

Summary

The purpose of this thesis is to present an analysis of the effects that urban cultural initiatives have on the subjective wellbeing of their users.

The thesis opens with an introduction on the origins of the research, underlying motivations, theoretical premises, and positioning. The first chapter presents the theoretical context in which the thesis is set, namely the relationship that exists between culture and social impacts, understood as a fundamental and increasingly recognized part of development. After a brief summary of the most relevant literature — with a particular focus on the last 30 years — the chapter delves into both the principles and the main techniques of social impact assessment, concluding with an overview of the most common uses in culture.

Zooming in from the contextual literature, Chapter 2 focuses on the concrete theoretical premise underlying the research, namely the concept of subjective wellbeing — a rather under-studied social impact, especially in the cultural sector. After a careful examination of the various definitions given in the literature, the chapter highlights the need to find a way to operationalize the concept of subjective wellbeing in order to study it in the specific context of an urban cultural initiative. Here I propose the acknowledgement of three dimensions to which the determinants of subjective wellbeing can be attributed, to delimit the studied concept and to link it to the characteristics of the studied initiative (urban, cultural).

Chapter 3 connects this framework to the chosen case study, namely the Capitals of Culture. After introducing the program at its two considered levels (Italian and European), the narrative of the chapter focuses on the reasons for the choice, and in particular on the parallels between the program's objectives and the concept of subjective well-being. Although there is no apparent trace of this, on closer study a connection becomes clear instead. The chapter closes with an introduction of the two cities selected for empirical analysis, Matera and Palermo. After introducing the main elements, Chapter 4 turns to methodology. In this thesis I propose a methodology based on automated textual analysis of textual content from different sources concerning CoCs: newspapers, institutional documents, and social media. The chapter briefly presents the Machine Learning techniques to be used in the analysis (topic modeling and sentiment analysis), but also the sources themselves and the

data collection, cleaning, and analysis procedures. The limitations encountered in applying the method, and the solutions adopted to complete the research are also highlighted.

Chapters 5 and 6 are devoted to the results of the analyses and their discussion. In sum, it appears that there is indeed an impact on the determinants of subjective wellbeing in both case studies, with some specific differences at the level of topics covered, but also in sentiment. Some such differences could be attributable to the different scales of the event (European or national). One output that emerges at this stage is the need to introduce a new dimension of wellbeing to those previously set out in the framework, including variables that can only be assessed in interaction with other people, and thus not with the instruments used in this research.

In Chapter 7, among the conclusions I highlight the possibility to implement a second phase of research, field-based, in order to make up for these shortcomings. This chapter also presents the contributions of the thesis and possible future research directions.