

FUTURE ROLE AND FUNCTIONS OF THE MATERA-BASILICATA 2019 FOUNDATION

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Abstract

This study looks at the legacy of the Matera-Basilicata 2019 Foundation within the strategic pathway of changing the city that began with the title of "Matera 2019 - European Capital of Culture". With this in mind, our aim is to investigate the role played by the Matera-Basilicata 2019 Foundation and the role it might play in the future. To carry out this investigation, we decided to set up a listening process using interviews, also employing a benchmarking of what happened with regard to the management structure following the award in other European Capital of Culture cities between 2010 and 2018. We reviewed approximately 17 European experiences, and conducted a series of desk analyses of documents that we decided were of fundamental importance for the study (from the bid book for the application to the Foundation's Articles of Association). We have also attempted to develop a proposal for potential guidelines for the future prospects of the Foundation.

The benchmarking demonstrated that only the cities of La Valletta, Leeuwarden-Friesland, Wroclaw, Mons, Tallin ed Essen-Ruhr allocated new functions to the management bodies after the event through which they continued their activities in the form of a legacy, while in the case of most of the other ECoC cities, promotion of the cultural agenda returned to the municipality.

The desk analysis revealed that in its bid book Matera 2019 described its desire to develop activities and processes across a long, well-defined timeframe. 2019, the year of the title, was a significant trigger, and a key moment in a pathway that it was found necessary to continue to pursue over the following years. Although the Articles of Association established a pre-determined duration of the Foundation up to 2022, they stated as their principal purpose a desire to adopt the courses of action described in the bid book, and therefore implicitly to implement all the medium-and long-term cultural development actions the bid book projected beyond 2019.

36 interviews were carried out in the course of the study with a sample of parties identified in the Basilicata region and involved in the Matera 2019 experience. They included representatives from the institutions involved in the governance of the Foundation and its staff; representatives from the project leaders and the local creative scene; representatives from the civil society of Matera; and finally, experts who observed and followed Matera 2019. The interviews

revolved around two issues: the role demonstrated and played by the Foundation in the territory, and the role the Foundation might adopt as a future development along the lines of the Capital of Culture. From the opinions expressed by the interviewees, it emerged that in relation to what was achieved, the Foundation's strengths were that it succeeded in effectively communicating the importance of the Matera 2019 project and the sense of an exciting experience, not only for the Basilicata region but for the entire South of Italy. It restored a narrative framework, significant storytelling and an image to the city, leading to a value-added of attention and territorial visibility. Culturally, the Foundation translated the bid book equally effectively around the practice of co-creation (a distinctive mark of Matera 2019), the mobilisation of citizens, capacity building of local actors, the enhancement of local creativity and the activation of innovative processes. There was a restitution of territorial values, an involvement by the population from below, the affirmation of a cultural vitality and the creation of new cultural experiences, thereby expanding the city into the temporary and permanent cultural locations and bringing about the emergence of vital and latent energies in the territory. The Foundation was seen as an important operating machine with a charismatic guiding role, a true fulcrum for the creative scene in which it had invested in relation to the acquisition of outside products, breaking down the isolation of cultural operators and increasing their awareness of their opportunities. The most highly-appreciated activities included the creation of the passport system, which was viewed as a matter of pride for the South, and which made it possible for the general public to draw closer to the consumption of culture across the board; all the communications-related activities, and above all the experience of Materadio; and the Open Design School project, with its innovative and creative strength, which was seen as an important example that will be remembered in Europe (in addition to its work on co-creation, which produced significant experiences).

The weaknesses and areas for improvement that were mentioned included: the delays in starting up the Matera 2019 project due to the intense institutional dialectics, with a laborious subsequent run-up; the problematic inter-institutional dialogue, which was not absolutely fluid; and the issue with finding a convergence and a more systemic partnership among institutions in order to develop joint strategic thinking on cultural policy. It was observed that the Foundation's status as a public body inevitably resulted in some issues of administrative sluggishness, and a more widely spread programme across the region would have been appreciated.

With regard to the future role of the Foundation, the interviewees agreed on the need for it to continue, and said that it should aim at a national status, or at least one that covered the entire South. The investments that have been made should not be wasted, and value should be given to the legacy of Matera 2019 as an exemplary laboratory, a national and international example and an opportunity for the future of the Lucanian community. Based on the opinions we gathered, the Foundation should exploit the professional assets it acquired and continue its work on social innovation through cultural practices, applying the principle of "care" and the

process of involving the community. The role for the foundation that enjoyed the greatest consensus was that it should become a "platform", and work on the development of culture as territorial software. The Foundation was viewed as a form of pivot for the future, as a fertiliser of ideas, an activator of connections, a kind of "watering hole" from which content and suggestions gush out, a facilitator and director of the construction of new transversal projects and processes across the territory that also pursues European opportunities, and a point of radiance and reference.

Principally, the Foundation should proceed with the topic of co-creation and participatory intervention, experimenting with new models and formats, and assisting with their distribution, making them scalable and disseminating awareness of them, among other things by promoting an annual Festival of co-creation and participation. The Foundation should also develop the Open Design School experience further, including with regard to its exportability in Italy and abroad and internationalisation in its relations and content, and evaluate the hypothesis of a subsequent spin-off. It should also enhance the passport tool, and act to promote the development of a new public (defined as cultural inhabitants). It should continue with the skills training and development of local cultural actors. It could also create an improved cultural fabric, contribute to the birth of a territory-wide system of artistic residence projects, exploiting Basilicata's configuration and urban atmosphere, capitalise on the Matera 2019 and future productions, increase networking between administrations and other territorial actors, act on the cultural containers that have already been implemented by continuing to make them available for cultural production and exploitation, recover the digital topics linked to culture, and cooperate with cultural products that add value to high-quality and local tourism, especially in inland areas. Finally, some interviews mentioned the idea that the Foundation might change over the long-term, and be transformed into a community foundation.

Based on what emerged from the interviews, recommendations and suggestions were prepared around the idea that the Foundation's work should continue beyond its statutory expiry date, which should be extended. In the first place, validation was given for the future role for the Foundation as a platform able to integrate and support cultural heritage and artistic potential, territorial contributions, community centrality, the development of social innovations with a cultural and creative foundation, as well as value-adding, identity-based and symbolic elements, with the ability to transform them into active processes and projects. This prerogative is further confirmed by the fundamental constitutive elements of the Foundation (its bid book and Articles of Association), and was actually experienced during Matera 2019. In terms of its scale of intervention and positioning, a potential dual scenario was found to be possible in which the Foundation might seek national relevance, or alternatively a status of importance for the entire South of Italy. This is a result of the Foundation's potential, which enables it to

emanate practices, processes and experiments in relation to its own identifiable topics, beyond its city-based dimension. This would be an innovation in the context of the Italian cultural panorama as a whole; it would become a PROTOTYPE, a cultural workshop that would constitute both a cultural gateway and a provider with a broader range. With regard to redefining the Foundation's mission, it is suggested that it might be put forward as an *enabler*, as a *mediator* and as a *facilitator*. The functions that might guide the Foundation in the future in relation to these connotations are principally as follows: a *project-based* function, as a catalyst and implementer of projects and processes mainly centred around co-creation and participatory processes that involve citizens in cultural and creative production, with attention being paid to social innovation (which embraces the idea of a festival of co-creation and the continuation of the Open Design School); a function associated with the *development of audiences* (by enhancing the passport experience); an *educational* function, to lend further support to skills; and a *services* function, with special attention being paid to the communications and media component following the successful Materadio experience. Finally as regards its function, it is suggested that the Foundation's partners should guarantee the necessary financial support so that these functions can be performed, and that they look into the possibility of simplifying certain procedures, working on strategic planning as a method, and also, with a view to strengthening both alliances, on sustainability and the capacity for intervention, and to evaluate a potential expansion of the basis of the Foundation's social governance in line with its nature as a "participatory" partner, including with a view to expanding its status.