio Innova, 2024*). This trend erodes the district's demographic diversity and threatens its social balance. If unchecked, Celio risks transforming from a lived neighbourhood into a museum-like environment serving transient populations.

A third concern relates to infrastructure and accessibility. The district's narrow streets and limited public transport connections constrain mobility and complicate the daily life of residents, particularly the elderly and persons with reduced mobility (*Roma Servizi per la Mobilità, 2023*). Maintenance of historic buildings, public lighting, and green areas is uneven, reflecting the difficulties of coordinating interventions in a heritage-protected area.

Environmental sustainability also presents a growing concern. Limited green space (4.8 m² per inhabitant, compared to 9.2 m² citywide) reduces resilience to heat waves

and air pollution (*Ufficio Statistica Roma Capitale, 2024*). The urban heat-island effect, exacerbated by stone and asphalt surfaces, compromises thermal comfort during summer months. Strategies for climate adaptation—green roofs, shaded pathways, and improved energy efficiency in historic buildings—remain in preliminary stages (*Piano Clima Roma 2030*).

Finally, the management of archaeological areas at the margins of the district poses both physical and symbolic challenges. The spatial discontinuity between the monumental and residential zones creates functional barriers and perceptions of segregation. Integrating these heritage sites into everyday life without compromising conservation remains an unresolved policy objective (Rapporto CaRME, 2024).

5.9.2 Socio-Economic Challenges

The socio-economic equilibrium of Celio is delicate. On one hand, the district benefits from high levels of education, employment in culture and services, and access to public amenities. On the other, its economy depends disproportionately on tourism and cultural consumption, rendering it vulnerable to external shocks. The pandemic period (2020–2021) illustrated this fragility vividly: temporary closures of museums, restaurants, and guesthouses disrupted both income and community rhythm (*Roma Turismo, 2022*).

Moreover, while the median income is slightly above the city average, economic inequality is pronounced. Wealthier newcomers and expatriates coexist with elderly residents living on fixed pensions and foreign service workers in precarious conditions. This duality generates latent social tension and a subtle divide in consumption patterns and civic participation (*Fondazione Charlemagne, 2023*).

A further challenge is the decline of local commerce. Traditional workshops and family-owned shops, once central to the district's identity, have gradually been replaced by restaurants and souvenir stores catering to tourists. This shift undermines the functional diversity that supports daily life and reduces opportunities for local employment beyond the service sector. Urban policies encouraging mixed-use development and the preservation of traditional commerce are therefore critical to

maintaining the social and economic fabric (*Roma Capitale – Piano Commercio, 2023*).

Another emerging issue involves demographic ageing. With over a quarter of residents aged 65 or older, Celio faces increasing demand for health, mobility, and social assistance services (*ISTAT, 2023*). The neighbourhood's compact form and high density, while conducive to social interaction, also amplify the impacts of ageing populations on public space design, accessibility, and community welfare.

In this context, fostering generational renewal through youth engagement, affordable housing, and educational innovation becomes not only a social imperative but also a condition for the long-term sustainability of participatory governance.

5.9.3 Cultural and Social Opportunities

Despite these constraints, Celio possesses extraordinary potential as a laboratory for participatory and sustainable heritage governance. Several structural advantages position the district at the forefront of cultural innovation.

First, its human-scale morphology and dense social fabric facilitate community interaction. The coexistence of historic architecture, small public spaces, and mixed functions supports the conditions for social cohesion that larger districts struggle to maintain (*Roma Capitale, 2023*). Second, the area's rich institutional network—comprising schools, parishes, research institutions, and cultural associations—provides an existing foundation for collaboration. This ecosystem could serve as a platform for developing integrated cultural programming, educational initiatives, and social innovation projects that link heritage with contemporary urban life (*Lazio Innova, 2024*). Third, the Celio's cultural and creative economy offers opportunities for diversification and resilience. The presence of small creative enterprises can be leveraged through policies that promote cultural entrepreneurship and adaptive reuse of underutilised spaces. Supporting co-working and cultural incubation hubs would both preserve tradition and stimulate new forms of employment. Fourth, the district's proximity to the Colosseum Archaeological Park provides unparalleled visibility and tourism potential. By developing responsible tourism strategies, the

Celio can transform visitor flows into instruments of economic and social benefit, rather than disruption (*Roma Capitale – Turismo Sostenibile, 2023*). Finally, Celio's educational and civic traditions make it an ideal environment for testing participatory governance models. The integration of schools, associations, and institutions in shared projects could embody the principles of *Civic Wealth Creation*—mobilising engaged participation, collaborative innovation, and resource synergy to generate long-term communal value (Lumpkin & Bacq, 2019).

The Celio's contextual conditions—historical depth, institutional density, and civic vitality—position it as a paradigmatic case study of sustainable heritage districts. By integrating cultural heritage, community engagement, and environmental adaptation, the district can embody a holistic model of urban regeneration consistent with the Cultural Ecosystem lens (Borin & Donato, 2015).

5.9.4 Remarks from the Contextual Analysis

The contextual analysis of the Celio district reveals a territory where millennia of history intersect with contemporary social, economic, and environmental realities. Its dense stratification of monuments, institutions, and community life encapsulates both the complexity and potential of managing heritage cities in the 21st century.

The district's challenges — overtourism, ageing population, gentrification, and administrative fragmentation — mirror global trends affecting heritage centres. Yet, its enduring community networks, educational infrastructure, and cultural dynamism provide the foundations for renewal.

Celio's experience demonstrates that sustainable heritage management cannot rely solely on conservation policies or market forces. It requires participatory governance, where institutions, residents, and organisations share responsibility for preserving and reimagining their environment.

In doing so, it reaffirms the role of heritage as a living common — a shared resource that connects past, present, and future through collective care and creative participation.

CHAPTER 6. REGENERATING HISTORIC URBAN NEIGHBORHOOD THROUGH CULTURAL NETWORKS (Contribution no. 1)

The overall ambition of this doctoral research is to explore how participatory governance can support the sustainable management of cultural heritage. Yet, this broad aim has been articulated through three specific Research Questions (RQs)**,** each examined through a different theoretical perspective. These perspectives have offered distinct interpretative lenses through which the same empirical setting—the Celio district in Rome—has been analysed.

Although the study focuses on a single territorial context and relies on a shared set of data sources, the methods of inquiry and analysis have varied according to the theoretical assumptions guiding each RQs. This has led to the elaboration of three partial but complementary contributions, each shedding light on different facets of participatory governance in heritage contexts.

This chapter addresses the first research question (RQ1) of this doctoral thesis**:**

- *Who are the* actors *involved in the governance of cultural heritage within an historic urban district*?

To explore this question, the chapter draws upon the conceptual framework of the Cultural Ecosystem lens (Borin and Donato, 2015; Holden, 2015; De Bernard et al., 2023). This contribution investigates the stakeholder landscape of the Celio district, identifying the diversity of actors that are in such neighbourhood, their impacts generated by their cultural activities, and their willingness to collaborate in the creation of a shared cultural network. We found it useful to draw on the SoPHIA model and toolkit (Marchiori et al., 2021) to collect and analyse data.

Based on context analysis, stakeholder mapping and semi-structured interviews to main actors, this contribution uncovers a fragmented but active cultural environment. Cultural associations, educational institutions, civic initiatives, and public

organisations operate in parallel—each generating valuable cultural and social contributions—yet rarely interacting within a coordinated framework.

By using a metaphor and borrowing from the language of chemistry, this chapter introduces a typology of stakeholder roles—*catalysts*, *reagents*, *cohesive elements*, and *possible reagents*—that helps to visualise how different actors might contribute to the development of a cultural network capable of supporting participatory governance in the district.

The chapter unfolds as follows:

- Section 6.1 introduces the research question, conceptual background, and objectives;
- Section 6.2 presents the methodology, outlining the application of the SoPHIA model, the data collection and data analysis processes;
- Section 6.3 discusses the findings, focusing on the mapping of actors and their potential roles within the emerging cultural ecosystem.

Overall, this chapter provides a first analytical step in understanding the *"social architecture"* of participatory governance. By identifying the actors and their interrelations, it establishes the groundwork for the subsequent exploration of how these relationships evolve into processes and dynamics of collaboration and civic value creation**,** which will be discussed in the following chapters 8 and 9.

6.1 Introduction

The notion of cultural ecosystems is key point of analysis of this first contribution. A cultural ecosystem is an environment in which different actors (i.e. public and private organisations, associations, communities, artists, creative people, citizens), interested in producing and consuming arts and culture interact each other (Florida,1999). Scholars such as Borin (2015) have emphasized the positive spillovers generated by networks of cultural actors (Dameri & Demartini, 2020), ranging from the creation of social capital to enhanced innovation potential.

In recent years, local cultural ecosystems have emerged as a new way for understanding the cultural and creative sector in connection with its territory (Borin & Donato, 2015; Holden, 2015). As an example, scholars as Guintcheva and Passebois-Ducros (2012), Borin (2015), Poisson-de Haro & Myard (2018) studying cultural alliances, demonstrated how collective identity can emerge when institutions collaborate. These perspectives highlight the interdependence of cultural actors and the importance of networked forms of governance for fostering regional development.

The literature highlights the variety of actors that constitute a cultural ecosystem. Within these ecosystems, the range of cultural actors (Dameri & Demartini, 2021) is particularly broad and heterogeneous. It includes entrepreneurs and professionals who operate in the cultural sector, small and medium enterprises active in the cultural and creative industries (CCIs), cultural institutions such as museums, libraries, theatres, etc. that promote the cultural life of citizens and third-sector organisations, including associations and cooperatives, which pursue cultural and social objectives simultaneously. In addition to these established entities, an important role is also played by grassroots initiatives that often emerge informally from local communities (Moser & Bader, 2023). Although modest in scale, these initiatives contribute significantly to community engagement (O'Meara, Pendergast, & Robinson, 2007), memory preservation, and the regeneration of social ties. Taken together, this diversity of actors underscores that cultural ecosystems are not simply collections of independent organizations, initiatives or projects, but rather complex, multi-layered networks in which economic, symbolic, and social dimensions intersect, interact and co-evolve.

In this context of analysis, the governance dimension is critical. Participatory governance of CH emphasizes bottom-up approaches to heritage valorisation (Demartini et al., 2024), where cultural actors (i.e. citizens, associations, entrepreneurs, CCIs and institutions) co-create initiatives and policies for local development (Biondi et al., 2020; Piber et al., 2019). According to the last EU cultural policy trends, the Participatory Governance of Cultural Heritage Report (2018) states that protection and safeguarding, management and promotion of cultural heritage require effective multilevel governance and good cross-sectoral cooperation, involving all the

stakeholders, from public authorities and professionals to private actors, civil society organisations, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and the voluntary sector. This calls for a strong development of the participatory governance of cultural heritage, that is to say: new management practices and governance models that seek to actively engage all stakeholders, local and other communities in "*open, participatory, effective and coherent"* processes of governance. This is particularly relevant in heritage-rich districts, where top-down interventions risk neglecting the identity and memory of local communities. In fact, cities are the settings where participatory governance takes place (Kazepov, 2005; Piattoni, 2010) and, according to the literature, a participatory governance is a condition to generate positive and lasting impacts over time (Sacco et al., 2019).

6.2 Research Methodology

Our research process begins with identifying main different stakeholders and exploring networking possibilities as an antecedent for the creation of a cultural ecosystem that could generate benefits for society. The SoPHIA model (Marchiori et al., 2021) was employed as a valuable instrument in mapping local stakeholders and highlighting the impact of their cultural projects on the cultural and social life of the district.

6.2.1 The SoPHIA Model to Map Stakeholders

In recent years, there has been an increasing recognition that impact assessment serves as a crucial tool for comprehending how decisions regarding cultural heritage resources can effectuate changes in individuals' lives and their environments. The Europa Nostra report, *Cultural Heritage Counts for Europe* (CHCfE, 2015), has significantly contributed to the evaluation of impacts related to cultural heritage interventions. It underscores the importance of employing a holistic approach encompassing four domains: social, economic, cultural, and environmental (CHCfE, 2015). This document further incorporates an analysis of interventions in terms of both positive and negative impacts and elucidates how to examine the correlation between objectives (policies, projects, initiatives) and impacts. Another significant

document is the ICOMOS report, European Quality Principles for EU-Funded Interventions with Potential Impacts on Cultural Heritage (ICOMOS, 2019, 2020). Drafted by a panel of experts convened by ICOMOS under the mandate of the European Commission and within the framework of the European Year of Cultural Heritage 2018, this document provides guidance on quality principles for all stakeholders directly or indirectly involved in EU-funded interventions with potential impacts on cultural heritage.

Building on these recommendations, the SoPHIA model (Marchiori et al., 2021; Baioni et al., 2021), developed as part of an H2020 European funded project, employs a multi-dimensional approach based on three axes, emphasizing: the multifaceted aspects of the impacts related to CH interventions (multi-domain perspective); the complex interactions among stakeholders that can have different and sometimes conflicting interests on CH (people perspective); the balance between expected or current impacts and the legacy towards the next generations (time perspective) (see figure 5).

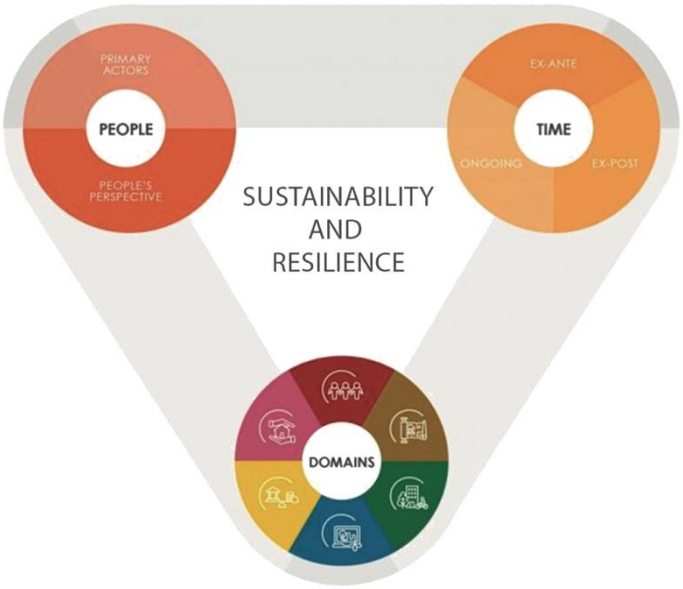


FIG. 5 SoPHIA Model Based on three axes (Marchiori et al., 2021)

Regarding the multi-domain perspective, the SoPHIA Model delineates six impact areas/themes: Social Capital and Governance, Identity of Place, Quality of Life, Education, Creativity and Innovation, Work and Prosperity, and Protection. It further

identifies 28 sub-themes designed to capture the cross-sectoral and multidimensional nature of impacts.

An essential step in the SoPHIA model is the stakeholders' analysis, which helps to understand local interest groups, their relevance and their role in relation to cultural initiatives. This analysis may help to assess their potential impact on the district heritage management, to avoid, resolve or mitigate conflicts, to identify potential partners and involve them more closely in future collaborations.

6.2.2 Data Collection

Information for the case study was gathered from primary and secondary sources, including semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders, public discussions, mapping tools, and statistical sources (as Mappa Roma, 2021). As emphasized by scholars, it is crucial to scan data from multiple sources to capture people's perceptions of cultural heritage (Sontum et al., 2018) and to identify approaches for citizen engagement (Billore, 2021).

The first critical decision was to select the stakeholders who would be involved and interviewed. Initially, a top-down approach was adopted, and different stakeholders were identified based on their influence on the district's cultural and social life, as determined by the contextual analysis (see par. 5.4). An additional method employed was the "Snowball method," a non-probability sampling technique used in qualitative research (Johnson, 2014). This method relies on "networking" and "referral," where initial contacts meeting the research criteria recommend other potential participants, who in turn recommend further participants, and so forth. Due to its networking characteristics and flexibility, snowball sampling is particularly useful when complete information is unavailable (Parker, Scott, & Geddes, 2019).

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with key representatives from selected relevant stakeholders, identified as cultural associations, organizations, or institutions (see Annex 2). Semi-structured interviews allow interviewees the freedom to express their views (Qu & Dumay, 2011). The primary goal for researchers employing such techniques is to delve deeply into the interviewees' opinions, perspectives, and

perceptions, seeking comprehensive information that quantitative methods might overlook. In more detail, the interviews focused on the following topics:

1. The history of the association/organization/institution and its relationship with the territory.
2. The impacts created by the association/organization/institution, as outlined by the SoPHIA model.
3. The possibility of establishing a cultural ecosystem/network with other local stakeholders.

These interviews aimed to understand the cultural and social context and to discuss concerns and challenges related to the regeneration and future development of the district. They were conducted to gain insights into the communities' perspectives. Seven semi-structured interviews were conducted between late 2023 and early 2025, each lasting approximately 60 to 90 minutes.

6.2.3 Data analysis

Following the suggestion by Miles et al. (2014) that data analysis should be an ongoing process, we analysed the data iteratively to develop an interpretative framework. Therefore, we coded and extracted the data from the interviews, identifying stakeholder values, impacts, and perceptions within the domains of the SoPHIA model, aligning with our research objectives. The impacts reported were categorized into macro-categories according to the SoPHIA model.

Our aim was to assess the relevance of the impacts each organization generates or might generate for district development. Each author read the empirical material and performed manual open coding, categorizing the flow of words within the SoPHIA domains.

We also evaluated the stakeholders' willingness and commitment to creating a network among themselves. This involved assessing their readiness to collaborate and their perceived benefits of such a network (see table 1 and 2).

After the initial coding and categorization, we compared and discussed the results obtained by each author, ensuring the reliability and validity of the coding process. We

utilized the Gioia's (2013) approach to interpret our data. This approach involves gathering primary data from semi-structured interviews coded according to first-order concepts and then developing second-order themes. These themes are next used to create aggregate dimensions through a further reasoning phase. This structured approach facilitated the interpretation of the investigated phenomenon by connecting data, emerging concepts, and the resulting grounded theory.

Gioia and Chittipeddi (1991) first introduced the data structure methodology in qualitative research (Gehman et al., 2018). This approach was further elaborated on by Corley and Gioia (2004) and Gioia (2013). The methodology ensures that the voices of the interviewees are represented in the research report, creating opportunities to discover new concepts. The data structure was crucial to our research approach (see Figure 6). It not only helped us organize our data into a clear visual representation but also illustrated how we moved from raw data to concepts during the analysis (Pratt, 2008; Tracy, 2010).

6.2.4 Data Structure

We compiled two tables highlighting the results in terms of impacts and commitment to creating a cultural network. Each table is divided into first and second-order data. In Table 1, the first-order data displays individual impacts of organizations, extracted from interviews and coded according to SoPHIA's six themes. The second-order data indicate the researchers' assessment of the potential relevance of these impacts on urban regeneration, categorized as "High" or "Medium/Low".

TABLE 1. Organization s'Impacts and Potential Relevance of Impacts Related to the Project

FIRST ORDER DATA: ORGANISATIONS' IMPACTS							
IMPACT AREA AND PRIORITY FOR THE PROJECT	ASSOCIAZIONE PROGETTO CELIO	SOCIETA' GEOGRAFICA ITALIANA	CELIO AZZURRO	CINEMA ALLE MURA	GALLERIA D'ARTE ARCA DI NOESIS	DIGILAB SAPIENZA	CO.DE COLAVORO ROMA COLOSSEO/ MöBIUS
Social Capital and Governance (High Priority)	Bottom-up participation. To involve other cultural associations and religious communities. "To open rather than close".			We try to integrate Chinese, Indian Sinhalese and Pakistani communities	I have a circle of friendships that come from my past both as a teacher and as a political activist	It was an intentional choice to include the community in the co-design process of our research.	We mainly collaborate with companies. We have interested in the "Roma Diffusa Project"
Identity (High Priority)	Mending ancient topography, forgotten paths		Legacy of neighbourhood social life in the 1980s-90s		Legacy of neighbourhood social life in the 1980s-90s		
Quality of Life (High Priority for the subthemes: social life and environment)	Walking both day and night in the neighbourhood	Our library is open to students, and we organize cultural events, which may be of interest to citizens	Caring for childhood and organizing meeting opportunities for families	Bringing families and friends together to enjoy Roman evenings	The artist relates to the who are interested at their paintings. We organize musical events and public poetry readings		The event hall also houses a cultural association, Mobius.
Education, Creativity and Innovation (High Priority for the subthemes: awareness raising, arts &creativity)	Mending a cultural community, exchanging culture and reflections		Intercultural centre		Many artists are amateurs, the gallery is quite affordable	Our project (Metaverso) intersects with that of CoopCulture: the enhancement of a community aspect and Case	

						Romane del Celio.	
Work and Prosperity (High priority for subthemes: tourism economy, social innovation & entrepreneurship)			Social innovation & Entrepreneurship		A few art critics come to value works that the artist can sell	A public-private collaboration design between us and CoopCulture	The cultural association mainly cooperates with artists, thus it acts as a promoter of various kinds of artists as street artists, sculptors or painters
Protection (High for safeguarding against human-related risks)	Reviving abandoned civilian buildings within the Parco del Celio			Projecting the films on the Aurelian walls and then disassembling everything the same evening			
SECOND ORDER DATA: RELEVANCE OF IMPACTS RELATED TO THE PROJECT							
RELEVANCE	HIGH	MEDIUM/LOW	MEDIUM/LOW	HIGH	HIGH	HIGH	HIGH

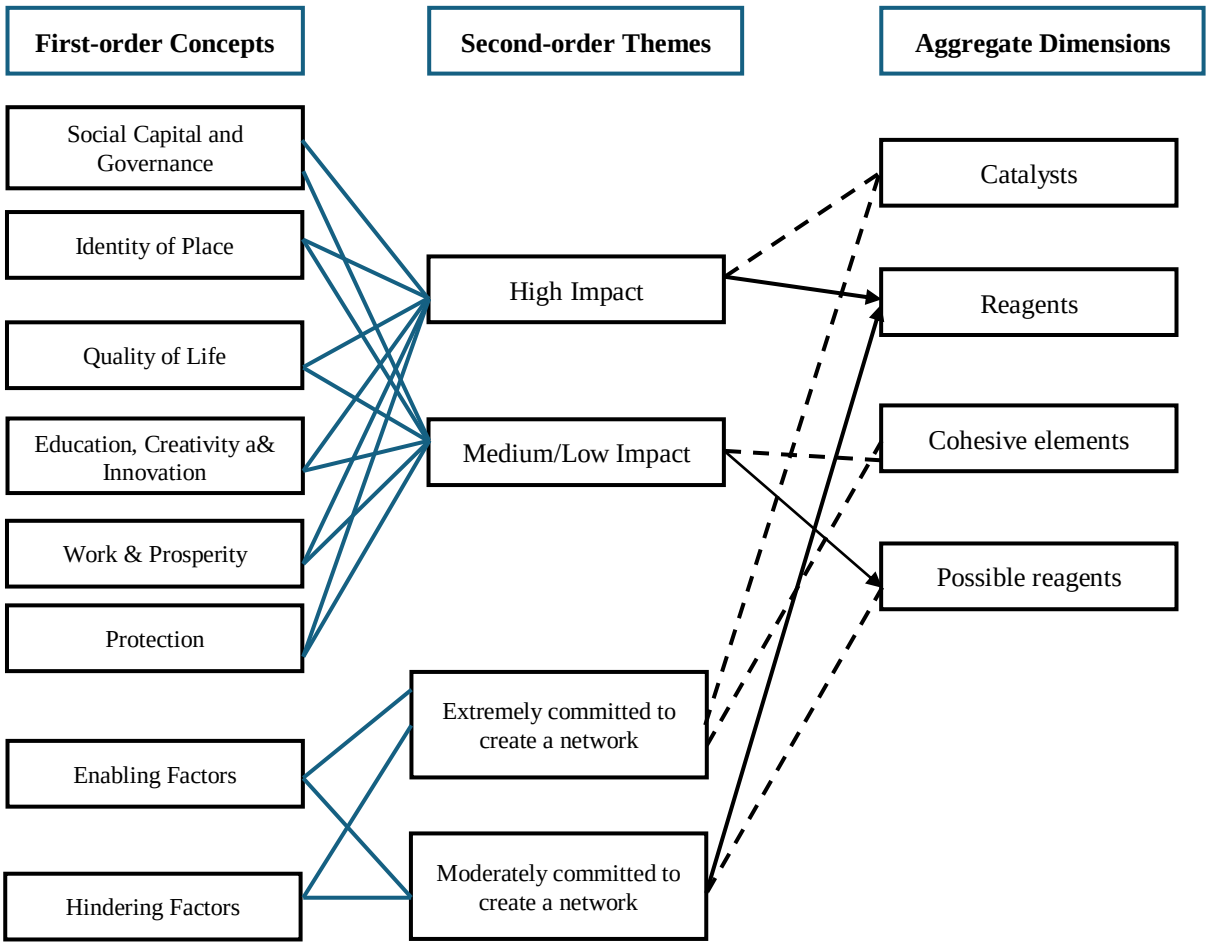
Table 2 follows a similar structure, showcasing the commitment to network creation among stakeholders. The first-order data outlines the enabling and hindering factors underlying their vision. The second-order data assess their willingness and commitment to creating a stakeholder network, rated by researchers as “Extremely” or “Moderately”.

Table 2. Commitment Toward Potential Network Creations

FIRST ORDER DATA: ECOSYSTEM VISION							
ENABLING HINDERING FACTOR	ASSOCIAZIONE PROGETTO CELIO	SOCIETA' GEOGRAFICA ITALIANA	CELIO AZZURRO	CINEMA ALLE MURA	GALLERIA D'ARTE ARCA DI NOESIS	DIGILAB SAPIENZA	CO. DE LAVORO ROMA COLOSSEO
ENABLING FACTORS	We would like to mend a broken community. My vision, the one I try to instill in everyone else, must be systemic.	Cultural assets are common goods, and there should be a common interest in fostering an integrated network creation.		It would be nice if our committee was a bonding factor for the neighbourhood.	I wanted to give Via Ostilia an art-like character. We had in mind a space that could bring forms of creativity to life. Between the craftsmanship and the art: the great comes from a multiplicity of inputs.	It was an intentional choice to include the community in the process of governance of co-creating research assets. It means that it is something that over time becomes usable, therefore sustainable	We always try to network in the end, at the neighbourhood level it would probably be interesting.
HINDERING FACTORS	Today it is difficult to activate participatory processes. Firstly, there is great fragmentation within institutions; there is never an integrated systemic vision.	Our relationship with the Celio neighbourhood is a sporadic one. Our information channels are national, possibly international, but not neighbourhood based.	We are aware of our isolation compared to the citizens of the neighbourhood.		The neighbourhood committee disappeared in the 1980s. Today this social and political dimension of the area has been lost.		
SECOND ORDER DATA: COMMITMENT							
COMMITMENT	Extremely committed	Moderately committed	Moderately committed	Extremely committed	Extremely committed	Moderately committed	Moderately committed

Structuring the data allowed us to achieve a higher level of abstraction by cross-referencing the "impacts" and "commitment" dimensions. This enabled us to visualize the mapping of stakeholders through aggregate dimensions, revealing the main roles that actors could play in constructing a network (Fig. 6). This marks the initial step in establishing a territorial cultural ecosystem.

FIG. 6 Data Structure

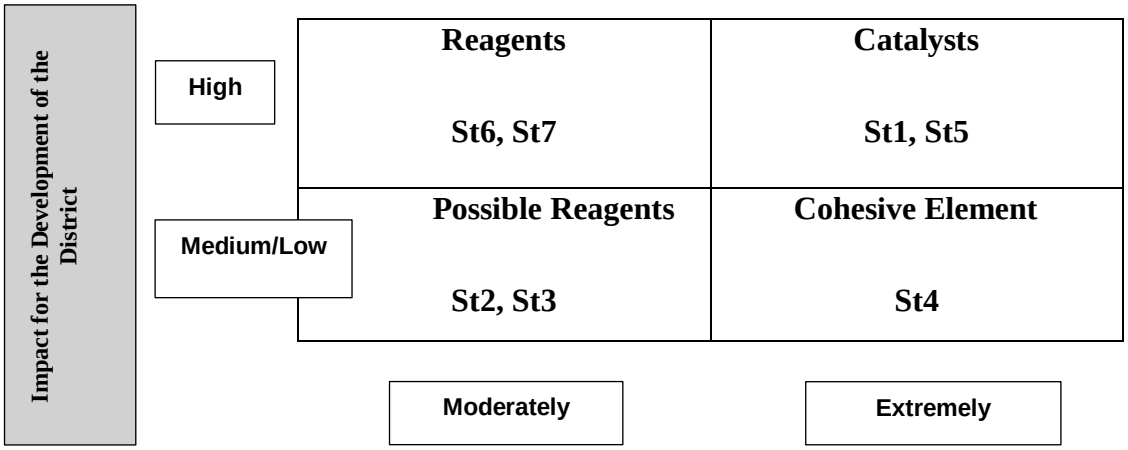


6.3 Findings and Discussions

6.3.1 A Typology of various roles in the formation of cultural networks

As illustrated in Figure 7, it has been created a 2x2 matrix and employed the analogy of a chemical reaction to describe the processes in which elements combine or transform to create something new.

FIG. 7 A typology of various roles in the formation of cultural networks



We have categorized the following roles:

- *Catalysts:* Primary, proactive and leading local actors actively driving cultural development in the district through initiatives and projects, eager to facilitate networking;
- *Reagents:* Key local entities capable of participating in network co-creation. They contribute significant impacts individually and maintain their own networks, though currently without clear intentions for collaborative synergy with other local actors;
- *Cohesive Elements:* Local actors who generate more limited impacts for the development of the neighbourhood but demonstrating a willingness to collaborate with other stakeholders, thereby fostering cohesion;
- *Potential Reagents:* Actors with cultural or social roles in the area, making smaller impacts on neighbourhood development but showing moderate interest in participating in a local network with other stakeholders.

This typology highlights the diverse roles stakeholders can play in establishing a cultural network to enhance and promote the neighbourhood. It provides a framework for discussing strategies to develop a cultural ecosystem involving public administration, public and private organizations, and community members.

CHAPTER 7. BRIDGING HERITAGE AND INNOVATION: COLLABORATIVE FUTURES FOR HISTORIC URBAN NEIGHBOURHOOD THROUGH PATRIOTTA AND HIRSCH'S ART WORLD FRAMEWORK (Contribution n.2)

This chapter continues the exploration of participatory governance by shifting attention from *who* the actors are to *how* they interact and co-produce meaning within a shared cultural environment. Although the overarching purpose of the research remains the same—to investigate how participatory models can enhance the sustainable management and valorisation of cultural heritage—each phase of the study has been guided by a specific research question and a corresponding theoretical lens.

Despite focusing on the same case setting—the Celio district in Rome—the three analyses differ in scope and interpretive approach. The evidence base and data sources are common, but interpretative frameworks applied to them vary, producing three complementary perspectives on the same urban and cultural setting.

This second contribution, corresponding to Research Question 2 (RQ2**)**, examines the dynamics among actors who operate within the Celio cultural ecosystem. It asks:

- *What dynamics emerge from their interactions, and how do these influence processes of value creation?*

To address this question, the chapter adopts the Art World framework (Becker, 1982; Patriotta & Hirsch, 2016) as its conceptual foundation. This perspective views cultural production and governance not as the outcomes of isolated institutions or individual initiatives, but as collective accomplishments shaped by conventions, negotiations, and exchanges between multiple actors. It emphasises the relational infrastructure that enables cooperation—how norms are shared, how roles evolve, and how creative practices are sustained within complex socio-cultural networks.

This chapter investigates how the actors of Celio—cultural institutions, civic associations, artists, entrepreneurs, and residents—position themselves within this web

of relations. The analysis employs Patriotta and Hirsch's typology of social roles—Mainstreamers, Mavericks, Amphibious actors, and Outsiders—as an analytical tool to understand the tensions and opportunities that arise when traditional cultural institutions encounter new, community-driven forms of creativity and innovation.

Methodologically, the research applies a qualitative interpretative design, combining semi-structured interviews, field observations, and documentary analysis. This approach makes it possible to capture both the structural aspects of collaboration (networks, alliances, coordination mechanisms) and the symbolic dimensions (shared meanings, conflicts) that underpin participatory governance processes.

The chapter proceeds as follows. Section 6.1 outlines the research question and theoretical premises of the Art World framework. Section 6.2 details the methodological design and data collection process. Section 6.3 presents the findings and discussion, examining how the interplay between different actor roles shapes collaboration, innovation, and the negotiation of cultural value within the Celio district.

By analysing the social dynamics and relational infrastructures of this local ecosystem, the chapter contributes to understanding how historic neighbourhoods may evolve into collaborative arenas where heritage and innovation coexist and mutually reinforce one another.

7.1 Introduction: RQs and Theoretical framework for actor's dynamics

This chapter explores the dynamics of collaboration and interaction among cultural actors within the context of participatory governance for cultural heritage. This specific contribution focuses on understanding how cultural networks evolve, how actors interact, and what mechanisms enable (or hinder) cooperation and innovation in heritage-rich urban environments. The underlying goal is to generate value for multiple stakeholders—particularly citizens—through inclusive and collaborative practices. In this perspective, the participation of local actors plays a decisive role in keeping communities *alive*, *lived in*, and *economically dynamic* (Dormaels, 2016).

The setting of this study is the Celio district in Rome, a neighbourhood that embodies both the richness and the fragmentation typical of heritage-intensive urban areas. Celio represents a microcosm of cultural diversity: it encompasses archaeological and artistic heritage, religious sites, natural assets, and vibrant civic associations. Despite its strategic location near the Colosseum, the area remains largely excluded from the tourist circuits that dominate the adjacent monumental zone. Instead, the district hosts a constellation of independent initiatives led by public, private, and third-sector organisations that often operate in isolation. This lack of coordination and synergy limits opportunities for collective action and innovation, constraining the area's potential to function as a truly collaborative cultural ecosystem.

By selecting this single case study (Walsham, 2006; Yin, 2018), we attempt to address important dimension of cultural networks and their broader implications for community and urban development (Cerreta et al., 2018). These objectives are designed to contribute to both theoretical understanding and practical applications, emphasizing the significance of cultural ecosystems in fostering collaboration, innovation, and inclusivity.

First, the Celio district provides a fertile ground for enhancing our understanding of collaborative networks in cultural innovation (Arnaboldi & Spiller, 2011). By examining how stakeholders in varied roles interact within this specific cultural ecosystem, the case study sheds light on the mechanisms that enable innovation in the arts and culture sector.

Second, the case study advances methodological frameworks for stakeholder mapping in the cultural field. By aligning real-world stakeholders in Celio with theoretical social types (such as Mainstreamers, Mavericks etc.) it provides a structured approach to analysing cultural ecosystems. This methodological alignment offers a replicable template for investigating other cultural initiatives, enabling scholars and practitioners to identify the roles and relationships that drive successful cultural networks.

Finally, the insights from Celio contribute to the development of sustainable cultural and urban development policies. Inclusive cultural initiatives that integrate diverse

stakeholders such as residents, cultural organizations, businesses, and public institutions, can serve as catalysts for urban renewal and community building.

It aims to offer an answer to the doctoral thesis overarching question no. 2 *"What dynamics emerge from their interactions and how do these influence processes of value creation?"*. Specifically, this contribution seeks to address the core following questions:

> *RQ1: In what ways can cultural networking contribute to community building, promoting inclusivity, and addressing tensions among diverse stakeholders?*
>
> *RQ2*: *How does the presence—or absence—of collaborative networks influence the success of cultural initiatives in Celio?*

The study contributes to both theoretical understanding and practical applications by examining the mechanisms through which collaboration can transform fragmented systems into inclusive, dynamic cultural environments.

To frame this inquiry, the chapter adopts the Dynamic Art Worlds framework developed by Patriotta and Hirsch (2016)**,** an evolution of Becker's foundational theory of *Art Worlds* (1982). This model conceptualises cultural production as a collective achievement shaped by the interactions of multiple social types—artists, institutions, civic groups, and intermediaries—whose cooperation and conventions sustain the creative ecosystem. Patriotta and Hirsch expand Becker's original framework by introducing the idea of fluid and dynamic boundaries, where actors shift roles over time and where innovation arises from boundary-spanning relationships between mainstream and peripheral participants.

Applied to the Celio case, this framework helps to interpret the network of relationships among local stakeholders—from cultural institutions and associations to civic innovators, cultural entrepreneurs and grassroots initiatives—through categories such as *Mainstreamers*, *Mavericks*, *Amphibious actors*, and *Outsiders*. These types provide an analytical lens for understanding how collaboration occurs (or fails to

occur), and how hybrid actors can bridge divides to foster innovation, inclusivity, and civic value creation.

The study also responds to a broader research gap. While existing literature on cultural networks often focuses on macro- and meso-level analyses—examining institutional structures or policy frameworks (Taylor, 1995; Jackson & Murphy, 2006; Camarinha-Matos & Macedo, 2010; Borin & Donato, 2015)—fewer studies address the micro-level dynamics that shape everyday collaboration in local cultural ecosystems. Exceptions, such as Jamal's (2004) work on participatory processes, which analyses the participatory dimension through a micro-level study of the Banff Bow Valley Round Table, drawing considerations about participation to support the management of cultural initiatives. This scarcity of systematic scholarly research on micro-level dynamics thus calls for further empirical investigations to support the formulation of guidelines and help build and manage collaborations in cultural systems. By focusing on the micro-level dynamics of cultural ecosystems in the Celio District, this study seeks to bridge this gap, examining how diverse stakeholders interact, the barriers to collaboration, and the potential for creating cohesive cultural networks. In doing so, this framework provides a foundation for future research and practical applications. It emphasizes the value of local heritage as a catalyst for cultural innovation and the necessity of cross-sector collaboration. By applying these principles, neighbourhoods like Celio can unlock their cultural potential, creating networks that not only preserve their heritage but also enrich their cultural life and identity.

7.2 Research Methodology

Consistent with the objectives of qualitative research (Denzin et al. 2006), this study seeks to explore and interpret how the potential of cultural ecosystems is expressed and realized within the Celio District. By examining the nuanced interactions among stakeholders and the mechanisms of collaboration within this urban and cultural context, the research aims to uncover the specific dynamics and processes that shape the district's cultural ecosystem.

This contribution uses a qualitative research approach and presents our findings on context analysis and stakeholder mapping, aiming at exploring cooperative links and conventions within Celio and revealing the roles of key actors in line with Patriotta and Hirsch's typology (2016). In fact, an important step in Patriotta and Hirsch's *Art Worlds* is the stakeholder's involvement, which is pivotal in this analysis, as their interactions and contributions form the foundation of the district's cultural ecosystem.

Through the context analysis, it was possible to understand the history of the neighbourhood. The case study data was gathered was collected from both primary and secondary sources, including unstructured interviews with key project stakeholders, public discussions, mapping tools, and statistical sources such as *Mappa Roma* (Lelo et al. 2021, available at: https://www.mapparoma.info/mappe/). This approach facilitates the identification of effective strategies for citizen engagement, as emphasized by Billore (2021). To gain deeper insights, semi-structured interviews were conducted, a method recognized as central to qualitative research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Semi-structured interviews provide interviewees the flexibility to share their perspectives and perceptions freely, enabling researchers to collect comprehensive data, including aspects that may not emerge from quantitative methods (Qu & Dumay, 2011). This approach aligns with the principle of qualitative inquiry, which prioritizes understanding the subjective experiences and viewpoints of participants.

The research team adopted a top-down approach to identify key actors. This decision was informed by the recognition that stakeholders play diverse and crucial roles in the development and sustainability of cultural ecosystems. This approach, surely, aligns with Patriotta and Hirsch's (2016) framework but also reflects broader scholarly consensus on the importance of stakeholder's diversity in cultural heritage research (Holden, 2004; Auclair & Fairclough, 2015; Borin & Donato, 2015). As Borin and Donato (2015) argue, engaging stakeholders across various levels enhances the capacity of cultural ecosystems to adapt and thrive, while Holden (2005) underscores the role of diverse voices in ensuring cultural initiatives are inclusive and impactful. This strategy ultimately positions the Celio district as a fertile ground for exploring the interplay of governance, collaboration, and innovation within a cultural ecosystem.

The different categories of stakeholders were considered 'relevant' in relation to their role, engagement and cultural activities that carry out in the district. Additional method used to select stakeholders for involvement is the so-called “Snowball method”. This is a non-probability sampling method of survey sample selection employed in qualitative research (Johnson, 2014). The main features of this method are "networking" and "referral." Researchers usually start with a small number of initial contacts who meet the research criteria and are invited to become research participants. Participants, who accept, are then asked to recommend other contacts who meet the research criteria and could potentially also be participants, who in turn recommend other potential participants, and so on. In the literature, because of its network characteristics and flexibility, “snowball” sampling is a useful way to select stakeholders to involve when one doesn't have all the information needed (Parker, Scott & Geddes, 2019).

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with key representatives of relevant stakeholders, who were identified as grass-root cultural associations and organizations, cultural institutions, entrepreneurs and research centre (see Annex, Figure 1). The topics addressed were the following:

1) the history of the association/organisation/institution/activity and the relationship with the territory;
2) the impacts that the association/organisation/institution/activity creates;
3) the possibility of creating a cultural ecosystem/network with the other stakeholders of the territory

The interviews aim to understand the cultural and social context, and discuss concerns and challenges related to the regeneration and future development of the district. They are conducted to gain insight into the communities’ perspective. Eight semi-structured interviews were conducted between the end of 2023 and the beginning of 2024. Each interview lasted approximately 60 to 90 minutes.

7.2.1 Data analysis

Miles et al. (2014) suggested that data analysis should be an ongoing process. We analysed the available data iteratively to develop an interpretative framework, which emphasizes the dynamic nature of cultural networks. Based on the interviews conducted with stakeholders, their roles were categorized following the framework proposed by Patriotta and Hirsch (2016). The analysis of interview data allowed for the identification of these roles within the Celio District's cultural ecosystem, offering insights into the diverse contributions, challenges, and interactions among stakeholders. This framework provided a structured approach to understanding how stakeholders interact, contribute to, and shape the district's cultural ecosystem. Key themes emerged through the analysis, highlighting both challenges and opportunities within the district. The most pressing challenges included the erosion of community engagement due to overtourism, the displacement of cultural spaces by commercial ventures, and the fragmentation of stakeholder interactions. Despite these barriers, stakeholders expressed shared aspirations for collaboration, sustainable cultural tourism, and the preservation of the district's unique heritage.

7.2.2 Data Structure

The data structure was crucial to our research approach. The data structure of this study integrates a triangulated methodology, combining primary and secondary sources to offer a holistic understanding of the cultural dynamics in the Celio District. The integration of semi-structured interviews, secondary data, and observations ensured depth, contextual accuracy, and validation of findings. Semi-structured provided critical insights into stakeholder perceptions, their roles within the cultural ecosystem, and the challenges they face. This method was chosen for its flexibility, enabling participants to articulate their views openly, while allowing the research team to probe deeper into specific areas of interest (Qu & Dumay 2011). This method was complemented by secondary data analysis, which contextualized the socio-economic transformations in the district (Sontum et al. 2018), while direct observations at community and public discussions added dynamic, real-world perspectives to the dataset. Stakeholders were classified into four roles, mainstreamers, mavericks,

amphibious actors, and outsiders, based on their activities and interactions, following Patriotta and Hirsch's (2016) framework. This categorization will be discussed in detail in the findings section. By integrating data from diverse sources and applying an analytical framework, the study highlights the need for cohesive governance strategies, the empowerment of boundary-spanning actors, and the development of mechanisms to address resource disparities.

7.3 Findings and Discussion

7.3.1 Findings

The analysis of stakeholder interactions within the Celio district reveals a multifaceted and fragmented cultural ecosystem in which collaboration, innovation, and inclusivity coexist in tension. Drawing on Patriotta and Hirsch's (2016) reinterpretation of Becker's (1982) Art Worlds, this section explores how different actors position themselves within this local network and how their relationships shape the capacity for collective action. The framework identifies several social types—Mainstreamers, Mavericks, Amphibious Actors, and Outsiders—each representing a distinct role within the ecosystem. These types are not rigid categories but dynamic positions that stakeholders may shift between over time, depending on their resources, legitimacy, and relational strategies.

Through this typology, the Celio case illustrates both the potential and fragility of cultural collaboration in a heritage-rich but socially fragmented environment. Interviews and field observations highlight how institutional authority, grassroots creativity, and boundary-spanning mediation intertwine to form a complex web of relationships. Yet, while these roles contribute to the district's vitality, the absence of a unifying governance structure often prevents the emergence of a coherent and sustainable cultural network. These categories capture not only the diversity of positions within the cultural network but also the tensions that shape its evolution over time.

- *Mainstreamers: stability with limited local engagement*

Mainstreamers are institutional actors with significant resources, institutional legitimacy, and dedicated to maintaining dominant conventions. However, they often operate independently of grassroots initiatives. The "Società Geografica Italiana", a cultural institute active in the dissemination, scientific research, and education of geographic studies with a focus on digital innovation, could be identified as a prominent mainstreamer. During the interview, a representative stated: *"We focus on preserving national and international cultural assets. Local collaborations are rare but could add value to our mission"*. While this highlights their role in ensuring stability, it also underscores their limited local engagement with local actors. Similarly, "Associazione Progetto Celio", a cultural association, which advocates for large-scale projects like Parco del Celio, focuses on preserving the district's cultural identity through the reconnection of a disintegrated community, adopts a Mainstreamer role. A representative remarked: *"Our aim is to advocate for projects like Parco del Celio to revitalize the area while maintaining its cultural identity"*. This demonstrates their focus on structured, heritage-focused initiatives that prioritize preservation over grassroots adaptability. While mainstreamers provide essential resources and ensure cultural continuity, their limited collaboration with grassroots actors creates barriers to achieving a cohesive and integrated cultural network.

- *Mavericks: innovation at the margins*

Mavericks are stakeholders who challenge traditional norms, bringing fresh perspectives and grassroots innovation to the cultural ecosystem. Despite their creative contributions, they often face systemic barriers such as limited resources and institutional recognition. For example, "Cinema alle Mura", a grassroots initiative part of the broader project Mura Latine Committee, exemplifies the maverick role by transforming public spaces into cultural hubs. As noted by a representative: *"Our work transforms public spaces into cultural hubs. However, financial constraints limit how often we can organize events"*. Despite these limitations, their programming fosters community engagement and revitalizes the district, in the summer months as the core

activities they pursuit is the projection of film on the Aurelian wall in the historic centre of Rome. Similarly, “Scuola di Recitazione Videnì”, a performing act school, reflects maverick dynamics through its creative educational methods to engage youth in acting. As the director stated: *“Our approach is unconventional—teaching youth acting techniques as a form of personal and cultural expression”*. While their methods are impactful, the lack of institutional support limits their broader reach.

- *Amphibious Actors: bridging divides*

Amphibious actors mediate between grassroots and institutional stakeholders, navigating both social and symbolic boundaries to foster collaboration and inclusivity. These actors are instrumental in bridging gaps within the district’s fragmented ecosystem. First of all, “Celio Azzurro”, an intercultural centre dedicated to childhood, exemplifies this role through its efforts to connect grassroots needs with institutional priorities. As one representative noted: *“We aim to be a bridge, connecting grassroots needs with broader institutional goals, while ensuring the district’s identity remains intact”*. Then, “Co.de Lavoro”, a design- driven coworking space in the centre of Rome in which there is within a cultural association Möbius, created as a contemporary "Wunderkammer," a space devoted to the arts and debate, also embodies the amphibious actor role. By integrating coworking, event and exhibition spaces with the district’s cultural heritage, they illustrate how modern needs can align with cultural preservation. A staff member highlighted: *“Our space combines modern coworking with the cultural backdrop of Celio, showing how heritage can serve contemporary needs”*. Similarly, “Research Centre DigiLab” bridges technological innovation with cultural heritage, facilitating connections across stakeholder groups. Their representative emphasized: *“Our mission is to leverage digital tools to make heritage accessible and create synergies between tradition and modernity”*. Furthermore, “Associazione Progetto Celio”**,** in addition to its mainstreamer role, acts as an amphibious actor by fostering collaboration among diverse stakeholders. A representative observed: *“We see ourselves as facilitators, bringing together institutions and local communities for shared projects”*. These actors play a pivotal role in mediating tensions between mainstream preservation and grassroots innovation, promoting cohesion and adaptability within the ecosystem.

- *Outsiders: marginalized but innovative actors*

Outsiders contribute radical and unconventional ideas that challenge established norms. However, their lack of resources and institutional visibility often marginalizes them within the cultural ecosystem. "Galleria d'Arte Arca de Noesis", a cultural association deputed as an art gallery, operates as an outsider. As its founder explained: *"We operate on passion. Visibility and funding remain our biggest challenges, but we aim to create meaningful cultural spaces for artists"*. This highlights their contribution to fostering creativity and supporting emerging artists, despite systemic barriers.

Outsiders enrich the district's cultural diversity but require mechanisms for inclusion and resource-sharing to amplify their impact and insure their sustainability.

7.3.2 Discussion

The discussion part synthesizes key themes derived from the findings, supported by insights from stakeholder interviews and aligned with Patriotta and Hirsch's (2016) typology. These themes highlight the complexities of the Celio District's cultural ecosystem and provide a foundation for understanding its challenges and opportunities. The perspectives of stakeholders illustrate how fragmented networks, resource disparities, inclusivity efforts, and the tension between heritage preservation and modernization influence the district's cultural dynamics, in addressing the current state of non-collaboratives stakeholders that pursuit and work in such district.

First of all, a significant challenge identified in the Celio District is the fragmentation of its cultural ecosystem. Mainstreamers, Mavericks, Amphibious actors, and Outsiders often operate in silos, with limited formal mechanisms for collaboration. This lack of interconnection undermines the collective potential of stakeholders to create a cohesive cultural network. Several stakeholders acknowledged this fragmentation. For instance, a representative from Società Geografica Italiana noted: *"Our focus has been on maintaining international cultural projects. While local engagement could enhance our work, there hasn't been a structured way to build those connections"*. Amphibious actors like Celio Azzurro highlighted their role in bridging

these divides. Their representative stated: *"We try to connect institutional actors with grassroots voices, but it's an ongoing challenge. Trust and communication between these groups are often missing"*. This reinforces the importance of fostering boundary-spanning roles and formalized platforms for collaboration (Ansell & Gash 2008; Patriotta & Hirsch, 2016).

Other key theme that has emerged from the interviews in the inequalities of resources among stakeholders, that is certainly a critical barrier to sustainability and inclusivity. Mainstreamers, such as Società Geografica Italiana, enjoy access to funding and institutional legitimacy, allowing them to maintain stability. However, Mavericks and Outsiders face persistent challenges in securing financial support and visibility. A representative from Cinema alle Mura described this issue: *"We operate on a shoestring budget, relying on volunteers and donations. Meanwhile, larger institutions have access to grants and government funding. It's an uneven playing field"*. Similarly, the founder of Galleria Arca de Noesis noted: *"Passion drives our work, but without resources, it's hard to sustain meaningful cultural activities or support emerging artists"*. Amphibious actors play a vital role in addressing these disparities by mediating resource-sharing opportunities. Co.de Lavoro exemplifies this potential, with its director stating: *"By blending coworking with cultural heritage, we create opportunities for both economic and cultural stakeholders to thrive together"*. However, as several stakeholders emphasized, systemic changes are needed to ensure equitable resource distribution.

Further key theme is inclusivity and accessibility, both central in creating a sustainable cultural ecosystem, yet they remain significant challenges in the Celio District. While Mainstreamers often prioritize formalized projects, Mavericks and Outsiders focus on community-centred initiatives that engage marginalized voices. Amphibious actors play a pivotal role in fostering inclusivity by creating spaces for dialogue and collaboration. The importance of inclusivity was emphasized by Celio Azzurro, whose representative stated: *"Our educational programs are designed to ensure that everyone, from long-time residents to new migrants, feels part of the district's cultural identity. Inclusivity isn't just a goal; it's a necessity"*. Similarly, Scuola di Recitazione Videnì highlighted the transformative power of grassroots cultural engagement: *"Our*

workshops give young people a voice. Many of them wouldn't have access to these opportunities otherwise". However, outsiders as Galleria Arca de Noesis face systemic exclusion. One artist remarked: *"Cultural events often feel geared toward tourists or elites. There's little room for experimental work or voices from the margins"*. Addressing these gaps will require more robust mechanisms to amplify the contributions of marginalized stakeholders and integrate them into the broader network.

Besides, the tension between preserving cultural heritage and adapting to modern urban demands is a recurring theme in the Celio District. Mainstreamers, such as Associazione Progetto Celio, focus on preserving the district's identity through structured heritage projects. A representative stated: *"Parco del Celio is about maintaining the essence of this neighbourhood in the face of urbanization. We see heritage preservation as a way to protect its future"*. In contrast, Mavericks and Amphibious actors advocate for adaptive approaches that blend heritage with contemporary needs. Co.de Lavoro exemplifies this perspective, with their director explaining: *"Heritage isn't just about preservation, it's about making it relevant for today. By integrating coworking and cultural programming, we show how history can inform modern innovation"*. This dichotomy was also evident in the perspectives of grassroots actors like Cinema alle Mura, who noted: *"Cultural preservation is important, but it can't be static. Engaging the community in creative ways is just as vital"*.

7.3.2.1 Fragmentation and the non-collaborative state of stakeholders in the Celio district

The Celio District's cultural ecosystem is marked by significant fragmentation, with stakeholders operating independently and often failing to engage in collaborative networks. This non-collaborative state, characterized by conflicting interests, power imbalances, and resource disparities, reflects challenges documented in cultural network literature (Zukin, 1995; Belfiore, 2002; Tunisini & Marchiori, 2020; Moretti & Zirpoli, 2016). Drawing on insights from stakeholder interviews, we would like to examine the factors of this fragmentation, contextualizing them within the district's

dynamics and exploring opportunities for fostering collaboration. In fact, from the analysis of the interviews conducted with stakeholders in the Celio District, has emerged a lack of synergies and collaboration among stakeholders, where diverse actors pursue their activities independently without engaging in connections or partnerships. This fragmentation is consistent with literature that highlights the factors contributing to stakeholder isolation within cultural networks.

Interviews with stakeholders in the Celio District reveal significant fragmentation and the underlying dynamics contributing to this state. Società Geografica Italiana, for instance, highlighted its focus on international heritage preservation, stating: *"Our projects are designed with a global perspective, which leaves little room for engaging with local initiatives"*. This statement underscores a common trend among Mainstreamers, where institutional priorities overshadow local collaboration, reinforcing the isolation of smaller actors like grassroots organizations. On the other hand, Cinema alle Mura, a Maverick, expressed frustration at the lack of support from larger institutions: *"We've tried to reach out to some of the bigger organizations, but there's no response. It feels like they're not interested in what smaller groups like us are doing"*. Similarly, Celio Azzurro**,** an Amphibious actor, articulated the challenges of bridging the divide between grassroots and institutional stakeholders: *"There's so much potential for collaboration, but no one wants to take the first step. Institutions are hesitant, and smaller groups are wary of being overshadowed"*.

The non-collaborative state in the Celio District is driven by several interrelated factors. The insights from stakeholder interviews point to four primary drivers: competing priorities, resource disparities and a lack of communication and trust. Together, these factors create an environment where stakeholders operate independently, missing opportunities for collaboration and mutual enrichment.

One significant barrier to collaboration is the divergence in stakeholders' goals and timelines. Mainstreamers such as Società Geografica Italiana focus on long-term heritage preservation and international cultural projects. As one representative explained, their activities are designed to maintain cultural heritage on a global scale, often leaving little room for engaging with local initiatives. In contrast, grassroots

organizations like Cinema alle Mura prioritize immediate community engagement through cultural events that connect residents to their environment, in fact the founder of Cinema alle Mura described their approach as centred on revitalizing public spaces. This mismatch between institutional priorities and grassroots objectives creates a disconnect that limits opportunities for partnership. Diverging timelines and objectives, as Zukin (1995) points out, often lead stakeholders to pursue their goals independently, reinforcing divisions and making collaboration difficult.

Resource disparities add another layer of complexity to the non-collaborative state in the Celio District. Outsiders such as Galleria Arca de Noesis encounter substantial difficulties in securing the resources necessary to maintain their activities. The gallery's founder expressed that their limited resources make collaboration a secondary concern, as survival remains their primary focus. As Borin and Donato (2015) have argued, resource disparities undermine the potential for collective action and perpetuate silos rather than fostering networks of cooperation.

A recurring theme across the interviews is the absence of trust and open communication among stakeholders, further exacerbating fragmentation. Celio Azzurro, an amphibious actor attempting to mediate between institutional and grassroots actors, observed that without dialogue, it is impossible to find common ground.

Despite the challenges, several stakeholders expressed a willingness to collaborate if appropriate structures and incentives were in place. Cinema alle Mura, for instance, stated: *"We're open to working with anyone who shares our values of community and inclusivity. What we need is a framework to make it happen".* Similarly, Co.de Lavoro highlighted the potential of shared spaces to foster collaboration: *"Our model proves that when people come together in the right environment, amazing things can happen"*. The non-collaborative state in the Celio District aligns with broader challenges discussed in the literature. Stakeholder interviews demonstrate how these issues manifest in practice, emphasizing the difficulties in creating a cohesive cultural network. Empowering boundary-spanning actors, promoting inclusivity, and addressing resource inequalities are key steps to moving from fragmentation to

collaboration. These actions have the potential to strengthen individual stakeholders while fostering a more vibrant and sustainable cultural ecosystem.

CHAPTER 8. FROM HERITAGE TO WELL-BEING: PUBLIC ORCHESTRATION AND CIVIC WEALTH CREATION IN HISTORIC CITY CENTRES (Contribution no 3)

Although this research pursues a common overarching goal—to explore how participatory governance can contribute to the sustainable management and valorisation of Cultural Heritage (CH)—this objective has been articulated into three distinct RQs, each examined through a specific theoretical lens. The three perspectives—the Cultural Ecosystem Approach, Art Worlds Theory, and the Civic Wealth Creation (CWC) Framework—have enabled a progressive and multifaceted analysis of the phenomenon, capturing its systemic, relational, and ultimately civic and socio-economic dimensions.

Consequently, although the context analysed is unique (the Celio district) and the data sources are shared across all analyses, the processes of data collection, interpretation, and elaboration have been differentiated, as they were guided by the epistemological assumptions and analytical tools of each theoretical lens. This approach has led to the development of three complementary case studies, which together outline an integrated vision of participatory governance in the management of cultural heritage.

Chapter 8 fits within this broader framework and develops the third broad research question of the doctoral thesis (RQ3): *How is cultural, social, and economic value produced and sustained through participatory governance arrangements*?

To address this question, the chapter adopts the theoretical perspective of the Civic Wealth Creation Framework (CWC) (Lumpkin & Bacq, 2019), later adapted to the field of Cultural Heritage following the study of Aureli, Del Baldo & Demartini (2021; 2023). Within this framework, cultural heritage is not merely a resource to be preserved but a driver of civic regeneration, capable of generating collective wealth—economic, social, and symbolic—through processes of collaboration, innovation, and active participation.

This contribution explores how Public Administration (PA) can engage local communities in the governance of cultural heritage (CH) to enhance quality of life, using the Celio district of Rome as a case study. A historic area near the Colosseum, Celio has been significantly affected by overtourism, leading to social and cultural disruption. Framed by the concept of CWC, the research investigates collaborative dynamics among key stakeholders—communities, supporters, and entrepreneurs—facilitated by a public orchestrator. Employing an action-research methodology, the study evaluates the impact of the newly opened Archaeological Park and Museum in Celio. The paper argues that sustainable CH governance requires structured orchestration, community-centred design, and narrative integration to enhance urban well-being. Our findings offer actionable insights for public authorities and cultural institutions.

The following chapter is structured into three sections. Section 8.1 introduces the RQ and theoretical framework, highlighting how value is generated through participatory governance and the lens of CWC. Section 8.2 outlines the methodology, describing the qualitative approach, the Celio case study, and the data collection process. Finally, Section 8.3 presents the findings and discussion, organised around the three mechanisms of the CWC framework—engaged participation, collaborative innovation, and resource mobilization—showing how these dynamics contribute to civic value creation and collective well-being.

In this way, Chapter 8 does not merely describe an applied case, but interprets it as a dynamic synthesis of the processes explored throughout the thesis, demonstrating how public–community collaboration can translate into civic wealth and cultural regeneration**.**

8.1 Introduction

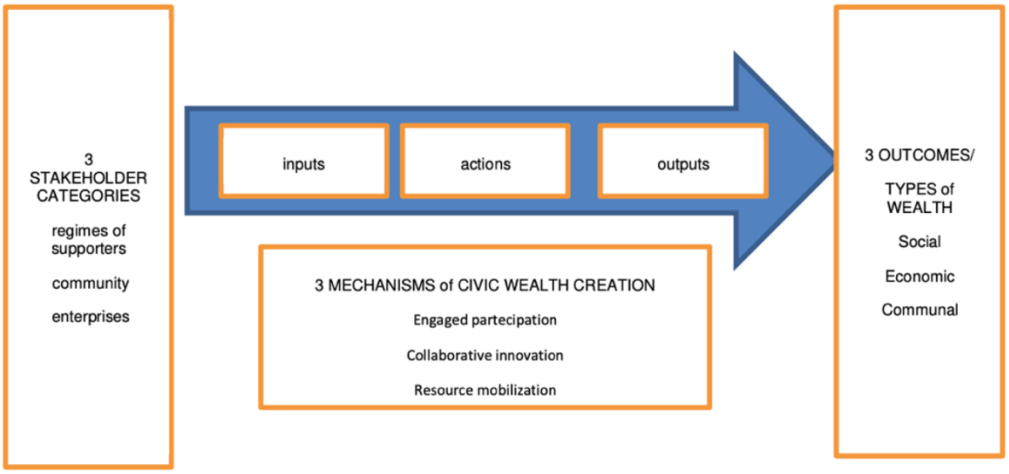
Cultural Heritage (CH) is increasingly acknowledged as a fundamental lever for fostering social impact and enhancing overall quality of life. CH, in all its forms—both tangible and intangible—is a valuable resource that generates intrinsic values (Throsby, 1999)—whether aesthetic, historical, spiritual-religious, social, or symbolic (Throsby, 2003)—which form the roots and legacy that communities and societies

transmit from one generation to the next. The experience of CH significantly contributes to the well-being of both individuals and communities (Biondi et al., 2020). Such benefits encompass the reinforcement of collective identities, the promotion of social cohesion and creative expression (Lenzerini, 2011) placing people at the heart of its stewardship. Moreover, interventions on CH bear considerable economic potential serving as a catalyst for tourism (Timothy & Nyaupane, 2009), underpinning cultural initiatives (Del Barrio et al., 2012), and acting as a source of inspiration for design innovation and artisanal production (Friel & Santagata, 2008). CH need to be sustained in its relevance and vitality; it must be carefully preserved and continually revitalized. In fact, the Faro Convention of the Council of Europe (2005) emphasizes that CH is a common good that depends on the presence of a community to sustain and renew it. Community become a spontaneous and dynamic subject of action, linked by a shared interest in heritage (Colomer, 2023). Communities that serve as custodians of widespread CH are increasingly threatened by complex socio-economic phenomena such as migration and depopulation in rural and deprived areas, mass tourism and gentrification in historic city centres. These dynamics weaken and displace the communities that are essential to addressing to preserve and revitalize CH, due to their deep-rooted connections to place, culture, and values. In more detail, in cities with strong tourism economies, overtourism (Amore et al., 2020; Higgins, 2020) has produced a comparable effect: the exodus of local communities from historic centres. Tourist congestion, rising living costs, and the proliferation of visitor-oriented businesses push residents to relocate, depriving cities of their most vital resource—the local community. So, research calls for solutions that reinvigorate or regenerate cultural heritage preserving the link with their communities. To address this complexity, the framework of Civic Wealth Creation (CWC), introduced by Lumpkin and Bacq (2019), and applied to the context of CH-led regeneration projects by Aureli et al. (2023) may offer a valuable lens for investigate how to enhance CH and preserve the link with local communities.

CWC explains how cross-sector and multi-actor collaboration can enhance community wealth by generating impacts that extend beyond the tangible value produced for individual stakeholders or organizations (Brenton & Slawinski, 2023; Fortunato & Alter, 2015; Fröcklin et al., 2018). Scholars are debating that CWC may serve as a

possible answer to the existence of a questionable just world (Hertel, Bacq, & Lumpkin, 2020) by addressing economic, social, and communal problems (Lumpkin & Bacq, 2019). It might also play a huge role in building communities through innovation, stakeholder engagement, and novel problem-solving techniques (Lumpkin & Bacq, 2019).

FIG.8 *CWC Framework*



As shown in Figure 8 the original framework rests on three interconnected layers:

1. Stakeholder Categories – typically involving three types of actors:
   - Supporters (e.g., public administrations, policy enablers),
   - Communities (e.g., residents, civic associations, activists),
   - Enterprises (e.g., cultural and creative businesses, cooperatives).
2. Mechanisms – the operational core of CWC, through which civic wealth is actively co-produced:
   - Engaged Participation, where diverse actors are meaningfully included in governance processes,
   - Collaborative Innovation, through which novel solutions and hybrid governance forms emerge,

- Resource Mobilization, defined as the shared use of tangible and intangible resources.

3. Outcomes – the forms of wealth generated through these mechanisms:
   - Social (e.g., trust, inclusion),
   - Economic (e.g., sustainable entrepreneurship, local value chains),
   - Communal (e.g., symbolic identity, sense of place).

What makes the CWC framework innovative is the collective action achieved through the collaboration of multiple stakeholders and regular citizens with different logics. The mechanisms for CWC creation occur only when the different stakeholders intentionally pursue a joint interest (Lumpkin & Bacq, 2019).

In a recent study on CH as a lever for generating societal impact, Demartini et al. (2024) explored the dynamics of collaboration among cultural associations in a historic district in the city centre of Rome. This area has been affected by over-tourism, which, in recent years, has disrupted local well-being and daily life. Numerous residential properties have been converted into holiday rentals, while traditional artisanal shops have been replaced by tourist-oriented retail stores and night life venues. Building on this context as a paradigmatic case, the authors examined whether and how local cultural actors (public, private and not for profit organisations) could actively engage local communities and citizens in taking care of heritage assets and maintaining alive the identity of places, ultimately enhancing citizens' quality of life.

These studies—part of a consistent research trajectory—are grounded in the idea that a shared commitment of citizens and communities to enhancing local well-being is essential for the success of CH-driven regeneration initiatives (Franch, 2020). This is connected to the belief that individuals can evolve into "cultural citizens" —active participants in cultural life—who contribute to cultivating culture as a driver of endogenous development, ultimately generating long-term value for the local community (Sacco & Segre, 2009).

This theoretical framing underpins our analysis of the orchestration strategies used to mobilize civic engagement. It also informs our evaluation of the projects' ability to produce civic wealth—not only as an outcome, but as a process of relational, cultural, and political significance.

Reflecting on these core issues, and refining the overarching doctoral thesis research query no 3, the detailed question of this contribution is:

- *How can PA activate urban regeneration processes that preserve local heritage, involve local stakeholders, place communities at the centre, and finally enhance the citizens' quality of life?*

The study adopts a qualitative methodology – conceiving the case study as a real-world "laboratory" for action research as researchers collaborate with local stakeholders to co-design and test community engagement strategies. The research is embedded in a formal collaboration between Roma Tre University and the Rome Superintendency and focuses on the evaluation of a specific initiative launched by the Municipality of Rome, as part of a broader project for the regeneration of Rome's historic centre (Progetto Car.Me), linked to the newly opened Archaeological Park and Museum in the Celio district. The latter is a historic neighbourhood located adjacent to the Colosseum, which has in recent years undergone significant transformation due to overtourism. Residential housing has been increasingly converted into short-term rentals, and traditional commercial activities have been replaced by tourism-driven businesses. Despite these pressures, Celio retains a strong cultural identity and active local associations. The district's current phase—marked by the establishment of a new archaeological museum—offers a unique opportunity to test how heritage-led strategies can revitalize civic life.

8.2 Methodology

This contribution adopts a qualitative research design, focused on a case study method and guided by the principle of action research. Action research (Avison et al., 1999; O'Brien, 1998) is particularly suited to this study as it is both participatory and iterative, enabling the research team to engage with stakeholders and foster change.

The objective is to explore how public initiatives grounded in CH—specifically the *Progetto Car.Me* in the Celio district—contribute to CWC through collaborative governance and stakeholder engagement. The case study was selected for its paradigmatic relevance: the Celio district, located in the heart of Rome near the Colosseum, is currently undergoing an urban regeneration following by the recent opening of the Archaeological Park and Museum, an initiative that seeks to reactivate the district's cultural vibrancy. This context offers a “living lab” to observe and assess participatory governance mechanisms and the civic value generated through public intervention.

In fact, in the context of our case study, all these dynamics take on a particularly complex and layered form. New governance configurations are emerging, in which PA act as orchestrators—not only coordinating urban regeneration efforts but explicitly pursuing social and economic impacts that align with community well-being. At the same time, institutional actors such as the Rome Superintendency assume a dual role: as guardians of cultural authenticity and as facilitators of cultural transmission. Their priorities emphasize the long-term preservation of identity, education, and symbolic meaning—elements of what might be called "Culture with a capital C". Thus, the Celio case study provides a concrete setting in which the CWC framework can be operationalized and examined. It allows us to explore how different actors—public, institutional, and civic—engage in co-producing value.

8.2.1 Data Collection

Primary data were gathered through semi-structured interviews conducted between the end of 2023 and 2025 with key stakeholders involved in or impacted by the project. The interviews lasted about 90 minutes each and have been addressed to no.13 informant people, selected as key representatives of the main institutions involved in the heritage regeneration project.
These interviews were organised into two main groups:

- *Institutional actors*: particularly representatives of the PA and cultural authorities (e.g., the person in charge of the urban redevelopment project

approved by the Mayor of Rome and by the city councillor for culture; and two key representatives of the museum in the archaeological zone, who work for the Rome Superintendency). These interviews explored their strategic vision, objectives for urban regeneration, and their role as orchestrators within the CWC framework, aligned with the research questions.

- *Local stakeholders:* including cultural operators, educators, and entrepreneurs active in the district. Participants included: a person in charge of a large civic association based in the district; two small social entrepreneurs who organise cultural initiatives and events for artists; representatives of four cultural associations located in the area; an educator who represents the network of public and private organisations that provide primary education in the area; the responsible for a research centre involved in project of digital transformation of an archaeological site and, finally, the representative of a large private cultural tourism operator granted the management of a well-known archaeological site located in the area.

These interviews focused on stakeholder perceptions of the project, specifically their awareness and evaluation of the benefits derived from *Progetto Car.Me*, including social, cultural, and economic impacts. In addition, the authors gathered public and internal documents of the organizations/associations interviewed. These included information retrieved from official websites, organizational statutes, strategic planning documents, records of public meetings, and content shared via social media platforms. These materials were analysed to complement and triangulate the data collected through interviews, ensuring a richer and more reliable interpretation of the case.

8.2.2 Data Analysis

The interview data were analysed using content meaning analysis, a method that seeks to identify, interpret, and synthesise recurring themes, perceptions, and value judgments in participants' narratives (Hsiel &Shannon, 2005). Attention was given to extracting key excerpts that reflected the multi-dimensional impacts of the initiative and the nature of collaborative dynamics across stakeholder groups. This interpretive approach allows for capturing the richness and complexity of stakeholder engagement

in a real-world setting, making it especially well-suited for exploring the mechanisms outlined in the CWC framework (engaged participation, collaborative innovation, and resource mobilization). The qualitative insights were triangulated with public project documents, strategic communications from the Municipality of Rome, and the institutional activities of the Superintendency to ensure coherence and contextual grounding. Through this methodology, the study aims to provide both empirical evidence and critical reflection on how heritage-led urban regeneration can serve as a catalyst for CWC in contemporary city governance.

8.3 Findings and Discussion: an analysis of the three CWC mechanisms

The case of Celio reveals a fragile but active civic ecosystem, where institutional ambitions and grassroots energies intersect, sometimes harmoniously, often in tension. Applying the threefold lens of CWC—engaged participation, collaborative innovation, and resource mobilization—we observe not a fully functional civic economy, but a complex civic process in the making. While each of these mechanisms manifests across various actors and practices in the district, they do so in isolated, episodic, and often disconnected ways.

8.3.1 Engaged Participation

If participation is the first mechanism of CWC, Celio district shows both a strong desire to participate and a structural difficulty in doing so. Engaged participation entails the active involvement of community members and local actors in shaping shared visions and decision-making processes. Across stakeholder interviews, a strong desire for involvement emerged—yet participation is often symbolic, episodic, or informal. Several actors noted that the Museum and the *Progetto Car.Me* were perceived as externally imposed: "*We weren't really involved in the design phase. We were informed after things were already decided.*"

While civic associations and schools have engaged in co-curated activities—especially educational initiatives—the lack of structured channels for engagement prevents

consistent and inclusive participation. As one stakeholder noted: *"We try to contribute, but there's no clear process or invitation. It feels like you need to know someone inside."* In contrast, institutional actors expressed intentions to foster dialogue, yet often viewed participation as communication or consultation, rather than co-decision-making.

8.3.2 Collaborative Innovation

The second mechanism of CWC—collaborative innovation—refers to the capacity of different stakeholders to co-create new approaches, services, or solutions through joint experimentation.

There are clear examples of creative experimentation in Celio:

- Coopculture's storytelling projects and immersive heritage tours,
- A local coworking space organized cultural events to connect creative workers with residents,
- The Forma Urbis Museum's *"A piedi scalzi nella città"* project, fostering sensory education and territorial identity among local youth.

These examples embody the second CWC mechanism—collaborative innovation—demonstrating that diverse logics (public, civic, entrepreneurial) can co-create new cultural meanings and services. However, these innovations remain disconnected from one another and from a broader strategic framework. As noted during coordination meetings: *"Each initiative is valuable, but they don't speak to each other. There's no structure tying them into a larger plan."*

8.3.3 Resource Mobilization

The third mechanism—resource mobilization—is, perhaps, where the fragility of the Celio civic ecosystem is most evident. Resource mobilization involves aligning tangible and intangible resources—funding, knowledge, time, networks—for collective benefit. The neighbourhood is rich in institutions, in historical density, in symbolic capital but in practice the Celio context reveals abundant but underutilized

resources. The Forma Urbis Museum structure is architecturally and symbolically powerful but still lacks full public accessibility and spatial equipment (e.g., conference rooms, but it will be realized in the future). The economic actors in the district are weak, with traditional crafts disappearing and most commercial activity oriented toward tourism rather than civic engagement. As noted in internal evaluations: *"There are resources, but they're not mobilized collaboratively. Everyone works in parallel."*

Taken together, these findings highlight the coexistence of participatory dynamics and persistent structural weaknesses within the Celio context. The three mechanisms of CWC emerge in practice—through moments of collaboration, experimentation, and civic engagement—yet remain fragmented and only partially integrated. This partial activation of the CWC process provides the foundation for the following discussion, which examines how these mechanisms interact, what constrains their full potential, and how public orchestration and shared narratives could transform them into a more coherent and sustainable governance model.

- *Role of Public Institutions*

The Public Administration (PA) and the Rome Superintendency play central but distinct roles in the regeneration of Celio. The Superintendency is primarily tasked with the safeguarding, restoration, and promotion of CH. Its operations are deeply rooted in conservation logic, with a workforce of specialized professionals selected for their expertise. This institutional culture emphasizes protection and educational initiatives but places limited focus on fostering collaborative networks with civic actors or local organizations. However, officials from the Superintendency involved in the Museum of Forma Urbis expressed a clear desire to evolve toward greater community integration, stating: *"We would like to become a point of reference for the neighbourhood and to open up to the citizens. These are ambitious goals, only partially achieved".* This signals an important cultural shift—albeit still in progress—toward recognizing the museum not only as a heritage institution but as a potential civic anchor within the district. Conversely, the PA, particularly through the leadership of the *Progetto Car.Me*, adopts a more explicitly civic-facing agenda. The project envisions a new public space open to surrounding neighbourhoods and integrated into

a broader urban strategy, including soft mobility and improved accessibility for residents. Through *Progetto Car.Me,* as one planner described, the PA intends to reopen the city to its citizens—those overwhelmed by dominant tourist flows in which monumental areas tend to become standardized in style and consumption, losing alternative cultural and economic opportunities, and eventually becoming less interesting for both residents and travellers. As such, the best tourism policy is not the one focused on tourists, but the one directed toward citizens. To succeed in this vision, the participation and empowerment of local communities must be placed at the centre of urban policy. This requires not only structured engagement processes but also continuous evaluation of socio-economic impacts, adaptive governance frameworks, and the development of innovative management models. Without these, even the most well-intentioned public projects risk reinforcing existing fragmentations rather than enabling genuine civic wealth creation.

- *Lack of "Humus" for CWC Collaboration – A Fragmented Context*

The process of CWC in Celio is not absent, but rather stuck in an embryonic and fragmented stage. The three mechanisms (participation, collaborative innovation, and resource mobilization) exist as potential elements distributed among different actors, but they do not come together into an integrated system. What is missing is orchestration: a process, a subject, or a platform capable of building a shared vision and operational connections. This aligns with Biondi et al. (2020), who emphasize the orchestrator's critical role in shaping and enabling the dynamics of participation and interaction among citizens and stakeholders within the socio-cultural fabric of heritage-led regeneration projects. Without such orchestration, each actor operates based on their own values, goals, and capacities, often in parallel rather than in collaboration. The transformation of these individual visions into a shared civic agenda remains unrealized. As Della Lucia and Trunfio (2018) point out: *"In the creation of a shared vision of urban development, the greatest challenge is to overcome the significant barriers that inevitably arise when a wide variety of stakeholders are involved, all with different backgrounds, power agendas, aims, roles, and competencies."*

- *The Missing Narrative: Storytelling as a Catalyst for Collective Action*

A critical, yet underutilized, dimension of the Celio regeneration process is the absence of a shared narrative that connects the diverse actors, initiatives, and visions involved. While CWC relies on participation, innovation, and mobilization, these mechanisms require not only coordination but also meaning—and storytelling is a key vehicle for that. Historically dismissed as a simplistic or purely rhetorical device, storytelling has, since the 1990s, gained recognition as a powerful tool for complex environments (Salmon, 2008). Recent research in the humanities underscores storytelling's role as a cultural adaptation **(**Boyd, 2009). It offers stakeholders a way to articulate shared values, navigate complexity, and construct collective narratives that can guide long. term urban and cultural strategies. A particularly salient insight from the study is the unexploited power of narrative and storytelling as instruments of orchestration and civic connection. As Biondi et al. (2020) argues, storytelling is not a mere communication device, but a social technology capable of translating complex planning agendas into accessible, emotionally resonant forms. It can enable heterogeneous actors—residents, institutions, entrepreneurs—to construct a shared sense of place and purpose. In Celio, the absence of a unifying narrative is felt. Initiatives are valued but disconnected, and the project lacks a recognizable identity that can be collectively owned. Establishing a participatory storytelling strategy—through tools such as community dossiers, narrative mapping, or public memory platforms—could significantly enhance civic engagement and support the emergence of a common urban vision.

Final remarks reinforce this point: today, it is neither desirable nor feasible to carry out urban regeneration without meaningful community participation. There are significant opportunities for local administrations and communities willing to take this step and to explore new collaborative models. Storytelling now holds renewed significance, the issue is no longer whether to tell stories, but how to integrate them into a coherent, democratic, and actionable urban project.

In conclusion, the case of Celio highlights the urgent need to rethink heritage governance as a relational and participatory process rather than a purely institutional mandate. While the foundations for CWC are present, they remain underutilized due to fragmented coordination, limited engagement infrastructure, and the absence of a shared narrative. For historic urban centres facing the pressures of overtourism, the real challenge lies not in preserving monuments, but in restoring the civic fabric that gives them meaning. Placing communities at the heart of regeneration, supported by inclusive governance and strategic storytelling, is essential for transforming cultural heritage into a driver of well-being, identity, and sustainable urban futures.

CHAPTER 9. DISCUSSIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

This doctoral thesis has investigated how participatory governance models can contribute to the sustainable management of cultural heritage and to the creation of social, cultural, and civic value in historic urban contexts. Moving from a dual gap—both ontological and theoretical—the study has addressed three core research questions:

1. **Who** are the actors involved in the governance of cultural heritage within an historic urban district?
2. **What** dynamics emerge from their interactions, and how do these influence processes of value creation?
3. **How** is cultural, social, and economic value produced and sustained through participatory governance arrangements?

Through a qualitative and exploratory research design centred on the case of the Celio district in Rome, the thesis has integrated three theoretical frameworks—Cultural Ecosystem, Art Worlds, and Civic Wealth Creation—to provide a multi-level interpretation of participation, collaboration, and coordination processes in the cultural heritage field. The empirical work has been articulated into three complementary contributions (Chapter 6, 7 and 8), which form the analytical backbone of the study and are discussed here in an integrated manner.

9.1 Cultural actor mapping reveals a fragmented Cultural Ecosystem

The first contribution has shown how the cultural heritage of the Celio district can be interpreted as a complex and fragmented cultural ecosystem, composed of public institutions, cultural organisations, civic associations, creative enterprises, and residents. The application of the SoPHIA (Marchiori et al., 2021) model and the Gioia's methodology made it possible to move beyond a sectoral view of heritage, highlighting the plurality of roles, impacts, and expectations coexisting within the same territory.

The resulting typology of roles demonstrates that participation is not an automatic condition, but rather a latent potential, often constrained by informational asymmetries, coordination failures, and the absence of structured spaces for interaction. In this sense, the first contribution provides an essential takeaway: without a nuanced understanding of the ecosystem and its actors, any attempt at cultural heritage participatory governance will remain merely episodic or symbolic.

9.2 Relational Dynamics within the Celio Art World

The second contribution explores the micro-level of interactions, interpreting the Celio district as an Art World characterised by social and symbolic boundaries. Through the lens developed by Patriotta and Hirsch (2016), the analysis reveals how fragmentation is not only organisational, but also cultural and cognitive. Mainstreamers, Mavericks, Amphibious actors, and Outsiders coexist within the same urban space, yet rarely share conventions, languages, or horizons of meaning.

The discussion shows that cultural innovation and collaboration tend to emerge primarily through boundary-spanning actors, capable of translating across different worlds and connecting institutional practices with bottom-up initiatives. However, in the absence of an intentional governance design, these dynamics remain fragile and dependent on personal relationships.

9.3 From Participation to Civic Wealth Creation (CWC)

The third contribution links those dynamics to the mechanisms of CWC (Lumpkin & Bacq, 2019), offering an answer to how cultural heritage can be translated into collective well-being. The findings show that the three mechanisms—engaged participation, collaborative innovation, and resource mobilisation—do not operate in isolation, but rather as a cumulative and interdependent process.

In particular, the role of public administration as a possible "orchestrator" (Dameri & Demartini, 2020) emerges as crucial. The experience of the Celio Archaeological Park and Museum demonstrates how public action could activate participatory spaces and support collaborative experimentation. At the same time, the

analysis highlights tensions between institutional logics and the needs of local communities, pointing to the risk of participation being driven more by project-based imperatives than by genuine power sharing. In particular, this contribution allows cultural heritage to be reinterpreted not as an end in itself, but as a means for civic value creation, capable of strengthening identity, social ties, and quality of life.

Overall, the findings of this research suggest that while the presence of participatory governance projects represents an essential enabling condition, their effectiveness in CH contexts depends more on missing institutionalised relations. In this respect, participatory governance projects—particularly when supported by dedicated funding schemes focused on active participation—can play a crucial role in transforming episodic interactions into more structured, sustained, and future-oriented forms of collaboration.

Within this process, proximity emerges as a crucial enabling factor: not merely spatial, but relational and temporal, allowing interactions to sediment into durable ties that can be observed, assessed, and sustained over time. Proximity fosters the exchange of ideas, encourages cooperation, and strengthens local identity. However, physical proximity alone does not suffice to stimulate innovation. As Tremblay and Cecilli (2009) argue, "relational proximity"—built upon mutual trust, shared commitment, and a collective vision—constitutes the deeper connective tissue that transforms co-location into genuine collaboration. When individuals and organizations cultivate such relationships grounded in shared values and a strong sense of belonging, they progressively generate a collective identity that aligns organizational and territorial aspirations. In cultural heritage settings, where actors often operate under different logics—administrative, cultural, economic, and civic—relational proximity plays a crucial role in mediating these differences and enabling cooperation across heterogeneous worlds. Moreover, relational proximity is not an a priori condition but a processual outcome that emerges over time through repeated "interconnexion" according to Bourdieu (1980), joint projects, and shared experiences. Its development requires spaces—both formal and informal—where dialogue, experimentation, and mutual recognition can occur.

Closely related to this is the role of relational capital that consists in a set of formal and informal, temporary and permanent relationship. It is understood not only as the sum of existing connections, but also as the presence of unrealised relationships whose absence limits collective action. Together, these elements highlight that participatory governance is ultimately a matter of governing relationships—creating the conditions for connections to emerge, stabilise, and evolve. In this sense, the sustainability of cultural heritage and the creation of civic value are inseparable from the quality and inclusiveness of the relational fabric that surrounds heritage itself.

Like any qualitative study based on a single case, this research presents limitations related to the generalisability of its findings. Nevertheless, the value of the Celio case lies in its paradigmatic nature, which allows for the formulation of transferable hypotheses applicable to similar contexts.

Future research could:

- Compare multiple historic neighbourhoods to test the robustness of the proposed model;
- Integrate quantitative or longitudinal methods to observe the evolution of networks over time;
- Further investigate the role of cultural policies and public funding in shaping more or less inclusive forms of participation.

In conclusion, this thesis demonstrates that participatory governance of cultural heritage is not a technical solution, but a social process that requires time, care, and mediation capacity. The Celio case shows how heritage can become a lever for civic regeneration only when it is recognised as a common good and when institutions are willing to share vision, responsibility, and power with communities.

In this sense, the main contribution of the research lies in demonstrating that the sustainability of cultural heritage inevitably depends on the quality of the relationships surrounding it, and that the creation of civic value is, first and foremost, a matter of governing relationships.

ANNEX

Annex 1 – Table sources of the scoping review

1. Reframing Cultural Heritage

Paper References	***Main Themes of the paper***	***Journal/Book name***	***Journal's academic field***
Fojut, N. (2009). *The philosophical, political and pragmatic roots of the convention*. In Council of Europe (Ed.), *Heritage and beyond* (pp. 13–21). Strasbourg: Council of Europe Publishing.	Philosophical, political, and pragmatic foundations of European heritage conventions and heritage policy frameworks.	*Heritage and beyond* (edited volume), Council of Europe Publishing	Cultural Heritage Studies; Heritage Policy and Governance; Philosophy of Heritage; Cultural Policy
Fairclough, G. (2011). *The value of heritage for the future. Heritage in Society.* Cultural Policy and Management (KPY); Yearbook, 3.	Value of Heritage for the Future	*Heritage in Society. Cultural Policy and Management*	Heritage Management
Colomer, L. (2023). Exploring participatory heritage governance after the EU Faro Convention. *Journal of Cultural Heritage Management and Sustainable Development*, 13(4), 856-871.	Key Faro notion of "heritage community" and "democratic participation"	*Journal of Cultural Heritage Management and Sustainable Development*	Heritage Management
Gultekın, N. (2012). Cultural heritage management: The case of Historical Peninsula in Istanbul. *Gazi University Journal of Science*, 25(1), 235-243.	How management can be developed cultural heritage sustainability not only for the world heritage but also the national level (Turkey case)	*Gazi University Journal of Science*	Cultural Heritage management (CHM) , Heritage management plan (HMP)
Barile, S., Saviano, M. (2015). *From the Management of Cultural Heritage to the Governance of the Cultural Heritage System.* In: Golinelli, G. (eds) Cultural Heritage and Value Creation. Springer, Cham.	A Systems Approach to Cultural Heritage Governance	*Cultural Heritage and Value Creation. Springer/Cham (book chapter)*	Cultural Heritage management
Golinelli, G. M., & Gaetano, M. (2015). *Cultural heritage and value creation*. Sprienger Briefs in Economics. Cham: Springer.	Employs a systems approach to provide a new perspective on the study and management of cultural heritage	*Cultural Heritage and Value Creation. Springer/Cham (book chapter)*	Cultural Heritage management
Smith, L. (2006). *Uses of Heritage*. London & New York: Routledge.	Heritage should be understood as a cultural and political process that actively constructs social meanings.	*Uses of Heritage (book)*	Heritage Studies; Cultural Studies; Sociology and Anthropology of Culture.

Harrison, R. (2012). *Heritage: Critical Approaches*. Abingdon & New York: Routledge/Taylor & Francis	Critical and interdisciplinary examination of tangible and intangible heritage as a global phenomenon; the socio-political functions of heritage in late modernity; calls for democratic, dialogical approaches to heritage decision-making	*Heritage: Critical Approaches* (book)	Humanities, Museum and Heritage studies, Social Science, Anthropology
Grahn, W. (2011). *Intersectionality and the Construction of Cultural Heritage Management*. *Archaeologies*, 7(1), 222–250.	Intersectional perspective to critically analyse how social categories such as gender, class, ethnicity, and nationality are embedded and interlinked within official cultural heritage management discourse and practices	*Archaeologies: Journal of the World Archaeological Congress*	Archaeology; Cultural Heritage Studies; Heritage Management; Gender and Social Theory.

2. Defining and Managing Cultural Commons

Paper References	**Main Themes of the paper**	**Journal/Book name**	**Journal's academic field**
Ansari, S., Wijen, F., & Gray, B. (2013). *Constructing a climate change logic: An institutional perspective on the "Tragedy of the Commons"*. *Organization Science*, 24(4), 1014–1040.	Framing on social constructionist account of the commons**,** showing how shifts in actor framing over time can generate a shared "commons logic" that helps avoid collective inaction in transnational fields such as climate change.	*Organization Science*	Organizational Studies; Institutional Theory; Environmental Governance; Management Science.
Arena, G. (2020). I custodi della bellezza. *Prendersi cura dei beni comuni. Un patto fra cittadini e istituzioni per far ripartire l'Italia. Touring Club Italiano*.	The work focuses on citizens as active stewards of common goods and on collaborative governance between civil society and public institutions, highlighting civic engagement as a source of social capital and public value.	*Touring Club Italiano (Book)*	Social and legal studies of commons and civic engagement; public administration; community development; cultural policy and commons governance.
Dameri R.P., Moggi, S., Emerging business models for the cultural commons. Empirical evidence from creative cultural firms, *«Knowledge Management Research & Practice»*, 1-14, 2019.	The article examines how cultural and creative firms can support the sustainable management of cultural commons by developing cooperative and participative business models	*Knowledge Management Research & Practice (Taylor & Francis)*	Management and Organizational Studies; Cultural Economics; Cultural and Creative Industries; Knowledge and Innovation Studies
Dubini P., Leone L., Forti, L., Role distribution in public-	How private partners can be involved in preservation activities so that public-private	*International Studies of Management & Organization*	Management and Organizational Studies; Public-Private

private partnerships: The case of heritage management in Italy, International *Studies of Management & Organization*, 42(2), 57–75, 2012	partnerships may become effective instruments of cultural policy.		Partnerships; Cultural Heritage Management; Governance and Policy
Hardin, G. (1968). *The tragedy of the commons*. *Science*, 162(3859), 1243–1248.	Concept of the "tragedy of the commons" in which individuals acting in their own self-interest can overuse and deplete shared common resources.	*Science*	Environmental Science; Economics; Resource Management; Social Theory; Public Policy.
Hess C., Ostrom, E., *Understanding knowledge as a commons: From theory to practice*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2007.	The volume presents a commons-based framework for understanding how knowledge, information, and cultural resources can be collectively governed and shared.	*Understanding Knowledge as a Commons: From Theory to Practice (edited volume).*	Commons Studies; Knowledge Management; Institutional Economics; Cultural Studies.
Iaone C., Beni comuni e innovazione sociale, *«Equilibri»*, vol. 19(1), pp. 60-72, 2015	The article discusses the concept of *commons* (beni comuni) as a foundation for social innovation, arguing that shared resources and collective governance can stimulate new forms of civic engagement, collaborative practices, and community-driven solutions to social and urban challenges. It situates commons within broader debates on participatory governance and the rethinking of institutional roles.	*Equilibri (Journal)*	Social Innovation; Commons Studies; Public Policy and Governance; Urban Studies.
Marotta S., *Per una lettura sociologico-giuridica dei beni culturali come 'beni comuni*, in Patrimonio culturale: profili giuridici e tecniche di tutela, Roma, Roma Tre Press, 2017.	The article offers a sociological and legal interpretation of cultural heritage as *commons*.	*Roma Tre Press (Book)*	Sociology of Law; Legal Studies; Cultural Heritage Governance; Public Policy
Ostrom, E. (1990). *Governing the commons: The evolution of institutions for collective action*. Cambridge University Press.	Challenge the conventional "tragedy of the commons" thesis by showing through empirical cases that common-pool resources can be sustainably managed by collective governance**.**	*Cambridge University Press (Book)*	Commons Studies; Institutional Economics; Political Science
Viola F., Beni comuni e bene comune, *«Rivista Diritto e Società»*, III serie, pp. 381-398, 2016.	The article explores the conceptual distinction and relationship between *beni comuni* (common goods) and the philosophical notion of *bene comune* (common good). It analyses implications for governance, public policy, and the role of the State and civil society in managing and protecting communal assets.	*Rivista Diritto e Società*	Legal Studies; Political Theory; Public Policy; Commons Studies.
Zamagni, S. (2014). I beni comuni per il bene comune. *Milano: Casa della Cultura*.	Need to define a common governance system for the management of private and public assets.	*Casa della Cultura*	Commons Studies; Public Policy; Civic and Community Studies.

3. The Evolving Concept of Community in Cultural Heritage

Paper References	Main Themes of the paper/book/book chapter	Journal name	Journal's academic field
Carandini, A. (2017). *La forza del contesto*. Roma-Bari: Laterza.	The author examines how places and their embedded histories influence social cohesion, community practices, and meaning making.	*La forza del contesto (Book)*	Historical and Cultural Studies; Social Theory; Cultural Anthropology
Cavaye, J. (2004). Governance and community engagement: The Australian experience. *Participatory governance: Planning, conflict mediation and public decision making in civil society*, 85-102.	Role of the government in Australia in adopting new processes of community engagement.	*Participatory Governance: Planning, Conflict Mediation and Public Decision Making in Civil Society (book)*	Public Governance; Community Engagement; Local Government Studies; Civic Participation.
Chirikure, S., Manyanga, M., Ndoro, W., & Pwiti, G. (2010). Unfulfilled promises? Heritage management and community participation at some of Africa's cultural heritage sites. *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, *16*(1-2), 30-44.	Participatory Management is an ambitious theme, not easy to apply	*International Journal of Heritage Studies*	Heritage Management and Community Participation
Georgiou, A., & Arenas, D. (2023). Community in organizational research: A review and an institutional logics perspective. *Organization Theory*, *4*(1), 26317877231153189.	The study clarifies how "community" is conceptualized and operationalized in organizational research.	*Organization Theory*	Organizational Studies, Management Research
Lumpkin, G. T., & Bacq, S. (2022). Family business, community embeddedness, and civic wealth creation. *Journal of Family Business Strategy*, *13*(2), 100469.	This article links the concept of community embeddedness—the degree to which a firm is connected to its local community—with civic wealth creation, defined as the generation of social, economic, and communal resources.	*Journal of Family Business*	Family Business Studies; Organizational Strategy; Community Engagement; Civic and Social Value Creation
Tönnies, F. (1887). Gemeinschaft und gesellschaft. In *Studien zu Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft: Herausgegeben von Klaus Lichtblau* (pp. 231-255). Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften	Distinction between "Community" and "Society"	*Studien zu Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft. Springer-Verlag.*	Sociology; Social Theory; Community Studies; Organizational and Cultural Theory

4. Citizen Science (CS)

Paper References	Main Themes of the paper/book/book chapter	Journal/ Book name	Journal's academic field
Bonney, R. (1996). Citizen Science: A lab tradition. *Living Bird* 15(4): 7–15.	Cs as a research approach highlighting the value of public participation for expanding research capacity and strengthening the relationship between scientific institutions and society.	Living Bird (scientific and educational magazine)	Citizen Science; Public Engagement in Science; Science Education; Environmental and Ecological Research.
Bonney, R., Cooper, C., & Ballard, H. (2016). The theory and practice of citizen science: Launching a new journal. *Citizen science: Theory and practice*, *1*(1), 1-1.	Conceptual foundations and practical dimensions of CS, emphasizing public participation in knowledge production,	*Citizen science: Theory and practice*	Citizen Science; Science and Technology Studies; Public Engagement with Science; Interdisciplinary Research.
Eitzel, M., Cappadonna, J., Santos-Lang, C., Duerr, R., West, S. E., Virapongse, A., ... & Jiang, Q. (2017). Citizen science terminology matters: Exploring key terms. *Citizen science: Theory and practice*, 1-20.	It identifies and clarifies important terms (e.g., participation, community science, crowdsourcing) to support more consistent communication and understanding in the field.	*Citizen science: Theory and practice*	Citizen Science; Interdisciplinary Research; Science Communication; Public Engagement in Science.
Haklay, M. E. (2015). Citizen science and policy: a European perspective.	Relationship between CS and public policy in Europe, highlighting how citizen enhance participation.	Policy and research contribution on citizen science	Citizen Science; Science–Policy Interface; Public Policy; Governance and Participation
Irwin, A. (1995). *Citizen science: A study of people, expertise and sustainable development*. Routledge.	The book examines how CS reconfigures the relationship between science, the public, and society by foregrounding scientific citizenship	*Citizen Science: A Study of People, Expertise and Sustainable Development* (book).	Citizen Science; Public Engagement in Science; Environmental Sociology; Science Policy
Lewenstein, B. V. (2022). Is citizen science a remedy for inequality?. *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, *700*(1), 183-194.	CS is both public participation in the scientific process and public participation in the governance of science.	*The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*	Citizen Science; Science Policy; Governance and Participation
Vohland, K., Land-Zandstra, A., Ceccaroni, L., Lemmens, R., Perelló, J., Ponti, M., ... &	How the involvement of citizens into scientific endeavours is expected to	*The Science of Citizen Science. Springer (Book)*	Humanities and Social Sciences; Environmental Sciences; Citizen science tools and guidelines

Wagenknecht, K. (2021). The science of citizen science evolves. *Chapter 1. in Vohland, K. et al (Eds.).(2021) The Science of Citizen Science. Springer. https://doi. org/10.1007/978-3-030-58278-4. pp 1-12.*	contribute to solve the big challenges of our time, such as climate change		

Annex 2. Our Cultural Actors Database in Celio District of Rome

ID	CULTURAL ACTORS	TYPE OF ORGANIZATION	HISTORY, MISSION AND ACTIVITIES	CULTURAL HERITAGE AND LINK WITH THE TERRITORY
ST1	**ASSOCIAZIONE CULTURALE PROGETTO CELIO**	Cultural Association	A participatory grass-root initiative design in the Celio area between built-up area, archaeology, architecture and greener. The main objective is to enhance the historical and environmental identity of the Celio area through the reconnection of a disintegrated community.	Park and ancient vestiges of the Celio district
ST2	**SOCIETA' GEOGRAFICA ITALIANA**	Cultural Association	Cultural institute active in the dissemination, scientific research, and education of geographic studies with a focus on digital innovation in the use of GIS and Story Map tools.	Tangible heritage: Headquarter in the Celio district, historical archives Intangible assets: Studies and research on geography/economic geography
ST3	**CELIO AZZURRO**	Social Enterprise	Intercultural organisation dedicated to childhood established in 1990, first in Italy. Celio Azzurro is an experimental project carried out by 10 educators and has established itself in the world of national and international child pedagogy as an Educating Community.	Born from a grass-root initiative of the 1970s/80s developed within the neighbourhood committee (historical social identity)
ST4	**CINEMA ALLE MURA**	Grassroot association	The Cinema alle Mura is a project of Mura Latine Committee. It is an initiative that represents a moment of sharing by the neighbourhood, but it is also the transformation of a place into an inclusive space, set in a unique setting: the Mura Latine.	Tangible heritage: Latin Walls (Aurelian period)
ST5	**GALLERIA D'ARTE ARCA DI NOESIS**	Cultural Association/ Social Enterprise	Is a cultural association, deputed as an art gallery, hosting Italian and international artists, making it a place to reflect in distinct cultural moments through the dissemination of professional and non-professional artists.	Located in the Celio district

ST6	**DIGILAB RESEARCH CENTER – SAPIENZA**	Research Centre/ University Spin Off	The DigiLab Research Centre was established to enhance interdisciplinary scientific research in the area of cultural heritage and production, manage particularly complex instrumentation and laboratories in the area of digital technologies for culture.	Located in the Celio district, Research Centre focused on intangible CH
ST7	**Co.de. COLAVORO / MöBIUS**	Cultural Entrepreneur	The business offers a design-driven coworking space in the centre of Rome. it has been designed to increase casual encounters and productivity. Within Co.de, there is the cultural association Möbius, which was created as a contemporary "Wunderkammer," a space devoted to the arts and debate. An environment that serves as an incubator of ideas.	Located in the Celio district and links with contemporary artists
ST8	**COOPCULTURE**	Cultural Entrepreneur	It is an Italian cooperative specialised in managing and promoting cultural heritage. It provides services for museums, exhibitions, libraries and archives, and develops innovative approaches to audience engagement, education, and cultural tourism.	Access to heritage, community engagement, regional networks.
ST9	**PERFORMING SCHOOL – VIDENI'**	Cultural Entrepreneur	It is a performing arts school that offers training in acting, theatre, and related performance disciplines, functioning as a local cultural actor that bridges formal education with grassroots artistic practice. It helps anchor cultural and creative vitality within the local neighbourhood, contributing to the cultural ecosystem of the area.	Performing arts rooted in Celio, entrepreneurial creativity.
ST10	**FORMA URBIS MUSEUM/ROME SUPERINTENDENCE**	Institution	Recently opened in within the Celio Archaeological Park, the museum hosts the fragments of the Forma Urbis Romae, a massive marble map of ancient Rome (3rd century AD). Managed by the Rome Superintendence for Cultural Heritage, it enhances public access through a display that overlays the fragments onto Nolli's 1748 map, linking ancient remains with the city's historical morphology.	Heritage linked to Celio's identity.

Annex 3: textual summary coding of each semi-structured interview. Themes and Concepts

Methodological Note. Approach to Interview Analysis, Coding Procedures, and Analytical Positioning

This Annex presents the analytical codification of the semi-structured interviews conducted for the Celio district case study. The interviews constitute a core component of the empirical strategy of this doctoral research, which adopts a qualitative, inductive–iterative approach aimed at understanding how cultural, institutional, social, and community actors conceptualise their relationship with the district and its heritage, as well as how they perceive the possibilities and constraints of participatory governance.

The analysis acknowledges the researcher's positionality: conducting a doctoral study on participatory governance implies operating with a conceptual sensitivity toward empowerment, inclusion, and community participation. To mitigate risks of interpretive bias, coding was conducted with highly attention to the capture actor narratives. Themes reflect what actors emphasise—not what the researcher assumes they should emphasise.

In several semi-structured interviews, the lack of collaboration, the invisibility of institutions, or the absence of community were presented not as narrated events but as structural voids. These absences are analytically significant and were coded as such.

The methodological choices underpinning this annex respond to two intertwined objectives: (1) ensuring analytical transparency, and (2) creating a structured basis for comparison across a heterogeneous set of actors.

Data collection and interview design

The interview corpus includes actors from five principal categories:

1. public institutional authorities
2. cultural operators
3. grassroots associations
4. educational and social organisations
5. creative practitioners.

The selection reflects a purposive sampling strategy aimed at representing the diversity of the Celio district's cultural ecosystem. The sampling has the aim to capture contrasting perspectives, organisational scales, motivations, and governance roles. Interviews were semi-structured, allowing the convergence of a shared thematic frame—governance, participation, identity—with the flexibility to explore specific issues relevant to each stakeholder. Questions were intentionally open-ended to elicit narratives, examples, and reflections that could later form part of an inductive coding process.

All interviews were transcribed manually, preserving linguistic nuances and emphasis markers where relevant for meaning making. For the purpose of the annex, excerpts have been

translated into English while maintaining fidelity to the semantic content of the original Italian statements.

Coding Process

The coding process drew upon the principles of Thematic Analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Joffe, 2011.) Each interview was read line-by-line to identify concepts categories, seeking relationships between them (e.g., linking "institutional fragmentation" with "difficulty of collaboration" and "unreadable governance landscape" in a sort of axial process). From this iterative process, themes emerged in clusters of meaning that could explain how actors interpret governance dynamics and participatory possibilities in Celio. Themes were compared across different stakeholder typologies (institutions, grassroots actors, creative collectives, educational organisations) to identify patterns and structural asymmetries.

This annex provides:

- a transparent record of the gathered information
- a structured comparison across actors
- empirical grounding for interpretive arguments presented in this doctoral thesis chapters to support the validity of the findings

In this sense, the annex is not merely documentary; it is a methodological tool that strengthens the internal coherence and analytical rigour of the entire research project.

Semi-structured interview guide

Using a predefined guide, but without adhering to it rigidly, the interviews aimed to explore the interviewees' opinions, perspectives, and perceptions in a highly in-depth manner. The objective was to obtain as much relevant information as possible, including dimensions that cannot be adequately captured through quantitative methods.

The interview aims to examine in depth the contextual conditions of the Celio neighbourhood with regard to the design and development of the cultural offer.

A) Objectives within the neighbourhood

- As an association based in the neighbourhood, what is your mission and founding purpose?
- How many members does the association have? Does each member have a clearly defined role?
- History of associational activity: how was your association formed and how has it evolved over time?
- What cultural projects or initiatives have you implemented, are currently implementing, and plan to implement in the future?
- Celio Park: what activities have been carried out there?
- Have the municipality or district authorities ever expressed interest in your initiative to enhance and revalorize Celio Park?

Do you engage in dissemination and promotional activities through networks and/or partnerships? With which other actors or institutions? What has been the experience of stakeholders involved in these networks and/or partnerships? Could you explain the advantages and disadvantages that arise from them?

B) Relationship with the local community and other associations

- What kind of relationship has been established between you and the community living in the Celio neighbourhood?
- Which other recognized or unrecognized associations are active in the Celio neighbourhood? Do you interact with these associations or communities?
- How do you foster and activate citizen participation?

C) Perceived impacts to date

- At present, what are the most significant positive and negative aspects that you/your association identify with regard to the liveability of the neighbourhood and the cultural activities offered?
- **Social capital**: participation, social cohesion, opportunities for developing cultural partnerships and collaborations.
- **Place identity**: historical memory, visibility and reputation, enhancement of the urban landscape and aesthetics, contemporary reinterpretation and/or reuse of the site.
- **Well-being and quality of life of residents**: socio-economic and cultural impacts on living conditions in the neighbourhood; peace and safety; encouragement of participation in civic life; opportunities for residents to enjoy the environment surrounding the site; promotion of services for citizens, e.g., additional benches, street lighting, cleanliness, etc..
- **Education, creativity, and innovation**: training activities, awareness-raising, opportunities to conduct research; access to new technologies related to the cultural experience; opportunities to carry out activities that promote arts and creativity in the neighbourhood.
- **Employment:** strengthening of the local economy; how social cohesion may contribute to enhancing the positive reputation of cultural heritage and fostering favourable living conditions in the local area; promotion of local culture; ensuring that essential neighbourhood shops do not close in favour of businesses exclusively oriented toward tourism; contribution to the local economy and resident workforce; quality of the tourist offer; involvement of businesses and the third sector in culture-related activities; identification of social needs in the surrounding area.
- **Site protection**: mitigating harmful tourism practices associated with overtourism; addressing excessive overcrowding in the Colosseum area; monitoring and sustainably managing tourist flows; preventing the negative impacts of overtourism; ensuring greater protection of the neighbourhood.
- Based on the considerations above, do you think it may be possible to organize activities of shared interest in the future?

Interview n. 1 – Coopculture

1. Interview Metadata

Stakeholder: Coopculture

Participants: Giovanna Barni, Francesco Cocchetti

Date of Interview: 25 September 2023

Role: Cultural service provider; concessionaire of the Case Romane del Celio; actor involved in designing governance models for cultural heritage management.

2. Summary of Interview (Governance-Focused)

Coopculture describes a long-standing approach to cultural heritage management grounded in visitor care and service integration. In the Case Romane del Celio, a cultural heritage site under their management, however, the key governance characteristic is the unusual institutional structure**,** since the site belongs to the Ministry of the Interior (Fondo Edifici di Culto), and not to the Ministry of Culture. This generates a wider operational autonomy, as the site lacks an internal scientific director overseeing daily activities. Coopculture therefore has more room to define opening hours, collaborate with local actors, and experiment with different forms of public engagement.

The interview highlights strong limitations of the concession model**,** especially the short time horizon and the lack of shared strategic responsibility with public institutions. Coopculture aspires to a participatory governance model based on long-term partnerships, co-responsibility, and coordinated action across institutions and community actors. They underline how fragmented governance in Rome weakens cultural sites and limits the potential for regeneration and community engagement.

The Case Romane del Celio are perceived as an under-known heritage asset that could serve as an identity-building hub for residents, schools, and local organizations. Coopculture stresses the need to reconnect the site with the surrounding territory, strengthen relations with stakeholders, and embed it in a broader cultural network. Their testimony shows a clear desire to overcome isolated management and move toward collaborative, multi-actor governance.

3. Themes

1. Limits of current concession governance
2. Need for long-term collaborative governance models
3. Fragmentation of institutional responsibilities
4. Disconnection between local communities and the site
5. Role of heritage as a civic and territorial resource

4. Analytical Contribution of the semi- structured interview

1. Contribution to understanding the governance context

This interview provides a clear picture of the structural weaknesses of the current governance model at the Celio:

- rigid concession mechanisms,
- short-term planning horizons,

- lack of strategic mandates
- institutional fragmentation.

CoopCulture's perspective highlights how governance arrangements shape, and often limit, possibilities for collaboration, innovation, and community engagement. The interview clarifies the distribution of authority among actors and the operational space available to cultural operators in this specific administrative setting.

2. Contribution to identifying participation opportunities and barriers

The interview reveals both barriers and opportunities for participatory governance:

Barriers:

- limited institutional coordination,
- absence of structured stakeholder engagement channels,
- low community awareness of the site,
- formal constraints imposed by concessions.

Opportunities:

- CoopCulture's operational autonomy under FEC,
- willingness to experiment with community-oriented programming,
- potential involvement of residents, schools, and associations,
- openness to collaborative, long-term governance models.

These insights help identify leverage points for designing more inclusive and participatory governance processes.

3. Contribution to the overall case study

CoopCulture's interview is crucial to the Celio case study because it provides the viewpoint of the main cultural operator managing the site. It clarifies:

- how existing governance arrangements function in practice,
- how operators perceive institutional constraints,
- how they envision alternative cooperative frameworks, and
- how they interpret the role of the community in heritage management.

This interview contributes an essential perspective on the relationship between cultural operators, institutions, and local communities, making it a foundational piece of the overall understanding of participatory governance at the Celio.

Interview n. 2 DigiLab Research Centre – Sapienza University of Rome

1. Interview Metadata

- **Stakeholder:** DigiLab Research Centre, Sapienza University
- **Participant:** Laura Leopardi
- **Role:** Researcher specializing in cultural economics, management, sustainability, and social research.
- **Date of Interview:** October 2023

- **Relevance:** Academic partner combining technological experimentation with participatory approaches in cultural projects.

2. Summary of Interview (Governance-Focused, with technological relevance)

DigiLab presents itself as a research centre deeply engaged with the intersections of digital innovation**,** community activation and cultural management**.** In the interview, Dott. Laura Leopardi explains that their core technological work, particularly the development of metaverse-based environments, is designed not as a technological end, but as a tool for co-design, participation, and governance transformation in cultural heritage contexts.

The Case Romane del Celio are considered an ideal case study because of the site's proximity to communities, its layered territorial identity, and the potential for building an actor ecosystem including residents, associations, institutions, and cultural operators. DigiLab stresses the importance of co-projecting experiences not only with Coopculture, but directly with the communit**y**, through processes of social innovation that reveal needs, expectations, and governance gaps.

From a governance perspective, DigiLab emphasizes that digital environments can serve as **participatory infrastructures**, enabling shared decision-making, collective ideation of cultural services, and new forms of interaction between institutions, private actors, and community stakeholders. They underline that existing governance in Rome suffers from fragmentation and hierarchical structures, and that technological tools can facilitate more horizontal, iterative, and collaborative models.

The interview reveals the centre's ambition to co-create **replicable models** of participatory, digitally supported governance in cultural heritage.

3. Themes

1. Digital innovation as a tool for collaboration and participation
2. Structured co-design and stakeholder mapping
3. Hybrid role of academia in facilitating governance processes
4. Institutional fragmentation and need for connective processes
5. Community-centred cultural design and social innovation

4. Analytical Contribution of the Interview

1. Contribution to understanding the governance context

The interview helps clarify the position of DigiLab as a hybrid, boundary-spanning actor within the governance landscape of the Celio. It reveals gaps in inter-institutional coordination and the absence of structured approaches to community participation. DigiLab's methods and tools highlight potential pathways for overcoming these limitations through mediated processes of collaboration and shared design. The interview enriches the understanding of Rome's governance environment by showing how academic institutions can intervene as connectors and methodological anchors in fragmented systems.

2. Contribution to identifying participation opportunities and barriers

The interview identifies several **opportunities** for participatory governance:

- the existence of a structured stakeholder mapping framework,
- the potential of technology to facilitate accessible engagement,
- the possibility of involving communities through co-design methodologies.

It also surfaces **barriers**, including:

- the challenge of activating communities without institutional support,
- the absence of stable communication channels between actors,
- the difficulty of translating technological experimentation into durable governance practices.

This provides a clearer picture of what is feasible and what requires structural change.

3. Contribution to the overall case study

This interview adds depth to the case study by introducing the perspective of an innovation-oriented institutional actor. It expands the analysis beyond cultural operators and community associations, showing how research institutions can shape governance processes by providing methodologies, tools, and conceptual frameworks. DigiLab's contribution demonstrates how participatory processes can be strengthened through structured research practices, digital environments, and social innovation approaches. This perspective complements operator- and community-based insights, offering a more comprehensive understanding of participatory governance at the Celio.

Interview n. 3 – Cultural Association Progetto Celio

1. Interview Metadata

- **Stakeholder:** Associazione Progetto Celio
- **Participants:** Dott. Paolo Gelsomini, Cristina Marcucci
- **Role:** Grassroots cultural association focused on community cohesion, cultural networks, heritage awareness and participatory revitalisation of the Celio district.
- **Date:** 26 October 2023 (implicit from transcript context)
- **Relevance:** Community-based actor and key representative of local civic engagement in the Celio neighbourhood.

2. Summary of the Interview

The interview presents Associazione Progetto Celio as a grassroots civic initiative created with the explicit mission of reconnecting a fragmented community through shared projects, cultural networking and public space revitalisation. The association views the Celio as a historically cohesive but progressively disintegrated social fabric, weakened by the disappearance of intermediate bodies, and the pressures of overtourism.

Their focus has long been the revitalisation of the Celio Archaeological Park, a project understood as a vehicle for rebuilding social bonds, fostering civic participation, and framing cultural identity. The association is highly active in organising public meetings, cultural events, and stakeholder conversations aimed at rebalancing the district's relationship with tourism and restoring its identity as a place of everyday life.

A strong emphasis emerges on collaboration among local actors, including associations, cultural spaces, religious communities, schools, and residents. The interview also reveals the association's interest in working with the Case Romane del Celio, with a willingness to contribute to shared projects, provided access conditions are compatible with their nonprofit status.

Their narrative is grounded in a vision of urbanism as relational practice: culture, public space, and heritage must be lived collectively and must generate opportunities for human interaction. The association advocates a systemic, district-level perspective, arguing that the Celio cannot be understood or managed in isolated fragments.

3. Themes

1. Reconnecting a socially fragmented community through shared projects
2. Heritage and public space as relational and identity-building elements
3. The impact of overtourism and loss of local identity
4. Need for systemic, district-level approaches to governance

4. Analytical Contribution of the Interview

1. Contribution to understanding the governance context

This interview offers a crucial grassroots perspective on the governance landscape of the Celio district. It shows:

- deep social fragmentation in the neighbourhood;
- the lack of mediating institutions, leaving citizens without structured channels for participation;
- the weak interconnection between civic actors and heritage institutions;
- a strong need for coordinated territorial governance, rather than isolated projects.

Progetto Celio's experience highlights the gap between institutional heritage management and community expectations, offering insight into how governance processes are perceived and navigated at the neighbourhood level.

2. Contribution to identifying participation opportunities and barriers

Opportunities emerging from the interview:

- strong motivation among residents to re-engage with cultural heritage;
- the association's experience in community mobilisation;
- willingness to collaborate with heritage sites;
- existence of local networks that could support participatory governance.

Barriers identified:

- lack of structured collaboration channels with institutions;
- practical barriers (ticketing, access) preventing community participation;
- dominance of tourism-related interests reducing space for civic use;
- fragmentation of local initiatives without an overarching coordination framework.

These insights clarify both the potential and the structural limitations for participatory governance in the district.

3. Contribution to the overall case study

The interview is essential for understanding the civic fabric of the Celio. It brings forward:

- the viewpoint of a long-standing, highly committed community actor;
- a narrative of heritage as social infrastructure, not only cultural asset;
- the demand for systemic approaches integrating public space, heritage, and social relations;
- evidence of the community's readiness to participate in joint valorisation projects.

Progetto Celio provides the case study with a bottom-up perspective that illuminates how residents conceptualise identity, belonging, and the role of heritage in everyday life. Their perspective is indispensable for constructing a realistic and inclusive vision of participatory governance for the Celio.

Interview n. 4 - Galleria D'Arte Arca Di Noesis

1. Interview Metadata

- **Stakeholder:** Galleria d'Arte Arca di Noesis
- **Participants:** Representatives of the gallery
- **Role:** Cultural association/art gallery hosting exhibitions and artistic events; active actor in local cultural life and community networking.
- **Relevance:** Provides insights into the cultural ecosystem of the Celio, the relations with institutions, and the challenges faced by cultural actors in a tourist-driven district.

2. Summary of the Interview

The interview portrays Arca di Noesis as a hybrid cultural space combining the functions of an art gallery, a cultural association, and a meeting point for artistic and community-oriented activities. The gallery hosts Italian and international artists and strives to foster cultural reflection and shared experiences within the Celio district, which it perceives as culturally rich but institutionally disconnected.

The interview reveals a complex landscape marked by institutional silence, weak collaboration from major actors and the dominance of tourist-oriented activities. The gallery conveys a sense of isolation typical of many cultural initiatives in the area, which struggle to integrate into broader cultural or governance frameworks despite their willingness to contribute.

The representatives comment on various actors in the district — Mediaset, local religious institutions, neighbourhood committees — exposing a pattern of fragmented relations. Some actors are described as entirely closed ("living in their own world"), while others occasionally interact through cultural events. The gallery's activities, including hosting meetings with municipal representatives (e.g., the cultural councillor of Municipio I), reveal its aspiration to catalyse cultural dialogue and proposals for the neighbourhood.

Overall, the gallery positions itself as a culturally dynamic but structurally marginal actor, operating within a district whose cultural potential is high but underleveraged due to systemic fragmentation and a lack of coordinated governance.

3. Themes

1. Cultural spaces as catalysts for local artistic and civic life
2. Fragmented relationships between cultural actors and institutions
3. Dominance of tourism and lack of cultural continuity in the district
4. Weak contribution of major private actors (e.g., Mediaset)
5. Potential and desire for cross-actor cultural collaboration

4. Analytical Contribution of the Interview

1. Contribution to understanding the governance context

The interview provides insights into the fragmented governance landscape of the Celio. It reveals:

- The absence of collaboration from important institutional and private actors.
- The role of small cultural entities operating with high cultural value but low institutional support.
- Institutional silos, particularly among religious institutions and large private entities, which undermine cultural coordination.

This perspective highlights a gap between the richness of local cultural initiatives and the lack of systemic governance frameworks capable of connecting them.

2. Contribution to identifying participation opportunities and barriers

Opportunities identified:

- The gallery acts as a convening space, hosting meetings that encourage dialogue between residents, cultural actors, and municipal representatives.
- There is interest in developing cultural proposals for the neighbourhood.
- Cultural spaces like Arca di Noesis could serve as hubs for participatory governance, linking artists, associations, and public actors.

Barriers identified:

- Sparse interaction across institutions and cultural actors.
- Dominance of tourism-oriented economic actors that do not contribute to cultural or civic life.
- Closed or inaccessible institutions (religious and private) reducing the permeability of the cultural network.
- Lack of structured governance mechanisms enabling sustained cultural collaboration.

The interview thus clarifies both the potential and constraints for a participatory governance model that includes cultural associations.

3. Contribution to the overall case study

Arca di Noesis adds an essential perspective to the Celio case:

- It represents the micro-scale cultural actor that operates daily in the neighbourhood but remains under-recognised in institutional processes.
- It shows how cultural vitality exists despite systemic fragmentation, highlighting opportunities for better coordination.
- It illustrates the disconnect between cultural potential and institutional engagement, reinforcing the need for participatory governance frameworks that bridge this gap.

By offering grounded insights into cultural practice, local networks, and institutional absence, the interview strengthens the case study's capacity to describe a multi-actor, uneven, and under-coordinated cultural ecosystem — precisely the context where participatory governance becomes necessary.

Interview n. 5 - Celio Azzurro (Intercultural centre for the infanthood)

1. Interview Metadata

- **Stakeholder:** Celio Azzurro – Intercultural centre for the infanthood
- **Participant:** Massimo Guidotti (Founder)

- **Type:** Social enterprise / intercultural education centre
- **Relevance:** Long-standing community actor, boundary-spanning between education, social cohesion, and local networks; key actor for understanding participatory dynamics in the district.

2. Summary of the Interview

The interview positions Celio Azzurro as a pivotal "educating community" rooted in the Celio district since 1990. Originating from a grassroots initiative and later supported by Caritas, the centre was conceived to foster intercultural dialogue, openness, and social coexistence from early childhood**.** Its mission is to create a space where children and families from diverse backgrounds can interact, learn, and grow together, forming a micro-community reflecting the district's multicultural identity.

The founder describes Celio Azzurro not only as an educational institution but as a relational and social infrastructure, shaped by decades of civic engagement. The centre has welcomed more than 1,000 children from over 70 countries, representing a vital node of cultural diversity in the area. The interview reveals strong historical ties with local committees, neighbourhood activism, and civic mobilisation—elements that continue to inform its organisational identity today.

In discussing the district, the founder highlights systemic challenges: lack of shared vision**,** institutional fragmentation, and the absence of coordinated strategies for cultural and social development. He expresses interest in better integrating cultural, social, and educational dimensions at district scale, emphasising that well-being, culture, education, and heritage cannot be separated in the Celio context.

Celio Azzurro emerges as both a witness and an agent of community-based governance: deeply embedded in the local social fabric, capable of bridging institutions, families, and civil society. However, the interview also suggests structural barriers limiting its participation in broader governance processes.

3. Themes

1. Intercultural education as a community-building process
2. Role of Celio Azzurro as a boundary-spanning actor
3. Tension between cultural heritage, well-being, and overtourism
4. Need for an integrated territorial vision
5. Civic identity and the role of grassroots mobilisation

4. Analytical Contribution of the Interview

1. Contribution to understanding the governance context

The interview reveals a district where social cohesion, cultural identity, and institutional action remain weakly integrated**.** Celio Azzurro's history of grassroots activism highlights:

- the persistent lack of formal governance channel**s** linking educational, cultural, and social actors;
- the reliance on civic initiative rather than structured institutional frameworks;
- the absence of mechanisms for sustained dialogue between community actors and public institutions.

2. Contribution to identifying participation opportunities and barriers

Opportunities:

- Celio Azzurro has strong community trust and long-term relationships with families, making it a potential anchor institution for participatory processes.

- Its intercultural mission positions it as a platform for inclusive engagement, representing diverse voices often absent in heritage governance.
- Its historical role in civic mobilisation suggests capacity to activate networks.

Barriers:

- Limited institutional integration: the centre is not structurally included in governance frameworks.
- Broader district challenges (overtourism, lack of shared vision) reduce opportunities for systematic collaboration.

3. *Contribution to the overall case study*

Celio Azzurro enriches the case study by providing the perspective of an actor deeply embedded in the social and intercultural life of the district. It brings to the fore:

- the importance of early childhood education as a site of cultural and civic formation;
- a long-standing tradition of grassroots activism informing contemporary community dynamics;
- the relevance of boundary-spanning institutions in bridging cultural heritage with social well-being.

The interview underscores that participatory governance cannot rely solely on cultural or institutional actors: social, educational, and intercultural institutions are essential components of a functioning governance ecosystem. Celio Azzurro thus adds a crucial layer to understanding how value is co-created at the intersection of heritage, community identity, and social relations.

Interview n. 6 - Italian Geographical Society (IGS)

1. Interview Metadata

- **Stakeholder:** Italian Geographical Society (IGS)
- **Participant:** Prof. Claudio Cerreti — President
- **Type:** National cultural institute / scientific association
- **Relevance:** Major institutional actor located inside Celio (Villa Celimontana), but with a national/international mission and limited local engagement.

2. Summary of the Interview

The interview highlights IGS as a long-standing cultural and scientific institution whose activities, mission, and audiences are predominantly national and international in scope. Although its headquarters are located in Villa Celimontana, within the Celio district, its relationship with the neighbourhood is described as “occasional, intermittent, sporadic”, with very limited structured interaction with local residents or organisations.

IGS’s communication channels are national/international, and therefore not targeted at the district level. Consequently, local inhabitants rarely attend its events, partly because they are unaware of them. This disconnect reinforces IGS’s perception that the neighbourhood lacks a cohesive community, a condition attributed to the broader socio-economic transformation of Rome’s historic centre: depopulation, overtourism, proliferation of hospitality and restaurant activities, and absence of generational replacement.

Professor Cerreti recalls past decades (1970s–80s) when the Celio had an active political and social committee life, now largely disappeared. He links this decline to structural changes such as migration of residents to more "serene and spacious areas" and the commodification of the historical centre.

IGS has attempted limited collaborations with local associations (e.g., Progetto Celio, "Aiutami a Restare"), but these produced no long-term outcomes. Both sides lacked continuity in generating concrete initiatives. The interview also outlines SGI's identity and evolution: founded in 1867, focused historically on exploration and methodological development of geographical knowledge, later institutionalised as a national centre of geographic studies. Its relocation to the Celio (Palazzetto Mattei) is described as a "somewhat casual" historic outcome rather than a strategic territorial choice.

Despite the limited local role, IGS expresses openness to contributions enhancing sustainable territorial valorisation, especially in relation to soft mobility**,** transhumance routes, and new forms of territorial storytelling—issues considered relevant to broader regional development.

3. Themes

1. National/international institutional identity with weak local integration
2. Perceived disappearance of the neighbourhood community
3. Effects of overtourism and urban transformation on the Celio
4. Failed or unstructured attempts at local collaboration
5. Broader geographic research and potential relevance for governance

4. Analytical Contribution of the Interview

1. Understanding the governance context

IGS exemplifies institutional actors with high cultural legitimacy but low territorial embeddedness**.** Its presence in the district does not translate into meaningful local governance participation. This highlights a structural pattern:

- Institutional fragmentation**:** stronger ties to national networks than to the immediate urban context.
- Lack of neighbourhood-scale governance infrastructure capable of incorporating actors like IGS.
- Absence of community receivership: without an active local civic base, IGS lacks interlocutors.

2. Participation opportunities and barriers

Barriers:

- IGS's mission orientation is not territorially focused.
- Communication channels do not reach local residents.
- Absence of community organisations able to activate collaboration.
- Over-reliance on national-level networks.

Opportunities:

- SGI's expertise in mapping, territorial knowledge, and landscape studies could be invaluable for participatory governance—especially regarding sustainable routes, peripheral areas, and heritage valorisation pathways.
- Its physical location in Villa Celimontana makes it a potential anchor for cultural programming, if engagement infrastructures were developed.

Overall, SGI represents a "quiet" institutional asset: rich in resources but underutilised at the local level.

3. Contribution to the overall case study

IGS enriches the case study by providing the perspective of a mainstreamer, in Patriotta & Hirsch's typology—actors who ensure stability and expertise but rarely engage in grassroots collaboration. Its interview confirms that:

- High-capacity institutions do not automatically generate territorial value**.**
- The lack of a cohesive community is a major obstacle to participatory governance.
- Historic urban districts face identity erosion when civic structures collapse and cultural actors operate in silos.
- Governance innovation requires not only bottom-up engagement, but also mechanisms to integrate institutional knowledge into community-oriented strategies.

IGS's perspective therefore illustrates the structural difficulty of creating a synergic governance ecosystem in Celio: the building blocks exist, but the connective tissue is missing.

Interview n.7 - Cinema alle Mura (Latin Wall Committee)

1. Interview Metadata

- **Stakeholder:** Cinema alle Mura — grassroots cultural initiative
- **Participant:** Tommaso Iorio (member of Latin Wall Committee)
- **Type:** Grassroots association / community-driven cultural programming
- **Relevance:** A maverick actor in the district's cultural ecosystem; demonstrates how grassroots creativity reshapes public space and generates social value despite institutional constraints.

2. Summary of the Interview

Cinema alle Mura is a grassroots cultural project organised by Latin Wall Committee, operating for over five years in the area adjoining the Celio district. Although geographically located near Porta Metronia—formally outside the Celio boundaries—its spatial and cultural proximity makes it an influential actor within the broader Celio ecosystem. The initiative transforms the Aurelian Walls into an open-air cinema, creating a temporary but recurring public cultural space accessible to all.

The member interviewed describes the project as a "moment rather than a venue": a cyclical activation of a heritage site that shifts its meaning from archaeological monument to place of community gathering. The initiative requires complex coordination with public authorities, including the Superintendency**,** due to the historical relevance of the walls.

During the interview, he illustrates how Cinema alle Mura serves as a vector of neighbourhood identity and social cohesion, filling the cultural void left by the disappearance of cinemas from the Celio district and offering a rare example of cultural programming not oriented toward tourism. He also provides important insight into the administrative geography of Rome: the distinction between the Celio district, Porta Metronia, and Municipio I, explaining how these boundaries influence governance and coordination.

The initiative is powered by volunteerism and community mobilisation but faces structural constraints: limited financial resources, dependence on seasonal programming, and administrative barriers for event

authorisation. Despite these challenges, Cinema alle Mura exemplifies how grassroots creativity can repurpose heritage into inclusive cultural experiences.

3. Themes

1. Grassroots cultural innovation in heritage sites
2. Transformation of public space into temporary cultural commons
3. Administrative complexity and multi-level authorisation
4. Community building and spatial proximity to Celio
5. Resource constraints and sustainability challenges

4. Analytical Contribution of the Interview

1. Contribution to understanding the governance context

The interview reveals:

- the lack of stable cultural infrastructure in Celio (e.g., closure of cinemas);
- the potential of underused heritage spaces to become cultural commons;
- challenges created by fragmented governance and multi-level authorisations.

The initiative demonstrates that cultural vitality emerges not only from formal organisations but also from community-led reinterpretations of heritage, though these remain fragile in absence of systemic support.

2. Participation opportunities and barriers

Opportunities:

- Cinema alle Mura generates high social value with low resources, demonstrating the capacity of grassroots actors to activate heritage in ways that resonate with residents.
- Its community-oriented approach aligns with participatory governance principles, offering a model for co-created cultural programming.
- Its spatial proximity to the Celio makes it a potential partner for district-wide cultural networks**.**

Barriers:

- Heavy administrative burdens (Sovrintendenza, municipal permissions).
- Lack of long-term funding and institutional recognition.
- Vulnerability due to dependence on volunteers and seasonal operations.
- Structural absence of a coordinating governance body to integrate grassroots initiatives into a broader cultural strategy.

These constraints limit scalability and continuity despite strong community resonance.

3. Contribution to the overall case study

Cinema alle Mura enriches the case study by illustrating how grassroots creativity compensates for institutional gaps. It demonstrates:

- the potential of public space activation for rebuilding community identity;
- the fragility of bottom-up initiatives without governance support;
- how cultural participation can occur at the edges of institutional boundaries, challenging traditional definitions of district identity.

Its role highlights both the untapped potential of Celio's cultural landscape and the systemic weaknesses of governance structures that fail to sustain such initiatives.

Interview n. *8* - *Co.de Coworking Space / Möbius*

1. Interview Metadata

- **Stakeholder:** Co.de Coworking Space / Möbius
- **Participants:** employers
- **Type:** Interdisciplinary cultural collective combining architecture, art gallery and coworking space.
- **Relevance:** Emerging cultural actor offering an innovative, experiential approach to heritage.

2. Summary of the Interview

The interview presents *Co.de Coworking Space /*Möbius as a collective working at the intersection of architecture, art gallery and coworking space. Their practice is grounded in embodied narratives and site-specific exploration. Their work positions heritage not as an object to observe, but as an experience to be lived, walked, touched, and narrated**.**

Möbius describes itself as a "craft workshop of stories," operating as a flexible and composite research group. They emphasise the importance of engaging with the territory in a relational way, turning everyday gestures, overlooked corners, and hidden narratives into tools for reconnecting communities with place.

The group expresses a strong interest in collaborating with institutions and cultural operators, envisioning projects that could bring residents closer to heritage through participatory storytelling or collective memory-making. However, they also recognise structural difficulties: heritage spaces often remain inaccessible, institutional processes are slow and opaque, and grassroots actors rarely find stable channels for collaboration.

Overall, *Co.de Coworking Space /*Möbius embodies a creative, exploratory approach to participatory governance**,** centred on experience, narrative, and community imagination.

3. Themes

1. Desire for collaboration with local institutions and cultural actors
2. Potential of storytelling and performance for community reconnection

4. Analytical Contribution of the Interview

1. Contribution to understanding the governance context

The interview with Möbius illustrates a type of actor not usually included in formal governance structures: creative, experimental, and narrative-driven practitioners who nevertheless hold significant potential for community engagement and cultural activation. Their presence reveals:

- the distance between institutional heritage governance and artistic/experiential practices;
- the richness of underexplored interpretative possibilities within the Celio's heritage landscape.

Möbius helps illuminate how governance could broaden its scope to incorporate experiential, narrative, and embodied dimensions of cultural value.

2. Contribution to identifying participation opportunities and barriers

Opportunities:

- Möbius' methods could foster deep, community-rooted engagement with heritage sites through storytelling, or shared narratives.
- They demonstrate strong openness to co-design processes with cultural and institutional actors.

Barriers:

- Lack of institutional channels for integrating creative micro-actors.
- Limited access to heritage spaces due to bureaucratic or administrative constraints.
- Absence of stable funding or support structures for experimental cultural practices.

3. Contribution to the overall case study

Möbius provides the case study with a creative and interpretive dimension of participatory governance. Their work demonstrates that:

- experimental cultural actors can serve as catalysts for new forms of meaning-making, especially in heritage areas with low community engagement;
- governance innovation can emerge from collaborations that blend cultural storytelling with spatial activation.

Möbius enriches the analytical understanding of the Celio by showing how creative practices can uncover hidden layers of the district, inspire participatory processes, and offer alternative approaches to heritage interpretation. Their perspective contributes to imagining a governance model that is more open, relational, and imaginative**.**

Interview n. 9 – *Performing School Videnì*

1. Interview Metadata

- **Stakeholder:** Scuola di Recitazione Videnì
- **Participants:**
  - Flavia Mancinelli (professional actress, founder and acting teacher)
- **Type:** Independent professional acting school and creative studio, located in a courtyard with other artistic and cultural activities.
- **Relevance:** Small but highly active cultural actor; combines professional artistic training, intimate community building, and potential connection with theatres and local cultural life.

2. Summary of the Interview

The school is hosted in a shared courtyard that historically housed a photography studio and now includes ateliers, a restoration lab, and other artistic activities — a small, semi-hidden cultural enclave within the Celio area.

Acting School Videnì is characterised by an intimate, personalised educational approach: lessons are often one-to-one, with deep work on the individual, and later students are brought together into groups to create scene work and collective experiences. The space functions as a micro-community, where students study together, attend theatre performances as a group, organise cineforums and build strong relational bonds.

The interview underlines that many students come from diverse backgrounds, often with previous university careers unrelated to theatre, attracted by a need for expression and meaningful relationships. Videnì becomes both a training place and a relational refuge, where personal issues emerge and are processed through artistic work.

At the same time, the interview reveals clear structural challenges:

- the courtyard is not widely known; passers-by often do not realise such a place exists;
- the school is under-publicised;
- The founder perceives a lack of support and connections with institutional actors, despite the existence of closed theatres nearby that could potentially host performances or training activities.

Videnì thus emerges as a small, high-intensity cultural node, rich in potential for participatory governance but still largely isolated and self-made.

3. Themes

1. Professional artistic training and highly personalised pedagogy
2. The school as a micro-cultural enclave and relational community
3. Youth, roots, and the search for cultural belonging
4. Limited visibility, underused local spaces, and lack of connections
5. Potential for theatre-based cultural activation and tourism

4. Analytical Contribution of the Interview

1. Contribution to understanding the governance context

This interview sheds light on micro-scale cultural actors who play a significant role in everyday cultural life but remain largely absent from formal governance and institutional strategies. It reveals:

- a high-density cultural micro-ecosystem (courtyard with multiple artistic professions) that is structurally disconnected from heritage and municipal governance;
- the presence of closed or underused theatres that could be reactivated but currently lack any bridging mechanism with existing grassroots actors;
- a lack of intermediary structures capable of connecting professional training spaces like Videnì with the wider cultural and institutional landscape of the Celio.

2. Contribution to identifying participation opportunities and barriers

Opportunities:

- Videnì offers a living community of young people and adults who regularly engage in cultural activities, attend theatre, and participate in shared events — an ideal base for participatory cultural projects.
- The courtyard environment could become a small cultural hub, integrating theatre training, visual arts, restoration, and community events.
- The existing practice of full-immersion theatre days shows capacity to produce high-quality cultural content that could be opened to broader audiences, including residents and visitors.

Barriers:

- The physical space is hidden and poorly known**,** limiting spontaneous access and awareness.

- There is no structured connection between Videnì and local heritage or governance actors, nor with the closed theatres in the area.
- The founders explicitly state they "come from nothing" and have no influential networks, highlighting barriers related to social capital and institutional access.

3. Contribution to the overall case study

Videnì adds a crucial layer to the Celio case:

- It represents a professional yet grassroots cultural actor that creates daily, relational cultural value in an informal setting.
- It demonstrates how small, self-organised cultural initiatives can generate strong social bonds, identity, and informal welfare through art.
- It exposes the gap between underused cultural infrastructure (closed theatres) and active cultural practices**,** suggesting the need for governance models that can match spaces, actors, and community needs.

This interview shows that training and artistic practice are not only "cultural services" but also social infrastructures**,** capable of anchoring people to the district and potentially contributing to Celio's cultural regeneration, if better connected to the institutional and territorial framework.

Interview n.10 - *Superintendency Capitolina ai Beni Culturali* (Forma Urbis Museum & Celio Archaeological Park)

1. Interview Metadata

- **Stakeholder:** Superintendency Capitolina ai Beni Culturali
- **Participants:** Museum leadership
- **Type:** Public heritage authority (Municipality of Rome)
- **Relevance:** Central institutional actor governing the largest cultural and spatial asset in the district; key to understanding governance structures, institutional priorities, territorial integration, and potential for participatory processes.

2. Summary of the Interview

The interview provides an extensive overview of the Superintendency activities related to the Forma Urbis Museum & Celio Archaeological Park, framed by the large-scale transformations associated with the Jubilee 2025**.** The institution is currently engaged in multiple infrastructural, curatorial, and research-oriented interventions aimed at enhancing the museum and requalifying the surrounding park. These initiatives include restoring the gardens, establishing a multifunctional hall, developing new exhibition spaces, introducing digital and gamified storytelling tools, and rehabilitating underground spaces. The Superintendency emphasises a clear goal: *"to leave Rome better than we found it"*, describing regeneration successes such as improved security, an increase in family use of the park, and the disappearance of previous issues related to marginalised groups sleeping in the grounds.

The museum also functions as a "*research hub"*, thanks to partnerships with Sapienza University (epigraphy and documentation), Notre Dame University, and Global Digital Heritage (3D digitisation). These collaborations reinforce the institution's position as an academic reference point for archaeological research. On the educational side, the museum has implemented programmes like *"A Piedi Scalzi",* which familiarises students with the Forma Urbis through embodied learning, and PCTO training, allowing high school students to understand museum work from within.

Institutionally, despite strong research and infrastructural roles, the Superintendency acknowledges limited structured engagement with neighbourhood associations, although it expresses the desire to become a reference point for the community. It sees the multifunctional hall as a future channel to open up to residents, host events, create meeting spaces, and support social interaction.

Data from the semi-structured interview illustrate priorities around accessibility, social cohesion, environmental management, and cultural programming; however, the Superintendency also notes constraints: dependence on centralised governance, and limits imposed by heritage regulations. Overall, the interview portrays an institution in transformation, highly active in infrastructural and scholarly domains but still searching for the right tools to integrate into local participatory governance.

3. Themes

1. Large-scale infrastructural and cultural transformation initiatives
2. The museum as research laboratory and academic hub
3. Education, accessibility, and social activation
4. Institutional openness vs. structural constraints in community engagement
5. The Parco del Celio as connective cultural landscape

4. Analytical Contribution of the Interview

1. Contribution to understanding the governance context

This interview is essential for understanding the institutional logic that shapes heritage governance in the Celio. It clarifies:

- the centralisation of decision-making within the Superintendency,
- the Superintendency's priorities (safeguarding and protection),
- the limited structural capacity to engage in neighbourhood-scale participatory governance,
- the significant role of major redevelopment projects (Jubilee 2025) in redefining space, access, and functions.

2. Contribution to identifying participation opportunities and barriers

Opportunities:

- The multifunctional hall and open park design can become participatory hubs for residents.
- Educational programmes offer entry points for youth participation.
- Academic collaborations show capacity for knowledge co-production, which could be extended to community narratives.
- The museum's commitment to accessibility ("a museum for all") aligns with inclusive governance principles.

Barriers:

- Strong institutional constraints and centralised governance reduce flexibility.
- Co-design is possible but only within pre-defined institutional parameters.
- Lack of demographic data and limited interaction with neighbourhood groups.
- Prioritisation of heritage protection above social programming limits participatory experimentation.
- Physical and symbolic scale of the institution may discourage smaller actors.

3. Contribution to the overall case study

The interview adds substantial depth to the case study by illustrating:

- the institutional backbone of cultural governance in the Celio;
- how large-scale heritage authorities perceive their social role;
- the gap between infrastructural transformation and community integration;
- the potential for creating new public cultural spaces (multifunctional hall, accessible park areas)

Annex n.4 Thematic Coding Overview of Interview Data

Interview / Actor	**Main Themes Identified (from the interview coding)**
CoopCulture	• Limits of concession-based governance (short duration, rigid contracts) • Need for long-term, collaborative governance models and partnerships • Institutional fragmentation • Disconnection between site and local residents • Heritage as civic resource, not just tourist product
DigiLab – University of Rome Sapienza	• Digital innovation (metaverse, digital environments) as a tool to support collaboration and participation • Structured stakeholder mapping and co-design methodologies • Hybrid role of academia as methodological facilitator and connector • Need to bridge institutional silos through interdisciplinary projects • Community participation integrated into governance processes
Cultural Association Progetto Celio	• Reconnecting a socially fragmented community through shared projects • Public space and heritage (especially Parco del Celio) as relational resources • Impact of overtourism and risk of losing neighbourhood identity • Need for systemic, district-level approaches rather than isolated actions • Interest in collaboration with other heritage actors
Art Gallery Arca di Noesis	• Small cultural space as catalyst for local artistic and civic life • Fragmented relations with institutions and nearby powerful actors (e.g. religious institutions, Mediaset) • Tourism-oriented transformation and lack of stable cultural frameworks in the district • Weak contribution from large private actors to local cultural life • Desire for collaboration and for shared cultural proposals at neighbourhood level

Intercultural Centre Celio Azzurro	• Intercultural education as a long-term community-building process • Celio Azzurro as a bridge actor between education, social cohesion and territory • Tension between well-being, heritage and overtourism in the area • Need for an integrated vision linking culture, education and quality of life • Civic identity rooted in decades of grassroots mobilisation
Italian Geography Society (IGS)	• Strong national/international institutional identity but weak local integration in Celio • Perceived disappearance of neighbourhood community and civic life • Effects of overtourism and commercialisation on the historic centre • Past attempts at collaboration with local associations that did not become stable • Potential contribution in terms of territorial knowledge, mapping and landscape interpretation
Cinema alle Mura (Latin Wall Committee)	• Grassroots cultural innovation using the Aurelian Walls as open-air cinema • Transformation of historic infrastructure into temporary cultural commons • Community participation built on spatial and cultural proximity to Celio • Fragility and seasonality due to limited resources and volunteer-based organisation
Möbius / Co.de Coworking	• Heritage and urban space understood as experiential, narrative, embodied landscapes • Desire for collaboration with institutions and cultural actors in the district • Storytelling and performance as tools for reconnecting communities with place
Acting School Videnì	• Highly personalised acting training (one-to-one + small groups) • The courtyard as a hidden micro-cultural ecosystem (artists, restorers, ateliers) • Young people and adults seeking roots, expression and belonging through theatre • Very low visibility towards the outside; lack of institutional and theatre connections despite high potential • Possibility to turn existing activities (full-immersion theatre days, cineforums) into broader cultural offers for the district
Superintendency Capitolina – Forma Urbis Museum & Archaeological Park of Celio	• Large-scale infrastructural and curatorial transformation linked to Jubilee 2025 • Museum as research laboratory (epigraphy, partnerships with Sapienza, Notre Dame, Global Digital Heritage) • Educational programmes (“A Piedi Scalzi”, PCTO) and commitment to accessibility and openness of the park • Institutional openness to collaboration, but constrained by centralised governance and mission priorities • Parco del Celio conceived as connective cultural landscape and “tessuto connettivo” in the Ca.RME project

The thematic patterns emerging from the semi-structured interviews confirm the internal validity of the qualitative coding process and demonstrate the coherence of the dataset. Despite the heterogeneity of actors—spanning public institutions, grassroots associations, creative practitioners, cultural

entrepreneurs, and academic partners—clear and recurring themes appear across the interviews, indicating that the coding framework consistently captures shared structural dynamics of the Celio district.

Across institutional actors (Superintendency Capitolina, IGS, CoopCulture), interviews converge on issues of governance fragmentation, limited mechanisms for sustained collaboration, and tension between heritage protection and community engagement. These institutions recognise the need for shared frameworks but remain constrained by administrative structures, and the absence of local coordination tools. Grassroots and community-based actors (Celio Azzurro, Progetto Celio, Arca di Noesis, Cinema alle Mura) consistently highlight the erosion of neighbourhood identity, the decline of social cohesion, and the need for relational spaces capable of reconnecting residents. Their narratives foreground the lack of institutional visibility for small actors, while simultaneously demonstrating their essential role as social infrastructure supporting educational, cultural, and community well-being. Creative and hybrid actors (Möbius, Videnì, DigiLab) introduce a complementary dimension centred on innovation, narrative reinterpretation of space, and experiential engagement with heritage. Their interviews reveal both the potential of artistic and digital practices for participatory governance and the structural barriers preventing their integration into institutional processes.

Finally, across all actor categories, interviews confirm structural challenges such as insufficient coordination platforms, poor visibility between stakeholders, and the absence of shared territorial vision. At the same time, they reveal latent opportunities: grassroots cultural production, academic–institutional collaborations, and infrastructural investments that could form the basis of a more inclusive governance model. Taken together, the themes emerging from the interviews form a coherent and well-supported analytical framework. They show that the coding process successfully captures both the diversity of viewpoints and the broader structural patterns that characterise the Celio district. This consistency across different types of actors increases the reliability of the findings and reinforces their ability to support the theoretical and interpretive arguments developed in the dissertation.

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