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Platform Spaces: When culture and the arts intersect territorial development and social innovation, a view from the Italian context

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Platform Spaces: When culture and the arts intersect territorial development and social innovation, a view from the Italian context

Abstract. This contribution intends to overview and frame a conceptual model for Cultural and Creative Enterprises (CCEs) that we call *Platform Spaces*. The paper contextualizes and discusses the main issues and challenges facing the CCE sector, identifying the need for more complex concepts better able to distinguish new policies and approaches being experimented with in Italy and across Europe. As Italy is currently experiencing a particularly rich period regarding the development of cultural creative activities based largely on social innovation, both in terms of organization management and relation with territorial development, it is an ideal context in which to explore the emergence of this new model. The paper describes three diverse examples of *Platform Spaces* based on multi-stakeholder cooperation mechanisms, arts and culture, and the engagement of local communities to not only ensure the accessibility of their activities but also in meeting territorial development goals. With this analysis the paper discusses a new conceptual framework that can be relevant both in theory and in practice, identifying policy recommendations to address territorial development approaches for *Platform Spaces.*

Keywords: Cultural and Creative Enterprise; Creative Hubs; Cultural heritage; Italy; Territorial development; Urban innovation

1. The emerging need for a new cultural concept

Culture, creativity, and the arts have taken on an unprecedented role in cities. Particularly during the last two decades academic research has accompanied these trends by contributing new concepts and configurations aiming at describing and capturing the range of effects of this phenomenon. Richard Florida's (2005) much discussed promotion of the *Creative Class* represents just one example of the attempts to both describe as well as promote the new role of culture and creativity in cities. Eleonora Redaelli (2019) overviews the impressive diversity as well as a lack of unity in the existing conceptual approaches used to capture these trends, from cultural planning and creative industries to cultural districts and creative placemaking. It is also worth noting the difficulties that distinguish this sector (i.e. Shade & Jacobson, 2015) in terms of unequal distribution of opportunities dependent upon access to amenities, universities, diversity, and other place-related factors in accounting for the growing divergence of skills across locations (Florida & Mellander, 2014). Additionally, many top-down cultural policy initiatives, such as the designation of 'official' Cultural Districts have in many instances led to vaguely defined areas of cities that lack consistent qualities that might serve to unify these zones and are too often left outside of local development strategies (Nuccio & Ponzini, 2017; Rushton, 2015).

One context where researchers have noted a growing role for the cultural enterprise sector within regional development policies and institutional reorganizations is in Italy (Billi & Tricarico, 2018). These processes aim at addressing a twofold challenge: to test new entrepreneurial and organizational approaches borrowed from other policy fields while also experimenting with "cultural innovation" through the collaborative governance of cultural heritage and assets. The term "cultural innovation" refers on one hand to the introduction of "elements of change" in policies that support the production and use of cultural goods and services while also implementing social innovation through cultural activities on the other (British Council, 2018; Cerreta et al., 2020; Clemente & Giovene di Girasole, 2019; Deliyannis & Papadopoulou, 2017; European Commission, 2010; KEA European Affairs, 2017; Napolitano & Marino, 2016; Sung et al., 2020). These approaches tend to be carried out by community-based initiatives (Peirce & Steinbach, 1990; Rothman & Zald, 1985) that fulfill their goals by using, producing, and exploiting

tangible and intangible cultural assets. International law first defined the concept of cultural assets in the 1954 Hague Convention (art. 1) and updated in the 1970 UNESCO Convention (art. 1). The concept has subsequently evolved beyond tangible, built heritage to include intangible cultural expressions that earlier international frameworks did not take into account and which transmit cultural expressions, regardless of their possible commercial value (UNESCO, 2003; 2005). In reference to the Italian context, there have been an increasing number of instances of "diffused cultural innovation" (Bonomi & Masiero, 2014) supported by means of a creative allocation of local interests and financial resources. These have given rise to new hybrid organizations (Venturi & Zandonai, 2016) ranging from for profit, nonprofit, to public private partnerships established in the midst of the economic crisis to not only meet emerging social needs but also to generate opportunities for territorial development (Borin, 2017; Tricarico & Zandonai, 2018). Recognizing this wide ranging literature and new emerging role of the cultural enterprise sector, this paper aims to develop the concept of *Platform Spaces* to more precisely define such instances where these range of issues intersect. *Platform Spaces* are cultural and creative places where social innovation plays a key role in community engagement activities as well as generating horizontal/collaborative interactions among different stakeholders and their interests while aligning with territorial development targets (Table 1). The approach of *Platform Spaces* should be understood as going beyond just an immediate local impact and framed as part of a territorial shift of regional development policies working towards developing the capacity to generate financial resources and utilize cultural assets. Within this perspective, the main research question we pose is: how can *Platform Spaces* effectively respond to the wider debate of the growing role of social innovation and culture within territorial development approaches? Can the concept of *Platform Spaces* more effectively describe emerging approaches and phenomena than existing terminology within the cultural management and planning fields? To respond to these questions, the paper is structured as follows: in Section 2 we explain the methodological framework and the purpose of the work, in Section 3 we address the discussion by identifying promising aspects as well as identify the missing intersection between the literatures on Cultural and Creative Enterprises, Social Innovation and Territorial Development. In Section 4 we then introduce the Italian context and three different examples

(rather than full in-depth case-studies) of *Platform Spaces* to demonstrate and further reason on its conceptualization. The conclusions in Section 5 then analyze the main findings regarding organizational and policy implications of this model across a wide range of contexts. Our aim in describing the opportunities and criticalities of the *Platform Space*s approach is to provide a relevant and useful tool for practitioners and scholars involved in cultural entrepreneurship studies and initiatives in order to experiment with practical, analytical, and policy approaches that bridge the gap among cultural and creative enterprises, social innovation, and territorial development (Friedmann & Weaver, 1979).

2. Methodological framework for identifying and defining *Platform Spaces*

As will be further demonstrated through the literature review and the examples presented in Sections 3 and 4, the four defining aspects of *Platform Spaces* are located at the intersection of four topics: the governance and management of cultural assets and spaces; economic activities linked to the arts, culture, and creativity; social innovation, collaborative governance, and experimentation; and territorial development approaches and targets. The methodological framework is divided in two approaches. The first approach discusses the concept through a non-systematic literature review of both practice and academic research to demonstrate the existing connections between these four identified areas in the literature as well as more clearly delineate the intersection between them. This review includes both research articles and a range of secondary data (e.g. including reports, institutional and corporate databases) that have taken these perspectives into consideration. The decision to divide the conceptual discussion in three sections was based on the reflection that the international academic debate in recent years has demonstrated the convergence of these issues, but it has not yet explicitly linked them through any specific organizational practice or policy (Grimm et al., 2013; Hernes, 2007; Moulaert et al., 2013). This literature review first highlights the importance of these aspects and then also demonstrates the need for a concept such as *Platform Spaces*.

The second approach focuses on outlining the general features of the Italian context and describes three examples of *Platform Spaces*[1] to exemplify this approach in practice rather than leave it as a purely abstract and vague theoretical concept. The description of the general contextual conditions and the process analysis of three specific examples has been conducted in order to illustrate the diverse facets of *Platform Spaces* from the ways they can be organized, implemented, managed, and funded. The interaction of these factors can be quite diverse and need not follow a linear formula of implementation. While intending to clearly demonstrate this diversity in the selection of the examples, we chose to focus on a single national context, Italy, in order to show that the differences within each example were due to the choices made by local or regional actors rather than dictated by differences in national policy, legislation, etc. Section 4 further discusses the particularities of the Italian context and why it makes for an interesting study.

< FIG 1 ABOUT HERE >

Any potential cases to be presented would inevitably vary one from another in terms of their specific defining aspects and a number of differing examples could have been used to illustrate *Platform Spaces*. The authors established two criteria for maximizing the potential diversity of the three examples. The first refers to how the three initiatives were established by quite different stakeholders that led these processes through different community engagement approaches: philanthropy (The Kètos Project) with a marked institutional approach, a complex interaction between multiple associations connected to regional development policies and social entrepreneurship (Ex Fadda), and a networked cultural infrastructure implemented by local authorities leading a bottom-up Urban Regeneration Strategy (“The “Rete delle Case del Quartiere” or the network of Neighborhood Houses). In this way the examples veer away from a focus purely on their spatial distribution or governance models to the interaction between cultural

[1] Informal interviews with Project Managers have been conducted by the authors during individual research experiences.

enterprises, creativity, and social innovation processes which can be found at both the macro and territorial levels as well as through bottom-up and top-down processes of development.

The second factor concerns the scale of the local contexts where the examples are situated. The issue of scale affects not only the size/spread of *Platform Spaces*, but also determines the availability of different financial and other resources (see Table 1). Smaller municipalities in particular often have a reduced capacity to support such initiatives or to attract cultural operators. For these reasons we intentionally selected examples from small, medium, and larger cities in Italy to illustrate not only how *Platform Spaces* operate within these scales but also how they come to be developed within such differing local contexts. The three examples in this way present different social innovation approaches that interact with different kinds of stakeholders and interests, varying spatial layouts utilizing different financial resources, as well as unequal access to artistic and cultural activities and differing levels of community engagement. The Ex Fadda project is located in the small city of San Vito dei Normanni (19,302 inhabitants) while the Kètos project is in the middle-size city of Taranto (comparatively speaking for the Italian context with 199,561 inhabitants), and the "Rete delle Case del Quartiere" is found in a larger city like Turin (886,837 inhabitants). These two criteria used to select three examples of *Platform Spaces* allow us to confirm the hypothesis that they can indeed succeed at different scales, in diverse contexts, and are resilient, both conceptually speaking (as policies) and practically (in terms of organization management), and can be applied to a wide range of scenarios.

As a concept paper, the process analysis is most useful to describe the interactions and interdependencies in exchanging assets during the formalization of the organizing process (Hernes, 2007), testing the hypothesis that these factors can be considered as determinants in shaping the social innovation process, mobilizing the tangible and intangible assets necessary in configuring *Platform Spaces*. With this perspective, the development of these initiatives has been interpreted as a complex interplay of different forms and dimensions of problems, networks, interests, duties, and powers (Bailey, 2012; Kleinhans et al., 2019; Tricarico, 2016). The process description (Yin, 1993; 2013) is also essential to show how different stakeholders have made these initiatives feasible through their differing approaches. As noted,

the defining aspects of the governance and management of cultural assets and spaces; arts and creative activities; social innovation and experimentation; and territorial development targets can be found in each of the three examples presented in this paper and the literature review in the following section addresses the intersection of these aspects.

3. Locating the intersection between cultural assets, creativity, social innovation and territorial development goals in the literature

This literature review aids in developing the concept of *Platform Spaces* by first identifying how in practice there are many competing definitions for cultural containers and arrangements that tend to focus primarily on spatial proximity and the role of creativity but which generally lack a clear connection to social innovation or local/regional development goals. Section 3.1 discusses the potential role or spillover effects of social innovation in existing practice, but it also highlights how studies of these effects have yet to inform a new conceptual understanding of these practices. Section 3.2 then points out the existing relationship between social innovation and cultural policy, yet highlights the lack of consideration in the potential connection with territorial development goals. It then discusses recent trends towards a territorial rather than a strictly regional approach, identifying the role for cultural and creative enterprises, one of the key components of *Platform Spaces*, to be more clearly linked. Finally, Section 3.3 demonstrates the opportunity to link the four aspects of governance of cultural assets; cultural activities linked to arts and creativity; social innovation and experimentation; and territorial development targets. It recognizes that in some instances these aspects have already been linked or causally connected, but the intersection between them has not yet been conceptually confirmed and for which we propose the idea of *Platform Spaces.*

3.1 Expanding definitions of cultural and creative spaces, their social and economic links

By examining literature and practice at both an Italian and European level (Santagata, 2009; European Commission, 2010), one cannot locate a single, strict definition of the cultural and creative sector (Daldanise & Cerreta, 2018). Though perhaps described, the dynamics between these two sectors (see

NESTA, 2013) are not fully dissected to reveal the complex challenge of assessing the value produced locally from these traditional policies. Several approaches have been developed to describe how social innovation processes (Moulaert, 2009; Moulaert et al., 2010, 2013; Mulgan, 2007; Murray et al., 2010; Phills et al., 2008) encounter and interact with society, businesses, and their wider territory through facilitating and improving long-term transformations within economic production and cultural activities (Abbasi et al., 2019). A number of terms such as community hubs, creative hubs, impact hubs, etc. (Gill et al., 2019; Clement et. al, 2018) have been proposed to describe this important emerging phenomenon in cities. European creative hubs have been defined as: "platforms or workplaces for artists, musicians, designers, filmmakers, app developers or start-up entrepreneurs. They are uniquely diverse in structure, sector and services, and range from collective and co-operative, to labs and incubators; and can be static, mobile or online" (British Council, 2018). Focusing on their spatial characteristics, Art Fund (2018) meanwhile defines cultural hubs as "A clustering of cultural venues such as museums, galleries and performance spaces with secondary attractions including food and retail", which closely resembles the typical descriptions of Cultural Districts (Frost-Kumpf, 1998). These broad definitions aim to capture a now widespread phenomenon that the British Council recognizes as being part of the broader Creative Economy (Cunningham, 2002; Waitt & Gibson, 2009; Roodhouse, 2010; Cooke & Lazzeretti, 2008; Florida, 2005), but which can be difficult to cohesively unify due to varying interpretations and diverse implementations. In some cases, these hubs may exist solely as co-working spaces that meet the needs of the changing economy, while in others they develop into innovative centers that serve important roles in local and even regional development schemes. A study on the spillover effects of the wider cultural and creative industry identified 17 potential knowledge, industry, and network spillovers that this sector can have (ERPCCS, 2017), but concludes by calling for further research and communication of these under-discussed aspects.

Indeed, many definitions of creative and cultural hubs lack a more comprehensive vision that fails to differentiate between the variations from co-working spaces for creatives, who are not necessarily collaborating innovatively together, versus arrangements where there is a shared set of common local or

regional goals being pursued through innovative collaborations. Likewise, the Creative Hubs Report: 2016 (Dovey et al., 2016) primarily differentiates cultural hubs based on their physical implementation as either centers, networks, clusters, online forums, or other alternative forms and mainly considers the sector for its economic potential rather than particular forms of implementation or the inner workings of different kinds of hubs. Therefore, under this umbrella of varying meanings and definitions of cultural/creative hubs, we identify the need to more precisely define such instances where cultural and creative actors share an awareness of cultural, symbolic, social, economic, and ecological values which increase the collective responsibility in producing innovation potentialities for social innovation processes and territorial development. Other scholars have come to a similar conclusion that the broad terms of cultural/creative hubs and clusters are too vague, failing to describe the significant differences between various iterations can lead to significant clashes rather than integration with urban policy (Virani, 2019). Rodwell (2014) also calls for a reworking of the traditional Creative City concept to further incorporate CCEs within heritage spaces, a combination which he proposes could serve as a driver for both cities and these important cultural assets. *Platform Spaces* actively involve cognitive abilities, creativity, and community engagement in new ways to respond to marginalization and pursue sustainable development through a capabilities approach (Evans, 2002; Bacot, 2008; Jackson, 2005). These capabilities are complex components of a collective identity that a community can develop thanks to learning patterns and approaches for co-creating strategies of territorial development.

3.2. Recognizing the role of social innovation in cultural policy

The international scientific debate indeed recognizes the arts and culture as drivers of both economic and social values, more recently noted as the fourth pillar of sustainable development (CHCfE consortium, 2015; European Union, 2007; Giovene di Girasole et al., 2019; Sacco et al., 2018). Community, cooperation, and creativity are starting points of experiences that impact local production, social inclusion, and urban policy implementation (European Commission, 2006; KEA European Affairs, 2017; Markusen, 2006). In particular, cultural policies can contribute to a model of innovation not purely

technological or industrial but linked more broadly to knowledge, building a dialogue amongst different cultures and forms of solidarity-based cooperation (European Union, 2007). In this perspective, new "open innovation" (Chesbrough et al., 2006) networks can improve cooperation through creativity and transform local demand in territorial services within a "cultural creative chain reaction" (Cerreta et al., 2018). In this sense, culture builds up social innovation and general quality of life by becoming a focal point of public governance. Culture and creativity can lead to a virtuous exploitation of knowledge, values, and skills supported by a collaborative governance (Ansell & Gash, 2008; Iaione, 2016; Perulli, 2016; Willis, 2004) working towards increasing social, cultural, and creative production in regional planning and policies.

Social innovation is often considered as the inclusion of citizens and social groups through the socialization of certain market mechanisms and, in this vein, the diffusion of dedicated socially innovative practices among private and public organizations (see Timeus & Gascó, 2018). One example of a socially innovative policy are inclusive services for the most vulnerable segments of the population; the provision of spaces to help develop local community initiatives and social economy; as well as the formalization of urban laboratories where stakeholders, citizens, and informal groups discuss complex issues inherent to the territory (Tricarico et al., 2018; Tõnurist et al., 2017; Moulaert, 2009; Moulaert et al., 2013). Culture, creativity, and the arts can play an important role in these processes of opening up and engaging local communities in these spaces, as demonstrated also by several cultural and creative initiatives that have involved European and national networks (British Council, 2018; Lo stato dei Luoghi, 2020). These experiences are multi/interdisciplinary, designed to exchange knowledge and represent one of the first instances of stimulating growth in a number of different sectors. The innovative and sustainable management of these experiments becomes in this way an essential requirement to guide, test, and evaluate the choices of cultural policies for territorial development (Markusen, 2006; Mercer, 2006). Art and culture, as opportunities for innovative and sustainable entrepreneurial development, constitute a key research field for balancing traditional economic policies in crisis (Rifkin, 2014) and aim at using existing resources to generate significant environmental, social, and economic impacts.

The literature notes how the combination of cultural assets/places where social innovation processes happen through creatively re-combining production factors (Potts et al., 2008; Sacco et al., 2018; Throsby, 2008) to ensure accessible arts and cultural activities, where entrepreneurial action fulfills individual and collective needs not satisfied by the market (Huggins & Clifton, 2011; Manzini, 2017; Zamagni, 2017). The creation of multi-level place-based relationships (Cutter et al., 2008; Untaru, 2002) intends to be a vehicle to generate socio-political capabilities for groups and initiatives involved in processes of social innovation (Moulaert & Van der Broeck, 2018), working as a collective intelligence to foster local development and inclusion (Saunders & Mulgan, 2017). Such networks and their outputs differ significantly from merely grouping together completely independent operators in close vicinity to one another, as in many definitions of cultural or creative hubs. Yet while such overlaps have been clearly studied, they often remain framed as a desired output or secondary effect of cultural policies rather than a defining aspect. In this way there is a clear need for a stronger conceptual understanding that captures such differences, treating them as an integral part of understanding how they function rather than framed as just a desired beneficial outcome. In this way, *Platform spaces* can be identified as paths of social innovation regarding both organization management and territorial development strategies of public authorities, social enterprises, and non-profit organizations (Bolzoni, 2019; Kleinhans, 2017; Moulaert et al., 2013; Tricarico & Pacchi, 2018; Tricarico & Le Xuan, 2014). While this paper affirms the importance of the local dimension in the cultural and creative policy framework, the next section emphasizes the importance of recognizing the potential for *Platform Spaces* to also contribute to territorial development goals.

3.3 From regional to territorial development policy and the opportunities to include culture, creativity, and social innovation

Within the cultural and creative policy sector, one can understand a lack of innovation in regional development policy as being due to the failure to develop clear links with cultural assets, creativity, or the promotion of social innovation processes (Mısırlısoya & Günçe, 2016; Nuccio & Ponzini, 2017). Looking

at the European and Italian context one can observe that the most relevant cultural innovation experiments have been tested where regional and urban governments are willing to enact territorial approaches that encompass the cultural and creative sector (Billi & Tricarico, 2018; De Lucia et al., 2016; De Vidovich & Tricarico, 2019; Scaffidi, 2019). The literature frames the shift towards these approaches as part of the more general ascendancy of place-based policy, where institutional decentralization and bottom-up processes overcome the classic paradigm of technocratic regional development policies (see Barca et al., 2012; Torre, 2014). This emerging approach to regional policies shifts the attention and investments from sectors and subjects of classical economic policy towards localized collaborative and experimental practices. In the proposed configuration of *Platform Spaces,* one can begin to see the ways in which these collaborative practices become particularly relevant, given their ability to manage the differing interests of multiple stakeholders and by aiming at developing an incremental process of collective intelligence capable of tackling social problems through experimental policy cycles (Mulgan et al., 2007; Jessop et al., 2013).

As noted in section 3.1, the lack of clear definitions of the cultural and creative sectors leads to difficulties in collecting evidence and indicators to measure the social and economic outcomes of territorial approaches at a regional level (Campbell et al., 2017; Cicerchia, 2015). If the link between culture and creativity has yet anyway been perceived as being stronger (but also more obvious) and certainly more discussed, defining the intersection between culture and cultural assets, creativity, and social innovation remains open and uncertain. Despite the fact that many studies are now available both nationally and at the European level that intend to measure the scale of the cultural and creative sectors in cities (European Union, 2017; Montalto & Saisana, 2017), the role of culture as a regional development catalyst remains little explored due to the complexity of measuring such a correlation. This gap highlights the opportunity for new conceptual definitions to target Cultural and Creative Enterprises (CCEs) and inform complex regional development strategies and the spread of sustainable organizational models (Bosi, 2017; Solima, 2005; Throsby, 2008; Valentino, 2013).

The concept of territorial development has become increasingly common both in academic literature as well as in the political discourse used by local actors (Boschma, 2006; Karlsen & Larrea, 2016; Torre, 2014). Looking at the international academic debate on urban studies and planning practices, we can observe how territorial development approaches have led to different reflections of varying policy fields as well as at differing scales. Among the different approaches found in literature some of the most interesting in terms of territorial approaches include the analysis of collaborative practices among small and medium-sized enterprises (SME) in urban contexts (Grodach et al., 2017) and the description of the urban implications of innovation spaces, city makers, and digital making movements (D'Ovidio & Rabbiosi, 2017). Additionally, research has also considered the role of civic activation practices in conflicting political-administrative cultural contexts (Sonda, 2016) and "administrative resilience" enhances bottom-up initiatives in different cultural entrepreneurship models (Pratt, 2015).

In light of the above considerations, it is possible to place *Platform Spaces* within the debate to identify a new territorial lens capable of describing how certain entrepreneurial practices can cover objectives of cultural and social development with strong communitarian roots (Fitzpatrick, 2018; Gibson & Gordon, 2018; Kleinhans et al., 2017; Sforzi & Bianchi, 2020; Tricarico, 2018a). We define such practices as instances where it is possible to observe an innovative way of mixing assets and financial resources as well as the way in which these mixtures are managed in order to ensure a high accessibility of cultural activities with specific attention on the tools and strategies of community engagement (Burnell, 2013; Bailey et. al, 2018; Lowe, 2004; Tricarico, 2018b). Projects with strong bonds to local coalitions and ecosystems with a strong value of economic and social redemption based on the enhancement of the cultural assets of the locality (see for example Kleinhans, 2017; Tricarico, 2018b) are thereby freed from a complete dependence on public resources. This freedom allows them to find new and different channels of financing and experimenting with activities aimed at promoting processes of social innovation through culture and the arts (García et al., 2015; Gorbis & Vian, 2016; Tremblay & Pilati, 2013). This thinking has spread to the EU level where culture and creativity are assuming new roles in defining social innovation paths along with new organizational and governance models in regional development

strategies and policies. The trend is also visible in the evolution of European funds as cultural and creative interventions can now be found within the three objectives of the European Union cohesion policy (convergence, regional competitiveness and employment, European territorial cooperation) and are being funded through two Structural Funds: the European Fund for Regional Development - ERDF and the European Social Fund - ESF. It is due to these emerging trends that we locate *Platform Spaces* within this shift from regional to territorial development approaches, combined with the clear inclusion of cultural assets, cultural creative entrepreneurship, and social innovation. Ultimately, the theoretical basis for *Platform Spaces* derives from the emergence and attention these areas have received in research as well as the most recent evolution of European Commission priorities though have yet to be explicitly conceptualized.

4. *Three Examples of Platform Spaces in the Italian Context*

While *Platform Spaces* are not limited to the Italian experience by any means, several factors make it an interesting context to study. First, Italy is somewhat underrepresented in the literature with a much greater focus on cultural and creative hubs in the US, UK, or other European nations like the Netherlands (British Council, 2018; KEA European Affairs, 2017). Second, Italy has yet to fully recover from the global economic crisis and retains relatively high levels of unemployment, socio-economic polarization, and subsequent high rates of emigration (Assirelli et al, 2019; Pulignano et al., 2016; Reynoud & Miccoli, 2019; Sarti & Zella, 2016). These elements concern in a more severe way the generation that entered the labor force over the last ten years, when an irreversible trend of worsening structural conditions affected many middle class households (OECD, 2019). For these reasons the Italian context is particularly interesting to analyze innovative approaches aimed at counteracting such trends by trying to attract and keep organizations, entrepreneurs, and jobs in the arts and cultural and creative sector (Comunian, 2011; Haisch & Klöpper 2015; Scott, 2006).

Additionally, the Cultural and Creative Production System, studied annually in Italy (Unioncamere-Fondazione Symbola, 2016, 2017, 2018) connects to various economic activities within the Core Culture

sector (around 289,000 companies) and the Creative driven sector (around 124,000 companies). The first concerns a wide range of activities from creative industries and cultural industries to the country's vast historical artistic heritage and visual and performing arts. Within this system, cultural creative entrepreneurship serves as a tool for open innovation in re-discovering complex values (Cerreta, 2010) and building new relationships between built heritage, local residents, cultural/social production, and economic opportunities.

<TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE>

Spaces, traditions, and expertise merge together in *Platform Spaces* as cultural and creative communities that facilitate innovative practices linked to local and regional development. Within Italy, there are many opportunities to develop *Platform Spaces,* in part due to its worldwide acknowledged heritage offering, especially the surplus of historic sites that have yet to be fully recognized and valued (Mangialardo & Micelli, 2017; Moroni et al., 2020). Many ongoing initiatives have popped up across Italy with projects focused on enhancing cultural assets based on the aggregation of local resource systems and the strong contribution of community-based organizations (Bianchi , 2019; Billi & Tricarico, 2018; Kleinhans et al., 2017; Tracey et al., 2005; Tricarico, 2017). The three examples presented in the following sections serve as clear references of *Platform Spaces* and which were selected due to their differences to demonstrate the diversity in combining the four main aspects that we use to define *Platform Spaces*.

4.1 The Kètos Project in Taranto: experimenting with innovative governance models of cultural assets

The Kètos initiative developed from the evolution of the funding strategies promoted by the Philanthropic Foundation "Fondazione CON IL SUD" (FcS), a private non-profit organization founded in November 2006 through an alliance between banking foundations, third sector organizations, and the voluntary sector. The project aims at promoting social infrastructures in Southern Italy (*Mezzogiorno*) and favoring routes of social cohesion for development. In twelve years of activity, between 2007 and 31 December 2018, the Con Sud Foundation awarded a total of 1,153 grants for a value of over € 211.7 million. The Kètos project was selected for the 2015 edition of the "The common good return" tender, thanks to its

ability to combine a research center of the sea and cetaceans with a proposal to revitalize the tourism potential of the ancient town of Taranto. Particular emphasis was placed on the intention to recover tangible cultural heritage assets, in this case the Palazzo Amati, a publicly owned (Municipality of Taranto) and abandoned property in the heart of the old city (Figures 2 and 3). The Kètos project cost just under half a million euros and was co-financed by the participants and the Municipality of Taranto. Half of the budget was dedicated to refurbishing the structure while the other half went towards supporting the project activities for at least three years (Palmiotti, 2019).

The project's governance structure included a wide range of representative actors from existing local cultural initiatives and the community living in the historic center that came together to rethink the use of abandoned and unrecognized cultural assets, primarily relating to the environmental context and craft production. The new governing network included the Jonian Dolphin Conservation Association[2], the leader of a partnership consisting of the touristic association Terra[3], the cultural activism association "*Manifesto della città vecchia e del mare*[4]", the nonprofit associations *Marco Motolese*[5] and *Comunità Emmanuel*[6] and the cooperative *Crest* Theater[7]. The project has centered on the creation of two interrelated functions: a new research center (Euro-Mediterranean research center on marine ecosystem issues) and a multimedia exhibition space consisting of interactive pathways with three-dimensional photos, images, and 4D animations. The combination of different cultural assets with social innovation in the design of the Kètos project is evident in the way that exhibition interacts and relates to the advanced research through projects dedicated to promoting human capital and the city's youth population. In fact, the new center hosts workshops in collaboration with *Amati Manufactures* that led to the creation of

[2] https://www.joniandolphin.it/wordpress/2017/chisiamo/
[3] https://associazioneterra.oneminutesite.it/
[4] https://www.madeintaranto.org/il-futuro-di-taranto-nel-manifesto-della-citta-vecchia-e-del-mare/
[5] https://www.facebook.com/pages/category/Professional-Service/Associazione-Culturale-Marco-Motolese-107514499324879/
[6] http://www.dipendenze-emmanuel.org/posts/list/centri/
[7] http://www.teatrocrest.it/

ceramic products through new technologies such as 3D printing and facilitates new makers' initiatives and experimentation with various technologies and digital productions.

<FIG. 2 AND 3 ABOUT HERE>

The main objective of the project is to become an open platform that can foster territorial development across and even beyond the city of Taranto, combining cultural assets at the micro scale (attention to the regeneration of the historic center), the meso-scale (city-wide coalition of cultural associations), as well as the macro-scale (the valorization of the marine ecosystem). Transformations included introducing a new museum of the sea and ships, linking tourism and cultural enhancement with the territorial network of actors who have been working to redeem the city for years. Despite being a context marked by strong environmental, economic, and social conflicts (Cardellichio et al., 2016; Camarda et al., 2015) one can observe numerous new cultural initiatives working towards the recovery of the city through the substantial development of "bottom-up" cultural and civic activism (Sonda, 2016). The experience of Taranto and the Kètos project represents an important example in creating bottom-up institutional capacity (Donolo, 1997). It has become a real living laboratory that mobilizes a wide range of actors including associations and experimental enterprises which have enhanced existing local cultural assets through an approach that works towards a shared vision of sustainable local and regional development.

4.2 Bollenti Spiriti and Ex Fadda: integrating the arts and cultural activities within territorial development policy

The Ex Fadda project originates from the "Bollenti Spiriti" program promoted by the Department for Youth Policies and Active Citizenship in the Apulia Region, in particular starting from the "Urban Laboratories" initiative. The Urban Laboratories initiative was granted a total €44 million of CIPE - FAS funds through the "Youth Policies" Framework Program Agreement from the Department of the Economy and Finance in cooperation with the Department for Youth Policies. The Apulia Region also contributed a further €10 million of co-financing to territorial projects that focused on the recovery of public buildings and the proposing of new activities related to the arts and entertainment; tourism and the

enhancement of practices of social inclusion and experimenting with new technologies; youth employment, training, and entrepreneurship services; as well as exhibition spaces, socialization, and hospitality.

The Urban Laboratory Ex Fadda of San Vito dei Normanni, a city of about 20,000 inhabitants in the Salento hinterland, is one of the most important projects realized through the overall funding scheme. The local area is characterized predominantly by agricultural activities and youth emigration. A partnership of 6 local organizations - five local cultural associations and a private company active in the field of communications - launched a long-term process of regeneration and community building that has managed to regenerate more than 4,000 square meters and about a hectare of garden space in the former municipally-owned winery after being decommissioned for more than forty years. Numerous projects focused on the arts and culture have been initiated at ExFadda to work towards these regeneration goals. These efforts include projects such as the *World Music Academy*, a center for training and production of ethnic music that enhances the intangible musical heritage of the territory as a lever of local development. There is also *La Manta,* a community craft project that connects the design skills of young designers and the manual skills of a team of local artisans and *XFoto*, a collective of photographers and video makers engaged in researching visual storytelling. Other projects have also focused at a local level of regeneration and social innovation through dance, food, music, and gardening (Baraldi & Salone, 2020; Campagnoli, 2015; Inti et al., 2014; Mangialardo, 2017; Tricarico, 2014, 2016; Scaffidi, 2019). Additionally, two more recent projects have dealt significantly with territorial development.

The first, *XFARM Agricoltura Sociale*, is a new agricultural project of the Urban Laboratory ExFadda that spans 50 hectares of confiscated olive groves and vineyards used to test a new model of agriculture focused on ecology, work inclusion, and social innovation. XFarm's experience addresses the emerging sector of social agriculture (Di Iacovo, 2008), a sector recently recognized by an ad hoc law (141/2015) and included in the list of activities of general interest identified by the recent reform of the Third Sector. The second project, *Santu Vitu Mia,* is a collaboration between Ex Fadda and the Municipality of San Vito dei Normanni for the realization of a participatory path aimed at drafting the Urban Regeneration

Planning Document of the municipal territory. The Municipality has given a mandate to the group formed by ExFadda and the *Metamor* and *Loparco* architecture firms. The plans will focus on transforming the city's disused and abandoned spaces. The project was developed through a series of meetings, excursions to the countryside, workshops, and moments of sharing and celebrating that led to developing strategies and seeking out the necessary funding and cultural assets to utilize (see Figures 4 & 5).

<FIG. 4 AND 5 ABOUT HERE>

4.3 The Rete delle Case di Quartiere: community engagement and social innovation leading urban regeneration strategies

The "Rete delle Case del Quartiere" (the Network of Neighborhood Houses) was founded in Turin, thanks to the work of eight non-profit organizations that reused public spaces in eight different urban districts of the city. In these places, collective experiences are created together with citizens through their active participation in formal and informal groups that respond to the social, cultural/intercultural, and economic needs of the city. The network generated a new shared governance for coordinating several different activities of 8 different "houses/districts" (European Creative Hubs Network, 2018). Over the years, additional places of experience have been developed in other urban districts through differing processes, but according to a common vision of adaptive reuse (Mısırlısoy & Günçe, 2016; Wang & Zeng, 2010). The general approach creates cultural assets as "places" for arts, creativity, participation, and citizenship thanks to the collaboration of public institutions, banking foundations, social enterprises, associations, and citizens (Rete delle case di quartiere, 2019). In 2012, a co-design process promoted by the City Council and the philanthropic foundation *Compagnia di San Paolo* encouraged "house managers" to hold meetings to coordinate their activities and share experiences, projects, and knowledge. Thanks to this coordination, in 2014, the network was created through the "di Casa in Casa" (from house to house) project (cheFare, 2015).

The project aims to coordinate the activities of 8 Neighborhood Houses of Turin (see Fig. 6) by empowering the network through sharing knowledge, experiences, and projects. The network also intends

to build a new model of welfare community capable of evaluating and rethinking its actions through the comparison of experiences, promoting meetings and knowledge transfer, stimulating synergies, as well as experimenting with new types of projects. The network's shared governance, as a territorial laboratory, is based on this sharing of knowledge, experiences, and projects that work towards improving social inclusion practices, developing economic self-sustainability, and enhancing communication across the network.

One specific example from the network is that of "Casa del Quartiere di San Salvario" located in the ex-public baths in San Salvario district. San Salvario house became a public laboratory for designing social and cultural services with related activities, involving cultural operators, associations, and citizens (Agenzia per lo Sviluppo Locale di San Salvario Onlus, 2019). The laboratory, as an incubator of public and private projects, aims at improving audience engagement and implementing co-creation practices for a "new welfare model in the San Salvario district" (Agenzia per lo Sviluppo Locale di San Salvario Onlus, 2017). In fact, the San Salvario Onlus acts as a facilitator by activating an annual program of permanent activities deriving from citizens' proposals as well as temporary cultural initiatives involving local artists, performers, and cultural operators (Bollo et al., 2016). The project's economic sustainability is strictly linked to social innovation as well as cultural and creative activities that meanwhile serve as territorial development opportunity for communities by hosting more than 1,007 art, cultural, sport, welfare, and educational activities (Bollo et al., 2016; Rete delle case di quartiere, 2018).

<INSERT FIG. 6 ABOUT HERE>

5. The contribution of Platform Spaces to the ongoing discussions on culture, creativity, social innovation, and territorial development

Within this article we have reviewed the existing literature on CCEs, social innovation, cultural policy, and regional/territorial development, tracing the existing overlaps between these fields but also identifying the missing intersection. With this theoretical basis, we posit *Platform Spaces* as a new concept to inhabit this space and better describe emerging, complex examples where social innovation

and new governance models of cultural assets are not just mere side effects of CCEs and regeneration schemes, but embedded aspects of complex strategies equally dependent upon each of these aspects (d'Ovidio & Coppola, 2018). The three examples presented above demonstrate various ways this concept can be enacted in practice as it is not limited to or characterized by precise governance models or funding schemes. This concluding section of the paper discusses in greater depth the impact of the intersection of these four aspects of *Platform Spaces* that other concepts fail to capture.

One key factor seen in each of the cases concerns the valorization of existing environmental and historical cultural assets often underutilized or not recognized as such. The approach to sustain *Platform Spaces* in the definition of territorial development and social innovation processes must be based on a systematic open valorization of tangible and intangible cultural assets, aiming at producing and redistributing financial resources in favor of other social initiatives that, for varying reasons, are not able to guarantee their economic sustainability through market exchanges. This approach is particularly visible in the case of Ex-Fadda but also and crucially in the case of the Kètos project. The ability to reclaim diverse cultural assets for a local community served as the base from which to create shared tools of empowerment for new projects using the cultural enterprise itself as a platform for the enhancement of local culture and identity, which is reinforced by the inclusive governance promoted by the organization and its activities (Heath et al., 2017; Su et al., 2018; Tengberg et al., 2012; Tricarico and Geissler, 2017). The regeneration of existing local cultural assets in *Platform Spaces* can be seen also through the innovative way to activate spaces through arts and cultural uses that were never previously put in place. Such underutilized cultural assets have long played a key role in establishing new cultural and creative centers or districts as well as parts of regeneration schemes. While there are specific factors to be considered in each of the cases, the link to broad governance coalitions and alignment with broader territorial schemes plays an important role that prevents these spaces and networks from becoming commodified and commercialized spaces (i.e. gentrified). While the rhetoric surrounding cultural districts and creative cities have often claimed similar ambitions/results, by their nature, tend to be all encompassing concepts lacking clearly defined qualities and ambiguously located within cities. In particular, the work of Nuccio and Ponzini (2017) demonstrates

that despite the profuse spread of Cultural Districts (CDs) at a policy level, there is little evidence of long-term or actualized impacts at either a local or regional scale.

Platform Spaces also work to advance a more nuanced understanding of CCEs, Cultural/Creative Hubs and cultural production linked to specific spaces rather than broad and vaguely defined zones. All three of these examples show a diffusing effect at both local and broader regional or territorial levels where the positive effects from an initial project spread. As these examples of *Platform Spaces* have demonstrated, new functions were indeed introduced into previously abandoned historic structures. This integration has also protected and promoted these spaces, introducing new conceptions of heritage for local citizens by providing an active use for these spaces rather than a purely touristic one. The sphere of influence and connectivity of these spaces are not limited by their spatial localization and use of historic spaces but which rather benefit from their increased interaction and connection with local communities.

Platform Spaces also support local creative ecosystems connected to cultural heritage (Hangar Piemonte, 2017). This way of making culture through the re-generation of local relational capital as a kind of "local acupuncture" (Hangar Piemonte, 2017) proceeds as an ongoing work in progress that guarantees the dimension of the project continuity within open and responsible innovation networks (Tricarico et al., 2020; Stilgoe et al., 2013). This can serve as a key component within new development approaches related to the life cycle of a territorial policy that considers an adaptive economic model capable of identifying cultural assets as attractors and local human capital as a social innovation resource. In each of the three examples discussed in this paper, one can observe how territorial approaches have boosted the ability of *Platform Spaces* to become arenas of participation and sharing of responsibilities among local networks and beyond. In particular, they stimulated partnerships between different subjects - mainly along the public-private and Third Sector- that insist not only on the side of policy but also on the attraction of financial resources and the co-management of initiatives. From this point of view, *Platform Spaces* may be fully situated as an example of multipolar administration as opposed to bipolar models where the public administration addresses external subjects exclusively as suppliers of goods and services (Bombardelli, 2016). This synergistic effect could provide new strategies for territorial development

agenda based on the strategic lines of the open management of cultural heritage, social innovation/creativity paths, and collaborative governance (Ansell & Gash, 2008).

The *Case del Quartiere* network in particular is an example of an open social innovation network of organizations generated through an open governance of each initiative, led by the local authority alongside other local actors that has helped to preserve its role within larger processes without sacrificing its impact at the local level. In this perspective, the approach promoted by the Torino Strategic Plan 2025 has been based upon this experience of promoting the connection between the regeneration of spaces and social inclusion, the integration of urban regeneration interventions, and the governance of public spaces to improve social innovation (Associazione Torino Internazionale, 2015).

The examples of *Platform Spaces* presented here were also employed as engines for the regeneration of spaces and services based on the valorization of common cultural assets (both of tangible historic structures and intangible local traditions), where beneficiaries also play an active role in the planning and management of their activities (Orlandini et. al, 2014). To ensure the legitimacy of such collaborative experiences, regeneration policies that might aim to reproduce *Platform Spaces* must take into account an appropriate accountability of their activities as connected to social innovation practices that strengthen the link between enterprises and territories by developing active citizenship and creative innovation. In each of the examples, *Platform Spaces* also paid great attention to the provision of public space, representing a critical point for policy makers especially regarding marginal/peripheral regions. Some scholars (Okano & Samson, 2010; Phelps, 2012) have underlined that an adequate presence of public spaces is crucial to sustain activities such as experimental social and cultural innovation practices. While certain aspects of these examples could indeed be described as cultural or creative hubs, such terms would fail to capture their overall complexity and range of impact. As argued and demonstrated, the formulation of *Platform Spaces* is particularly open, flexible, and adaptable to a range of contexts which may look quite different in situations outside of the Italian context. Even the examples presented here represent quite different cases in terms of scale, spread, governance and management, funding, and actual cultural and artistic content present. We view this range of possible models not as a weakness, but rather a key aspect

providing robustness to the concept of *Platform Spaces* that allows it to better characterize these instances whereas much of the existing terminology falls short in fully capturing the embedded complexity.

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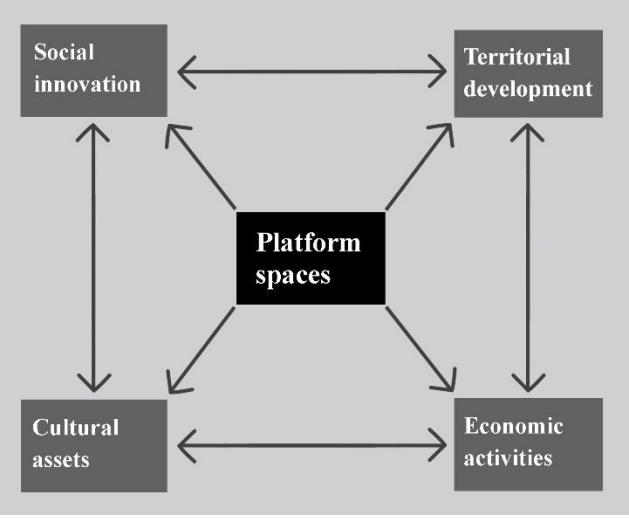

Figure 1. A representation of the methodological conceptual framework of Platform Spaces (source: authors)





Figures 2 and 3. Images showing the state of abandonment of the built environment in the historic city center of Taranto (source: authors)





Figure 4 & 5. The spaces within Ex Fadda used to interact with citizens and proposals for the Santu Vitu mia project in San Vito dei Normanni (BR), (source: authors)



Figure 6. Map of the 8 Neighborhood Houses of Turin (source: http://www.retecasedelquartiere.org/)

Platform Space	**Cultural Asset and spaces**	**Cultural Economic Activities**	**Social Innovation and Governance experimentations**	**Territorial development targets**	**Financial Resources**
Kètos Project	Public owned - historical building (Palazzo Amati)	Local Ecotourism Local Arts & Craftsmanship Digital Making & Exhibition	Hub for local Cultural Associations Coalition Open Research and Education platform	Cultural and Art Associations Tourism Associations Non profit Associations	Philanthropy Public Real Estate Assets Revenues of Services in the Marketplace

				Creative and Craft Industries Local Community Tourists	
Ex Fadda	Former Fadda Winery; 50 hectares of agricultural land	Performing Arts Sport Activities Education Programs Agriculture & Food production with social inclusion targets	Hub for local Cultural Associations Coalition Citizen engagement to co-design urban regeneration policies	Cultural, Art and Sport Associations Local Welfare Services Youth individuals in Creative and Craft Industries Local Community and informal groups	EU Structural Funds Revenues of Services and Products in the Marketplace Public Real Estate Assets
Case di Quartiere	Former historical public baths in San Salvario district; other public buildings	Performing arts & exhibitions Education programs	Audience engagement and co-creation practices Experimenting new territorial welfare services combining	Cultural and Art Associations Local Community and neighbourhood informal groups	Local Authorities Funds, Philanthropic investments, National awards,

			local public and private projects' incubators Social inclusion projects and services		Revenues of Services in the Marketplace Fundraising and crowdfunding Public Real Estate Assets

Table 1. Strategic Framework of the three example Platform Spaces