

Advanced Cultural Districts - Innovative Approaches to Organisational Design

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Contents

List of Figures

List of Tables

1. Industrial, Cultural and Advanced Cultural Districts	1
1.1. From Industrial Districts to Cultural Districts	2
1.2. Different Types of Cultural Districts	12
1.3. The Advanced Cultural District	18
1.4. The book	23
2. The Challenge for Territorial Development	34
2.1. International experiences	35
2.2. The Italian Way: Six Cultural Districts for Territorial Development	42
2.3. The Valtellina Cultural District: the Tension Between “Design” and “Designing” Approaches	69
2.4. The Tuscan Mining Geopark and the Iterative Process of Development	80
3. The Territory as a Reference Key	94
3.1. The Territory as a Context of Analysis and Designing	95
3.2. The Role of Tangible and Intangible Resources	103
3.3. The Duality of an (Advanced) Cultural District: Systems of Rules and Structuration	115
4. From Straight Lines to Spirals	128
4.1. A Model for Analysis and Designing	129
4.2. Concepts and Tools for Analysis and Designing	140
4.3. Final Remarks	163
References	177
Index	211

List of Figures

2.1	Congruence with the ‘advanced cultural district’ form	64
2.2	The stages of analysis and project development	73
2.3	The waterfall model	76
4.1	The process of districtualisation and the set of requisitions	131
4.2	Circles of analysis, design and implementation and assessment of an advanced cultural district	139
4.3	The process of design(ing) of an advanced cultural district as a spiral	139

List of Tables

1.1	Marshallian industrial district vs. the metropolitan cultural district and the museum cultural district	17
1.2	Strategic dimensions of the system-wide cultural district	21
1.3	Main literature on the district form	23
2.1	Main cultural districts examined in the literature	35
2.2	Magnitude/relevance of the cultural district	55
2.3	Size of the cultural district	57
2.4	Maturity of the cultural district	59
2.5	Governance of the six cultural districts	61
2.6	Transparency in the design process of the cultural district	62
2.7	The tension between the formal process and the process in action	79
3.1	Classification of the resources for a cultural district	113
3.2	Classification of the organisational competencies for a cultural district	114
4.1	An example of the structure of the resources and competencies balance sheet of an advanced cultural district	153
4.2	The matrix of interdependencies	162

1. Industrial, Cultural and Advanced Cultural Districts

Abstract: *Francesconi offers a summary of the literature on industrial districts, cultural districts and advanced cultural districts aimed at local development. He briefly recalls the birth of the concept of district in the industrial field. Then, he offers a deeper reflection on the similarities and differences between the industrial district and its culture-driven counter-part, the cultural district. Lastly, Francesconi analyses different typologies of cultural districts, from more traditional to more advanced forms, according to some critical factors: the integration of heterogeneous idiosyncratic cultural resources, the degree of integration of industrial and cultural industries, the geographic extension, the different criteria for designing the boundaries, the role of public and private actors.*

Keywords: industrial district, cultural district, advanced cultural district, culture-driven development

1.1. From industrial districts to cultural districts

The literature has extensively investigated how and why firms should decide to locate in a specific place. Basically, local agglomeration of firms is due to some sort of increasing returns, giving rise to positive feedback, such that the more firms are already located in that place, the larger the incentive for more firms to do the same.

The basic tenets of the economies of agglomeration are presented and discussed in Marshall's (1890, 1919) contribution, making up the so-called Marshallian triad:

- Demand and cost spatial effects: being close to a large final market (the demand side) and being close to other complementary firms lying upstream and downstream along the same value chain allow the possibility of far-reaching informal coordination that can work as the decentralised equivalent of a large, vertically integrated firm. This results in clear competitive advantages in terms of travel costs, the coordination of production, the optimal use of time, and so on.
- Specific and thick labour markets: the spatial concentration of firms operating in the same productive sector and requiring a certain range of skills facilitates the parallel concentration of skilled workers and the training of new ones, thus 'thickening' the

local labour market and making it more efficient and reactive to changes in the evolution of demand.

- The ‘industrial atmosphere’: this atmosphere, a “local, shared organizational culture working as the real entry barrier of the local system, allows firms to share experiences, information, forecasts about the future market dynamics, as well as extremely specific and critical bits of knowledge about productive processes and products.” (Sacco, 2008: p.7).

Agglomeration has taken a variety of forms, from clustering around one or several large firms, to constellations of complementary small-medium firms (as in the case of Italian industrial districts), with all the intermediate possible variations. Notably, the mere clustering of firms in a specific site is not per se sufficient to promote the development of a local area. Spatial concentration has to be supported by a sustainable social system, where knowledge, social norms, and conventions of mutual trust become the pillars of an all-encompassing network of interaction and exchange. With the concentration of productive assets (especially physical capital), a parallel concentration of intangible assets also takes place: knowledge, social relationships and place identity gradually develop, enriching the urban character of the agglomeration.

Starting from the seminal work of Marshall (1890, 1919), Porter (1989) and Becattini (2000a, b) have studied industrial clustering phenomena. Becattini, focused on the Italian industrial districts, has extensively analysed the underlying social dimension, placing particular emphasis on the ‘industrial atmosphere’ aspect. Porter, focused on the North American cases, has placed particular emphasis on the working of economic factors, and speaks of industrial clusters and of the different constellations that the spatial concentration of firms may take.

In the post-industrial era, the weight of traditional industrial districts in local development scenarios has diminished, as new forms of productive specialisation have taken over, characterised by higher degrees of intangible value added (Sacco et al., 2013). These new forms, which are typically creativity- and innovation-based (Belussi & Staber, 2011), assign a new role to the cultural dimension, which in the traditional industrial city has typically to do with leisure, entertainment and tourism (see e.g. Mommaas, 2004). Culture has acquired a fundamental role in the modern economy. The culture of a territory is commonly recognised as a potential factor for its development. Defined in its broadest sense, the notion of culture encompasses a wide range of idiosyncratic meanings: historical, political, legal, technological and artistic. In this book, the concept of culture is thus used in the sense of cultural capital (Scott, 2000; Throsby,

1999, 2001; Santagata, 2002; Sacco & Segre, 2009). Culture is a capital asset accumulated by a community whose members refer to it to connote their identity. Moreover, this cultural capital, tangible and intangible, enters the production of material and immaterial culture-based goods through two strategic inputs: human creativity and human intellectual activity. Culture-based goods are at the edge of a new wave of economic progress based on new creative and cultural industries (Hesmondhalgh & Pratt, 2005; Lazzarotti, 2012). Culture may be profitable per se (Lazzarotti, Boix & Capone, 2010), especially in some sectors (e.g. tourism and creative industries). Moreover, and most importantly, culture may be a transversal factor, which also facilitates and feeds innovative processes in other production fields. In this regard, culture plays several interdependent roles in local development, from fostering in socially diverse contexts (Everingham, 2003) to empowering the development of human potential (Matarasso, 1997). Owing to its economic characteristics (strong intellectual and creative component, increasing returns, flexible specialisation), its social traits (high power of identification and rich symbolic content) and its positive impact on other economic fields (namely tourism and the environment), culture is a resource of extreme interest for both scholars and policymakers. However, it assumes the activation of a model of territorial development focused on the valorising of, and not the

mere economic exploitation of, the artistic-cultural and landscaping heritage. A culture-driven development model aims to create important synergies between the cultural sector and the local production field, through agreements signed between public and private actors, with the scope for securing sustainable development of the territory, together with the protection and valorising of its landscape, its identity and its culture. This model can find a concrete application within the organisational form of the cultural district.

Many studies (e.g. Cheng, 2006) emphasise the parallelism between industrial and cultural ‘atmosphere’ in these new instances of local development processes, thereby establishing an ideal, although unintentional, continuity with the industrial districts approach. Becattini has already highlighted this linkage. In the more recent literature on cultural agglomerations in post-industrial cities, the social dimension is even more evident and compelling than in the literature on traditional industrial districts (Lloyd, 2006).

Of course, other important communalities between the industrial district and the cultural district are:

- Small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) operating in a bounded geographical area.

- Progressive learning, supported by environmental characteristics, by informality, by sharing of tacit knowledge, and by experimentation (through processes of learning by doing).
- Local 'specialisation' in a specific cultural or creative industry.

There is a stream of research that tends to conceive the cultural district as a direct extension of the industrial district model, e.g. in terms of the vertical integration of the value chains of given local cultural and tourism industries. Scott (2000), for example, analyses big cities, such as Paris, as organisational forms similar to industrial districts, where individuality arises from the cultural nature of the goods produced. Scott (2000) describes this mechanism and provides an extensive overview of the value of the creative industries in developing new economic opportunities for local areas. Scott & Leriche (2005) define the cultural district as an industrial district oriented to cultural production. In any case, the shift from industrial to cultural district implies a major substantial change: whereas the industrial district model is focused upon (decentralised) vertical integration (an increasing level of coordination of firms operating within the same value chain), the cultural district model is sustained by horizontal integration (increasing levels of coordination and complementarities among

firms belonging to different value chains) that leads to culture-driven forms of local economic and social development (Sacco et al., 2013).

Valentino (2003) develops a similar sector-specific approach for Italy, with a specific focus on Italian art cities, in which culture performs the tactical role of building a certain image of a city, to attract tourists or creative talent. He has emphasised that the model of development of cultural districts depends on:

- The creation of a diversified mix of cultural products, competitive in the external market, able to satisfy the needs of the local demand and to become a focus for other productive processes.
- The capacity for generating and attracting sufficient demand to guarantee adequate returns on investments for private entrepreneurs.
- High integration, both horizontal and vertical, of the cultural industries with the other productive sectors of the area.

Although Valentino (2003) has stressed the necessity for integration, most of the studies on cultural districts have used an industry-based approach, focusing in particular on cultural tourism and destination management. Art markets, the performing arts, museums and cultural heritage and design-based goods can all be articulated in chains of creation of value.

Additionally, such activities take on new economic significance when they assume the form of, and are governed in the logic of, districts. They create a path to economic growth by means of the growth of SMEs which are intensely integrated within the territory and in the local community and its identity. In this regard, a fundamental role is played by public policy. If an industrial district is almost always the result of a bottom-up dynamic, in relation to the cultural district this issue is more complex. Some cultural district strategies are the product of top-down local authorities' interventions in the local environment (e.g. Santagata, 2002). Some experiences, instead, start as spontaneous forms of local development, while others are a combination of the spontaneous district and the top-down structure (Le Blanc, 2010). Whichever origin cultural districts have, institutional leadership is crucial to construct a development path based on quality, integration and sustainability (Lorenzini, 2011). At the same time, stakeholders' participation is also essential, at least for implementing the development strategy, if not for planning it (Lorenzini, 2011). In any case, in every instance one can say that there was a local player, be it public or private, that provided the initial impulse.

Finally, even if, particularly in the Italian case, the role of public actors is fundamental to the initial impulse, it is interesting to note that the boundaries of a cultural district do not necessarily match the political and

administrative boundaries. Indeed, the boundaries of a cultural district can constitute:

- A mosaic made of tiles, i.e. territorial elementary units, identified and aggregated through multiple criteria (cultural, historical, geographic, demographic, social, economic, political and administrative), thus not only cultural or political-administrative elements (Valentino, 2003).
- A cluster of firms, such as in handicraft sectors (e.g. Murano, Caltagirone, Los Angeles and Valenza; ‘industrial cultural districts’) or in sectors of food and wine of excellence (e.g. Langhe; ‘institutional’ cultural districts), or a cluster of valuable cultural resources, historical and artistic areas, areas of material culture, landscapes (e.g. Strasbourg, Amsterdam, Berlin and Venice; ‘metropolitan’ and ‘museum’ cultural districts) (Santagata, 2003).
- Local cultural systems, on which are grafted the policies and actions of the cultural district, identified through cluster analysis and appropriate indicators that summarise their potential as districts (Carta, 2004, 2005).
- Areas, as part of a cultural geography of the territory, which are already networking, where boundaries can change over time (Sacco, 2003). Sacco (2003) criticises the view of a cultural district as a

clustering model because this perspective tends to focus only on the density of a particular cultural aspect of a territory, underestimating the integration of physical, human and social capital that distinguishes a cultural district.

Thus, different criteria can be adopted to define the boundaries of districts. Starting from the concept of geo-community developed by Bonomi (2004), we can distinguish three different types of boundary design (Francesconi & Cioccarelli, 2013):

- The formal design comes from a predominantly top-down approach, with the cultural district boundaries mainly linked to the territorial administrative divisions (e.g. provinces, municipalities, mountain communities, etc.). This criterion aims at rational management of cultural heritage, linked to the efficient government of the territory.
- The functional design is based on a central element, such as a specific cultural endowment (a museum, a historic or artisanal cluster already in existence), to be effectively and efficiently organised (in terms of protection, conservation, exploitation and valorisation, e.g. for cultural or tourism aims). This approach highlights the relationship between the cultural sector and other

interdependent sectors (e.g. touristic or eno-gastronomic sectors). It comes from the mediation between a top-down and a bottom-up approach and it is recognisable by the presence in the territory of a set of actors, activities and services organised around the local main cultural heritage. Examples are Anglo-Saxon cultural districts, museum networks and cultural systems.

- The systemic-relational design is the result of a process of territorial aggregation, even if only in part spontaneous, that is built around local identity, strong social relationships and networks (e.g. Alpine valleys).

1.2. Different types of cultural districts

Santagata (2002) argues that there are four different models of cultural districts: (a) the industrial cultural district; (b) the institutional cultural district; (c) the museum cultural district, and (d) the metropolitan cultural district.

Industrial cultural districts (e.g. related to the Italian SME phenomenon) belong to the endogenous growth models based on the presence of small firms and of specific forms of social local regulation. This type of district emerges from a spontaneous process, therefore it is difficult to export to other areas. Industrial cultural districts are mainly based on positive

externalities, localised culture, traditions in arts and crafts, and consumers' cultural lock-in. The basic components of this particular strategy of district building are based on:

- A local community which is cohesive in its cultural traditions and in the sediment of accumulations of technical knowledge and *social capital*.
- A low level of product standardisation.
- Accumulation of savings and the presence of strongly entrepreneurial cooperative local banking.
- A tendency towards open international markets.
- Public financial support along the entire chain of the creation of value.
- A high rate of birth of new firms as a result of *social capability* and *interactive learning*.
- The ability to be district-minded, to become a local system, and to produce positive externalities in the field of design, technological innovation, managerial organisation, the creation of new products, labour market flexibility and commercial distribution.

Within an industrial cultural district the costs of *the use of the market* are lower than anywhere else because of the intense creation of positive

externalities, tacit knowledge, a high rate of innovation, easy networking and the cost-free diffusion of information. In particular, two kinds of positive externality are (Santagata, 2002):

- The ‘atelier effect’, i.e. a great number of individuals are trained in the local cultural profession, so as to exceed the labour demand of the district and to make space for new entrepreneurial initiatives.
- The ‘creative product differentiation’, i.e. industrial cultural districts accelerate the rate of birth of new products and new processes of product differentiation.

The institutional cultural district’s main characteristic is its grounding in formal institutions that allocate property rights and trademarks to a restricted area of production. These rights take on the meaning of community or collective property rights, thus legally protecting the cultural capital of a community localised in a given area. Their protection concerns the intellectual and intangible components of the culture embedded in the goods and services produced. This right is normally established through the setting up of a collective trademark that only the local producers can exploit, such as the denomination of origin (DOC) mark¹. By attributing

¹ The *denomination of origin (DOC)* (in Italian *denominazione di origine controllata*) is a distinctive sign, usually the name of a village or locality, assigned

values that are not only economic but also cultural, immaterial and symbolic, areas can aspire to a level of visibility and appeal that also fosters the sale of its products and the growth of local accommodation facilities and related forms of tourism (Santagata, 2002).

A museum cultural district is the outcome of a public policy. This form of district is constructed around museum networks or within an artistic community. Its design is the result of accurate city planning oriented towards economic valorisation through an innovative network of the historical and artistic patrimony of the city. As in the case of the institutional cultural district, the basic ingredients for a museum cultural district are the presence of a localised culture embedded in the museums' human capital and collections, and an *institutional* start-up represented by a municipal decision to establish a museum district. The capacity to reach critical mass is the essential condition for success. An increase in the number of visitors attracted if critical mass is reached, in addition to the advantages of integrated tours and the availability of collateral services, are the ultimate outcomes pursued by urban development planners (Santagata, 2002).

to a product with characteristics deeply rooted in the local social and cultural environment or territory.

A metropolitan cultural district is a spatial agglomeration of performing arts, museums, and organisations which produce culture and related goods, services and facilities (Santagata, 2002: p. 19). This form uses arts and cultural services to attract people, to counteract economic industrial decline, and to design a new image of a city. If in the museum cultural district we have a city rich in historical monuments, traditions, palaces, churches and museums, the metropolitan cultural district, on the contrary, does not possess an abundance of historic and artistic resources, but is able to generate culture. Culture is produced by artists, composers and creative people. This approach is consistent with Richard Florida's (2002) creative class model, focused on the attraction of talent and human resources. The strength of this approach lies in the highlighting of the role of quality of life in the attraction of a critical mass of professionals whose high human capital endowment pushes the growth potential of the local economy forward, attracts external investment, and gradually transforms social life, norms, and values (Currid 2007).

Notably, if the industrial cultural district and the institutional cultural district have many similarities with the Marshallian industrial district, in the other two cases (i.e. the metropolitan cultural district and the museum cultural district) the distance and the difference between these and the industrial districts is considerable (Table 1.1) (Dal Pozzolo, 2006).

Table 1.1. Marshallian industrial district vs. the metropolitan cultural district and the museum cultural district (Dal Pozzolo, 2006).

Marshallian industrial district	Metropolitan cultural district and the museum cultural district
It concentrates production and attracts a greater or lesser influx of skilled staff and technicians	They concentrate especially on the consumption of culture, thus mainly attracting users and tourists
Is the result of a bottom-up dynamic	They are the result of a top-down type of policy
Is a mono-product system	They are multi-product systems
Industrial production is controlled privately while the public sector takes part in the governance of the territory, controlling and supplying services to connect industrial production with the local society	The cultural institutions continue to require considerable economic support from the public or private sector, since they do not produce profits, while the market-oriented collateral services and trades are run by the private sector
The role of tacit knowledge and know-how is fundamental for ensuring integration of the production process by firms specialised in various stages of the production process	Interaction between actors and firms is not indispensable. However, there is still a 'cultural atmosphere' perceived by users, consumers and tourists
It produces direct wealth and economic local development	The contribution to local economic development is indirect and lies in the ability of the districts to guarantee a different positioning of the city in the geography of European culture, attracting cultural consumers and tourists and providing incentives for local accommodation and hospitality services
It is self-supporting	They generally require economic support, at least for those cultural activities that are not able to generate a profit

The different typologies suggested by Santagata (2002) open up a debate on a very relevant issue in the literature on district forms: the scale of a cultural district. That scale can vary from the sub-regional [such as in the institutional cultural district (Santagata, 2004) or the system-wide cultural district (Lorenzini, 2011; Sacco, 2010)], to the urban [such as in the metropolitan district discussed by Santagata (2002) or the Florentine art restoration district or the museum cluster discussed in Lazzeretti (2003) and in Lazzeretti and Cinti (2009)], to the neighbourhood scale (De Propris & Wei, 2007)]. Notably, if in an American cultural district the urban level is very common [as the metropolitan district case of Denver (Hansberry, 2000; Sacco & Pedrini, 2003)], the sub-regional cultural district is a development model diffused above all in Mediterranean countries, such as Italy, Spain and France (see Chapter 2).

1.3. The advanced cultural district

The integration issue among cultural industries, and between those and other local industries, finds the most complete expression in the advanced cultural district form. Analysing the various types of cultural-led developments, Sacco et al. (2008) distinguish as their most evolved form the system-wide cultural district (or advanced cultural district).

“By ‘system-wide cultural districts’ we mean an idiosyncratic mix of top-down planned elements and emergent, self-organized activities coalescing into a model of local development in which cultural activity displays significant strategic complementarities with other production chains within typical post-industrial contexts. In this scenario, culture drives the accumulation of intangible assets, such as human, social and cultural/symbolic capital, thereby fostering economic and social growth and environmental sustainability.” (Sacco et al., 2008, p.3).

From a theoretical point of view, there are three main models related to advanced cultural districts, as described by Florida, Porter and Sen (Sacco et al., 2008).

Richard Florida’s (2002) creativity-based attraction model focuses on the economy of creativity and the extremely high level of attraction – for innovative firms and people – of places/areas where there is a particularly high concentration of creative professionalism. Florida (2002) points to three conditions for the existence of a creative milieu:

- Technology: the widespread existence of technological resources.

- Talent: the concentration of intellectually open-minded people oriented towards innovation.
- Tolerance: a cultural climate which is open to diversity, dialogue and interaction.

In Florida's view, the presence of a lively cultural milieu is the prime resource for local development, since it attracts further culture and greater innovation in an upward spiralling of local development.

The competitiveness urban renovation model devised by Michael Porter (1989, 1998) concentrates on the transition from an investment-based industrial economy towards an endogenously growing, innovation economy.

Amartya Sen's (1992, 2000) capability-based model stresses the central role of the social fabric in fostering the potential for building activities and practices as a prerequisite for viable economic development.

The system-wide cultural district model ideally encompasses all these aspects in a common theoretical perspective (Sacco et al., 2008). Advanced cultural districts represent a combination of these three theoretical models; one or another might predominate depending on the local conditions and specificities. A cultural district is characterised by interconnections between multiple systems (i.e. value chains) and a large number of

stakeholders, who embody diverse and sometimes conflicting interests. Therefore a cultural district may be described as ‘complex’ (Trist, 1983) or as a “complex adaptive system” (Farrell & Twining-Ward, 2004) that requires attention to spatial and temporal factors, and to decision-making dynamics (Arnaboldi & Spiller, 2011). This view makes the design approaches (see Chapter 4) and the development processes even more complex.

Starting from a meta-review of the existing literature and using the theoretical approaches of Florida, Porter and Sen, Sacco & Blessi (2005, 2006a, b) identified 12 strategic dimensions where valorisation determines the success of the development of an advanced cultural district, grouped into five macro-dimensions (Table 1.2).

Table 1.2. Strategic dimensions of the system-wide cultural district (Sacco & Blessi, 2005, 2006a, b)

Macro dimension	Strategic dimension	Description
Quality	Quality of Cultural Supply	The existence of a cultural milieu of organisations and institutions that represent and organise the local creativity base while at the same time providing challenging cultural standards, making the local cultural supply palatable to wider, though specific, global audiences
	Quality of Local Governance	One or more local administrations credibly committing to the enhancement of coordination and cooperation of local actors around a shared, socially equitable knowledge development-

		based vision
	Quality of the Production of Knowledge	The existence of a strong base of educational, research and knowledge transfer institutions that provide at least a few areas of excellence
Development	Development of Local Entrepreneurship	The availability of (merit-based) opportunities and facilities to develop new entrepreneurial projects by local people in knowledge-related sectors
	Development of Local Talent	The existence of a stimulating and motivating social and cultural environment that encourages and rewards the skilled and creatively talented young to emerge, and that provides opportunities to showcase their work and to expose it to qualified talent scouts
Attraction	Attraction of External Firms and Investments	Creating the legal, financial, logistical, environmental and socio-cultural conditions for non-local knowledge-related firms to settle down and for outside capital to be invested locally
	Attraction of External Talent	Creating the logistical and socio-cultural conditions for emerging and acclaimed talent to settle down or at least to have a stake in the local milieu for the development of their professional career and relationships
Sociality	Management of Social Criticalities	Referring to culture and knowledge-related activities and practices as basic, widely-trialled tools for the mediation and the rehabilitation of socially critical situations
	Capability Building and Education of the Local Community	Devising and implementing community-wide initiatives aimed at fostering a systematic and widespread accumulation of intangible assets, especially in terms of capability of access to knowledge-intensive experiences
	Local community involvement	Promoting the extensive and generalised participation and attendance of all local communities at knowledge-related initiatives and practices
Networking	Internal Networking	Providing strong networking among all local players with complementary strategic interests and fostering close, regular cooperation and

	coordination in their activities
External Networking	Establishing a dense, stable web of relationships within a number of other local contexts, characterised by similar tendencies toward the development of system-wide, knowledge-intensive cultural, social and economic orientations

1.4. The book

Through a summary of the main literature (Table 1.3), in this chapter we briefly described the evolution of the district form, from the original definition by Marshall (1890, 1919) in the industrial field to cultural districts, and a deep reflection on the similarities and differences between industrial districts and cultural districts.

Table 1.3. Main literature on the district form

Main topic	Author/s
Industrial District	Becattini, 1975, 1987, 1989, 1997, 1998, 1999, 2000, 2005; Becattini & Dei Ottati, 2006; Bellandi, 1987, 1995; Bonacci, 2007; Buscema, Carlei, Nuccio & Sacco, 2006; Camuffo & Grandinetti, 2005; Foresti, Guelpa & Trenti, 2009; Fuà, 1983; Garofoli, 1994, 2006; Lazzeretti, Boix & Capone, 2009, 2010; Marshall, 1890, 1919; Micelli & Di Mari, 2000; Rullani, 2002
Cultural District	Alberti & Giusti, 2009; Arnaboldi & Spiller, 2011; Barreca, Ferraro & Fiorani, 2011; Canziani & Moioli, 2010; Casoni & Fanzini, 2011; Chirico, 2009; Cooke & Lazzeretti, 2008; Cuccia, 2011; Debernardi, 2005; Hansberry, 2000; Lazzeretti, 2001, 2003, 2005, 2007, 2008, 2011; Le Blanc, 2010; Lorenzini, 2011; Maggiore & Vellecco, 2011, 2012; Massimo, Musolino & Barbalace, 2006; Mollica & Musolino, 2003; Pesaro, 2010; Ponzini, 2009; Prezioso, 2010; Ronsivalle, 2009; Santagata, 2000a, 2000b, 2001, 2003, 2004, 2005; Savi, 2010; Valentino, 2001, 2003, 2007
Advanced Cultural District	Sacco, 2002, 2004, 2006, 2008, 2010; Sacco & Pedrini, 2003; Sacco & Blessi, 2005, 2006a,b; Sacco & Ferilli, 2006; Cioccarelli, Francesconi & Dossena, 2010; Cioccarelli & Francesconi, 2013.

The concept of a cultural district, in very general terms, can be considered as an ideal place: a recognisable but mutable territorial environment, where culture-driven socio-economic development can be supported. However, different typologies of cultural district can arise, from the traditional forms of cultural district to the advanced cultural forms. Cultural districts can assume different forms according to some critical issues:

- The integration of heterogeneous idiosyncratic cultural resources: even if a cultural district never relates to a singular cultural industry [as in the case of cultural clusters (e.g. Bagdadli, 2001; Carta, 1999)], it may be focused on a specific cultural asset [as in the museum cultural district (Santagata, 2002, 2004)] or not [as in the advanced cultural district (Sacco et al. 2008, 2011, 2013)].
- The degree of integration of industrial and cultural industries (horizontal integration): from the traditional forms of cultural district (Santagata, 2002; Valentino, 2003) to the advanced cultural forms (Sacco et al. 2008, 2011, 2013).
- The geographic extension: from one area of a city to a sub-regional scale, as in the system-wide cultural district (Sacco, 2008, 2011, 2013; Lorenzini, 2011).

- The criteria adopted in designing the boundaries of a cultural district: cultural, historical, geographic, demographic, social, economic, political, and administrative.
- The role of public and private actors in fostering agglomeration and integration: from the metropolitan cultural district and the museum cultural district, which are often the result of a top-down type of public policy, to the industrial cultural district, which often starts from private initiatives and then receives support from public actors.

Based on these premises, this work has the scope for proposing, in context, two other kinds of contribution to the debate on the role of culture for the socio-economic development of a territory through a process of districtualisation:

- An occasion of reflection on some established international experiences, compared with some recent and relevant examples of Cultural District projects developed in Italy in two different Regions.
- A theoretical and normative contribution, proposing a framework conceived as support for both the analysis and the design of an Advanced Cultural District, also in a supra-urban territory.

The originality of this work relies upon its focus on organisational design approaches for Advanced Cultural Districts, conceived as adaptive complex systems. From a methodological point of view, this study is developed through the application of both deductive and inductive research methods: from the first perspective, we exploit the literature review on Cultural Districts, developed in this chapter with special attention paid to Italian interpretations of the related concept. In the next chapter, some key international cases of Cultural Districts are briefly compared, to highlight the distinctiveness of the Italian approach. An inductive approach is used to focus on the ambitious programme promoted in Lombardy by the Cariplo Foundation – which is one of the largest and most important private grant-making foundations with a banking origin in Italy – together with the evolution of six Cultural District projects developed within this programme. Another case is added (i.e. the “Tuscan Mining Geopark”) because it represents a more mature and different context for analysis and is recognised in Europe as a best practice example of the management and governance of cultural heritage.

The above-mentioned themes are divided into three chapters.

The second chapter (*The Challenge for Territorial Development*) offers an empirical framework to understanding the logic behind the designing of cultural districts. The chapter opens with an overview of relevant Italian and international experiences of *culture-driven* development. We then analyse, through a multiple case-study method (Yin, 1994), the six cultural district projects started in Lombardy by the Cariplo Foundation between 2009 and 2011, namely:

1. *'Il distretto culturale "Le Regge dei Gonzaga"'*
2. *'Il distretto culturale della Provincia di Monza e Brianza'*
3. *'Il distretto culturale della Provincia di Cremona'*
4. *'Il distretto culturale della Valtellina'*
5. *'Il distretto culturale della Valle Camonica'*
6. *'Il distretto culturale dell'Oltrepò Mantovano – DOMINUS'*

Issues raised by the designing of one of these (the Valtellina Cultural District) are further explored through participatory action research (Brock & Pettit, 2007; Chevalier & Buckles, 2008, 2013). This exploration emphasises the discrepancies between a deterministic and formal design approach – one embedded within formal plans – that extols the virtues of anticipation and completeness, and the actual and very different process of

designing in action. This case also offers the opportunity of strengthening the arguments embedded in our model, which summarises the evolution ‘from straight lines to spirals’.

Finally, the “Tuscan Mining Geopark” is analysed through direct interviews and document analysis. The case highlights the evolution of stakeholder engagement in the development of the park, within an iterative design process. This case provides further observations on the changeover from organisational *design* logic to *designing* logic, and on the balancing of top-down and bottom-up approaches to development. This suggests a shift in the meaning of the word ‘design’ itself, from noun to verb. In traditional settings, these two meanings of design have been separated from one another. ‘Design’ as a noun conceives organizational design as an ‘artefact’ (e.g. the organizational structure or the architecture) chosen to solve the ‘organizational problem’ (e.g. the differentiation/division and coordination of work). ‘Design’ as a verb conceives organizational design as a ‘process’ of organizing to achieve goals.

The third chapter (*The Territory as a Reference Key*) is focused on the role of a territory and the resources, knowledge and know-how available for designing a potential cultural district. The subsequent analysis of such aspects is intended to produce a systemic process which integrates resources, knowledge and know-how. The systemic process should not

leave aside the system of social relationships which permeate the investigated territory. Given that every firm is made up of a particular set of resources and capabilities, every territory can also be considered as a particular set of heterogeneous, cultural and non-cultural resources, of specific know-how and of relationships developable by the actors (public or private, individual or collective ones) operating in that territory. This perspective is inspired and sustained by the *resource and competence-based view* of the firm, a theoretical and consolidated approach in management studies, and by the *relational-based view* of the firm, in order to consider jointly elements such as intellectual, social and relational capital. In a cultural district, culture, embedded in both tangible and/or intangible cultural heritage, becomes a potential resource to be used for socio-economic development. The *resource base* will have to be developed and integrated through specific actions and policies (and organisational competencies), which will need at first to favour the growth of a widespread ability to assign sense and value to cultural experiences, putting resources into the network and encouraging creative re-combinations.

To highlight the socio-cultural dimension within the process of designing of a cultural district, we draw inspiration from the debate between agency and structure in the social sciences (Giddens, 1984; Archer, 2000). Inspired by the Structuration Theory devised by Giddens (1984), it is possible to

recognise the duality of the cultural district, which is both a means to and a result of the actions of districtualisation, which places it in a recursive relationship with the local system (that is to say the surrounding social, cultural and economic system).

The complexity of designing a cultural district and the complexity of the contextual elements, due to the heterogeneity and interdependence of actors, requisitions and resources, indicates the use of a framework, depicted in the fourth chapter (*From Straight Lines to Spirals*), where the process of districtualisation aims to satisfy, at the same time, three concomitant sets of requisitions:

- The institutional context, which affects the process of design through regulations and contextual culture (e.g. related to the social and the economic environment, the legislative context, the institutional framework, the financial resources, the accountability structures, etc.).
- The design group, which is engaged in the purposely rational development of ‘artefacts’ such as organisational design, structures, and processes that guide/provide rules for the effective and efficient use and development of the territorial and cultural capital towards achieving the district’s goals (human agency of design group).

- The other actors (cultural and non-cultural operators, cultural services users and other stakeholders, initially the inhabitants) that invent, design, and use both cultural and non-cultural artefacts which have an impact on the institutional context and become constraints and enablers at the same time for human agency.

In the same chapter, we propose a model for the analysis and designing of an (advanced) cultural district, where the socio-economic value of the cultural initiatives on a territory is linked to the systemic interdependencies and to the multiple relationships between a series of actors, activities, tangible and intangible resources and know-how. The goal of the model is twofold: on the one hand, to take into account the aforementioned suggestions for the analysis and designing, avoiding an extreme determinism; on the other hand, to offer a compass for anyone who has to act concretely (in particular within a design group) in situations of high organisational complexity.

Why a combined model for analysis and design(ing)?

The reason is rooted in the hypothesis that the process of development of a cultural district cannot be conceived as a rigid, sequential and linear planning process, completely definable a priori (*straight lines*). On the

contrary, we believe that this process is something more dynamic, constantly evolving (*spirals*) and allowing the pursuit of pragmatic implementations, creative experimentations, contextual learning and iterations, all concurrently.

2. The Challenge for Territorial Development

Abstract: *Francesconi provides an interpretative framework for the understanding of key dimensions behind the initiation of a cultural district as a challenge for territorial development. He starts from some international successful case studies. Then he focuses on a comparison between six cultural districts in Italy, also emphasising the 'Italian understanding' of cultural districtualisation. He further explores the issues raised by the early phase of development of one of these (the Valtellina case) to highlight the tension between the process of 'designing in action' and formal planning. Subsequently, he analyses the Tuscan Mining Geopark – an example of best practice in managing cultural heritage, recognised in Europe and by UNESCO – that shows a more mature stage of development and offers interesting insights about the process of 'iterative designing'.*

Keywords: case studies, Italy, design approaches, process of design(ing) in action, iterative process of design.

2.1. International experiences

Over time, many instances of cultural planning have been recognised in the literature as cultural districts (Table 2.1).

Table 2.1. Main cultural districts examined in the literature

Cultural district	Author/s	Type	Main purpose
St. Louis	Sacco & Pedrini, (2003)	Metropolitan cultural district	Counteract economic decline of the city
Denver	Hansberry (2000); Sacco & Pedrini (2003)	Metropolitan cultural district	Attract creative class and foster innovation
Glasgow	Booth & Boyle (1993)	Metropolitan cultural district	Counteract economic decline of the city, attract creative class, change the image of the city and support tourism
Linz	Sacco & Pedrini (2003)	Metropolitan cultural district	Attract creative class and foster innovation
Loire Valley	Donato & Badia (2008)	Museum cultural district	Enhance cultural heritage and support tourism
Ludwig castles	Donato & Badia (2008)	Museum cultural district	Preserve/enhance cultural heritage and support tourism
Cape Town	Sykes & Quesenberry (2008)	Metropolitan cultural district	Support socio-economic development and create a cultural identity
Saadiyat Island (Abu Dhabi's Cultural District)	Hashim (2011)	Metropolitan cultural district	Design a new image of the city, attract investment and support tourism
Tianzifang (Shanghai)	Yung, Chan & Xu (2014)	Museum cultural district	Rehabilitation of historic districts
Mount Vernon (Baltimore)	Ponzini (2009)	Metropolitan cultural district	Counteract economic decline of the city, enhance cultural heritage
Los Angeles	Santagata (2002)	Industrial cultural district	Support the motion picture industry

In the UK and the US, the cultural district is something different from the cultural district as it is understood in Italy. The UK and US cultural district is a city, or a part of it, where there is a concentration of activities related to cultural production and consumption. Sometimes this agglomeration follows bottom-up processes similar to industrial districts, such as in the industrial cultural district (Santagata, 2002; 2004). In this form, an area focuses on a specific cultural sector, for example the motion picture industry in Los Angeles. More frequently, United States districts are related to the form of the metropolitan cultural district as described by Santagata (2002, 2004). This form uses arts and cultural services to attract people, to counteract economic industrial decline, and to design a new image of the city.

There are cases of metropolitan cultural districts born from a willingness to influence the location choices of the creative class (Florida, 2002), to generate high levels of human and social capital, to attract investment and to support innovation-oriented activities (Porter, 1998). This is the case with Denver (Hansberry, 2000; Sacco & Pedrini, 2003).

The majority of metropolitan cultural districts have been developed to counteract the socio-economic decline of a city or a part of it. Mount Vernon (Ponzini, 2009), Glasgow (Booth & Boyle, 1993), St. Louis and Linz (Sacco & Pedrini, 2003) are metropolitan cultural districts commonly

cited as examples of districts created to counteract the economic industrial decline of a city. In some cases, the willingness to counteract economic decline starts from private initiatives, such as in the case of St. Louis. In this case, 1,200 volunteers have started a process of participatory involvement, where citizens define the development objectives of the city (bottom-up processes). Only later, public institutions assume a role of strategic coordination as the public institutions defined the 'St. Louis 2004' plan, in which local community has been significantly involved through working groups.

Partnerships between public and private actors appear to be one of the most important conditions for a cultural district's success. It is evident that the governance form and the relationship between public and private actors can significantly vary. The success of Denver is largely attributable to the presence of a public institution, the Scientific and Cultural Facilities District (SCFD). A peculiarity of the case lies in the form of fundraising for the organisations involved in cultural activities, resulting from a tax for this purpose. The SCFD is financed by receiving a penny for every ten dollars in revenue produced in the counties that belong to the metropolitan area of Denver. Glasgow's cultural district is governed by a public-private partnership, Glasgow Action. The district is based on an important network between the great public institutions and local cultural and artistic

associations. The district of Glasgow supports its cultural offer with festivals and events. It also provides artists with many local facilities for marketing their work, offering exhibition spaces and subsidised rents for homes. In this way, the city has attracted the creative class, who in turn have contributed to increasing the cultural offer of the city, and thus to increasing the attractiveness of Glasgow, feeding into a sort of virtuous circle. In addition, an effective marketing campaign was implemented in order to launch the new image of the city at an international level, and to promote its cultural and artistic heritage. From a traditional industrial city, Linz has now become one of the most important areas worldwide specialising in the field of multimedia and new technologies applied to cultural forms.

Recently, developing countries are also looking with interest at the cultural district form, as a way of counteracting poverty in metropolitan areas. The role of art in identity formation and in conflict resolution in South Africa is much in demand. The development of a cultural district in Cape Town is encouraging densification, crime reduction and improved quality of life for its citizens. An integrated approach, including partnerships with local businesses for micro-financing of professional artists, has formed the basis for a way forward.

In general terms, cultural districts aim to attract the creative class, integrate cultural and non-cultural sectors, enhance cultural identity, and support innovation activities. Notably, some districts adopt a predominantly internal focus, such as in the case of Tianzifang, a neighbourhood in Shanghai, in which the main purpose of the cultural district is to enhance the cultural identity of an historic cultural district (Yung, Chan & Xu, 2014). In other cases, the cultural district focuses on external actors, such as in the cases where supporting tourism is one of the most important aims of the district (such as in the Loire Valley). In the majority of cases though, the two needs are combined.

Regarding the integration of different industries, many districts focus on one or two leading sectors: tourism (Ludwig castles, Saadiyat Island, Glasgow, Loire Valley, Cape Town), food and wine (Ludwig castles, Loire Valley), multimedia and new technologies applied to culture (Linz), music (Glasgow, St. Louis), sport (Denver), the motion picture industry (Los Angeles).

Another relevant consideration is the size of the cultural districts. Except in some cases (such as Glasgow), in Europe cultural districts often have a sub-regional scale. Sometimes the criterion for setting the boundaries is functional, such as in the case of the cultural district of the Ludwig castles. At other times, the boundaries are defined through systemic-relational

design, such as in the Loire Valley. Notably, the two European cases aim at preserving and enhancing cultural heritage, strictly linked to the landscape (see Chapter 3 for a deeper analysis of the landscape as a strategic asset). Moreover, public intervention has often been an essential component for the development of a territory. Public institutions have efficiently supported the enhancement of artistic and cultural heritage, and integration between the cultural sector and other sectors, most notably the tourism and the food and wine industries.

A final consideration regarding the role that specific international awards and recognition may have: both Linz and Glasgow have received the accolade of European Capital of Culture; the Loire Valley has been registered since 2000 on the UNESCO list of World Heritage sites for its landscapes and gardens. In the cited cases, these recognitions have encouraged huge investment in cultural and creative initiatives.

In sum, all around the world cultural districts may assume very different forms, in terms of:

- Main purposes: to counteract the socio-economic decline of an area, to attract the creative class (Florida, 2002), innovation activities and investments (Porter, 1998), to support entrepreneurship and the development of new competencies, to design a new image of the city or of an area, to support tourism and

culture-related sectors, and, of course, to preserve/enhance cultural heritage. Notably, in the majority of cases the purposes of the cultural district are a mix of these.

- Presence of a cultural heritage and ‘idiosyncratic resources’ to be enhanced.
- Belonging to international cultural systems that provide legitimacy and attract investment.
- Degree of socio-economic development of the territory: from developing areas in South Africa to wealthy American metropolitan areas (such as Denver).
- Size: neighbourhoods, metropolitan areas, system-wide areas (e.g. valleys, cultural systems of sub-regional scale).
- Criteria for defining boundaries: administrative, functional, and systemic-relational criterion.
- Attention to local entrepreneurship and integration between cultural and non-cultural sectors.
- Governance model: cultural district governed by public institutions, private actors, or both.
- Partnerships between public and private actors in the conceptualisation, design and development steps. Notably, in all

the cases the role of public institutions is crucial in the development of the district, and often also for its inception.

2.2. The Italian way: six cultural districts for territorial development

Italy is a country with a long tradition of districtualisation, not limited to the boundaries of the industrial district model. Recently, many cultural projects are defined as cultural districts. We believe that it is interesting to investigate some of the more recent projects, in order to highlight their peculiarities, the underlying interpretations of the cultural district concept, and their consequent characteristics and goals, and the approaches used for their planning and design.

The Cariplo Foundation project

This section provides an empirical key to understanding the logic behind the development of cultural districts, through a multiple case study method (Yin, 1994) based on the six projects for cultural districts promoted in Lombardy by the Cariplo Foundation, under the heading of “Cultural districts, economic wheels for the territory”.

This project aimed at creating six cultural districts in Northern Italy, through a total investment of about 20 million Euros. This intervention has been developed in four main phases:

1. An overall pre-feasibility study to identify potentially suitable areas for the development of cultural districts (2005-2006).
2. The publication of a tender notice and the selection of 11 areas suitable for full feasibility studies (2007-2008).
3. The development of 11 full feasibility studies and the selection of 6 projects to be financed for the realisation of the following cultural districts (2008-2010):
 - *‘Il distretto culturale “Le Regge dei Gonzaga”’*
 - *‘Il distretto culturale della Provincia di Monza e Brianza’*
 - *‘Il distretto culturale della Provincia di Cremona’*
 - *‘Il distretto culturale della Valtellina’*
 - *‘Il distretto culturale della Valle Camonica’*
 - *‘Il distretto culturale dell’Oltrepò Mantovano – DOMINUS’*
4. The beginning of the development of the cultural districts (2010->).

The Foundation has provided technical support through a committee of experts, detailed guidelines, and training meetings.

The Foundation asserted that “the valorisation process, which is based on restoration of buildings at risk, or of buildings which need a functional adjustment, will be conditional on the way those restorations are realised and presented [...] Therefore, it is important that the districts choose

suitable courses of action to guarantee a continuous impulse towards high profile choices, in order to fully exploit interventions in the built cultural heritage in terms of the growth of human capital, the production and dissemination of knowledge, the updating and the strengthening of individual and collective awareness, the implementation of more up-to-date methodologies for the protection of the built cultural heritage”.

The comparison framework

To our knowledge, in the literature there is a lack of a commonly accepted framework that allows the comparison of different cultural district projects. This section aims at making a first contribution in this direction. Therefore, we suggest a five-dimension framework resulting from both the literature review and our empirical analysis. These dimensions have been developed to allow the comparison of the six cultural projects promoted by the Cariplo Foundation. Notably, the framework is built to be suitable for analyses that are based on public information, and it is not intended to be exhaustive.

Magnitude/relevance of the cultural district

This dimension refers to the impact the cultural district can have on the local area to ensure its socio-economic development. The objectives of the cultural districts, their concrete chances of being realised, and the types of

cultural assets, represent a first and very important dimension for their comparison. Evaluating the socio-economic impact of a cultural district in its conceptualisation and design phase is a huge challenge, with many issues that can arise (see the deepening of the design process in the following Valtellina case). However, the Cariplo Foundation required a precise vision of its projects to be financed from the earliest stages, in terms of budget, general aims and specific operating objectives, actions to be implemented, their costs and their impacts on local development.

According to the data publicly available, for this dimension we collected data regarding:

- Main purposes of the cultural district.
- Key assets of the cultural district.
- Number of planned actions.
- Total project cost.

Size of the cultural district

As argued in Chapter 1, there is no fixed optimal scale for a cultural district. Almost all over the world, a cultural district means a city or a neighbourhood, as in the cases of metropolitan and museum cultural districts (Santagata, 2002). In the Italian context, on the contrary, cultural districts tend to have sub-regional (Mollica & Musolino, 2002) and extra-

urban (Lorenzini, 2011) dimensions. A point open for debate concerns the difficulty of defining what parameters to choose to assess the size of the district, in terms of the number of municipalities involved in the district, the geographic extent of the territory, the population density, and so on. The parameters can vary according to the criteria for defining the boundaries of the district (see Chapter 1). For example, by adopting a formal perspective, the scale of the district could be effectively assessed through the number of municipalities, provinces and/or mountain communities involved. In adopting a systemic-relational perspective, we should take into account elements of territorial identity, strong social relationships and networks, such as local dialects or a common sense-making in Alpine valleys. Finally, if we adopt a functional perspective, we should take into account the spatial agglomeration of specific cultural heritage assets in defining the boundaries of a cultural district, such as museums, pre-existing cultural and industrial clusters, historic neighbourhoods, and so forth.

For the size dimension we have identified, for each cultural district, the design criterion adopted in defining its boundaries. Moreover, in order to allow a comparison between cultural districts that follow different criteria, we have collected data regarding the number of municipalities involved and the number of citizens.

Maturity of the cultural district

This dimension concerns the degree of maturity of the districtualisation process. Carta (2004) has identified nine indicators to measure the level of maturity in the districtualisation process:

- The cultural centrality, which relates to the concentration of cultural assets.
- The flexibility of the cultural offer and the adequacy of related services.
- The proximity and accessibility, which ensure the effective exploitation of the cultural heritage.
- The economic value created by activities related to conservation, enhancement, promotion, training, scientific research.
- The presence of activities and structures related to hospitality and cultural tourism.
- The collaboration and cooperation between local and/or external actors (such as universities, research centres, etc.).
- The integration between cultural and non-cultural industries.
- The participation of stakeholders in planning and implementing the local development strategy.

- The economic, social and environmental sustainability, key element for the proper management of a cultural district.

In our opinion, it could be useful to add another indicator: the presence in the territory of previous integrated projects and cultural systems. It might be a measure of a local inclination to collaborate, and thus become a cultural district.

Dependent on the information publicly available, for this dimension we collected data regarding:

- The presence of pre-existing projects/cultural systems.
- The degree of diversification of cultural and non-cultural industries.
- The number of local partners.
- The partnerships with universities in the conceptualisation phase of the cultural district.
- The membership of UNESCO heritage initiatives.
- The presence of a permanent structure for internal and external communication.
- The presence of a specific website for the cultural district (the initial recognition date: February 2012) and now (March 2015).

- Other tools for supporting the stakeholders' involvement in the design process of the cultural district.

Governance

For this dimension we adopt the model devised by Provan and Kenis (2008). They have identified three different forms of network governance, which they refer to as Shared/Participant, Lead Organization, and Network Administrative Organization (NAO), though further hybridisation is possible, showing that these different 'ideal' configurations can produce different results in terms of network performance (Provan & Lemaire 2012). In Shared/Participant models (Provan & Kenis 2008), governance and decision-making responsibilities are shared by all actively-involved participants, without any distinct governance entity. Network representatives have to interact frequently to ensure coordination and collaboration, minimise conflict, and focus on network-level goals. Engaging in these activities is critical to network effectiveness, and trust among participants is essential. The advantages of this model lie in the involvement of all partners, and in the responsiveness to participants' needs. The main disadvantage lies in the negative impact on network efficiency of this kind of structure. This configuration is suitable for small, geographically concentrated networks, where direct and mutual interactions

are possible. Otherwise, a shift to the Lead Organization or the NAO model is suggested. The Lead Organization-governed network (Provan & Kenis 2008) is a brokered form based on the coordination of activities and key decisions, by a leading organisation which has enough resources and legitimacy. It is common, for example, in vertical relationships between buyers and suppliers, or between funders and recipients. The leading organisation provides administration for the network and facilitates the work of partners towards the network goals. The advantages of this form lie in increased efficiency, through easier coordination of network activities and the legitimacy provided by the leading organisation. Nevertheless, the leading organisation often has its own agenda, which might be different from the specific interests and agendas of the partners, thus creating tension (Provan & Kenis 2008). The NAO (Provan & Kenis 2008) is another brokered configuration based on a separate administrative entity, which can be a government entity or a non-profit organisation. This entity manages, coordinates, and provides its services to the network, without being a network partner. It may be a single individual, who acts as a network facilitator or broker through relatively informal practices, or it may be a board and a management team which operate through more formalised and complex practices, especially when the NAO is looking for official recognition and higher legitimacy among inner and outer stakeholders. This

structure allows network organisations to interact and work together while the main activities and key decisions are coordinated by a separate, independent entity. The advantages lie in its greater legitimacy, sustainability and efficiency, while its disadvantage is primarily its bureaucratic decision-making process. Thus, NAO governance forms tend to be more suitable for large, highly complex networks.

In order to analyse the governance dimension, we examined the characteristics of the coordinator/project leader/promoter (its governance model, such as foundation, association, etc.), whether it is public or private, or a mix, and the network governance form (Provan & Kenis 2008).

Transparency in the design process of the cultural district

Many models of cultural planning recognise the stakeholders' involvement as a key element for the successful planning of cultural actions and interventions. This involvement requires, first of all, effective communication processes between local actors. The communication activities aim to support internal coordination. Moreover, they promote collaboration, building trust-based relationships (Woolthuis, Hillebrand & Nooteboom, 2002; Dyer & Nobeoka, 2000). The latter are very important coordination and control mechanisms that should be added to the formal mechanisms developed mainly through contracts.

In order to ensure transparency in the design process of a district, and to encourage the involvement of the local community, the mass media (television, radio, magazines, and so on) and, more specifically, the web, play a crucial role. Their role goes far beyond the mere promotion of the ‘cultural offer’ (Legrenzi, Micelli & Moretti, 1998). In particular, the web and social media become tools that support participation, innovation, and the growth of social capital (Solidoro, 2011). They represent useful tools in the development of a sort of ‘social information system’ for the district.

According to the data publicly available, in order to analyse the transparency in the design process we collected data on:

- Availability on the web of information regarding the cultural district.
- Design methods information available in online documents.
- Availability of information on performance during the design process (the initial recognition date: February 2012) and now (March 2015).

The six cultural districts promoted by the Cariplo Foundation

In this section we have applied our comparison framework to the six cultural districts involved in the Cariplo Foundation project.

Data sources

In order to allow a comparison of the cultural districts, we collected documents retrieved online and publicly available. An initial search was done in February 2012. Subsequently, a second search was done in March 2015. A dedicated section on the website of the Cariplo Foundation² represents the main data source. In particular, on the website there were the following documents:

- A detailed description of the project.
- A brief description of the six projects funded.
- Working documents for the design and implementation of some critical processes (e.g. guidelines for communication or for reporting activities) and documents for the development of the project (pre-feasibility study, notice, guidelines for the feasibility study).
- Some scientific publications related to the cultural districts.

² Available at

<http://www.fondazionecriplo.it/distretticulturali/sv1.do;jsessionid=74210286E8423C16FE6DC77B8977C86C> [retrieved on 12 November 2011]. Currently, the dedicated section on the Cariplo Foundation website links to a new site (<http://www.distretticulturali.it/>), where the project documents are no longer available (5 March 2015).

In addition, we analysed the dedicated sections on the official websites of each promoter/administrative actor for each cultural district.

Finally, we identified many press releases on the topic, published from 2006 to January 2012.

Comparison of the six cultural districts

Magnitude/relevance of the cultural district

The first dimension for our comparison considers the magnitude/relevance of the cultural district, as previously defined (Table 2.2).

	Valtellina	Oltrepò Mantovano	'Le Regge dei Gonzaga'	Valcamonica	Province of Cremona	Province of Monza and Brianza
Main purposes	1) Enhance the terraced landscape. 2) Support the local food and wine industries through innovative technologies. 3) Improve the knowledge of local cultural heritage and of the landscape for both citizens and tourists.	1) Develop the 'Sistema del Gusto' ('System of Taste') through integration between the agritourism and wine industries and the agricultural landscape. 2) Develop new local entrepreneurship. 3) Enhance the identity and rural culture of the early years of the '900s in Italy.	1) Promote the conservation of the 'Regge dei Gonzaga' through innovative methods developed in collaboration with local authorities, universities, professional highly specialised professionals and firms. 2) Develop and promote the 'Network of Taste'. 3) Integrate the activities of the 'Regge dei Gonzaga' with the management plan of the UNESCO 'Mantova and Sabbioneta' sites.	The district is based on three strategic assets: 1) The cultural district as a tool to reinforce governance. 2) The cultural district as 'lever' to promote cultural heritage. 3) The cultural heritage as a 'lever' for innovation and entrepreneurship.	1) Revitalise the local tradition in crafts and music. 2) Develop the 'Musical Tourism Exchange' 3) Strengthen the cultural offer of exhibitions and higher education in handicraft, music and musicology.	1) Enhance the local identity of the territory and strengthen the role of the new Province formed recently. 2) Promote the conservation of the local cultural heritage through the collaboration of construction firms, local authorities and institutions of higher education. 3) Support firms' innovative and creative processes.
Key assets	Landscape; terraces; food and wine; tourism; multi-sectoral integration; territorial cultural heritage	Food and wine; rural culture of the early years of the '900s in Italy; multi-sectoral integration; territorial cultural heritage	Food and wine; Regge dei Gonzaga; multi-sectoral integration; territorial cultural heritage	Rock art; local entrepreneurship; landscape; multi-sectoral integration; territorial cultural heritage	Music; 'Musical Tourism Exchange'; performing arts; handicraft; territorial cultural heritage	Higher education; multi-sectoral integration; territorial cultural heritage
N. of planned actions	12	N.A.	26	17	10	N.A.
Total project cost	8 million Euros	18 million Euros	8 million Euros	12.8 million Euros	9 million Euros	9 million Euros

Table 2.2. Magnitude/relevance of the cultural district

As suggested in the literature, each cultural district focuses on the valorisation of its specific cultural heritage and on its unique identity. Each project has drawn from its distinctive cultural heritage: the music in Cremona, terracing in Valtellina, agricultural and industrial traditions typical of the early twentieth century in Oltrepò Mantovano, the royal palaces in 'Regge dei Gonzaga', rock art in Valcamonica. The only exception is the cultural district of the Province of Monza and Brianza. In this district no distinctive cultural heritage of the territory was identified. However, the district has favoured a more general approach to the enhancement of the culture and identity of the territory. Compared with other projects, the district of the Province of Monza and Brianza is focused more on the development of human capital, investing largely in training programmes to foster the innovation and creativity of local firms. Notably, this district is characterised also by the recent founding of the Province as a new institution for the coordination of cultural policies.

Even if each cultural district draws on its unique cultural heritage, it is possible to find some common cornerstones of territorial development in all six projects. Firstly, there is strong synergy between the cultural sector and some local production sectors, in particular crafts, food and wine, and tourism. Secondly, many districts conceive the landscape as a fundamental resource to protect and enhance. Finally, all the projects intend to support

local entrepreneurship and innovation, conceiving culture as a driver of the socio-economic development of the territory.

In sum, all the projects aim at challenging purposes, based on both tangible and intangible assets, for territorial development. Although it is too early to assess the concrete impact of the cultural districts on the territory, we can infer that the projects with more realistic expectations might be more suitable for brand new cultural districts.

Size of the cultural district

The information about the size of the six cultural districts is reported in Table 2.3.

Table 2.3. Size of the cultural district

Cultural district	Criteria adopted in defining the boundaries	Number of municipalities	Number of citizens ³	Surface (Km ²)
Valtellina	Formal design + systemic-relational design	4	152,719	3,212
Oltrepò Mantovano	Formal design	22	96,825	600
'Le Regge dei Gonzaga'	Formal design + functional design	13	116,120	about 2,340
Valcamonica	Formal design + systemic-relational design	42	86,222	1,518
Province of Cremona	Formal design	8	335,939	1,770
Province of Monza and Brianza	Formal design	5	339,639	405

³ Data retrieved in the pre-feasibility study.

Regarding the criteria adopted in defining the boundaries, all the cultural districts have chosen to use at least a formal design process (see Chapter 1). However, in two cases an additional criterion is followed: systematic-relational design for the two cultural districts located in Valtellina and Valcamonica, because of the specificity of the two valleys that delineate the territory geographically, politically and demographically; the functional criterion was used for the 'Regge dei Gonzaga' district, where boundaries are linked to the geographic location of the royal palaces. It is notable that the projects differ considerably in terms of the number of municipalities involved (5 to 42) and in terms of the number of citizens and dimensions they have.

Maturity of the cultural district

The third dimension is the propensity of a territory to become a cultural district (districtualisation), i.e. the maturity of the cultural district and its propensity to use networking and to involve local actors (Table 2.4).

Table 2.4. Maturity of the cultural district

	Valtellina	Oltrepò Mantovano	'Le Regge dei Gonzaga'	Valcamonica	Province of Cremona	Province of Monza and Brianza
Presence of pre-existing projects /cultural systems	Medium	Low	Low	High	Medium	Low
Degree of diversification of cultural and non-cultural industries	High	High	Medium	High	Medium	High
Number of local partners	17	23	N.A.	44	N.A.	11
Partnerships with universities	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Membership of UNESCO heritage initiatives	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	No
Presence of a permanent structure for internal and external communication	Yes	Yes	N.A.	Yes	Yes	N.A.
Presence of a specific website for the cultural district	[2012] No [2015] Yes	[2012] Yes [2015] Yes	[2012] Yes [2015] Yes	[2012] Yes [2015] Yes	[2012] No [2015] Yes	[2012] Yes [2015] Yes
Other tools for stakeholders' involvement	N.A.	Focus group	N.A.	Online magazine	Database on tangible and intangible cultural assets; newsletter	Interviews with local key stakeholders; focus group; workshop

Regarding this dimension, Valcamonica's cultural district appears to be the most mature project. Indeed, having a consolidated system of museums already in existence in Valcamonica has efficiently supported the creation of the new cultural district. The heterogeneity of the cultural offer in

Valcamonica has led to a converging system with other local actors/institutions, such as eco-museums, archaeological sites, castles, heritage from the Roman period, landmarks related to the Great War, works of hydraulic engineering, historic houses, shrines, churches and so on. Valcamonica's propensity to networking is also confirmed by the high number of local partners, the collaboration with the university in the conceptualisation and design phases of the cultural district, and its membership of the UNESCO heritage scheme. The maturity of the cultural district is also confirmed by the presence of structures and mechanisms aimed at favouring communication and stakeholders' involvement. According to our data, the other five cultural districts appear to be at an earlier stage of maturity.

Governance

The governance of the six cultural districts is reported in Table 2.5.

Table 2.5. Governance of the six cultural districts

	Coordinator/ project leader/ promoter	Private/public actors	Governance model	Network governance
Valtellina	Foundation for Local Development	Mix	Foundation	Mixed (Lead Organisation – NAO)
Oltrepò Mantovano	Consortium of municipalities	Mix	Consortium	Mixed (Lead Organisation – NAO)
'Le Regge dei Gonzaga'	Association 'Regge dei Gonzaga'	Mix	Association	Mixed (Lead Organisation – NAO)
Valcamonica	Associate Office of the Mountain Community	Public	Office of the Mountain Community	Lead Organisation -
Province of Cremona	Interdepartmental office at the Province	Public	Office in the Province	Lead Organisation
Province of Monza and Brianza	Office in the Province	Public	Office in the Province	Lead Organisation

Despite the fact that the six cultural districts share many commonalities (willingness to create a strong public-private partnership, the usage/development of a management authority that acts as 'control room', with a 'guide' and coordination roles) the governance models diverge significantly from each other (foundation, association, consortium of municipalities, office in a public institution). However, the governance network form is a Lead Organization or a hybridisation with a Network Administrative Organization (NAO) form. The former is based on the coordination of activities and key decisions by a leading organisation, which has enough of its own resources and legitimacy (for example, a Province). The second is a blended configuration that exploits a separate

administrative entity, though a leading organisation seems to have a formal or informal leadership. Nevertheless, our analysis has revealed that information about the governance of the cultural districts analysed is very rarely shared online. This lack of information is related to our final dimension of comparison, namely the transparency of the process of realisation of the cultural district.

Transparency in the design process of the cultural district

The degree of transparency in the design process of the six cultural districts is summarised in Table 2.6.

Table 2.6. Transparency in the design process of the cultural district

	Valtellina	Oltrepò Mantovano-DOMINUS	'Le Regge dei Gonzaga'	Valcamonica	Province of Cremona	Province of Monza and Brianza
Design methods available in online documents	Analysis based on resources and competencies	Analysis based on resources and competencies	Analysis based on resources and competencies			
Availability on the web of information regarding the cultural district	Medium	Medium - High	Low	High	High	Medium
Availability of information on performance indicators during the design process	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.

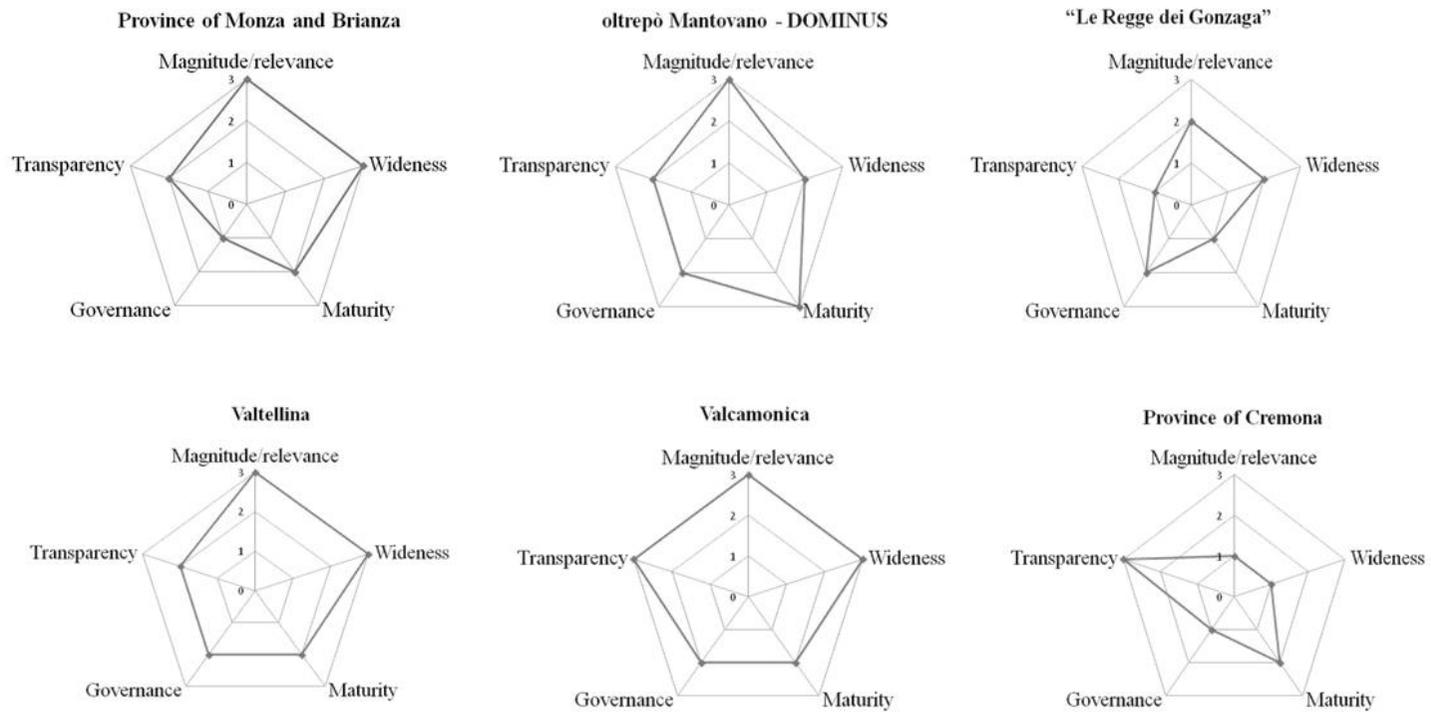
Each district has experienced a substantially different propensity to share precise information about the process of design of the cultural districts: from the districts of Valcamonica and Cremona, which have made available many documents pertaining to the project, to the cultural district of ‘Le Regge dei Gonzaga’, where project documents have not been shared on the internet.

Regarding the analysis and design methods, in all six cultural districts' documents the focus is on identifying and cataloguing the main tangible and intangible cultural resources. From the limited data available, the SWOT analysis is the main instrument used. In addition, in the documents we have reviewed, there is no information on the methods and tools used to detect the distinctive skills and competencies of local actors. Finally, but very importantly, there is a lack of transparent information about the system of performance indicators developed by each cultural district, and required according to the Cariplo Foundation guidelines and also for public accountability purposes.

Cultural districts or advanced cultural districts?

According to the data publicly available, we have attempted to make a comparison of each dimension among the six cultural districts (Figure 2.1). It should be noted that this judgement is based on secondary data.

Figure 2.1. Comparison of each dimension among the six cultural districts (Legend: 3=High; 2=Medium; 1=Low)



All the cultural districts show different configurations for the five dimensions. In our opinion, these configurations also reflect their different 'positioning' along the continuum between a cultural district and its advanced form. The province of Monza and Brianza cultural district is probably the closest to the advanced form. Compared with the other projects, this district focuses more on the development of the human resources of the territory, investing largely in training programmes to foster innovation and creativity of local firms. From this point of view, the district is close to the Sen, Florida and Porter models. However, only limited information is available about the actual translation of these objectives into concrete actions on the tangible and intangible heritage of the area. On the website of the Monza and Brianza cultural district⁴, some information can be retrieved about the projects, both completed and in action. These projects are grouped within six areas: training, education heritage, preservation of the cultural heritage, open villas and performing arts (two important events), innovation and business and the Meet Brianza Expo. It is notable that there are some elements that deviate from the advanced cultural district form. The district does not seem to fully satisfy the criterion of territorial delimitation linked to the identity and recognisability

⁴ <http://www.distrettoculturale.mb.it/>

of the area. Moreover, the public nature of the institution could suggest some doubts about the real involvement of private actors in the design of the district.

Even the Valcamonica cultural district has several elements typical of the advanced cultural district. The purpose of the district is to make culture a lever for integrated development of the territory, giving impetus to creativity and developing new entrepreneurship. The district stands out compared with the other districts because of the abundance of documentation concerning the project since its first stages of conceptualisation. In addition, there is a high degree of diversification of cultural and non-cultural sectors. Moreover, the systemic-relational criterion for the definition of territorial boundaries is consistent with a strong local identity. However, compared with the recommendations in the literature on advanced cultural districts, the role of private actors would be overshadowed by the predominant role played by public institutions.

The Valtellina district has a better balance in relation to public/private partnership. The management model is a foundation of local development, with mixed public/private equity. Like the Valcamonica district, this district is also territorially delimited on the basis of a systemic-relational criterion. Another strength of the district is the involvement of a variety of cultural and non-cultural sectors. However, although the stated goals

provide for the enhancement of both tangible and intangible assets, the main concern appears to be the conservation of pre-existing cultural heritage. Unlike other cultural districts, and contrary to what is theorised in the literature, on the website⁵ there are very few initiatives focused on attracting the creative class, or on supporting innovation activities and new knowledge-based entrepreneurship.

Unlike the Valtellina case, the province of Cremona cultural district has significantly invested in human capital and intangible assets. The district is also characterised by a good balance in terms of public/private partnership and a high degree of involvement of local actors in its cultural projects. This involvement has been supported through the development of ad-hoc tools, such as a database on the tangible and intangible cultural heritage, and through the large amount of information made available on the website of the province. However, the narrow focus on music as the cornerstone of the district, and the low degree of diversification of the local sectors involved in the project, seem to recall more a vertically integrated cultural system than a genuine advanced cultural district. However, it could be the embryo for future developments and expansions.

⁵ <http://www.distrettoculturalevaltellina.it/>

Strong vertical integration around an idiosyncratic asset, typical of cultural systems, is found also in the 'Regge dei Gonzaga' district. However, there is very limited information publicly available⁶, especially with regard to planned interventions.

Finally, from its website⁷ the Oltrepò Mantovano cultural district seems to have many elements that signify the advanced form:

- Strong commitment to attracting the creative class, and to supporting innovation actions and new entrepreneurship (see, for example, the call for supporting the development of creative firms).
- Great attention to intangible resources (e.g. landscape, culinary traditions, education, entrepreneurship, and so forth).
- Initiatives aimed at supporting integration among different sectors.
- Local community involvement in designing the cultural district (through focus groups).
- Good balance between public and private actors.

In Oltrepò Mantovano cultural district what is clear from this overview is that the level of districtualisation is not particularly high, probably because of the absence of pre-existing projects/cultural systems in the area.

⁶ <http://reggedeigonzaga.it/>

⁷ <http://www.oltrepomantova.it/>

To summarise, the six cultural districts differ significantly in terms of the five dimensions of comparison presented. We are aware of the limitations of an analysis based primarily on secondary data, publicly available documents and public information, and only time and further research will provide additional elements for the assessment of the soundness of the organisational and management choices made, and their success in meeting the challenging objectives defined at project level. Until now, the only certainty seems to be that there is no one-size-fits-all approach.

2.3. The Valtellina Cultural District: The tension between “design” and “designing” approaches

The author has been involved for about three years in a project aimed at designing the Valtellina cultural district. In particular, we have been involved in the phase of selection of the areas suitable for full feasibility studies (the above-mentioned phase 2: 2007-2008) and in the development of the full feasibility study (the above mentioned phase 3: 2008-2010). During this period, we have conducted many interviews with key local players and project partners, attended many meetings (both formal and informal) with local project members, and developed a document analysis (comprising more than 5,000 pages) on previous local projects, potentially

related to the development of the cultural district⁸. Therefore, access to the context, as research environment, has been opportunistic (e.g. Weick, 1990; Weick, 1993). We have exploited our field experience as researchers and insiders to develop this case study (Yin, 1994), and to juxtapose what we have seen and lived through and what was ‘suggested’ by the Foundation through its tender notice, guidelines and formal documents. We have chosen to combine pieces of direct observation and participation, document analysis and research to support our arguments, i.e. participatory action research (PAR) (Rahman, 2008; Chevalier & Buckles, 2013). Thus, our opinions come from the interweaving of practice and reflexivity. Being here more interested in reflections around the process of design, we tried to compare the design process as ‘suggested’ by the Foundation to what we experienced during the early stages of design (the above mentioned phases 2 and 3).

In 2007, the Foundation published the guidelines, stating the minimum requirements for a feasibility study for a cultural district, according to

⁸ For example, we have studied integrated local development projects (PISL), integrated territorial projects (PTI), and all previous cultural projects and cultural interventions already completed or still in progress in the territory.

which it is intended to be articulated in different sections, summarised as follows:

- Section 1 - Presentation of the potential cultural district: in this section the study must include an assessment of the local context, highlighting the strengths and weaknesses of the area as a potential cultural district. The section must highlight socio-economic and cultural peculiarities of the area as well as the system of relationship among key stakeholders.

- Section 2 - Definition of the strategic objectives: the section must include the precise definition of the strategic objectives of the project and the related system of actions to be taken for the economic development of the territory. Moreover, the section must include the strategic plan of the territorial integration as well as firms and partners to be involved.

- Section 3 - Definition of actions: the section must contain a detailed description of the interventions on both tangible and intangible assets. Moreover, the section must have a detailed communication plan for inner and outer stakeholders. The communication plan has to meet specific guidelines. The guidelines explicitly describe tools and methods to manage

communication within each cultural district (e.g. to stakeholders such as inhabitants) and to the Foundation⁹.

- Section 4 - Definition of management methods: the section must analytically describe the governance model chosen, the management plan and the reasons underlying those choices.

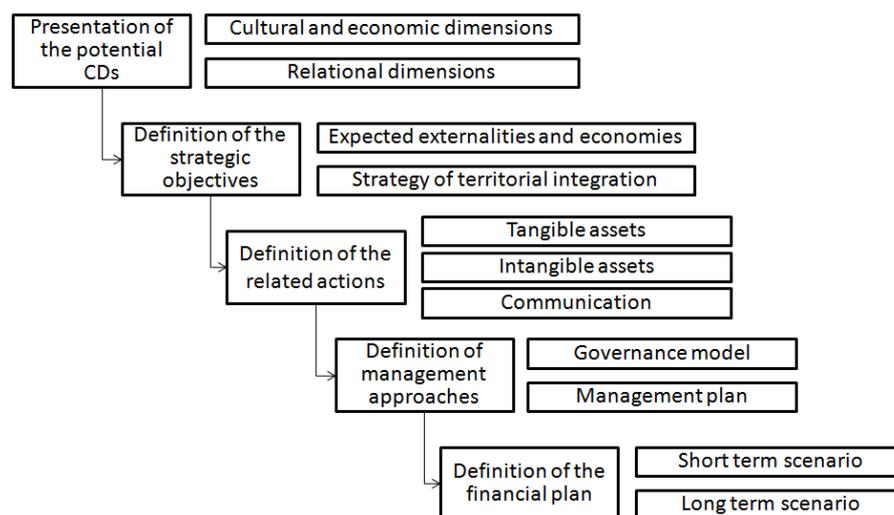
- Section 5 - Definition of the financial plan: the feasibility study must provide specific indications about the model of financial analysis, the budget, and a cost-benefit analysis. The economic analysis has to be able to assess all the investments and the direct and indirect economic impacts on the territory, also through scenario analysis.

- Section 6 - Definition of the time schedule of the cultural district development: the feasibility study must have a detailed time schedule for the implementation of the defined actions.

⁹ This excerpt from the guidelines for the communication plan is emblematic (p. 2; emphasis embedded): “The communication of the cultural district project is articulated into *actions planned directly* by the Foundation and into actions planned autonomously by every cultural district. All communication activities *must* meet the criteria of coherence and consistency [defined by the Foundation], and must be [jointly] designed or implemented in a participatory way *only where necessary*”.

It is interesting to report also the layout used in the documents of the Foundation to represent the phases of completion of the feasibility study (Figure 2.2).

Figure 2.2. The stages of analysis and project development. Source: Foundation's Guidelines.



The Foundation required a clear vision of the projects to be financed from the earliest stages, in terms of general and strategic aims, specific operating objectives and actions to be implemented for the socio-economic development of the territory, organisational structures, coordinating mechanisms and governance model to be designed and actors/stakeholders

to be involved, budgeting and co-financing needs, and so on. This excerpt from the section ‘definition of the strategic objectives’ is emblematic (p.8):

“The feasibility study *must clearly present* the project objectives in terms of:

- Externalities of the system, coming from the new cultural ties that will be established among cultural assets involved in the project and among these and other cultural and non-cultural assets of the territory.
- Consumption externalities, resulting from expected increases in terms of demand for the cultural offer.
- Economies of scale and/or economies of scope, arising from potential economic benefits coming from the integration of functions and activities related to the processes of maintenance and enhancement of the cultural heritage of the area.”

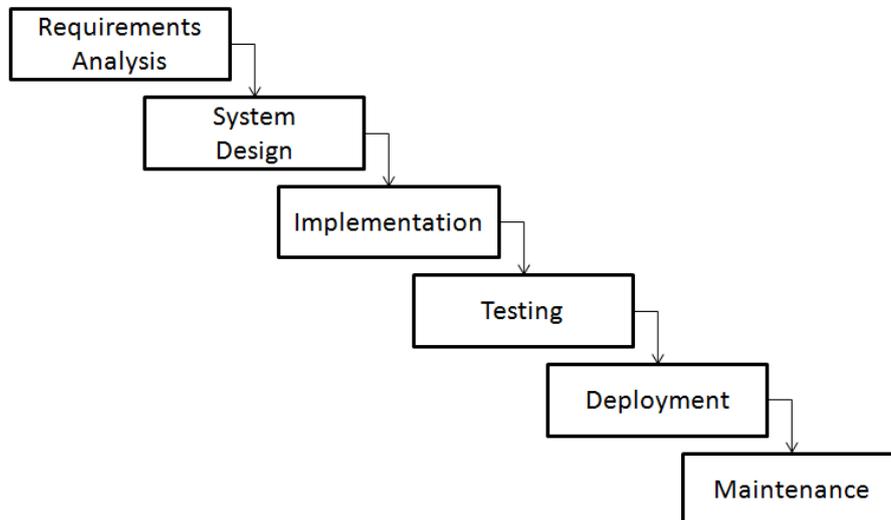
(emphasis added by author).

The requests in the Foundation’s guidelines seem to depict a process of design that extols the virtues of anticipation and completeness. Only during a meeting in 2009 (the third phase of the whole project mentioned above), did the Foundation declare that “the guidelines indicate the minimum information requirements that the operational feasibility studies must meet at the end of the process” and that the guidelines “are not a standard for contents, are not a process standard, do not require a methodological standard”. Nevertheless, a well-established perception, widespread within

our design group, often reminded us of a sequential and linear mode of design, more precisely a sort of ‘waterfall model’¹⁰ (see Figure 2.3).

¹⁰ The waterfall model is a sequential design process, used in software development processes, in which progress is seen as flowing steadily downwards (like a waterfall) through the phases of Conception, Initiation, Analysis, Design, Construction, Testing, Production/Implementation and Maintenance. The waterfall development model originates in the manufacturing and construction industries: highly structured physical environments in which after-the-fact changes are prohibitively costly, if not impossible. Since no formal software development methodologies existed at the time, this hardware-oriented model was simply adapted from highly structured physical environments into software development practices. The first formal description of the waterfall model is often cited as a 1970 article by Winston W. Royce, although Royce did not use the term ‘waterfall’ in that article. Royce presented this model as an example of a flawed, non-working model. This, in fact, is how the term is generally used in writing about software development: to describe a critical view of a commonly used software development practice. Thus the waterfall model maintains that one should move to a following phase only when the previous one is reviewed and verified. Advocates of more flexible (‘Agile’) software development methodologies argue that the waterfall model is a bad idea in practice, believing it impossible for any non-trivial project to finish a phase of a software product’s lifecycle perfectly before moving to the next phases and learning from them. Designers may not be aware of future implementation difficulties when writing a design for an unimplemented software product. That is, it may become clear in the implementation phase that a particular area of program functionality is extraordinarily difficult to implement. McConnell (2004) refers to design as a “wicked problem”: a problem whose requirements and limitations cannot be entirely known before

Figure 2.3. The waterfall model.



In fact, the feasibility study itself, as depicted in the figure, appears quite similar to the steps of ‘conception, initiation, analysis and design’ used in highly structured physical environments. Moreover, the ‘completeness’ required by the Foundation, as well as the expectation of detailed results and solutions, implicitly depicts an ideal process of design driven by an ‘absolute rationality’. “Completeness allows for the pre-specification of a completion. The implication of this is that if it is impossible to perfect one phase of software development, thus it is impossible, if using the waterfall model, to move on to the next phase. Parnas and Clements (1986) in *A Rational Design Process: How and Why to Fake It*, write: “Many of the [system’s] details only become known to us as we progress in the [system’s] implementation. Some of the things that we learn invalidate our design and we must backtrack.”

problem, the identification of pre-existing alternatives and the choice of the best solution. For such an approach to work, however, there needs to be a clear and stable boundary between the entity being designed and the context for which it is being designed. Such a boundary makes it possible to fix the purpose of a design based on a stable set of user preferences and performance expectations” (Garud et al., 2008, p.351). On the contrary, we have experienced a high degree of openness and complexity within the cultural district project in which we have participated, due to the significant number of actors involved (17 partners, both public and private actors), the geographic extension of the area (4 municipalities with about 153,000 inhabitants), the huge financial investments (a total amount of 8 million Euros), the heterogeneity of the sectors (both cultural and non) potentially involved, the challenging intrinsic aims of a cultural district, and the high number of interventions in both tangible and intangible assets.

Is the process of development of a cultural district a trivial project in a stable environment, with a clear and steady boundary between the entity being designed and the context? We do not think so, especially if we consider the social and economic environment, the actions involved, the socio-economic development and the need for the integration of people, knowledge, tangible and intangible culture. In fact, in our experience, though limited to the early stages, we lived through and perceived a tension

between the ‘deterministic’ perspective, which seems embedded into the Foundation’s approach and documentation and driven by ‘anticipation of the future and the aim of completeness’, and the actual process of design ‘in action’. The latter has been full of power struggles and political negotiations among key participants, learning by doing and by interacting, conflicts, misunderstandings, ongoing reviews of problems and possible solutions, and so on. As consultants for the local project leader, we have experienced many problems in applying the design approach as initially ‘suggested’ by the Foundation, although our argument can be made only in relation to the feasibility study.

In sum, we have experienced a tension between the deterministic and formal approach embedded within the Foundation’s documentation and guidelines – for which the project representation by the Foundation in Figure 2.2 is emblematic – and the actual process of design ‘in action’ experienced in the field (Table 2.7).

Table 2.7. The tension between the formal process and the process in action

The formal process (as depicted in the guidelines)	The process in action (as we experienced)
The guidelines propose a scheme of ‘next steps’ (as in the waterfall model). The approval of the feasibility study is intended to unlock the entire co-financing of the foundation.	The phases of the feasibility study were carried out in parallel. The financial plan represented the first real starting point, with a genuine risk of transposition of means (financial resources) with purposes (designing a cultural district).
The guidelines make no reference to the possibility of conflicts and complex negotiations in the definition of the strategic objectives (nor how to address and report them).	The ‘conception, initiation, analysis and design’ of the cultural district arose from complex power negotiations among multiple stakeholders, conflicts, ongoing review of problems and alternative solutions, with important processes of ‘reflections’ and ‘learning by doing’.
The guidelines require a clear vision of the project from the earliest stages as well as the identification and wide involvement of stakeholders.	Some fundamental aspects of the project emerged only at the end. Only a few important stakeholders were involved
The guidelines require ‘completeness’ in all parts. The feasibility study must lead to the conception, initiation, analysis, and design of a cultural district, to be then constructed and maintained.	The project constantly evolved over time. The cultural district is not a concrete, tangible, reified object.
The feasibility study <i>must clearly present</i> the project objectives in terms of externalities of the system, economies of scale and/or economies of scope, etc.	Many outputs and benefits of the project (in terms of negative and positive impacts on the territory) can only be estimated very roughly, being mostly emergent or sometimes unpredictable.
The guidelines seem to hypothesise that the designer has an ‘absolute’ rationality.	We experienced in the field a very ‘bounded’ rationality and a nexus of social relationships which diverges from absolutely rational behaviours.

Although we have experienced only the early stage of the process of cultural district design, our experience and the lessons learned lead us to criticise the design process of a cultural district – which is a complex

system – as following an overly deterministic approach. In other words, the creation of an advanced cultural district seems to be too complex to be constrained within early steps affected by an overly rationalistic approach. We argue that the design process of a cultural district should be conceived as something more flexible, dynamic and in constant change. We argue that designers should adopt an approach that shifts ‘from design to designing’, as suggested in recent organisational literature (e.g. Dunbar & Starbuck, 2006).

2.4. The Tuscan Mining Geopark and the iterative process of development

The Tuscan Mining GeoPark (‘the Park’) has been chosen because it represents a best practice example of managing cultural heritage, even when compared to other European and international experiences (Preite 2009). It became a member of the UNESCO European GeoParks Network in 2010, and it was admitted in 2011 into the European Destinations of Excellence programme, just nine years after its institution. More recently, the Park become part of the Protected Areas certified by the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism. The latter is an important step in the process of cultural districtualisation because of the interdependence with

the tourism sector and the process of engagement with local operators that have led to the certification.

The Park has been studied through direct interviews with the Director on many occasions (both formal and informal) and through document analysis¹¹. It was set up by ministerial decree on 28 February 2002 by the Ministry of the Environment, Land and Sea – which has funded the park with decreasing resources in recent years¹² – in fulfilment of the framework law on protected areas (law n. 394/1991). It is located in the territorial area designated ‘Colline Metallifere’ in the Southern part of Tuscany and includes a wide territory of seven municipalities, north of the Province of

¹¹ Main documents analysed: Project of the “Park Gateways” of 2004, Masterplan of 2002 and 2007, Charter of Principles of 2007, Dossier “Ten Years of the Park” – 2002-2012, Application Report of the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism of 2013, Report of the Global Geopark Network Revalidation Mission (18-21 June 2014).

¹² The financial and economic resources are funded by the Consortium-Park (about 80 per cent, including the ministerial funds) and by the municipalities (about 20per cent). Access to the Park is free, except for the Gateways of Gavorrano (Mining and Natural Park) and Massa Marittima (Mineral Park) which contribute 5per cent to the revenue of the Park. The number of visitors has grown from about 50,000 a year in the early years to stabilise at around 140,000 in recent years.

Grosseto¹³ along the Tuscan Coast, which covers about 1,080 square kilometers. The Park's area has an industrial heritage strongly linked to its geological resources, notably through the mining of pyrite. There is a great heritage of buildings and land relating to industrial activities covering a period of time from the Etruscans to the contemporary age.

Since mining activities ended only in the late 1990s, the related memories of inhabitants are still vivid. As stated in the Charter of Principles and reported in the Park's Masterplan, the many abandoned sites of previous mining and industrial activity are initially the subject of reclamation works, with special attention paid to the issue of environment protection. Nonetheless, due to the extraordinary historical-cultural value of the technological and archaeological heritage, there is also an effort to protect and value this particular cultural heritage, which is linked to works of art, technology and mining engineering, traditions, skills, and the historical memory of mining activities. This vital cultural heritage can be seen as a useful resource for promoting virtuous processes of local development, founded on principles of environmental sustainability and respect for territorial identity (Preite 2009). Consequently, the park has the

¹³ Follonica, Gavorrano, Massa Marittima, Montieri, Monterotondo Marittimo, Roccastrada and Scarlino.

task of looking after and coordinating the following activities, as stated by the Charter of Principles and according to the ministerial decree of foundation:

- Protecting, preserving and developing the sites and assets connected with the mining activity, in the interests of environment, culture, science, education and tourism.
- Preserving and developing, in museums and archives, the industrial archaeological heritage and the heritage of documents, books, and photographs about mining history and culture.
- Safeguarding and preserving the habitats, cultural landscape, and human values connected to mining.
- Promoting, backing and developing education and research in the sectors of history, archaeology, science and technology.
- Promoting and backing educational and artistic-cultural activities which are compatible with the values to be safeguarded.
- Promoting cultural and environmental tourism.

In each municipality there is a 'Gateway to the Park' which represents an ideal entry point into the park. The Gateways were inaugurated in spring 2005 and operate as welcome centres and info-points for visitors, organise walking routes and guided tours, seminars, professional training courses, and short-term post-graduate courses. In some cases they are the result of

major conservation, e.g. within museums and documentation centres, and restoration projects of local sites, assets and buildings. Some of these local sites and assets belong to the State, some are municipal property, and some are private properties (e.g. some belong to the firms which hold the mining concessions).

The organisational form within which the Park operates is a Consortium, a form imposed by the ministerial decree of foundation in 2002. The Chairman is appointed by the Ministry of the Environment, Land and Sea. The Consortium is run by a steering committee which includes deputies from the Ministry of Cultural Assets and Activities, the Tuscany regional authority, the Province of Grosseto, the Colline Metallifere Mountain Community, and a Vice-Chairman appointed by the seven Municipal Authorities to represent them. This committee plans and co-ordinates the fundraising necessary to deliver large projects and it is assisted by a Managing Director and a streamlined staff of three people. They collaborate also with a network of trained and skilled guides and expert advisors on geo-diversity, tourism, sustainability, archaeology, education and community development.

As emerged from documents and interviews, the Park operates as a *'public governance network of cultural interest'* through a Network Administrative Organization form (see Kenis & Provan 2009; Provan &

Lemaire 2012). Key decisions and coordination tasks are 'brokered' and facilitated by the Managerial Committee with the support of the streamlined centralised structure within the Consortium. As emerged from interviews, some advantages of this form have arisen over time in terms of higher official recognition and legitimation among inner and outer stakeholders. Also, increased efficiency through better coordination of activities has arisen, especially when compared to past uncoordinated and sometimes redundant actions. The risk of bureaucratisation has been reduced thanks to the streamlined organisational structure adopted since the Park's foundation.

The main phases in the Park's life cycle are summarised as follows:

- 2002 – Foundation of the Park by ministerial decree.
- 2005 – Inauguration of the "Gateways to the Park".
- 2007 – Signature of the "Charter of Principles" and delivery of the Masterplan.
- 2010 – Admission into the "European and Global Geopark Network".
- 2011 – Admission into the "European Destinations of Excellence" programme.
- 2013 – Candidacy for the "Europarc Charter for Sustainable Tourism".

- 2014 – Certification of Protected Area of the park by “Europarc Charter for Sustainable Tourism”.

These phases can be grouped into three main phases.

Phase 1– From foundation (2002) to “Gateways to the Park” inauguration (2005). The decree of foundation in 2002 defined only the main objectives of the consortium but very little about ways to pursue them, as emerged from interviews and document analysis. This defined a different approach with regard to the traditional Italian Region top-down way of development of National Parks, characterised, for example, by detailed rules and clear tasks, an articulated framework of governance and a clear top-down authority. In other words, the decree defined a brand new model for a park that lacked previous institutional and organisational experience in Italy. Thus, a high degree of uncertainty accompanied the foundation of the Park. Moreover, in spite of the many expected responsibilities of coordination among seven municipalities in a very complex political environment, little authority was granted to the Park, thus depicting a ‘weak’ park. For example, the Park’s Managerial Committee had no formal veto power over the local behaviour of the municipalities. It had only the lever of disbursement of funds as an indirect steering instrument, a weak form of governance in a very complex political context such as that of the territory involved. It took a bit of time until more

enlightened municipalities realised the potential of the Park for better governance of the territory and began to understand and adopt collaborative rather than opportunistic behaviour, and a win-win strategy.

Phase 2- From “Gateways to the Park Inauguration” (2005) to “Masterplan Delivery” and the “Charter of Principles” (2007). The Gateways to the Park were initially conceived and perceived mainly as info-points for visitors. Nevertheless, the Park has always invested a great deal in the Gateways project, about 40 per cent of its annual financial resources, with a double aim: involving the local municipalities as much as possible in the Park projects and strengthening the Gateways roles in terms of cultural heritage valorisation. The Gateways have become to some extent centres of cultural education and professional training, over and above their initial role. Between 2005 and 2006, the activities for the Masterplan of the park began. The Masterplan strategy was based on a number of key points: the integrated development of cultural resources (natural, archaeological, historical and industrial) present in the territory as a whole; the protection of the heritage, extended to its material and immaterial components; the participation of local communities; the management of archaeological and industrial assets able to wed conservation with new end uses. The Masterplan initiative triggered an ‘announcement effect’ that built interest and expectation around the cultural and social objectives pursued by the

Park. Moreover, the participation of many local actors in its drafting helped to create an atmosphere of mutual trust between local actors, nurturing a 'bottom-up' mobilisation. The first draft ended in July 2006 and in the following months the observations made by the local municipalities were examined until the final delivery. Since then, its content has been revised further.

Phase 3 – From “Charter of Principles” (2007) to the candidacy for the “European Charter for Sustainable Tourism”. In 2010 the park was admitted (as ‘Tuscan Mining Geopark’) into the “European and Global Geopark Network” recognized by UNESCO, and in 2011 into the European Destinations of Excellence programme. The mobilisation of the local communities around the candidacy, the support given by the tourist industry, as well as the involvement of a large network of cultural associations, represented a manifesto of “social participation”, as emphasised by the park’s Director: “Attending the meetings for UNESCO accreditation were all, all the associations [...] the evaluators were astonished [...] there was a realisation [...] it was clear that the local municipalities and the continued political support from each one were important to the Geopark accreditation...but equally the Geopark was important to the Municipalities as it had been a further occasion for bringing them together and providing direction to work more

collaboratively. This also provided a boost to the legitimacy of the Park, increasing its power based on the actual results so far achieved". After this, the Geopark was entered into the 2011 European Destinations of Excellence programme. The Park later became a candidate for the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism and it has recently become part of the Protected Areas certified through this European Charter. The important aspect of the Charter is not the award itself, but, again, the process of engagement of local tourism operators that led to it. The process has been about creating a shared vision for tourism amongst stakeholders, fostering collaboration and producing a comprehensive action plan with 46 actions for the coming five years (2014-2018), with a total budget of more than two million Euros. Proponents of these actions included the Park, the seven local municipalities as well as associations, farms, farm-holidays, bed and breakfasts, cooperatives and restaurants. After the first forum, a permanent "Working Territorial Table" coordinated by the Park was set up: the communities of the seven Municipalities are periodically involved and the participants are citizens, community associations, cultural organisations, tourism agencies and operators. This method of community engagement is important to support a sustainable tourism strategy as well as for accountability. Other efforts to foster collaboration and create a more joined-up and environmentally-aware tourism industry have been the recent

development of a network of restaurants and accommodation providers with discounted services for visitors and a programme with restaurant managers and hoteliers. These efforts have raised the awareness of the special qualities of the Park and have created a network of local ambassadors for the Park in the tourism industry.

The achievement of excellence goals (e.g. accreditation as UNESCO Geopark, the inclusion in the European Destinations of Excellence programme and in the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism, and other awards of excellence) and the efficacy of network governance in a very complex context using few financial resources have boosted the credibility and the legitimacy of the Park as well as the approval and participation of stakeholders (first, the local municipalities). In brief, one of the major successes of the Park and the management structure is that it has brought the local municipalities and individuals together in active co-operation for the first time.

The Network Administrative Organization form designed for the Park is fit for purpose and has generated considerable political and community support. It is likely that a more traditional structure would have failed in such a complex environment. In many places the community was very active in the preservation and interpretation of *their* heritage well before the Park's foundation. Though they were advised and supported by experts

provided through the Park (e.g. during the Masterplan construction), local people were often the driving force, including in terms of political support, for this “project”, and the Park was the vehicle for making it possible (financially, logistically and technically).

Thus, the initial weakness of the Park, with little top-down authority, has been at the same time an opportunity, because it ‘forced’ the park to build its legitimacy in the field, based on actual and excellent results achieved (and not by recourse to law). Moreover, the Park focused initially on a few, even if challenging, objectives, through a very streamlined organisational structure. As stated in the Masterplan (Preite 2009, p.9) “The ministerial contribution was and remains so moderate that any personnel structure, however small, would have ended up absorbing it almost completely, condemning the park to basically self-referential activity”.

The stakeholder engagement was strategic for accreditation as UNESCO Geopark and the admission into the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism. At the same time, both the accreditation and the admission can be considered true turning points, which strengthened pride and a sense of identity and belonging in people and reinforced the legitimacy of the Park itself along with the achievement of excellent goals. The engagement of other stakeholders achieved results, facilitated, widened and deepened the

project. Thus we can interpret this process as an iterative path of mutual reinforcement over time.

3. The Territory as a Reference Key

Abstract: Within a recursive dialogue between deduction and induction, Francesconi proposes a preliminary framework for advanced cultural districtualisation in which the territory is seen as a reference key for analysis and design. Territory is conceived as a bundle of resources (tangible and intangible, including the landscape) which represent potential for its socio-economic development through adequate competencies. Of particular interest for the development of advanced cultural districts, which are complex adaptive systems, are the relationships between social structures and agency. Francesconi aims to highlight the duality of the advanced cultural district, which is seen either as a means to and/or a result of the actions of districtualisation, in a recursive relationship between agency and structure.

Keywords: territory, landscape, resources, competencies, cultural district, structure, agency, structuration theory, critical realism

3.1. The territory as a context for analysis and designing

In the current economic situation, the competitiveness of ‘actors’ is increasingly dependent on the surrounding competitiveness of the socio-economic and territorial systems in which they are located: e.g. for organisations, development policies are interconnected and dependent on the specific resources of the territories where they are located (Foss & Eriksen, 1995). These reflections have gained increasing attention not only among economists but also among business scholars (e.g. Porter, 1998) and in the literature on shared resources (Foss & Eriksen, 1995; Grant, 2005) or on intangible resources (Lado et al., 1992).

The issue of endogenous development, growth and the attractiveness of a territory, exploiting its assets, has become a major field of interest (Capello et al., 2011; Servillo et al., 2012; Atkinson, 2013). Territorial capital was first mentioned in a regional policy context by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and then reiterated by the European Commission (OECD, 2001, pp.15-16; European Commission, 2005, p. 1; Camagni, 2008, p.36; as cited by Tóth, 2014, p.2):

Each region has a specific territorial capital that is distinct from that of other areas and generates a higher return for specific kinds of investments

than for others, since these are better suited to the area and use its assets and potential more effectively.

As highlighted by Tóth (2014), the interest in territorial capital has been motivated by its practical relevance, and also for achieving the goals of Europe 2020, since scholars have revealed fragile and unequal development between the regions of the EU and their heterogeneous potential (“territorial capital”) (Fischer & Sykes, 2009; Conto et al., 2013); in parallel, criticism of the EU cohesion policy has emerged (Camagni, 2007, 2009b; Cochrane, 2007; Barca, 2009; Adams et al., 2011; Sarmiento-Mirwaldt, 2013).

However, as argued by Tóth (2014), the aforementioned definition of territorial capital does not contain any specifications about the real extent of the return on investment, and seems to have lost its significance over time. Other conceptualisations refer to the notion of territorial capital as “localised assets” and as a “set of social relations” (Tóth, 2014). For example, according to Camagni (2009a), territorial capital is seen as a set of localised assets – natural, artificial, human, organisational, relational and cognitive – that comprises the potential of a certain territory. For van der Ploeg et al. (2008, p.13, as cited by Tóth, 2014) territorial capital is “the amount and intertwinement of different forms of capital (or different

resources) entailed in, mobilized and actively used in (and reproduced by) the regional economy and society”. Ventura et al. (2008, p. 160, as cited by Tóth, 2014) defined territorial capital as “a stock of resources specific to the place and available to those who live and work in the territory. These resources (material and immaterial) are common goods for a local community”. Berti (2011, p. 9, as cited by Tóth, 2014) argued that territorial capital is “the whole of the local assets which if adequately mobilized provide comparative advantages to those who live and work there”.

In brief, previous definitions emphasise the importance of specific local resources and territorial assets, including the set of social relations that should be proactively exploited to promote a sustainable territorial development (Tóth, 2014). In doing so, attention to intangible assets of regions, rather than only to tangible ones, is important (Perman et al., 1996; OECD, 2001, 2005; World Bank, 2006).

However, what is increasingly clear in cultural districtualisation is that every territory represents something more complex and deeper than a mere surface, being characterised by different elements, such as a population, settlements, infrastructures, and natural and environmental elements. The territory integrates the history of who once lived there, passed by or left traces there, and the intangible and cultural characteristics gain importance

from this point of view. These characteristics generate an impalpable atmosphere, made up of “a set of attitudes, beliefs, mores, customs, values and practices which are common to or shared by any group” (Throsby, 2001, p. 4). They also generate widespread knowledge, know-how and practices linked more directly to the economic-productive sphere, and also instilled in cultural goods and services—as those that involve creativity in their production embody some degree of intellectual property, and convey symbolic meaning (Throsby, 2001), in which the quality of human resources, trust and cooperation are key factors. This is also the reason why Santagata (2004), with regard to cultural district models, refers to “cultural and territorial capital” as a set of “idiosyncratic” resources. For example, in the majority of the cultural districts of the Cariplo Foundation project (Chapter 2) we can identify their idiosyncratic resources: the music in Cremona, terracing in Valtellina, agricultural and industrial traditions typical of the early twentieth century in Oltrepò Mantovano, the royal palaces in ‘Regge dei Gonzaga’, rock art in Valcamonica. The only exception is the cultural district of the Province of Monza and Brianza, with no distinctive cultural heritage: as a consequence, the district has favoured a more general approach to the development of human capital, investing largely in training programmes to foster the innovation and creativity of local firms.

In this context, the characteristics of the landscape also gain importance, as emphasised in two of our case studies, since the coexistence of natural and cultural elements and their interrelations shape the particular characteristics of the territory. As stated by the European Landscape Convention (2000)¹⁴, “Noting that the landscape has an important public interest role in the cultural, ecological, environmental and social fields, and constitutes a resource favourable to economic activity and where protection, management and planning can contribute to job creation”, the European Landscape Convention aims to promote European landscape protection, management and planning and to organise European cooperation. The Convention defines landscape as “an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors” (Article 1). Landscape is recognised “as an essential component of people’s surroundings, an expression of the diversity of their shared cultural and natural heritage, and a foundation of their identity” (Article 5).

¹⁴ The Convention was adopted by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe on 19 July 2000 in Strasbourg and opened to signature by Member States in Florence (Italy) on 20 October 2000. To date, 32 Council of Europe member states have ratified the Convention and six States have signed it. It is the first international treaty exclusively devoted to all aspects of European landscape.

‘Landscape management’ means action, from the perspective of sustainable development, to ensure the regular upkeep of a landscape, so as to guide and harmonise changes which are brought about by social, economic and environmental processes” (Article 1). It applies to the entire territory of the parties and covers natural, rural, urban and peri-urban areas. It concerns landscapes that might be considered outstanding, as well as every-day or degraded landscapes” (Article 2). Adequate “procedures for the participation of the general public, local and regional authorities, and other parties with an interest in the definition and implementation of the landscape policies” are promoted in Article 5, as well as specific intervention in awareness-raising, training and education, identification and assessment of landscape, as suggested in Article 6.

In brief, in the Convention a twofold profile of landscape is recognised, as a reality and as a representation of itself at the same time, thus emphasizing its holistic nature. The coexistence of natural and cultural factors and their interrelationships are responsible for the character of the landscape that allows an integrated and comprehensive ‘learning’ of a portion of the territory. Unlike the environment, which is essentially a scientific concept, the landscape belongs to the sphere of experience, and it is important for its interconnections with cultural aspects. The landscape is a notion closer to who lives and acts in a territory or simply visits it (Zerbi, 2003). Even more

interesting is the assumption that motivates the Convention, i.e. the assignment of a central value to culture as a constitutive and binding resource. Among the primary forms in which culture is instilled, there are tangible goods and territorial organisation. In this light, the landscape belonging to every piece of the territory is a key element of its territorial identity, because it can integrate natural and cultural aspects. The landscape and its related assets assume the role of guarantors of specificity and territorial diversity, set against some emerging homogenising dynamics. From these considerations comes a growing awareness of the importance of the cultural landscape, understood in the broader multisensory conception that associates visual experience to all the other senses, in a global sensory involvement of the observer: the landscape of sound, touch, taste, and smell (Zerbi, 2003; Zerbi & Scazzosi, 2004).

In a cultural district, culture, embedded in both a tangible or intangible cultural heritage, becomes a potential resource at the foundation of socio-economic development. The *resource base* will have to be developed and integrated through specific actions and policies and organisational competencies. They will have at first to favour the growth of the widespread ability to give sense and value to cultural experiences, putting resources into the network and favouring their creative recombination.

Beyond the traditional factors usually quoted in regional policy schemes, e.g. infrastructure, natural and cultural resources, private capital stock, human and social capital, more appealing and innovative elements, e.g. landscape in the broader multisensory conception, territorial identity, networks, relational capital, trust, creativity, connectivity and receptivity should be emphasised. These components are important in mobilising a whole territory and can be regarded as a “binding material” of traditional factors and traditional material assets (Tóth, 2014).

Therefore, is territorial capital a static or a dynamic phenomenon? Stein (2010) is of the opinion that territorial capital remains a territorial resource. Nevertheless, according to Berti (2011) territorial capital is not meant to provide a static picture of the territory’s characteristics, but to describe the evolutionary dynamics that can be triggered. And, as argued by Swagemakers et al. (2014), territorial capital is temporary and flexible in nature. In other words, elements of territorial capital can be strengthened and developed over time, but may also be depleted (Tóth, 2014).

In this work, we follow a dynamic approach, mainly due to the role played by culture and because cultural districtualisation, in its advanced forms, is primarily a process thought to activate dynamic phenomena as well as potential positive externalities. However, the great differentiation of this process and the lack of a unique development pattern, as shown by the

heterogeneity of our case studies and the international experiences, open up the interpretative frameworks towards the adoption of a model of analysis and intervention of a systemic nature. According to this perspective, in the next chapter we will propose a model of analysis and organisational design of a cultural district, exploiting the experiences of the six cultural districts analysed in the previous chapter, with particular reference to the Valtellina and the Tuscan Geopark examples, in a recursive dialogue between deduction and induction. To do so, however, we must first explore the theme of resources, knowledge and competencies of a territory that can be organised to develop or strengthen a cultural district.

3.2. The role of tangible and intangible resources

As explained in Chapter 1, interventions in the development of a cultural district presuppose an analysis of the resources – i.e. the territorial and cultural capital – that characterise the territory in question, in order to exploit them through specific organisational competencies, already held or yet to be acquired and strengthened through the districtualisation process itself. Given these premises, we follow the resource-based view (RBV) of the firm – a consolidated approach in management studies (cf. Wernerfelt 1984; Barney, 1991; Mahoney & Pandian, 1992; Peteraf, 1993; Collis & Montgomery, 1997) – and the *relational view* (Dyer & Singh, 1998) in

order to consider jointly elements such as intellectual, social and relational capital. Social capital (Putnam, 1993) is a territorially-rooted relational asset that underwrites the existence of networks, collaborative relations and institutional capacities, which are of increasing importance in providing competitive advantage (Cooke & Morgan, 1998; Evans & Syrett, 2007).

According to the RBV, each firm is conceived as a set of heterogeneous and specific resources, tangible and intangible, and specific abilities (or competencies) (Wernefelt, 1984; Barney, 1991). The presence of resources which are unique or rare, valuable, inimitable, not easily transferable or exchangeable, can lead to a sustainable competitive advantage for the firm that controls them (Barney, 1991; Dierickx & Cool, 1989). The resources represent a potential, where the competencies relate to the organisational ability to use them, combine them, and recombine them in creative ways. Moreover, the bundle of competencies is not intended to be viewed in static terms, but in dynamic terms. Teece and Pisano (1994; Teece et al., 1997), developing the concept of *dynamic capability*, emphasise the firm's ability to integrate, develop and dynamically reconfigure competencies to effectively deal with a changing environment. In brief "*a dynamic capability is the capacity of an organization to purposefully create, extend, or modify its resource base*" (Helfat et al., 2007, p.1).

Therefore, the RBV can be useful to support a strategic and organisational analysis for the development of a cultural district. As well as every firm being characterised by a distinct set of resources and competencies, so that sustainable value creation over time requires a strategy that recognises and valorises the development of its distinctive features (Grant, 2005), each territory can also be conceived as a particular set of heterogeneous resources, cultural and non-cultural, of specific know-how, and also as a set of relationships and organisational competencies held or developable by territorial actors (public and private, individual and collective). In brief, the specific local resources and territorial assets can be used proactively to promote sustainable territorial development. Sometimes, the importance of the competencies can even exceed a cultural heritage in the strictest sense, such as on monumental and artistic capital. This is the case, for example, with some success stories of American and English cities, which used the cultural district model and the strategy of the Greater London Council of the 70s to accelerate their development, despite the lack of cultural heritage of excellence.

The usefulness of the RBV as a theoretical premise for cultural districtualisation is even more evident if we consider that cultural-based products, in their generation and often in their fruition, derive from high specialisation and are inextricably linked to a territory, and to a community

and its traditions (Sacco, 2003), as aforementioned (see Chapter 1). The resources of a territory are linked together by a geographic nexus, are unique, rare, difficult to imitate (“idiosyncratic”), subject to a progressive process of accumulation and strictly related to the local historical experience, and thus are not easily transferable. In other words, the cultural resources of a territory are often characterised by those features of rarity, value, inimitability and difficult transferability, which has already emerged in the literature on the RBV (Barney, 1991; Dierickx, Cool, 1989) as key factors in competitive advantage.

Thus, the RBV instilled in a process of cultural districtualisation suggests focusing on the resource base of a particular territory – i.e. its territorial and cultural capital – emphasising policies of differentiation between territories, rather than their imitation and homogenising. As well as the RBV focusing on the heterogeneity and specificity of resources and competencies among different firms, and also for cultural districts, the specificity of the territorial and cultural capital is a factor that differentiates the territories. This specificity influences potential development, because it comes from a complex series of situational conditions, such as:

- Unique historical conditions; the situated experience gained over time; the knowledge developed through learning by doing (Arrow, 1962), learning by interacting (Lipparini & Lorenzoni, 1996) and “collective

learning” (Capello & Camagni, 2002); the ability to assign meaning and value to cultural experiences. All these aspects are strongly path-dependent and rooted in a specific territory.

- Causal ambiguity (Reed & DeFilippo, 1990), linked to the difficulty of fully explaining the causation that led to the maturation of certain resources, often intangible, and competencies (Lipparini, 1995). This is due to complex social, economic, organisational and institutional processes, which are influenced by each other over time. Moreover, the resources are closely related to the life of the territory, its history and relationships, and its idiosyncratic culture, and therefore they are difficult to imitate outside the territory. This can produce a competitive advantage over other territories. For example, the historical tradition of music of the Cremona cultural district (see Chapter 2) can be conceived as a sustainable competitive advantage because of the high level of specialisation embedded in the area and consolidated over time.
- Social complexity, linked to the ability to weave relationships among actors, which is in turn linked also to aspects such as trust, reputation, and social capital.
- Forms of specific and tangible differentiation such as trademarks, patents, territorial brands, to name a few, which valorise and

institutionalise the specificities of the territory, as described by Santagata (2002; 2003).

Furthermore, the organisational skills and competencies required for an advanced cultural district include the capability of encouraging interaction and relationships among actors, as well as the (re)combination of territorial resources and competencies (Kickert & Koppenjan, 1997; Meneguzzo & Trimarchi, 2004; Meneguzzo, 2008), so as to give rise to network forms for the valorisation, provision and promotion of the cultural heritage. A central role is played by the competencies of network management and inter-institutional project management required for negotiated planning (integrated territorial planning, territorial pacts, territorial employment pacts, etc.). Other network competencies are, for example, the capacity for social innovation¹⁵, facilitation and brokerage, change management, and the

¹⁵ Social innovation is defined as the ability to apply intuition and imagination to policies and projects, so that culture becomes a creative factor for innovation in a territory (Meneguzzo & Trimarchi, 2004; Meneguzzo, 2008). Social innovation is directly linked to the abilities of system thinking and social entrepreneurship that allow the transition from the conception of a project through to its effective implementation.

activation and management of networks (even those already existing, such as museum networks) and of ‘networks of networks’.

The network manager, in particular, stands out in a decisive role of facilitator and broker, helping to achieve a balance between the issues, opportunities, possible solutions and instances of the actors. Kickert and Koppenjan (1997) identify three different modes of play for this role, ranging from the exercise of strong leadership, to an intermediate level aimed at maintaining a ‘constant tension’ among various actors towards participation in the network, to a softer level oriented only towards the creation of negotiating tables. It is likely that a “one best way” does not exist: it will probably depend on the specific context, and it will be subject to change over time, even in the same context. This has been a characteristic, for example, of the Tuscan Geopark case (see Chapter 2) where the network manager, i.e. the managing director of the park, has maintained a predominantly intermediate level aimed at maintaining a ‘constant tension’. Nevertheless, more than in the past, she acquired an increasing strong leadership rather than a softer approach, thanks to the legitimation gained over time.

Benchmarking, bench-learning and bench-action (Meneguzzo & Trimarchi, 2004; Meneguzzo, 2008) capabilities can be useful when intended as

drivers of inspiration and proactive learning, rather than mere replication and ‘prone’ imitation of practices developed in different contexts.

A final consideration depends on the systemic and multidimensional nature of an advanced cultural district. This involves a rethinking of operating systems such as planning and control, towards a multidimensional approach (Meneguzzo, 2008; Cioccarelli & Francesconi, 2013), incorporating elements such as accessibility, quality, equity, effectiveness, sustainability, and social attraction (of talent, innovators, firms, projects, and so on). In parallel, therefore, the logics of accountability and social reporting have to be strengthened, especially from the perspective of stakeholder engagement (Meneguzzo, 2008).

Provan and Lemaire (2012) identify four broad capacities/characteristics of effective networks that flank the fundamental ability to choose the form of network governance more appropriate to the context (cf. Chapter 1): the involvement of network members at multiple levels in terms of network goals and interests; selective integration in network design which is based on a mix of close and dense ties, e.g. for exploitative aims, with structural holes, e.g. for explorative aims; the capacity of combining stability at the core while maintaining flexibility, especially at the periphery, thus allowing new organisations – and new resources and ideas – to enter, and less involved actors to leave; the capacity for building and maintaining

legitimacy, under both an inner and an outer perspective (Human & Provan, 2000).

From the above considerations, there is a need to put in a network and organise a sufficiently critical mass of resources, cultural and non-cultural, in the territory. In the early phases of the development of an advanced cultural district, i.e. its 'conceptualisation', the analysis and design cannot be limited to the monumental and artistic capital, for example to increase the tourism flow. On the contrary, as shown by the efforts of districtualisation promoted by the Cariplo Foundation and the cases analysed in the second chapter, the goal should be to increase the capacity to attribute meaning and value to cultural experiences, to enhance the externalities of cultural activities in terms of creativity, experience of the new and of the unfamiliar (Sacco & Pedrini, 2003). In other words, the aim is to strengthen the foundation of intangible resources of an area, such as the human, social and relational capital, through the enhancement of cultural-based elements such as knowledge, experience and skills, fostering a cultural atmosphere able to support and catalyse excellence, innovation, and creativity. These aspects have already been highlighted by Becattini with reference to industrial districts (1987, 1989, 1995, 1997, 1998, 1999, 2000) and even earlier by Marshall (1919), showing that there can be no true development without the widespread socialisation of knowledge and

know-how. The difference is that in the industrial districts knowledge and know-how related to particular industries are privileged, whilst in cultural districts the focus is on culture and the cultural sector as driving forces for socio-economic development, as emerged from our case studies (see Chapter 2). The current competitive scenario, in fact, involves more and more the need to develop the ability to attract innovators and stimulate the creative potential of the local systems. For these further aims, investment in art and culture, in the broadest sense, is essential (Florida, 2002).

As a support to the conceptualisation, feasibility analysis and design of a potential cultural district, it should be useful to carry out a synthetic survey and a mapping of the main resources and competencies in the territory. Combining the aforementioned arguments, the suggestions from the literature, the previous case studies and our direct experience through participatory action research in the Valtellina case (see Chapter 2), we propose the following tables 3.1 and 3.2, which present a classification of the resources and competencies for cultural districts. These tables are not to be considered as ‘deterministic tools’ but as simple decision supports.

Table 3.1. Classification of the resources for a cultural district

Resources	Examples of resources	Examples and criteria of recognition
Cultural atmosphere (ambiance)	Tangible cultural heritage	Monuments, archaeological sites, artistic heritage (civil, religious, etc.) in a broad cultural meaning
	Intangible cultural heritage	Attitudes, beliefs, mores, customs, values, ideals and practices which are common to or shared by many groups, traditions, languages, aesthetics, which represent a link between the past, present and future
	Landscape and natural Heritage	Landscape Geographic location Natural resources
	Human Capital	Individual skills, competencies and knowledge Attitudes, motivation and creativity Entrepreneurship and social entrepreneurship Formal/informal networks Trust among actors
	Social capital and network	Networks with excellent cultural realities Institutions, behavioural models, values
	Intangible territorial capital	Brand and territorial image Widespread knowledge and information Territorial reputation Symbolic capital
Territorial infrastructure heritage	Transport infrastructure and communication routes	Current infrastructure, ancient historical transport and minor communication routes (local roads, paths, etc.).
	Infrastructure for information and communication	Local press, local TV, ICT networks
	Receptive and recreational infrastructures	Hotels, restaurants, places of social aggregation, sports facilities, etc.
	Research and training infrastructures	Schools, centres of professional training, laboratories, universities, research centres, etc.
Administrative and governance resources	Administrative systems	Centrality versus marginality of the administrative system in the process of territorial development, past experiences, support systems (e.g. policies for young people, local labour market, for businesses and new-ventures), etc.
	Integrated design plans and inter-institutional projects already active Agencies	Territorial integrated plans, cultural systems (museum systems, theatre systems, library systems, etc.), territorial information systems, collaborations within non-local projects (national and international), etc. centres for technology transfer, business incubators, collaborations with research centres/universities, information points for young people, for local labour market, for businesses and start-ups, etc.

Table 3.2. Classification of the organisational competencies for a cultural district

Organizational competencies	Examples of competencies	Examples and criteria of recognition
At individual level	Artistic and cultural value chain Other value chains	Cultural design and management Technical, managerial and relational abilities with reference to the specific activities carried out
		Selective integration in network design which is based on a mix of close and dense ties Management of interdependencies and creation of synergies between value chains Management and facilitation of interactions among actors Involvement of network members at multiple levels in terms of network goals and interests Capacity for combining stability at the core while maintaining flexibility, especially at the periphery, thus allowing new organisations—and new resources and ideas—to enter, and less involved actors to leave
At district level	Network management and governance	Knowledge management System thinking Combination of resources, expertise and other competencies Inter-institutional project management Brokerage, mediation and arbitrage Activation and management of networks and cultural systems Development and management of information systems to support the local community Social reporting and accountability Capacity for building and maintaining legitimacy, from both an inner and outer perspective
	Change management	Monitoring and strategic control Benchmarking, bench-learning and bench-action Social innovation and social entrepreneurship Management of intra and inter-organisational learning processes Dynamic capabilities and re-combination of resources, expertise and other competencies in creative ways

3.3. The duality of an (advanced) cultural district: systems of rules and structuration

To highlight the socio-cultural dimension within the process of design of a cultural district – which will be treated in more detail in the next chapter – and its ‘dual nature’, we draw inspiration from the debate between agency and structure in the social sciences, i.e. the debate over the primacy of structure or agency in shaping human behaviour. Structure is the recurrent patterned arrangements which influence or limit the choices and opportunities available (Barker, 2005, p.448). Agency is the capacity of individuals to act independently and to make their own free choices (Barker, 2005, p.448). The structure versus agency debate may be understood as an issue of socialisation versus autonomy in determining whether an individual acts as a free agent or in a manner dictated by a social structure. “[...] participants in organization studies most prominently debate to what extent organization derives from agency exercised by its members or results from structures *enabling* and/or *constraining* such agency. Further issues discussed in this debate, concern the exact character of organizational agency, the quality of its relationship with the respective

structures, and the composition and permanence of the latter” (Clegg & Bailey, 2007, p. 47).

Giddens (1976, p. 75) “...define[s] action or agency as the stream of actual or contemplated causal interventions of corporeal beings in the ongoing process of events-in-the-world”. Giddens suggests the actor is an embodied unit and as such, a possessor of causal powers that she may choose to employ to intervene (or not) in the ongoing sequence of events in the world. This makes her an agent. It is crucial to the concept of agency that a person or agent “could have acted otherwise”. This conception of the agent ties agency to power. Agency approaches see the individual as atomised, positing a voluntary approach to human action. Structure is essentially explained in terms of the social, economic, and/or political context in which action occurs. Structuralist approaches recognise that there are specific conditions which produce human actions or behaviours. Individuals are believed to be acting as a result of and through the constraints of the structures in which they exist. Thus, behaviour is not a result of free will but a product of structural factors. Criticisms of the structuralist approach highlight the underestimation of reflexivity and the autonomy of human actions, and the ambiguity and ambivalence of human experience. “Giddens in the form of what he calls ‘Structuration’ theory has set out to try and transcend the dualism of structure and agency. His basic argument

is that, rather than representing different phenomena, they are mutually dependent and internally related” (McAnulla, 1998). Structure only exists through agency, and agents have ‘*rules and resources*’ which facilitate or constrain their actions. These actions can lead, in turn, to the reconstitution of the structure, *defined as rules and resources*, which will, in turn, affect future action. Thus, we have a close interrelationship between structure and agency. The metaphor used by Giddens is that rather than being distinct phenomena, structure and agency are in fact two sides of the same coin.

However, as Taylor (1993) argues this conception is the most distinctive feature of Giddens’ Structuration theory and, at the same time, a feature which crucially undermines this theory as a whole. In fact, Giddens’ (1984) Structuration theory claims that structure and agency are mutually constitutive and cannot be untied. According to Archer (2000) this precludes any analysis of how structures and agents influence each other, as the specific properties and powers of neither the structures nor the agents can be identified. The context of Giddens’ theorising about structure-agency relationships is the social structures of everyday social interaction and the concepts people use to make sense of it. Giddens’ focus on social life and subjects’ reflexivity within it (Delanty & Strydom, 2003) may be useful within such a context, but has important limitations when taken as a general theory of structure and agency (Næss 2015, p. 9). As argued by

Næss (2015), the claim by Giddens (1987, p.21) that structures are not material but “only exist as memory traces orienting the conduct of knowledgeable human agents and as the instantiation of rules in the situated activities of agents”, is hardly useful for analyses of the built environment which includes also, for example, the tangible cultural heritage. As argued by Næss (2015), Giddens’ Structuration theory largely disregards the important time lag between the influence of our surroundings on our actions and the influence of our actions on our surroundings. It downplays the fact that we are born into already-existing socio-material contexts and that we are subject to enablement and constraint given by the specific structural context (e.g. the urban structure, the ‘tangible’ landscape, the monuments that surround us, etc.), although we can potentially change such structures.

Starting from these premises, what are the inspirations we can draw from this debate, for the aim of cultural districtualisation?

Let us recall, again, an interesting reasoning by Næss in the specific field of urban planning (2015, p.2):

“For urban planning to be meaningful and possible, certain conditions must be met. First, urban spatial structures must exert some influence on people’s behaviour, well-being, the natural environment, the economy, etc. – otherwise

there would be no point in trying to influence how these structures develop. Second, it must be possible to influence these structures – otherwise urban planning would not be able to make any difference. Third, it must be possible to assess the likely impacts of alternative spatial solutions so that the pros and cons of different plan proposals can be discussed. Fourth, since urban development influences and is influenced by social, economic, environmental as well as cultural conditions, integration of knowledge from several fields is necessary to provide the knowledge required for taking conscious steps towards the urban futures considered desirable.”

And, at p. 8-9:

“For urban planning to be possible, cities’ spatial/material structures must at the same time be changeable. It must be possible to change them through the actions of agents (such as urban planners). Moreover, urban planners and other agents of change do not operate in a vacuum but are subject to influences (enablements as well as constraints) from a host of social-structural conditions (e.g. property rights, legislation, society’s fundamental economic system, etc.). What we are dealing with here is a double set of structure–agency relationship. First, there is the content-related relationship between urban spatial structures and the actions of the inhabitants who are exposed to these structures in their daily life. Second, there is the process-related relationship between “non-material” social structures (such as legislation, land ownership, the overall

economic system, etc.) and the agents involved in planning and decision-making about urban spatial structures.”

Similar to Næss on urban planning (2015), we can argue that, distinct from the natural environment, the cultural district is undeniably socially constructed. Human-made material structures (e.g. tangible cultural goods, monuments, buildings, ancient as well as modern roads, and land relating to industrial activities, to name but a few) often established many years ago, by whoever lived or passed by a territory, still characterise it¹⁶. At the same time, the material structures are reproduced and can be modified and changed by human actions. The same applies to the overall societal and

¹⁶ For example, the ancient Romans used a consolidated scheme for city planning, developed for military defence and civil convenience. The basic plan consisted of a central forum with city services, surrounded by a compact, rectilinear grid of streets, and wrapped in a wall for defence. To reduce travel times, two diagonal streets crossed the square grid, passing through the central square. A river usually flowed through the city, providing water, transport, and sewage disposal (Vitruvius, 1914). Hundreds of towns and cities were built by the Romans throughout their empire. Many European towns, e.g. Turin in Italy or Seville in Spain, preserve the remains of these schemes, which show the very logical way the Romans designed their cities.

cultural – more intangible – conditions which represent the context for district design and development.

We are aware that the above-mentioned theory on structuration, if taken in a strict sense, imposes severe limitations on highlighting the possibilities for cultural districtualisation as well as the impact of different kinds of spatial/material district development. However, they offer interesting reflections around the concept of the cultural district, even more so in its advanced form. Paraphrasing Næss (2015), we can argue that in an advanced cultural district, firstly there is the content-related relationship between territorial structures and the actions of the inhabitants who are exposed to these structures in their daily life. Secondly, there is the process-related relationship between intangible social structures and the agents involved in designing and decision-making about cultural districts' structures. The recursive and dynamic relationship among these elements is emphasised when we take into consideration the territory and the landscape, and the territorial and cultural capital available therein, as constraints and opportunities at the same time, which can be changed

(sometimes only partially) through action (agency)¹⁷ towards development. This is coherent with the conception of a territory as a peculiar set of heterogeneous resources, cultural and non-cultural, of specific know-how, and of relationships and organisational competencies held or developable by territorial agents (public and private, individual inhabitants, etc.), as argued above.

Inspired by these arguments, we emphasise a dual nature even for the advanced cultural district. The advanced cultural district, in fact, is both a means and a result of the districtualisation actions and it is in a recursive relationship with the surrounding local system (that is to say, the relevant social, cultural and economic system). This dual nature suggests the use of a definition of organisational design as *development of adequate structures, where decisions can be taken and executed*. The organisational structure is in turn a set of rules for decisions, or “game rules” which drive the behaviour of the actors, for whom it can be an enabler or a constraint.

Following this reasoning, at least three components arise:

¹⁷ This reasoning is in line with reasoning about territorial capital (cf. Berti, 2011; Swagemakers et al., 2014), territorial culture (cf. Throsby, 2001, p. 4) and the holistic nature of the landscape (cf. Zerbi, 2003; Zerbi & Scazzosi, 2004).

- The actors (cultural and non-cultural operators, cultural services users and other stakeholders, firstly the inhabitants), whose agency affects the cultural district and who are influenced recursively by it.
- The cultural district it-self, purposely identified through some features (such as geographical, functional and administrative boundaries, aims, resources, governance and organisational structures, etc.).
- The design group (i.e. an element of meta-structuring), engaged in the purposely rational development of the cultural district, an efficient and effective coordination and control of triggering actions, resources and competencies.

Just as argued by Næss (2015) in relation to urban planning, it is also a necessary condition for advanced cultural districts' designers that the impact of proposed solutions can be predicted, at least to some extent. Designers must be able to distinguish between efficacious, less efficacious and counter-productive means for achieving the goals defined. This also applies to the design of decision-making processes (e.g. the degree of stakeholder engagement). However, the thin red line is represented by what we mean by "at least to some extent". As exemplified by Næss (2015, p. 11) in the context of urban planning

“within professions influenced by positivism and neoclassical economics, such as transport planning, there has been widespread belief in the possibility of predicting future situations resulting from the construction of new infrastructure. The use of transport models to predict future traffic volume and its distribution between different parts of the road network after the construction of a new road is an example. Another example of strong belief in the possibility of making precise predictions is cost-benefit analyses of public investments, where the calculation of a few numerical values (e.g. net present value or benefit/cost ratio) is supposed to indicate the long-term profitability for society of a proposed project”.

Thus, as suggested by Næss (2015, p.11) in the context of urban planning – and, we argue, even more so in a more complex and ambiguous context of designing, like an advanced cultural district – designers’ predictions about the impact of alternative solutions are of a “softer” nature when compared with the predictions made by traffic engineers and economists, as exemplified above. Most often, alternative solutions can be discussed and compared only qualitatively, or are at least limited to simple calculations and crude estimates, due to the social phenomena involved.

Being aware of the limitations of Structuration theory ‘à la Giddens’ (1984), applied in its strict sense, we refer to critical realism as a useful

theoretical framework in a socio-material context such as the cultural district. As recalled by Næss (2015, p.5), although

“some critical realist theorists have rejected the possibility of predictions of social phenomena (Sayer, 1992; Lawson, 1997; Danermark et al., 2001) [...] a more nuanced view has gradually gained support among critical realists, according to which the positivist belief in precise predictions about future situations is still rejected, while at the same time the possibility of qualitative predictions about the impacts of causal factors is left open, possibly supplemented with crude estimates about the order of magnitude of the effects (Næss, 2004; Karlsson, 2011; Næss & Strand, 2012)” [...] “Although it is impossible to predict for certain the influences of structural conditions on human actions, particularly in a long term, some anticipations about aggregate-level future effects can appear more reasonable than other assumptions. Being able to say something about the likely consequences of proposed policy measures is a necessary condition for planning. The predictions in question are, however, usually not of the precise, quantitative kind, but qualitative impact assessments, with modest statements about the directions of influences and maybe their order of magnitude [...]. What can be predicted are not future events or situations, but the direction and strength by which a proposed measure is likely to “push” the future situation, based on the capacities or abilities of things to behave and interact in certain ways.”

In the next chapter we will propose a model of analysis and design(ing) of an (advanced) cultural district, where the socio-economic value of the cultural initiatives in a territory is linked to the systemic interdependencies and to the multiple relationships among a series of actors, activities, tangible and intangible resources and competencies. The conception of an advanced cultural district as a complex adaptive system as well as the relationships between social structures and agency argued above, emphasise the need to adopt a design process that avoids an excessive determinism.

4. From Straight Lines to Spirals

Abstract: *Francesconi proposes a model of analysis and design(ing) of an (advanced) cultural district, where the socio-economic value of the cultural initiatives in a territory is linked to the systemic interdependencies and to the multiple relationships among actors, activities, resources and competencies. The goal is twofold: on the one hand, to take into account empirical experiences and recent trends in organisational theory for analysis and designing, avoiding the extreme determinism which is often implicit in traditional 'linear and sequential' approaches ("straight lines"). On the other hand, Francesconi aims to offer a compass to whomever has to act concretely in situations of high organisational complexity, emphasising the importance of circularity, feedback and learning during the design process and bringing to mind the idea of iteration ("spirals").*

Keywords: analysis, organizational design, advanced cultural district, complex systems, matrix of interdependencies, iterative processes

4.1. A model for analysis and designing

In the previous chapter we emphasised the complexity and the dual nature of the advanced cultural district, which is both a means to and a result of the process of districtualisation. An advanced cultural district is not constituted merely by the sum of its components, but has emergent particular properties that go beyond the sum of its parts. Moreover, it is something ‘in the making’, in a recursive relationship with surrounding systems. We also anticipated the use of a coherent definition of organisational design as development of adequate structures, where decisions can be taken and executed. Thus, the organisational structure of a cultural district is here conceived as a set of rules coupled with resources and competencies which drives the decisions and the behaviours of actors, for whom it can be an enabler or a constraint, and can be modified by their agency during the process of districtualisation itself. Finally, we have also highlighted three key components, i.e. the actors with their agency, the cultural district itself as a means to and a result of the districtualisation process, and the design group as an element of meta-structuring.

The complexity of designing a cultural district indicates the use of a framework, where the process of districtualisation aims to satisfy, at the same time, three concomitant sets of requisitions (Figure 4.1):

- The institutional context, which affects the process of design through regulations and contextual culture (e.g. related to the social and the economic environment, the legislative context, the institutional framework, the financial resources, the accountability structures, etc.).
- The design group, which is engaged in the purposely rational development of 'artefacts' such as organisational design, structures, and processes that guide/provide rules for the effective and efficient use and development of the territorial and cultural capital towards achieving the district's goals (human agency of design group).
- The other actors (cultural and non-cultural operators, cultural services users and other stakeholders, initially the inhabitants) that invent, design, and use both cultural and non-cultural artefacts which have an impact on the institutional context and become constraints and enablers at the same time for human agency.

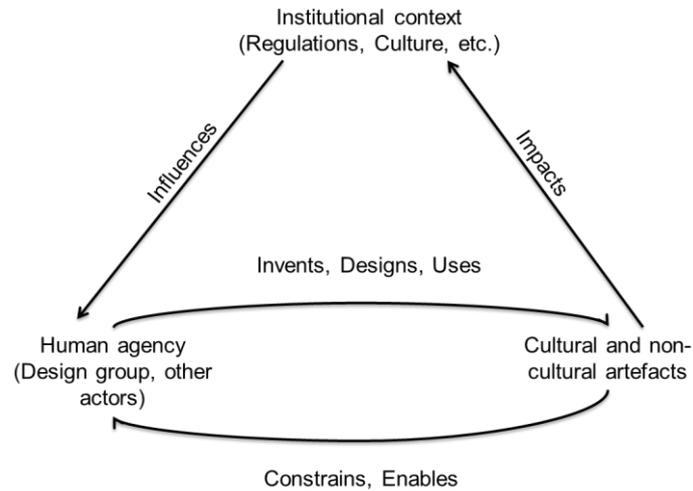


Figure 4.1. The process of districtualisation and the set of requisitions

Therefore we propose a model of analysis and design(ing) of an (advanced) cultural district, where the socio-economic value of the cultural initiatives in a territory is linked to the systemic interdependencies and to the multiple relationships among a series of actors, activities, tangible and intangible resources, competencies and know-how.

The goal of the model is twofold: on the one hand, to take into account previous suggestions for the analysis and design(ing), avoiding an extreme determinism; on the other hand, with a pinch of pragmatism inspired by a nuanced critical-realist approach, to offer a compass to whomever has to act concretely (in particular the design group) in situations of high

organisational complexity, allowing them to orient at least the direction and influence the strength in the process of development of an advanced cultural district.

Why a combined model of analysis and design(ing)?

It is already forty years since Cherns (1976) presented a set of sociotechnical principles to guide system design, subsequently revised and extended by Clegg (2000). Although these principles have generated wide debate, especially in fields such as ergonomics and information systems, we argue that they offer useful tips for the process of design of a cultural district conceived as a system with many interdependent components. In fact, an advanced cultural district is a system socially constructed by humans through the use of 'technology' (intended to include know-how, techniques and tools of analysis and design, and so forth) and the design itself is systemic, because all aspects of a system are interconnected. This implies that none should take a strict logical precedence over the other. Moreover, there may be unintended consequences from various change initiatives. Some of these consequences may only become obvious when the system (e.g. our cultural districts) is 'in operation' and some of the knock-on effects may have consequences for others (Clegg, 2000, p. 465). An interesting meta-principle is that values and mindsets are central to design (Clegg, 2000, p.465). This emphasises the role played by people

(e.g. the design group of the district and the stakeholders who are eventually involved) and by the particular context of design. Moreover, while it is quite obvious that design involves making choices, what is too often underestimated is that design is an extended social process. There are several important considerations embedded in this meta-principle (Clegg, 2000, p. 467):

“The first is that design is extended over lengthy periods of time. It is not a one-off that has a clear end. Design continues beyond implementation and throughout use. In addition, this principle points to the social nature of design, in which various stakeholders help shape and moderate design choices over time. It also follows that such stakeholders will interpret designs and their meanings in different ways (McLoughlin & Harris, 1997).”

Also, design involves multi-disciplinary education. In other words, design is shaped by a range of social partners over time. This raises another meta-principle, i.e. design is socially shaped (Clegg, 2000, p.467):

“This principle goes further and argues that wider social factors help influence the sorts of design problem that are addressed, and the kinds of design solution that are attended to and invested in. Put a different way, design

is subject to social movements and trends. These them-selves may be manifest in various fads and fashions”,

which in our context of districtualisation may also be interpreted as mimetic forces.

A logical consequence of the above-mentioned meta-principles is that design is contingent. This means that design choices are also contingent, and do not necessarily have universal applicability. There is no ‘one best way’. One of the difficulties is that the nature of these contingencies is not well understood (Clegg, 2000, p. 468).

To prepare the answer to our earlier question, we integrate the aforementioned considerations of system design using three metaphors for three ways of organisational thinking, i.e. lines, circles and spirals.

We argue the process of development of a cultural district cannot be conceived as a rigid sequential and linear planning process, completely definable a priori (*straight lines*). Lines represent tasks, simple projects, and discrete activities, with very clear objectives and foreseeable patterns in mind.

Is it sufficient to represent the process of design of a whole advanced cultural district in this way?

We do not think so, due to the aforementioned theoretical arguments and our direct experience in the early phase of development of the Valtellina Cultural District, and also the lessons learned from the Tuscan Geopark case (cf. Chapter 2).

Some simple and specific activities – even within the design process of a cultural district – may be thought of as lines. Nevertheless, when a line extends itself it can become a circle, a wheel, and it reminds us that while the line begins with a problem or an opportunity and ends with a realised ‘solution’, the solution itself may turn out to be another ‘problem’ or a further opportunity that needs other ‘solutions’, as emerged in the Valtellina and Tuscan Geopark cases. The assumption that solutions will not bring other problems (or opportunities) is an illusion. In other words, the risk is to ignore the emergent aspects and to focus a priori on a fixed set of goals, problems, opportunities and actions. The circle also reminds us that all things have a cyclical nature, that there can be feedbacks and loops, and nothing remains static. It draws attention to the relationship between agency and structure, as well as to individual and collective learning opportunities – including learning by doing and by interacting during the process of design itself – which are the basis, and often one of the first goals, of an advanced cultural district.

Is an advanced cultural district a static object that does not change over time?

We hope it is not, though the risk of reification and the transposition of means and ends do perhaps exist, because the timescale for change can be very long.

Have the district's actors – be they members of the design group or other stakeholders involved, such as local operators or inhabitants – learned and been 'transformed' from past experiences and the district's actions, or are they still the same?

We hope not, because the basic 'raison d'être' of an advanced cultural district should be to increase the capacity to attribute meaning and value to cultural experiences, to enhance the externalities of cultural activities in terms of creativity, and to experience the new and the unfamiliar (cf. Sacco and Pedrini, 2003 and Chapter 1).

Thus, the concept of a spiral draws attention to the many projects and cyclical events that constitute the process of development of an advanced cultural district, and its analysis and design cannot escape the circularity and typical feedback of a complex adaptive system. Some of the elements may be predicted; others emerge unpredictably. In other words, we believe the process of design is something dynamic and 'in the making', with feedback and learning loops (*circles*), and constantly evolving (*spirals*),

allowing the simultaneous pursuit of pragmatic implementations, creative experimentations, contextual learning and iterations (Wicks & Freeman, 1998; Romme, 2003): “The test arena is our life situation, not a laboratory” (Warfield, 1994; p.8). The Tuscan Geopark case is emblematic. Its focus began with a basic core, developed through a very thin meta-management structure, with a few main goals, actions and policies, enriched and developed over time, on the basis of accrued experience and of the legitimation gained through tangible and demonstrable results. The iterative process of analysis and design, both formal and informal, has allowed new opportunities for development and growth beyond those included in the initial master plan, such as new connections with other value chains (e.g. tourism) and with other networks, also at supra-national level, catalysing in the meantime the addition of new stakeholders, in a virtuous cycle of development.

Thus, we can answer our initial question as follows: the reason for a combined model of analysis and design(ing) (Figures 4.2 and 4.3 below) is based on the assumption that the whole design of an advanced cultural district cannot be conceived as a static and discrete activity (design as a straight line). On the contrary, design is a process which is dynamic and constantly evolving (designing as circles and spirals), while accelerating or decelerating. Therefore the distinction between analysis, design, and

implementation of a cultural district is dictated more by the need for exposure order. The Valtellina case study is typical here, (cf. Chapter 2) in which analysis, design and actions planned were actually interconnected rather than separated in sequential steps: we can conclude from this experience that the results of analysis have to guide the choice of design, as well as the design decisions offering new ‘objects’ on which to focus the analysis. Opportunities for learning can arise in any circle and at their intersections.

In summary, the design should include iterations and start with multiple goals and general guidelines, considering the goals themselves and the process of designing as essentially problematic and non-deterministic (Dunbar & Starbuck, 2006). Compared with design methods that favour a linear and deterministic approach¹⁸, the components of our model are not strictly sequential but closely interlinked, with circular feedback systems and emergent phenomena.

¹⁸ Such as the ‘waterfall model’ we referred to in the Valtellina case (Chapter 2).

Figure 4.2. Circles of analysis, design and implementation and assessment of an advanced cultural district

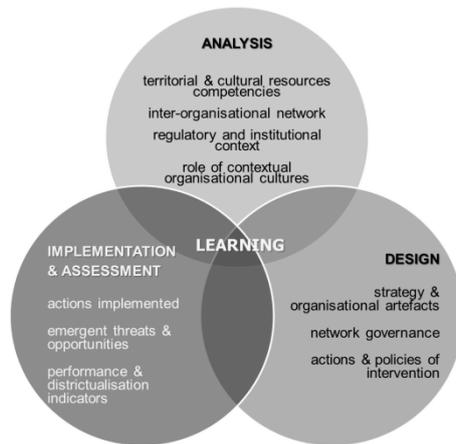
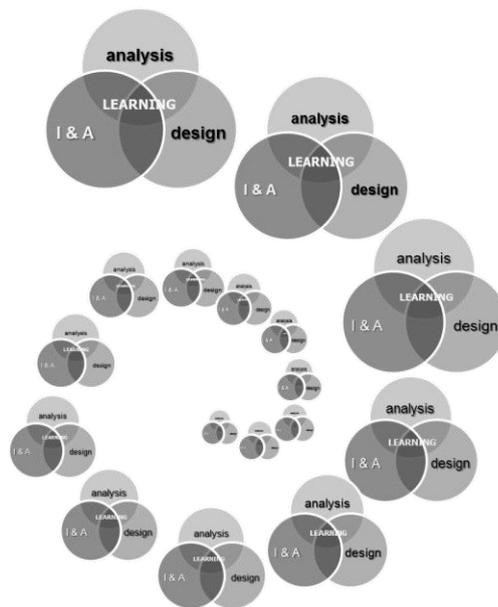


Figure 4.3. The process of design(ing) of an advanced cultural district as a spiral



4.2. Concepts and tools for analysis and designing

A pinch of pragmatism, and the nuanced critical-realist approach we referred to in the previous chapter, imply that it is often important in designing to assess at least whether strategies and possible interventions impacts will be small or great (Næss, 2015), though such estimates often have to be based on qualitative judgements (Næss, 2015; Næss & Strand, 2012; Næss, 2014). Moreover, with an advanced cultural system being an open system, proposed actions must be expected to have several side effects apart from the effect in relation to the goals, and its main motivations need clarification (Næss, 2009). Therefore, as suggested by Næss (2015, p. 14) in the specific field of urban planning – and, we argue, it is even more true in relation to an advanced cultural district – it is

“necessary to conduct a much broader assessment of the impacts of alternative solutions than is usually done. Such broad considerations of impacts require knowledge from several disciplines to be brought into the analysis. [...]. Moreover, since conditions and impacts are often highly context-dependent and vary between population groups, theoretical expert knowledge should be supplemented with local knowledge and the experiences of different population groups”.

This is an even more important proposition for an advanced cultural district, which aims at horizontal and transversal relationships among different sectors and value chains, different knowledge domains and different groups of people.

Again, as suggested by Næss (2015, p.14), this implies “a call for communicative and participatory planning processes involving different sectors of public administration as well as different groups of stakeholders”, also outside the cultural sector in its strictest sense, we would add. Thus,

“[...] goal-oriented planning would typically be understood as a multiple-goal situation instead of single-minded pursuit of one or a few goals. This too calls for participatory planning processes where the needs of different population groups can be articulated as a basis for goal formulation. Communicative processes during the preparation and implementation of plans are also necessary to give legitimacy to the plans”,

though the ideal of consensus-building across all stakeholder groups seems a less viable strategy (Næss, 2015, p. 14).

Finally, regarding the more technical aspects of designing, we cannot evade the suggestion by Næss (2015, p. 15) that designers would be sceptical

towards quantitative “expert system” analytical tools purporting to produce precise predictions of the impacts of actions. Consequently, we propose in the next section some reflections on this issue, a return to well-known concepts and tools, and a simple instrument for analysis and design (the matrix of interdependencies).

The issue of the “project cycle management framework”

The aim of this chapter is not to present a sort of manual on what should be done step by step in designing an advanced cultural district. Rather, the aim is to give some suggestions distilled from the literature, our case studies and our experiences. Thus, our suggestions can be conceived as complementing, supplementing, or replacing much more detailed methods already included in the so-called “project cycle management framework (PCMF)”, a standard practice for development agencies introduced more than thirty years ago by Baum (1970) for the World Bank, as a rational way of conceptualising, and then managing, projects.

We start our reflection with a general statement, i.e. it is very difficult to define a standard procedure extraneous to the particular social context of design, which is made up of instances from different stakeholders, negotiations, power relations and so forth. Try to think of one of the first problems to be addressed in the design of an advanced cultural district,

namely the definition of its borders. As argued in Chapter 1 and illustrated by the case studies in Chapter 2, the role of public actors in the definition of the boundaries of a potential cultural district is fundamental to the initial impulse towards its development, and this is especially true in the Italian case, even if it might easily not be the case in different cultural and institutional contexts. The boundaries of a cultural district do not necessarily match precisely with political and administrative boundaries, because different approaches might be used, along with contextual hybridisations: for example, a formal and top-down design, which aims at rational management of cultural heritage, linked to the efficient government of a territory; or a functional design, which is based on a specific cultural endowment to be effectively and efficiently organised, which mediates between top-down and bottom-up approaches; or, again, a systemic-relational design which is the result of a bottom-up process of territorial aggregation, built around local identity, strong social relationships and networks (cf. Chapter 2). In our case studies formal design has always been present – being also quite an intrinsic request by the donor foundation – even though in three cases (Oltrepò Mantovano-DOMINUS, Cremona, and Monza and Brianza) it seemed to prevail alone, while in other cases it has been hybridised with systemic relational design (Valtellina, Valcamonica and Tuscan Geopark) or with functional design ('Le Regge dei Gonzaga').

In other words, we argue there is no one best way to define the boundaries of an advanced cultural district.

Let us now reflect on other more specific design elements.

The project cycle (PCMF) is made up of a number of progressive phases – e.g. programming, identification, design, support, implementation and evaluation – that start from the identification of needs and objectives, from the planning and implementation of activities to address these needs and objectives to the assessment of the outcomes. It serves to provide structure and direction to development actions, at the same time as allowing for key objectives and issues to remain in focus.

“Central to the PCMF is the concept of learning: making adjustments during the project cycle in response to ongoing events and taking account of past experience in future planning. The fact that a cycle is used to represent the project, rather than a linear form, clearly embodies this principle”. (Biggs & Smith, 2003, p. 1743).

Participatory processes for the engagement of potential beneficiaries and stakeholders have been introduced at every stage, and many tools have been developed within the project cycle management framework (European

Commission, 2002). One of the most widely used is the Logical Framework (Coleman, 1987; Gasper, 2000) which

“summarizes the objectives of a project and the activities designed to achieve them, as well as the critical assumptions that underlie the progression to project goals. It also specifies the indicators to be used to monitor project inputs, outputs, impacts and outcomes. A four-by-four matrix is drawn up which incorporates all this information into a concise and easily understood document”. (Biggs and Smith, 2003, p. 1744).

Though initially used only in the early stages of the project cycle, it is now commonly used not only in more participatory ways, but is also sufficiently flexible for periodic updating, to allow for changing conditions and to encourage learning and innovation (Biggs & Smith, 2003; Howes, 1992; Platt, 1997). Another widely-used version of the Logical Framework is the GOPP (Goal-Oriented Project Planning, also known as the ZOPP approach (Zielorientierte Projektplanung), that provides a systematic structure for the identification, planning and management of projects developed in a workshop setting, with principle interest groups and moderators.

We tried to use these tools in our participatory action research in the Valtellina case (cf. Chapter 2), but with little success. Many predictions of

the type of actions and impacts, even if enforced by the formal demands of the donor foundation during the design process, have been very difficult or have been pursued mainly from a formal point of view rather than a substantial one. The best ideas arose at the end of the design process, and others in the context of negotiation among a few powerful actors, outside the formal logic of the logical framework. From this point of view, we cannot fail to recall the wise suggestion from Næss (2015, p. 15) that designers would generally be sceptical towards “expert system” analytical tools purporting to produce exact predictions of the impacts of actions. And we experienced these suggestions in the field. Therefore, tools such as the logical framework can be useful to obtain simply crude estimates about the order of magnitude of effects, rather than precise predictions of the impacts of actions, maybe except in the case of rather simple and ‘discrete’ design contexts. Thus, we think that the choice between ‘crude, simple and synthetic’ tools vs ‘more analytical and more refined’ ones will depend on the exact situation of a specific context of design: e.g. in terms of the breadth and complexity of a project; familiarity, perception and – not always obvious – ‘political’ acceptance of the typical tools of PCMF by a design group and the stakeholders involved; the ‘external’ and formal constraints which arise, for example, from formal and rigorous requests imposed by funders and donors for legitimization, control and accountability

aims, and so forth. In other words, it will depend on how the personal characteristics of those involved, as well as the specific social context, will influence the way approaches, tools and techniques are likely to be used in practice. These and other critical issues have been reported by Biggs and Smith (2003), who selected examples from the vast normative literature advocating the use of the PCMF and ‘best practice’ guidelines for the way project activities ‘should be done’. Alongside this normative literature, in fact, these authors highlighted another strand of literature that questions the way that the PCMF and related tools have been used in practice (e.g. Thin, 1998, as cited by Biggs & Smith, 2003, p.1745, who reviewed a large number of evaluations of social development projects).

“This latter type of analysis follows a tradition as old as Hirschman’s (1967) book. By looking at what happened in projects in practice, Hirschman found that ‘good’ management demanded an intention, and an ability, to change and guide activities in ways that had not been thought about in the original designs, and for which there were no management guidelines. These intentions and abilities were captured by the notion of the ‘hidden hand’.”

We tried to define the concept of ‘hidden hand’ it in a more explicit way with our ‘from straight lines to spirals approach’.

However, much of this ‘other’ literature has been critical of the way project cycle ideas have been implemented in practice (Biggs & Smith, 2003, p. 1745). Biggs and Smith (2003) highlighted the existence of a paradox. On the one hand, there is a body of literature that promotes an ‘ideal’ project cycle management model, brimming with ways to improve it with best practices and specially designed tools. On the other hand, there is a revealing and often critical literature, documenting what happens when these types of approaches, tools and techniques are used in practice, with all their limitations. Again, from our experience, the Valtellina case is emblematic, as explained in Chapter 2, with the tension that arose between very formal, structured and detailed processes inspired by a PCMF-like approach – as required by the donor foundation – and the actual process of design in action: more informal, iterative, with constant negotiations and adjustments as well as issues and opportunities that continued to emerge until the end of the feasibility study.

In brief, we agree with the suggestions by Biggs and Smith (2003, p.1745): in fact, what seems to emerge from our experience in the field and our case studies, and from the critical literature these authors analysed, is that “project cycle planning and management could be improved a great deal if it was acknowledged that all parts of projects are carried out by people working in social contexts, with all the features of social relationships that

are present in human interactions”. This is highly relevant not only to the suggestions for system design by Clegg (2000), as aforementioned, but also to our model of analysis and design and the underlying process of districtualisation, made up of “agency and structure”.

Some approaches and tools for analysis and design of an advanced cultural district

With the aforementioned premises in mind, we propose the use of some simple investigation tools for analysis and design of an advanced cultural district, because the aim is to provide a direction for the development of a complex adaptive system, rather than a precise and analytical pre-definition:

- The drawing up of a *resources and competencies balance sheet*.
- The analysis of the *cultural, relational and interorganisational contextual structure*.
- The use of a *matrix of the interdependencies between cultural and non-cultural value chains*.
- The *SWOT analysis*, as an executive summary tool.

These tools can also support districtualisation initiatives even in the context of feasibility studies or project reviews in the accomplishment stage, also through iteration.

The strategic orientation originates from the explication of the design idea, from the vision, from the issues, from the development opportunities and from the macro-goals of districtualisation: aspects that can come from the use of the above-mentioned analytical tools.

One of the more complex aspects is linked to the fact that in reality, part of the goals and of the strategy cannot be precisely defined a priori. Also, for the districts, the strategy is partly emerging, since it depends on the evolutive pattern of the cultural district, which manifests itself through the circularity between actions and executive policies, concretely gained results and feedback on resources, know-how and relationships, as in the Tuscan Geopark case.

However, it is often necessary to take a proactive attitude, sometimes pragmatic, in order to provide impetus to the development process of the district itself: usually it is required by the funding sources (European, public or local bodies, firms, foundations, etc.), by the accountability needs in relation to the allocation and destination of resources, by the links with the planning tools of the territory and with the political mandate, and so on.

Therefore, a forthright strategic orientation and a plan at the beginning are still necessary aspects.

In this sense, the typical users of the tools explained below are usually:

- The policymakers and bringers, on the basis of their political mandate, of values and policy lines.
- The experts, owners of the technical-specialised know-how, and ready to offer solutions.
- The beneficiaries of the cultural activities of the district and other individuals involved (stakeholders), often bringers of problems and unsatisfied needs, even in relation to opportunities not yet taken.

The resources and competencies balance sheet

The resources and competencies balance sheet of a potential cultural district (table 4.1) involves the ability to observe and monitor the relevance of the resources, competencies and expertise in both absolute and relative terms, and also for use in comparative analysis with other districts and territories. The capacity of investigation and benchmarking is not trivial in

practice, because of the difficulty of gathering data and timely information to support objective assessments, in the absence of dedicated studies¹⁹.

¹⁹ With particular reference to cultural goods, practical suggestions can be found in the specialist literature (cf. Valentino, 2003; Carta, 2005). In our Lombard case studies, for example, a regional database of cultural goods was available to map the cultural heritage (especially the tangible one), together with the collection of more specific material for each district. In the Valtellina case, for example, we analysed in detail and catalogued major cultural projects (32 in total) from the last 10 years, a total of more than 5,000 pages of documentation (e.g. cultural systems projects, studies and research on the culture and on the landscape of the area in question). In the Tuscan Geopark case, between 2005 and 2006, the gathering of the necessary documentation to put together the master plan of the Park began, in collaboration with the University of Siena as a reference partner for the scientific part.

Table 4.1. An example of the structure of the resources and competencies balance sheet of an advanced cultural district

<i>Factors</i>	<i>Relevance</i>	<i>Relative strength</i>	<i>Brief description</i>
Resources	e.g. scale 1-10	e.g. scale 1-10	
Tangible cultural heritage			
Intangible cultural heritage			
Landscape and natural heritage			
Human capital			
Social capital and network			
Intangible territorial capital			
Territorial infrastructure heritage			
Administrative and governance resources			
Competencies			
Cultural design and management			
Technical, managerial and relational abilities			
Selective integration in network design			
Management/creation of interdependencies between value chains			
Management and facilitation of interactions among actors			
Involvement of network members at multiple levels			
Capacity of combining stability at the core while maintaining flexibility, especially at the periphery			
Knowledge management			
System thinking			
Combination of resources, expertise and other competencies			
Inter-institutional project management			
Brokerage, mediation and arbitrage			
Activation and management of networks and cultural systems			
Development and management of IS			
Social reporting and accountability			
Capacity of building and maintaining legitimacy			
Monitoring and strategic control			
Benchmarking, bench-learning and bench-action			
Social innovation and social entrepreneurship			
Management of intra and inter-organisational learning processes			
Dynamic capabilities and re-combination of resources, expertise and other competencies in creative ways			

The resources and competencies balance sheet can also be understood as an exercise in reflection, dialogue and discussion between the actors involved

in the analysis and implementation of a district, to promote the perception and awareness of resources and competencies actually available, and the strengths and weaknesses of the territory, subject to a potential districtualisation. In other words, this may be considered a first learning tool.

For particularly large areas, it is possible to draw up balance sheets for each of the sub-systems of the same district, thus nurturing internal processes of benchmarking.

Finally, the balance sheet can also be intended as a support for longitudinal analysis (once the district is realised), where confrontation takes place not only in spatial relative terms but also in temporal terms.

The analysis of the cultural, relational and interorganisational context

In the reality of development actions, a key issue concerns the appearance of change, if and how to manage it, or at least, stimulate it (Consiglio, 2000). The pragmatism that sometimes distinguishes the actors that make up the design group of a cultural district may lead to the adoption of drastic solutions, in order to speed up the change itself, risking, however, rejection or failures. The risk of failure is likely to increase when the design group tries to change the structural context through its agency, without paying particular attention to the contextual environment, with poor stakeholder

engagement or poor understanding of the cultural, relational and interorganisational context, being the network a reference organisational form for the cultural district. The importance of the network form is due to the systemic and contextual notion of cultural heritage, which is not limited to a set of monuments but comprises a set of tangible and intangible legacies spread throughout the territory. Secondly, the network refers to the dynamic combination of resources, know-how and relationships among public and private organisations, typical of the cultural environment. A tight bond is therefore created between cultural planning, governance networks (as a form) and network governance (as a capability), recognising the network form as an important variable for cultural-based designing. At the same time, both from an analytical and designing perspective, it is useful to consider the social networks that constitute the dynamic element in which the agency takes place. Social networks, in fact, often do not have fully predictable outcomes. The outcomes come from the complex relations of interdependence among actors, and they reflect organisational aspects of resource flows that pass through the interconnections. Social networks are themselves the conditions for both the maintenance and the transformation of the structures. In other words, social structures have their concreteness when they are defined by the interconnections of equally concrete actors, who in turn are influenced by the constraints/opportunities that social

structures offer, in a continuous evolution of reciprocal interactions. There follows the potential to use (also) interpretations and typical instruments of social network analysis, because the prospect of the network itself and the complexity of the analysis/design of an advanced cultural district involve the adoption of a multi-method approach.

Therefore, in the process of analysis of a territory subject to a cultural districtualisation, it is important to consider, over and above the resources and competencies, the existing interorganisational structure. For example, some central actors, when involved, could contribute to catalyse critical mass that, in turn, could supply credibility and legitimacy to the project. Often local institutional actors (such as municipalities, counties, provinces, etc.) have a good knowledge of the local relational context.

However it may also be useful to use more robust and structured analytical tools, for example to make the process of analysis more transparent and to allow the monitoring of the evolution over time of the networks themselves. These tools include those of social network analysis (Lincoln, 1982; Wasserman and Faust, 1994), sociological analysis (to assess the local identity and cohesion, institutional and inter-institutional), as well as the description of practices of planning and cooperation among the various territorial institutions (Meneguzzo, 2008) and between public

and private (e.g. pre-existing territorial pacts, integrated territorial plans, and so on).

As argued by Biggs and Smith (2003), the promotional literature on the PCMF has paid little attention to the critical role of the ‘human factor’ in project cycle management and the different cultural/institutional contexts. “For example, mechanisms may be needed which acknowledge and mediate the interface between the culture of an implementing organization and the culture of a donor organization” (Biggs & Smith, 2003, p. 1749). As emerged from our Valtellina case study, tension may arise between the deterministic culture of the donor foundation, instilled within PCMF-like documentation and guidelines, and the culture reflected by the actual process of design ‘in action’ by the design group. There is a wide range of frameworks and techniques that can be used to address different cultural, institutional, relational and interorganisational context. Biggs and Smith (2003) cite the grid/group framework devised by Hood (1998), and White’s framework (1996). Actor-Network Theory (ANT) approaches (e.g. Arnaboldi and Spiller, 2011, in the context of cultural districts) and the use of social network analysis could also be used.

In the process of interorganisational analysis of a potential cultural district, the system of relationships and alliances, the role played by possible focal actors and the level of trust among actors are all useful input

for defining strategies, organisational options and forms of network governance that are not disconnected from the reference context. Among the main features of the networks that influence their dynamics and performance (Galaskiewicz & Zaheer, 1999) we can specify:

- The structure of the network, in terms of relational density (Nieminen, 1974), structural holes (Burt, 1992), center-periphery relations, size, number and type of value chains (cultural and otherwise) involved.

- The methods of interaction, which can be mainly formal or informal, collaborative or opportunistic and conflicting (Khanna et al., 1998), strong or weak (Hansen, 1999), based on negotiating and influence processes, and so on.

- The governance, with reference to the predominantly public, private or mixed structure, as well as the form of network governance, such as the shared/participant, lead organisation or Network Administrative Organization models (Provan & Kenis, 2008; Kenis & Provan, 2009; cf. Chapter 2) deemed most appropriate.

- The types, e.g. in terms of the use and valorisation of a pre-existing knowledge base and cultural heritage (network for exploitation) and/or in relation to the exploration of new knowledge and the instillation of new cultural stimuli (network for exploration). For example, in the Tuscan Geopark case analysed in Chapter 2, the initial focus was on the

exploitation and valorisation of the industrial archaeological and cultural by building a network (mainly) for exploitation. Afterwards the focus was widened through a process of exploration of new ideas, stimuli and resources by connecting with other local sectors and value chains and with international networks, thus also building networks for exploration.

The matrix of the interdependencies between cultural and non-cultural value chains

Interventions in the development of an advanced cultural district, according to the considerations discussed so far, tend to encourage the strengthening or creating of collaborative networks that are able:

- To create critical mass in terms of resources (including financial resources) and competencies, so as to allow the culture to become a driving force for economic development.
- To generate social added value, creating the possibility for individual and collective “capacitation” (Sen, 2000).
- To improve the quality of cultural heritage.
- To activate virtuous circles capable of attracting and catalysing resources, talents and competencies within the territory.
- To consolidate an image centred on the culture and identity of the territory.

There may be different interdependencies among firms and between actors in a territory in general. Besides the competitive interdependencies that exist among actors competing for scarce resources, transactional (Grandori, 1999) and symbiotic (Aldrich, 1979) interdependencies gain importance because of the shared common local resources of a cultural district²⁰.

²⁰ Pooled interdependence is the lowest form of interdependence because each of the parties draws resources from a shared source; each party contributes to an overall goal; thus, this kind of interdependency is characterised by relationships in which each of the parties provides its own contribution to the relation, on the basis of a minimum set of shared rules (e.g. the contributions of each actor who participates in scientific research on the cultural heritage of a territory and collects data and information);

Intensive interdependence, i.e. resource sharing at high levels of information complexity, are situations of cooperative interdependence which are complicated by even higher information complexity that can occur if the parties must define their individual actions by mutual adjustment based on the information that emerges from the performance of every other action in real time (Grandori, 2001, p.244); these interdependencies are based on complementary resources and characterised by the performance of joint activities around an object by different parties (e.g. in the organisation of cultural events involving different actors in the same project, territory and period, or in the design of a tourist cultural itinerary).

Sequential interdependence, a relatively simple type of interdependence, characterised by unidirectional flow from (activity) A to (activity) B (Grandori, 2001, p.242), in which the bond between the two activities is the fact that the output of the first activity constitutes the

When analysing or designing interdependencies is necessary to take account of the purposes of an advanced cultural district in the sense of (re) combination of resources and competencies through the activation and management of the interdependencies among multiple actors within different value chains, cultural and non. Culture, in fact, may be regarded as a technological convergence sector that crosses other sectors such as telecommunications, media, tourism, and fashion (Lazzeretti, 1997, p. 673). From here the opportunity not to limit the analysis and design, for example, only onto the cultural tourism, but the need to enlarge to other sectors seemingly unrelated, such as building construction with artistic restoration, or banking with cultural sponsorships, or the IT with the virtual artistic restoration, and so forth. An advanced cultural district involves multiple sectors and is different from both an industrial district, focused on a particular production process of a specific industry, and the mere cultural system, focused on the cultural field (cf. Chapter 1).

input for the second (e.g. between sequential activities involving different suppliers and actors for the realisation of an exhibition).

Mutual interdependence, based on a bi-directional sequential relation which may require, for the management of the complexity of the relationships, the specific competencies on each different occasion to be managed by means of a work-group but also through coordination with higher-order units (e.g. the setting up of large integrated cultural projects).

To support our analysis and, at the same time, to serve as a compass for the design of an advanced cultural district, it may be useful to refer to a matrix of interdependencies (Table 4.2), which draws some inspiration from the input-output system, defined by Leontief (1951, 1986), which statistically analyses the interactions between the industries of a country, based on an input-output table.

Table 4.2. The matrix of interdependencies

		Other value chains (examples)					
		Wine-making	Crafts	Energy	Research and education	Sport, wellness and tourism	Publishing, multimedia
CULTURAL HERITAGE							
Cultural value chain	Protection Conservation Development Management Promotion Fruition						

The interdependencies we refer to, indeed, can also be evaluated in a more qualitative and synthetic way. We do not focus on the exchange of goods or resources from a strictly economic point of view. We aim to concentrate on mapping pre-existing interdependencies or designing new ones. These interdependencies are related to flow, information, knowledge, know-how, technology applications, management and organisational practices, cultural resources, and so forth.

Therefore, the objective of an analysis of interdependencies is not to produce accurate measurements and econometric analyses. Rather, it can be conceived as a synthetic, heuristic and mostly qualitative evaluation of the interdependencies already in existence or yet to be designed, according to the prevailing logic of a network. The matrix can be used as a simple tool for analysis and design at the same time, to support the definition of a strategic orientation and of development trajectories towards cultural districtualisation. In other words, the matrix of interdependencies is helpful in making more explicit the goals to pursue and the trajectories for development of an advanced cultural district, avoiding at the same time a choice of actions that fall exclusively or mainly in the cultural sector: we fall back, in fact, on the mere logic of traditional cultural systems (e.g. a traditional museum system).

4.3. Final remarks

In the current economic situation, the competitiveness of actors is increasingly dependent on the surrounding competitiveness of the socio-economic and territorial systems in which they are located. The policies of development are interconnected and depend on specific territorial resources. Cultural heritage, in its widest meaning, as confirmed by

researchers and practitioners, acquires a fundamental role as a key resource for the socio-economic development of local communities.

In an attempt to face these challenges, wide debate on the concept of a cultural district has emerged in Italy, and it seems that legitimisation and institutionalisation of the idea of a cultural district has begun, at the level of academic debate and also within economic and political institutions, in order to promote a growing number of ground-breaking initiatives for local development. Some of the most relevant and recent experiences have been analysed in the previous chapters, with particular focus on the Italian context.

The concept of a cultural district, in very general terms, can be considered as an ideal place: a recognisable but mutable territorial environment, where culture-driven socio-economic development can be supported. A precise definition is neither simple nor prescriptive, since it depends also on the meaning given to culture by public bodies, local communities, and firms. Consequently, the broader political context and the nature of the power structure among the participants involved and stakeholders affected by the districtualisation processes always affect the nature and content of these processes, as do the network governance and the governance network form. For example, the boundaries of a cultural district do not necessarily match

precisely with political and administrative boundaries, because different approaches might be used, along with contextual hybridisations.

In our case studies, a formal and top-down approach has always been present – being also quite an intrinsic request by the donor foundation and the initial ministerial inception in the Tuscan case – even though in the three Lombard cases it seemed to prevail alone, while in other cases it has been hybridised with systemic relational design or with functional design. Whichever origin cultural districts have had, the role played by public actors such as provinces, municipalities and mountain communities has been important as a ‘trigger’ and as an interpreter and mediator among instances of local actors and inhabitants, thus emphasising the interconnection with issues of the efficient government of the territory.

Despite the fact that the six Lombard cultural districts share many commonalities, the governance models diverge significantly from each other (foundation, association, consortium of municipalities, office in a public institution). However, the governance network form is a Lead Organization or a hybridisation with a Network Administrative Organization (NAO) form (cf. Provan & Kenis, 2008) in the Lombard districts, while the Tuscan Geopark operates as a ‘*public governance network of cultural interest*’ through a Network Administrative

Organization form. NAO governance seems to be more suitable for large, highly complex cultural districts.

Even if each cultural district draws on its unique cultural heritage, it is possible to find some common cornerstones of territorial development in our case studies. Firstly, there is strong synergy between the cultural sector and some local production sectors, in particular crafts, food and wine, and tourism. Secondly, many districts conceive the landscape as a fundamental resource to protect and enhance. Finally, all the projects intend to support local entrepreneurship and innovation, conceiving culture as a driver of the socio-economic development of the territory. Nevertheless, the specific configurations reflect also a different ‘positioning’ along the continuum between a more traditional cultural district and its advanced form. However, even the more traditional forms may represent an embryo from which to grow more advanced forms, because the processes of districtualisation are inherently long.

We know that in the cultural district, particularly in its most advanced form, culture takes on a relevance which goes further than the cultural value chain, becoming a transversal resource, which can favour the cross-fertilisation of ideas and the advancement of creative and innovative processes, even within other territorial environments and in different value chains. Due to the intrinsic openness of such a system and the

interdependencies among different sectors and value chains, it is likely that the proposed actions and measures might have several externalities (both positive and negative) apart from the effect in relation to the goals and needs forming their main motivations. As suggested by Næss (2009), in urban planning we consider it necessary to conduct a much broader assessment of the possible impacts related to alternative actions than is usually done in less complex or less open systems. Thus, we argue that the heterogeneity of sectors and value chains involved in a process of advanced cultural districtualisation requires knowledge, practices and ideas from several disciplines. This can be seen as not only a need, from a designing point of view, but also a first opportunity for learning for local actors. An advanced cultural district has to feed a cultural environment, sustaining processes of knowledge circulation over time, overcoming the lack of managerial competencies, and producing genuine innovation. Efforts at districtualisation should aim to define actions and policies that favour the enhancement and the widening of the widespread ability to attribute meaning and value to cultural experiences, and should be careful not to destabilise those elements which are at the core of territorial specificities. This is even more vital if the aim is to avoid short-sighted trivialisation and flattening processes of a cultural heritage and the disappearance of the initial benefits, as a result of negative externalities. Thus, the challenge is to

offer support to the organisational design of advanced cultural districts conceived as complex adaptive systems.

We accepted this challenge of trying to offer an innovative perspective focused on the issue of organisational designing. From a methodological point of view, we developed our study through the application of both deductive and inductive research methods: from the first perspective, a review of the literature on cultural districts was carried out, with special attention paid to Italian interpretations of the concept. Some key international cases of cultural districts were briefly compared, to highlight the distinctiveness of the Italian approach. An inductive approach has been used to focus on the ambitious programme promoted in Lombardy by the Cariplo Foundation – which is one of the largest and most important private grant-making foundations with a banking origin in Italy – together with the evolution of six cultural district projects developed within this programme. The issues that arose from the designing of one of these (the Valtellina case) were further explored through participatory action research (Brock & Pettit, 2007; Chevalier & Buckles, 2008, 2013). This exploration has emphasised the discrepancies between a deterministic, linear, and formal design approach – one embedded within formal plans – that extols the virtues of anticipation and completeness, and the actual and very different process of design(ing) in action. This case also offered the

opportunity of strengthening the following arguments embedded in our model, which summarises the evolution ‘from straight lines’ to more iterative processes. The Tuscan Mining Geopark case was chosen because it represents a different context for analysis, more mature, and it is recognised in Europe as an example of best practice of cultural heritage management. We highlighted the role and the evolution of stakeholder engagement in the development of the Park, within an iterative design process that is ‘always in the making’, as emerged by interviews. This case also provided further observations on the changeover from organisational design as ‘straight lines’ towards a conception of ‘circles and spirals’. As explained in Chapter 2, its focus began with a basic core, developed through a very thin meta-management structure, with a few main goals, actions and policies, enriched and developed over time, on the basis of accrued experience and of the stakeholder legitimation gained through concrete and positive results. The iterative process of analysis and design, both formal and often informal, has allowed new opportunities for development and growth beyond those included in the initial master plan, such as new connections with the tourism sector and with other networks, also at supra-national level, catalysing new stakeholders, resources and competencies, in a virtuous cycle of development.

The main findings and lessons learned have been embedded in our framework, which is not intended as a final result but as a stimulus to the strengthening of the debate on the approach to the designing of an advanced cultural district. We are aware of the limitations of our work and further research is necessary in this regard. However, we have tried to enhance our knowledge and our experience of the analysis and design of some typical Italian cases to offer a different point of view from the traditional linear and sequential planning.

Firstly, our framework emphasises the duality of the advanced cultural district, which is seen either as a means to and/or a result of the actions of districtualisation, in a recursive relationship between agency and structure. In this framework, the definition of the rules system for districtualisation aims to satisfy demands coming from:

- The institutional context, which affects the process of design through regulations and contextual culture.
- The design group, which is engaged in the purposely rational development of ‘artefacts’ such as organisational design, structures, and processes (human agency of design group).
- The other actors (cultural and non-cultural operators, cultural services users and other stakeholders, initially the inhabitants) that invent, design, and use both cultural and non-cultural artefacts which have an

impact on the institutional context and become constraints and enablers at the same time for human agency.

Reflecting on the interdependencies between structure and agency and the possible conflicts of interest among the different actors involved, it is probably very difficult to aim at consensus-building among all stakeholders in a process of districtualisation, especially in the early phase of development. For example, in the Valtellina case, despite the demands (e.g. within Foundation guidelines) of the broadest stakeholder engagement and our insistence on using at least a widespread survey in order to involve many stakeholders, only a few key players have actually been involved from the beginning in the planning stages of the cultural districts analysed. Thus, the majority of stakeholders had little opportunity to voice their concerns prior to decisions. Also, it appeared that information was communicated in a one-way manner about decisions that had already been taken ‘by someone else’ (the stakeholders “listened as spectators”, Fung, 2006). Also in the Tuscan Geopark case a broader involvement occurred only in the later stages of development (e.g. through permanent stakeholder roundtables and workshops), though the design group has been initially the catalyst of instances widespread among inhabitants. We can argue that in our case the degree of ‘inclusiveness’ of

stakeholders in decision-making can be average positioned between “State” and “Mini-publics” (Fung, 2006)²¹.

In short, it seems that alliance building among key actors appeared to be a more ‘viable’ strategy in our case studies, even if we argue a stronger dialog and more transparent communication towards stakeholders might play an important role in creating consensus, as emerged in the later phases of the Tuscan Geopark development. Moreover, the medium-low level of transparency in almost all cases in terms of information (e.g. on the web) about the actions taken and the performance achieved in the districtualisation projects – even a few years on from the beginning, and with rare exceptions – emphasises some important limitations in terms of accountability of the projects and stakeholder engagement.

²¹ Fung (2006, p.68) distinguishes the selection of participants in decision-making ranging from the most exclusive – labelled “State” (Expert Administrators and Elective Representatives”) – to the middle level – labelled “Mini-publics” (Professional Stakeholders, Lay Stakeholders, Randomly Selected, Open Targeted Recruited, Open Self-selected) – to the most inclusive – labelled “Public”, i.e. the diffuse public sphere of mass media, secondary associations, and informal venues of discussion.

We can argue from these experiences that the culture-driven development of a territory implies the activation of a process focused on progress, and not merely on short-sighted economic exploitation, for instance through mass tourism, of its own cultural heritage. There is a need to go further, consistently, than the simple maintenance or restoration of cultural goods, avoiding ephemeral results driven by managerial fads and institutional conformism, or merely following research by politicians seeking electoral support through the distribution of the few financial resources still available.

We agree with Næss (2009) that, since conditions and impacts are often highly context-dependent and vary between stakeholder groups, theoretical expert knowledge should be supplemented with local knowledge and the experiences of different stakeholders groups. At the same time, we argue that it is even more desirable for local actors (firstly the local members of the design group engaged in the purposely rational development of 'artefacts' such as organisational design, structures, and processes) to assimilate the deeper concept of advanced cultural districtualisation. We argue that it is also desirable, especially for local members of the design group, to assimilate some basic tools. This can be pursued by participating intensely and directly, and by avoiding requesting and obtaining only a 'turnkey' project from consultants and theoretical experts. This is already,

per se, a first objective of true cultural districtualisation and, in our direct experience, perhaps one of the biggest challenges. But it is not impossible, as evidenced by the Tuscan case. This too calls for true and wider participatory inception processes where the needs of different stakeholder groups can be articulated as a basis for goal formulation, although we are aware that the engagement of all stakeholders is likely a challenge ‘more theoretical than practical’. Thus, regarding the more technical pursuit of designing, as already suggested by Næss (2009, p.14), goal-setting should be conceived as a multiple-goal and problematic situation, instead of the single-minded pursuit of one or a few pre-defined goals. We also agree that the design group would, in reality, be sceptical towards quantitative “expert system” analytical tools purporting to produce exact predictions of impacts Næss (2009, p.15) of different districtualisation actions, because often only qualitative impact assessments of alternative solutions and modest estimates of magnitudes of effects can be actually made in complex contexts.

Consequently, we presented a combined model for analysis and design(ing). The reason is rooted in the hypothesis, corroborated by our experiences and research, that the process of development of a cultural district cannot be conceived as a rigid, sequential and linear planning process, completely definable a priori (*straight lines*). On the contrary, we

believe that this process is something dynamic and always in the making, constantly evolving (*spirals*) and allowing the pursuit of pragmatic implementations, creative experimentations, contextual learning and iterations, all concurrently. This emphasises a context-dependent process and the combination of different methods (among which might be the drawing up of a resources and competencies balance sheet; the analysis of the cultural, relational and interorganisational contextual structure; the use of a matrix of the interdependencies between cultural and non-cultural value chains, etc.). We do not claim that the districtualisation goal(s) would actually be reached by using these methods or implementing the proposed actions, because many other factors can influence the outcome and can emerge over time (e.g. new issues, constraints, opportunities and ideas). And this is intrinsic in our framework of designing and the use of the metaphor ‘from straight lines to spirals’. We only hope that the awareness that the process of advanced cultural districtualisation is something inherently iterative might give due weight to the use of pragmatic tools for the pursuit of pragmatic implementations, as well as creative experimentations and contextual learning.

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Index