

## CONSERVING ITALIAN WORLD HERITAGE SITES THROUGH LIVE MUSIC EVENTS: EXPLORING BARRIERS AND OPPORTUNITIES

CLAUDIA MELPIGNANO AND IRIDE AZARA

Centre for Contemporary Hospitality and Tourism, University of Derby, Buxton, UK

---

Consumers' demands for innovative forms of heritage consumption combined with a desire for long-lasting memories have highlighted the role that staged events and other live music performances at cultural and historical sites can play in the conservation of these assets. However, to date, research on these aspects remains fragmented and indeed lacking within the Italian landscape. Building on these considerations, this article explores the tensions inherent in the reuse and conservation of Italian cultural and historical assets through live events. The research uses three World Heritage sites (WHS) distributed across the Italian territory as case studies to identify the positions of different stakeholders involved in the production of live music performances. A qualitative, comparative, case study design has been deemed as the most fitting to enable an in-depth investigation of the stances held by public and private sector organizations involved in the staging of events at WHS and to enable a rich analysis of the issues. Findings show significant ideological and cultural barriers impacting the use of staged live events at such venues. Besides suggesting a cross-sectorial cooperative approach to help rejuvenate these WHS and to generate funding for conservation purposes findings suggest the need to develop a sustainable strategy for managing national heritage assets incorporating clear guidelines on the reuse of WHS.

**Key words: Heritage; Stakeholders' management; Events; Live performances; Creative tourism experiences**

---

### Introduction

The advent of the “experience economy” has fostered important changes in societal consumption habits (Berridge, 2007; Getz, 2008; Pine & Gilmore, 1998, 2011, 2014; Yeoman, 2013). The trending pursuit of unique experiences and life-

lasting memories has consequences for the event industry now facing the need for tailored packages that enable to cocreate special events (Berridge, 2007; Getz, 2008; Yeoman, 2013). More specifically, the combination of a growing interest in cultural tourism consumption with the desire for life-lasting memories has recently led to the

Address correspondence to Iride Azara, Senior Lecturer in Tourism, Centre for Contemporary Hospitality and Tourism, University of Derby, 1, Devonshire Road, Buxton, SK176RY, UK. E-mail: [i.e.azara@derby.ac.uk](mailto:i.e.azara@derby.ac.uk)

staging of live music performances in refined and inspirational venues in contrast to more conventional stadia and clubs (Avakian, 2016; Starr, 2013; Timothy, 2011; United Nations World Tourism Organization [UNWTO], 2018; Van Klyton, 2015). In this context, unique heritage locations have become marketable products and valuable resources for the production of memorable experiences (Azara, Wiltshier, & Greator, 2018; Du Cros & McKercher, 2015; Hewison, 1987; Hoffman, 2009; Janiske, 1996; Sigala & Leslie, 2005; Smith, Carnegie, & Robertson, 2006).

Many authors have discussed the importance of historical landscapes as places and spaces of social interaction, emotional significance, sensitivity, nostalgia, identity, and attachment (see, e.g., Aitken & Campelo, 2011; Cresswell, 2004; Du Cros & McKercher, 2015; Edensor, 2002; Shalaginova, 2008; Stewart & Strathern, 2003). Studies by the same authors show how, by intertwining the concept of heritage with the modern consciousness, cultural performances staged at historical sites such as World Heritage sites (WHS) create a direct link from past to present and suggest a reinterpretation of heritage by fostering the sense of belonging in the consumers. In addition to this, Connel and Gibson (2003) identified music performances as means to shape spaces and create places as they connect the venue with performers and audience. However, Du Cros and McKercher (2015) pointed out the staging of rock and pop events at unique historical settings opens up a dialectic on space and place reinterpretation, and on the role the creative industry can play in support of the conservation of United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) WHS.

WHS are traditionally understood as sites where conflicting ideologies of preservation vs conservation and rejuvenation through tourism practices (e.g., here staged events) take place (Aas, Ladkin, & Fletcher, 2005; Hoffman, 2009; Timothy, 2011). Processes of *tourismification* (Salazar, 2009) demand reimagining and reinterpreting tangible and intangible heritage for the benefit of a tourism audience. These approaches clash against principles and practices of cultural heritage management (CHM), which advocate the need to manage world heritage assets for the benefits of a wide variety of stakeholders seeking different benefits from its

use (Du Cros & McKercher, 2015). In this light cultural tourism activities are strictly evaluated by heritage sites professionals (i.e., administrators, archaeologists, historians, and governmental agencies) against the opportunities they offer for assets' rejuvenation and the threats they may present to the protection of the cultural values of the WHS (Aas et al., 2005; Landorf, 2007; Leask, Hicks, & Chuchra, 2013; Lochrie, 2016; Seeger, 2015; Shalaginova, 2008; Silberberg, 1994; UNESCO, 1972). Du Cros and McKercher (2015) argued that although the benefits of a partnership between tourism, arts, and cultural heritage management are well understood and advocated; in practice "tourism and CM stakeholders often do not understand each other's interests, do not share a common language or goals, and are confronted with limited and incomplete data to inform decisions" (p. 13).

The above discussions are important in the context of Italy: a country that detains the highest number of UNESCO sites in the world (53) (Cuccia, Gucci, & Rizzo, 2016; Missikoff, 2010; Ricci, 2014; Riccio, 2014; Richards, 2007; UNESCO, 2017; UNWTO, 2018). Prestigious WHS such as the Pompeii Amphitheatre or the monuments of the historic city of Rome are regularly lamented in the national and international media for the state of degradation due to lack of national and regional funding and investments. Simultaneously, media commentaries critique the state these sites are left after the staging of live music events pointing at the need to devise stricter criteria for artists and events' selection, and reinforcing the classical debate that regards opera and ballets as acceptable forms of arts and frames contemporary entertainment shows as debasing (Hughes, 2000). Such boisterous and controversial propaganda enacted by the media further highlights the importance of exploring the dynamics and tensions existing in the Italian context concerning the use of WHS as venues for live music events. Indeed, as Ricci (2014) pointed out, although the tensions inherent the reuse and conservation of cultural and historical sites of national and international importance through tourism are certainly well aired; in the context of Italy these debates remain largely unexplored.

Building on the above, this study aimed to address two key questions: can live music events play a beneficial role in the conservation of Italian

UNESCO WHS? Furthermore, what are the barriers preventing this use? The article firstly discusses the background literature to the study. It then presents and justifies the methodology deployed and discusses the research findings. Finally, the article forwards the theoretical and practical implications, the study limitations, and the suggestions for further research.

### Literature Review

#### *Consumers' Demands for Creative Tourism*

The event industry's attempt to adjust to the changing nature of the event market increasingly focuses on providing consumers of the "experience economy" with the much-requested element of distinctiveness (De Geus, Richards, & Toepoel, 2016; Pegg & Patterson, 2010; Richards, 2011; Richards & Wilson, 2006; Walls, Okumus, Wang, & Kwun, 2011). The production of festivals and live events at *untraditional* venues appears to confirm this drive and simultaneously highlights the increasing importance of creative tourism in attracting those tourists that look to forms of entertainment to stand out of the mass (Richards, 2011; Tan, Kung, & Luh, 2013; UNWTO, 2018).

To further relate the concept of "creative tourism" to the subject hereby explored, it is worth mentioning Connell and Gibson's study (2003) and their definition of music tourists as a niche creative tourist segment. This specific market segment is constituted by those who are willing to travel in order to attend untraditional live music performances and acquire unique music skills and creative experiences by doing so. This peculiar event product particularly highlights the impact that the location has on the overall experience when: 1) exploiting its physical assets (Davis, 2016; De Geus et al., 2016; Janiskee, 1996; Smith et al., 2006); 2) the symbolic sociocultural narratives (Aitken & Campelo, 2011; Edensor, 2002; McIntosh, 1999; Richards, 2007; Bennett, Taylor, & Woodward, 2014); 3) the atmosphere (Connell & Gibson, 2003; Richards, 2011; Timothy, 2011). In such consumption process, not only do live music performances become a catalyst of time, space, activities, and experiences; they also embody the relationship between tourism and creativity where the consumers, the artists, the

producers, and the landscape are all engaged in a "creative interplay" (Richards, 2011). As a result of this emerging niche market, deconsecrated churches, natural caves, limestone quarries, and other unique locations have become valued resources for the production of memorable experiences that initially only emphasized the artistic performance (Avakian, 2016; Starr, 2013; Van Klyton, 2015). In other words, such event products exploit the cultural capital of places and spaces to valorize the consumption of festivals and events (Davis, 2016; Richards, 2007), making performing arts a crucial part of cultural heritage products (Timothy, 2011).

However, it has been noted that while creative tourism seeks for distinctive forms of consumption in alternative to the mainstream cultural tourism activities; it may also lead to increasing chances for heritage commodification (Richards, 2011). Commenting how cultural heritage experiences are nothing but the translation of cultural elements into marketable products, Landorf (2007) pointed out how it is the commodification and creation of more attractive forms of consumption that generate visitor education and income. Hence, in this context, both the entertainment and tourism sectors can be perceived as potential partners for the creation and packaging of new forms of heritage consumption, which could prove beneficial for WH sites.

#### *Challenges to WHS' Valorization*

The challenges that WHS face in improving visitor management strategies to generate income for conservation purposes are well articulated in the tourism literature (see e.g., Cuccia et al., 2016; Gravari-Barbas, Bourdeau, & Robinson, 2016; Gravari-Barbas, Robinson, & Bourdeau, 2017; Janiskee, 1996; Leask, 2010; Leask et al., 2013; McIntosh, 1999; Missikoff, 2010; Richards, 2007). These authors highlighted the need for creating more exciting, innovative, and participative ways to attract visitors and spread knowledge about WHS, gaining in return a larger and more heterogeneous group of heritage supporters. However, it can be argued that the opportunities that increased visitor attendance and participation entail have yet to be fully recognized, accepted, and therefore exploited by heritage professionals and conservation experts (Du Cros, 2008). Indeed, while some sites have

turned to tourism as a source of income and independence from dwindling government support, many others still have to reach the conclusion that tourism is an important means to ensure conservation (Leask & Fyall, 2006).

A lack of marketing creativity, together with a general reluctance of the heritage sector to collaborate with the tourism industry and introduce nontraditional forms of participation have generally been noted as barriers preventing many WHS from maximizing those opportunities that would bring revenue generation through tourism (Bullen, 2011; Du Cros & McKercher, 2015; Landorf, 2007; Lochrie, 2016). Tight financial budgets often force site managers to reduce services or look at alternative strategies for financial support such as increased admission fees; sponsorship packages; online marketing; and indeed the hosting of special events (Aas et al., 2005; Leask et al., 2013).

#### *The “Festivalization” of WHS*

Despite the conservative picture provided above, it must be noted that an interest in exploring the complex relationship of unconventional forms of tourism (here creative tourism) has lately manifested itself (Bennett et al., 2014; Janiskee, 1996; Lochrie, 2016; Richards, 2007, 2011; Silberberg, 1994; Timothy, 2011). The need for creating alternative and contemporary forms of visitor attractions in response to the decreased interest in traditional heritage has been brought up by those academics and practitioners who have applied the experience economy principles (Pine & Gillmore, 1998) to heritage tourism. For instance, Richards and Wilson (2006) suggested that in order to attract local communities and tourists to heritage sites and historical cities, it is necessary to diversify the products according to consumers' changing demands. In this context, festivals and events have recently been considered and deployed as creative forms of heritage tourism thanks to the animation and liveliness that they bring to otherwise inanimate landscapes (Leask & Fyall, 2006). Accordingly, a number of archaeological and historical sites have become the prestigious backdrops of live performances and entertainment shows (Timothy, 2011). Numerous opera houses, theaters, and concert halls such as The Sydney Opera House; the Roman Colosseum;

the Theatre of Dionysus; and Herodian have been transformed from ruins of outstanding architectural values into the stages of contemporary concerts performed in ancient settings.

Studies on the role of festivals and events in touristic destinations (see, e.g., Leask et al., 2013 discussion on Edinburgh; Richards, 2007 discussion on Catalunya; and Smith et al., 2006 discussion on Greenwich) have shown that those cities that have recognized tourism as an essential part of the economic and cultural development of the community have been able to alleviate some of the issues through the development of an integrated management plan. For example, this is the case of Edinburgh (Leask et al., 2013), where an action plan has been devised as to ensure that internal and external interests are combined for the promotion of awareness and knowledge of WHS through different projects and a portfolio of events and festivals. In addition to this (and in relation to the importance of the social narratives that individuals attach to heritage landscapes), further studies have shown that events and festivals can be effective marketing tools for fostering WHS awareness, knowledge, and community support as they are means to achieve stakeholders' involvement, participation, and heritage attachment (Connell & Gibson, 2003; Lochrie, 2016; Stewart & Strathern, 2003).

#### *Stakeholders Management at WHS: Complexity of Approaches; Clashing Ideologies, and Missed Opportunities*

An efficient stakeholder management strategy is crucial to the preservation, conservation, and presentation of WHS (Aas et al., 2005; UNESCO, 2017). UNESCO itself encourages a wider and consistent stakeholder engagement and structured managerial frameworks to function as pillars of each WHS' strategic plan (Aitken & Campelo, 2011; Landorf, 2007). However, as Shalaginova (2008) and Seeger (2015) pointed out, differing approaches exist across each of the 195-member states responsible for the management of differing sites enlisted in the WH list.

At a broader level, the challenges implicit to the management of any WHS revolve around the mission to maintain the authenticity of their outstanding universal value, while balancing the

needs of the buildings themselves with those of the external actors surrounding them such as residents, tourists, and businesses (Leask et al., 2013; Lochrie, 2016). The introduction of an additional dimension of social actors in this context opens a dialectic regarding the variety of stakeholders that may (or may not) be directly (and indirectly) involved in matters related to UNESCO heritage sites.

Several studies have been conducted on the difficulties presented by the coexistence of a large number of stakeholders orbiting around the UNESCO planet (see Aas et al., 2005; Hoffman, 2009; Landorf, 2007; Leask & Fyall, 2006; Sigala & Leslie, 2005; Silberberg, 1994). Du Cros and McKercher (2015); Shalaginova (2008); and Timothy (2011) pointed out how even though a site's inscription to UNESCO should be an incentive for cooperation and collaboration among stakeholders; the varied and numerous agendas that characterize the UNESCO landscape often translate in a tendency of considering governments, conservation experts, and local authorities as the only key stakeholders entitled to take part in the consultation and decision-making processes on matters related to site management. This, despite the fact that at local level, regulatory, economic, and social factors impact heavily on the management of WHS and that local communities, businesses, and visitors may be useful allies in ensuring the sustainability of the sites (Aas et al., 2005).

The current discussion on the needs for effective stakeholder management strategies proves to be even more relevant when trying to explore the fragmented landscape of live music performances staged at UNESCO sites. The complexity of the task rests on the identification of the variety of stakeholders involved in the consultation, operationalization, and delivery of such events, and on the recognition of where heritage and tourism (as two distinctive sectors with differing stances with regards to the use of heritage sites) intertwine and arguably clash (Aas et al., 2005; Landorf, 2007).

It is widely accepted that the presentation of a UNESCO heritage site entails the balancing of many delicate aspects: achieving inclusiveness; negotiating with the different stakeholders

(Landorf, 2007); accounting for the needs and attitudes of the different types of audiences (Missikoff, 2010; Richards, 2007); and assessing the possibility of integrating contemporary uses of the site without compromising its value (Shalaginova, 2008). Indeed, it is clear that not all WHS have the potential or capabilities to be fully or partially developed as tourism assets.

Aas et al. (2005) and Lochrie (2016) highlighted how an effective collaborative approach should start with the identification of the different stakeholders' interests, which would help building knowledge, insights, and capabilities of those who are involved in the management of WHS. Yet Landorf (2007) pointed out, this approach may only be possible through careful relationship-building processes among stakeholders based on integrity, trust, coherent policies, and mutual appreciation. In fact, the author identifies mistrust as one of the principal barriers in achieving open communication and consistent collaboration in the conflicting exchanges occurring between the internal world of the heritage sector and its external counterpart.

On a similar vein, Du Cros and McKercher (2015) and McKercher, Ho, and Du Cros (2005) pointed out that it is the lack of (and the challenges in achieving) full partnerships within the WH environment that limits the effective integration of a more collective planning process that includes economic development and tourism. In this context, Du Cros and McKercher (2015) suggested the interplay of:

At least 5 mitigating factors: the independent evolution of tourism and CHM; the existence of a politically imposed power balance between stakeholders; the diversity of stakeholders with different levels of knowledge; the diversity of heritage assets under consideration; and the different ways in which assets can be consumed. (p. 18)

This will ultimately determine the type of relationship among WHS stakeholders. Given the challenges to achieve full partnerships between stakeholders, it is clear to see that the benefits that heritage sites may gain from a strategic planning based on entertainment and cultural tourism activities may be easily missed (Aas et al., 2005; Seeger, 2015).

### *The Italian WH Landscape*

The discussions so far presented are arguably critical in the context of Italy. The country is known all over the world for having a rich heritage and one that is increasingly requiring new and innovative approaches to its conservation (Ricci, 2014). As a result of the number, variety, and indeed geographical distribution of WHS across the national landscape, much debate has been generated on the potential benefits that the fostering and management of tourism at WHS could bring to the national, regional, and local Italian economy (Cuccia et al., 2016; Riccio, 2014). In this context, Missinkoff (2010) pointed out not only has the increasing number of enlisted sites helped promoting tourism as a much-needed strategy to achieve economic development at regional and local level; it has also opened up a critical and ongoing dialectic with regards to the role it *should* play in the planning and management of these sites.

Not completely dissimilar to other WHS realities, the Italian UNESCO context is characterized by the difficulty of managing a varied range of stakeholders with different agendas, missions, and ideologies specific to each of the 53 sites (Lochrie, 2016; Seeger, 2015; Shalaginova, 2008). Yet perhaps unique to the Italian context, Ricci (2014) argued, is the systemic lack of interests and values alignment among internal and external stakeholders (whose stances are often openly at odds with each other) that poses significant barriers in meeting contemporary demand for those services and products that could improve the satisfaction level of visitors to heritage sites. Ricci's (2014) analysis of the matter is partially in accordance with Riccio (2014), who pointed out that although an effective and well-coordinated system of protection has historically been established in both Italian legislative and administrative practices; the adopted managerial strategies and frameworks appear to be inconsistently structured. In fact, despite tourism constituting a primary element for the economic growth of Italy as a nation (Missinkoff, 2010); each region is given large competences in the way touristic experiences related to tangible and intangible heritage are exploited, managed, and delivered (Cuccia et al., 2016; Timothy, 2011). Such a diversified strategic approach in preservation, conservation, and

presentation may act as a barrier limiting the full exploitation of these assets (Aas et. al, 2005; Du Cros & McKercher, 2015; Landorf, 2007; Lochrie, 2016) and more in general, the fostering of growth and innovation through sustainable tourism practices at WHS (Missinkoff, 2010).

The complicated issues revolving around the management, conservation, marketing, funding and safeguarding of Italian WHS, in combination with the emerging trend (and associated opportunities) of staging contemporary live music performances at these peculiar locations (Bennett et al., 2014; Du Cros & Mckercher, 2015; Gravari-Barbas et al., 2016; Gravari-Barbas et al., 2017; Leask & Fyall, 2006; Lochrie, 2016; Richards, 2007, 2011; Richards & Palmer, 2010; Timothy, 2011) have come to sketch a topic yet to be fully explored especially in the Italian context (Cuccia et al, 2016; Ricci, 2014; Riccio, 2014). Responding to this need, this study set out to provide insights into the barriers and opportunities to the use of live music performances at Italian WHS. It did so by 1) exploring the advantages and disadvantages deriving from the staging live music performances at Italian UNESCO world heritage sites from the position of the key stakeholders involved in their production and management, and 2) identifying the type of the tensions between public and private organizations in negotiating the reuse and preservation of these heritage sites.

### Methods

To gain a better understanding of the problem under investigation, the research deployed a qualitative comparative case study design, which has been deemed as the most fitting to enable an in-depth and rich analysis of the issues (Denzin & Lincoln, 2013; Stake, 1998; Thomas, 2011). Furthermore, building on the principles of comparison, multiple-case studies designs are normally considered as producing more robust findings (Herriot & Firestone, 1983). The three sites taken as case studies were the Arena of Verona, the Circus Maximus in Rome, and the Pompeii Amphitheatre. Following the logic of *literal replication* (Yin, 2009) these cases studies were selected because of their growing national and international use as prestigious event venues and, being spread across the Italian

territory, they function as significant representations of the national landscape in relation to the topic explored. The deployment of a qualitative strategy has been chosen as to gain the “insiders’ view” on matters of reuse and conservation of Italian cultural and historical assets (Crang & Cook, 2007; Creswell, 2013; Silverman, 2016).

In alignment with the gaps and themes identified through the review of the literature, semistructured interviews have been selected as research method to investigate the tensions, interactions, and relationships between the different stakeholders operating across and within each sites’ reality. Questions were carefully constructed to explore the advantages and disadvantages (e.g., if any and for whom) deriving from the staging live music performances and to identify the type of the tensions (e.g., ideological, personal, managerial) between public and private organizations in negotiating the staging of live music events at these heritage sites.

The research took place in two phases. Initially, through a combination of a purposive sampling strategy (Bryman, 2015; Veal & Burton, 2015) and a snowballing strategy (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Crang & Cook, 2007; Crotty, 1998; Silverman, 2016), seven interviews were conducted with the representatives for each of the three sites under investigation; a representative for the Italian minister for tourism (MIBACT); a representative of the UNESCO chapter in Italy; the president of a national event association; and one major event organizer. Interviewees were selected on the basis of their authoritative role and of their valuable views that need acquiring to form a representative depiction of the national landscapes (Silverman, 2016).

The second stage of the research took place at the Milano Music Week (Milan, November 20–26, 2017). This was a professional conference promoted by the leading associations of the live entertainment sector in Italy. The initial findings were presented by one of the authors of this article at panel session titled “Open Music—Places of Culture Open Up to Live Music,” which was attended by a pool of national and international experts belonging both to public and private sectors. The participation to the panel, combined with the observation of the more informal discussions among the exponents of the sectors and further informal interviews with one

representative of an entertainment association, two event organizers and one representative of the Italian ministry for tourism, have amplified and further corroborated the findings of the study. The analysis of data followed the principles of thematic analysis. Data collected during the first stage of the research were initially coded and the subsequent emerging themes contrasted and compared to enable interpretation of the difference stances adopted by the stakeholders (Denzin & Lincoln, 2013; Potter, 1996, 2012; Silverman, 2016).

Due to the sensitivity of the study and the socio-cultural positioning of the two authors, attention was paid to ensure the maintenance of the trustworthiness, authenticity, and robustness of data as required in a qualitative study (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Thus, although the adoption of a reflexive stance to the research allowed for the identification of the sociocultural trajectory of the two researchers during the various stages of the investigation, all interview findings were summarized and discussed with each participant to avoid misinterpretations and to ensure consensus construction (Denzin & Lincoln, 2013; Gray, 2014; Silverman, 2016). The next section presents the findings emerging from the interviews carried out with participants. These are organized according to the emerging themes thereafter presented.

## Findings and Discussion

### *Innovation, Preservation, and Conservation*

Much debate is currently taking place to acknowledge the role, value, and place of Italian live music events (may these fall within the categories of high arts or entertainment enunciated by Hughes, 2000) and the extent to which they are capable of enhancing the value of important spaces, such as WH venues. These arguments are clearly forwarded by the event industry associations as well as the event organizers. The changing consumers’ demand, increased business opportunities fueled by the development of an experience economy, and a fairly mobile audience (Berridge, 2007; Getz, 2008; Missinkoff, 2010; Pine & Gilmore, 1998, 2011; Riccio, 2014; Richards, 2011; Smith et al., 2006; Yeoman, 2013) clearly feature high in the decisions of many production companies to search

for, negotiate, and produce events and concerts at such prestigious venues:

It is certainly what leads you to create an event which . . . is even more special than its artistic component alone. Clearly organizing the concert of a great artist in such a special location enhances its value. (Event representative, 60–62)

In this context, venues such as Pompeii, Verona, or the Circus Maximum are not merely a spectacular backdrop to a live music performance, but rather an integrated, crucial component adding value to the audiences' experience. However, besides business and economic interests, it is the understanding of how little appreciated the role artists and indeed the event production companies can play in reanimating places of social gathering that frames many of the conversations:

We are talking about artists that have a career that spans over 50 years! They made the history of music, call it pop, but music nonetheless. I don't believe this [music] can devalue a site. Let's consider that—because of them—these sites become once again spaces for social gathering, shall we? Places of assembly. (Event representative, 95–100)

The UNESCO's function, beside that of preserving and promoting . . . it has been that of helping sites and places that had been abandoned to a tragic destiny be visited again right? We have the same function. (Event representative, 105–107)

Festivals and events in this context are conceived as being well positioned to fulfill UNESCO's objectives through their ability of enhancing the promotion and presentation of WH spaces by widening participation and more importantly targeting disengaged younger market segments (Connell & Gibson, 2003; Leask et al., 2013; Richards, 2007; Smith et al., 2006):

There are many experiences—operatic and non—that have attracted new visitors that had never set foot in the theatres before and through that somehow became attached to those sites. (Event representative, 122–125)

Younger generations are an issue: they have very different attitudes towards architectonic

monuments . . . doing things that would attract them to those places where they would never have gone, I believe is a means of communication and promotion of the historical, cultural, and architectonic value of Italian heritage. (Event representative, 106–111)

Despite being acknowledged, these positions appear starkly in contrast with the views of the public stakeholders interviewed, who openly express their reluctance towards the staging of activities that may be perceived as lacking or hindering continuity with past traditions. In this context, if proposals for the staging of operatic performances at these WHSs are somehow received more favorably than live music events, the key guiding principles for the selection of the events remain firmly embedded within ideological discourses of preservation and conservation that, originating at national level, find themselves perpetuated and enacted at regional and local individual level:

You must understand . . . our public servants are very much attached to the idea of preservation. (MIBACT representative, 70)

Such promotional activities don't always have beneficial outcomes. . . . This sort of activities [live music entertainment] is not traditionally linked to the Convention. (UNESCO representative, 105, 134–135)

We choose activities that somehow respect our site from a cultural point of view. . . . One architect coordinates all aspects of the event organization: administrative, technical, and organizational together with a team of archaeologists and security experts. (Pompeii representative, 117–119)

For most of the year the Arena (Verona) has to remain and be used the way the Romans left it to us. (Verona representative, 87)

Let's say that the sensitivity has changed, society's demands have changed . . . there has been an opening [to different perspectives] which I reckon to be fair, but still there is a need for being cautious. (Rome, 87–89)

Conceptually, the conservative perspectives and attitudes that characterize the positions of these stakeholders find their roots in the traditional understanding of tourism (here forms of creative

tourism) as potentially contributing negatively to the commodification of heritage assets and to a range of short-term and long-term impacts: from increased visitation, to negative environmental impacts, loss of prestige, image, and authenticity (Aas et al, 2005; Hewison, 1987; Landorf, 2007; Lochrie, 2016; Salazaar, 2009; Seeger, 2015; Shalaginova, 2008; Sigala & Leslie, 2005). However, at an operational level this often translates in practical barriers that prevent a fruitful process of negotiation between the two groups on matters of selection and production of live events at WHSs. In this context, the lexical choices used by event professionals to describe the barriers that limit the production and staging of events at Italian WHs (e.g., “obstacles,” “endeavors,” and “problems” to “overcome”) convey the sense of frustration of the latter group on being systematically excluded from these processes:

More than difficulties: proper obstacles. (Event representative, 8)

Even when we have showed that no harm is to come to the place; that the attendees don't go there to damage things; that the organizers comply with the laws; that the community is glad to have them (concerts) organized; that the hosting city councils get huge economic profits out of it . . . it was a very hard, very hard endeavor. (Event representative, 15–16 and 40–42)

#### *Weak Managerial Frameworks*

Relationship building should be critical to initiate dialogues aimed at evaluating the sustainability of cultural tourism initiatives. However, “partnerships are unlikely to evolve spontaneously, instead they usually require intervention from a dominant management agency, whilst conflict is most likely to occur in a management vacuum” (Du Cros & McKercher, 2015 p.19). These considerations, although common to many other WHS across the world, are arguably critical in the context of this study. As clearly highlighted by the UNESCO representative in Italy: “There is no pre-established managerial model that could work for all of them [WHSs]; there are only guidelines” (UNESCO Representative, 9–12).

Furthermore, although in principle allowing for the recognition of the diverse range of assets

(including their needs and tangible constraints), a drive to decentralize and give autonomy to each Italian region on matters of WHS management also generates a muddled managerial landscape where multiple public and private stakeholders' ideological positions, political views, and personal interests conflate, compete, and, at times, openly conflict (Aas et al., 2005; Hoffman, 2009; Landorf, 2007; Missinkoff, 2010; Ricci, 2014; Riccio, 2014; Shalaginova, 2008; Timothy, 2011).

Nowadays the important sites are gaining more and more autonomy, so this is another factor that interacts in the mechanism . . . again it means moving away more and more from the idea of having guidelines . . . there is no universal direction which sets the actual guidelines for those who want to proceed and rent the site in this way [staging events]. (MiBACT Representative, 45–48 and 50–52)

The systems that make this happen are varied. (UNESCO Representative, 131)

I guess that since the Arena (Verona) has stabilized its procedures on staged events over time, this has made thing smoother, in part. However, this doesn't change the fact that there is a managerial problem due to contrasting views. (Verona Representative, 46–48)

Specifically, political and administrative differences and interests appear to play a key role in the decision-making process related to the selection, and production of live music events:

I have the feeling that the current administration has thought it over in these terms. (Verona Representative, 97)

It often happens that you get caught up in diatribes between old and new political administrations. (Event representative, 142–143)

Pompeii is a special case (under the jurisdiction of the ministry of Heritage) and you can discuss with the Minister himself only. (Event representative, 38–39)

In this context, event production representatives suggest how decisions on what type of event to host at these sites are too often based on who is

in charge, rather than on a careful cost and benefit analysis or evaluation of the compatibility of the event with the value of the assets:

I haven't been given a reason why yes to this and no to that. I have been told something dogmatic. . . . According to the person you speak with you'll be told what he/she thinks instead of what would be right doing. . . . People's reasoning is unfortunately based on what I like, or what my son likes, or what my wife likes. (Event representative, 62–63 and 66–71)

As a response to this bureaucratic and politicized muddled environment, a cautionary “case by case approach” (Rome representative, 19) to hosting live events at WHSs appear to have organically developed across the three WHS under investigation, with each management team creating “ad-hoc” procedures arguably not based on shared identified criteria and stages, but on relationships and personal trust. This latter, in specific, appears to be the critical decisive factor in facilitating the production of live music events at WHSs and in the building of tentative relationships:

In Verona, where there is a relationship and what we do and what we don't do is clear, we could say that the [staging of such events] has almost become normal, whereas on other sites. (Event representative, 8–10)

You have to keep the relationship going. (Pompeii representative, 70)

Now, since they saw how we behave, how we work, now that we opened up Pompeii . . . they are the ones calling upon us. (Event representative, 49–50)

We take into consideration who is presenting the project. Clearly it has to give guarantees himself, then we check the reports. (Rome representative, 40–42)

Along these lines of reasoning, both public and private sector participants highlight how the building of trusted relationships over time is the only possible solution to begin overcoming difficulties in the staging of live music events within a heritage landscape. In fact, it appears to be the key toward a more integrative and synergetic cross-sectorial

stakeholder collaboration between the entertainment and heritage sectors:

Unless we go towards interaction and synergies, there is no future for anybody. (Event representative, 128–129)

I am saying it is necessary to plan smartly, because if we keep shuffling the cards . . . it is not beneficial to anyone. (Verona representative, 84–85)

Findings from this study show that in the context of Italy, the fostering of these fragile trust-centered relationships (Lochrie, 2016) may act as a starting point in the development of a more holistic stakeholder approach (Landorf, 2007), which would ensure the cooperation between the two sectors and ultimately facilitate the conservation and valorization of WHS.

#### *Managerial Implications*

The landscape of WHs is characterized by complex, multilayered intersections and interactions between a variety of stakeholders, agendas, and ideologies (Hoffman, 2009; Landorf, 2007; Leask & Fyall, 2006; Lochrie, 2016; Missikoff, 2010; Seeger, 2015; Sigala & Leslie, 2006; Timothy, 2011). The need for attracting new forms of cultural heritage consumption stimulated by the inadequacy of financial resources are issues that reinforce the global debate regarding the reuse, preservation, and conservation of WHS sites (Aas et al., 2005; Bullen, 2011; Du Cros, 2008; Leask et al., 2013; Shalaginova, 2008; Silberberg, 1994; Smith et al., 2006).

Despite such discussions being common to all the UNESCO enlisted countries, Italy presents a particularly complicated situation where the inaction towards presentation and valorization strategies of many national WHS poses great threats to heritage sustainability and passage of knowledge to future generations (Landorf, 2007; Leask & Fyall, 2006; Ricci, 2014; Timothy, 2011; UNESCO, 1972, 2002). Many international WHS sites are opening up to the use of alternative and more creative ways to support these assets (Aas et al., 2005), including the staging of festivals and events (Leask et al., 2013; Lochrie, 2016; Richards, 2007; Richards & Palmer, 2010; Smith et al., 2006). However,

in this context Italy appears ill-equipped to adjust to today's consumers' interests for cocreating memorable experiences (Berridge, 2007; De Geus et al., 2016; Getz, 2008; Pegg & Patterson, 2010; Pine & Gilmore, 1998; Ricci, 2014; Riccio, 2014; Richards, 2011; Walls et al., 2011; Yeoman, 2013). The triangulation of the findings from the three different cases studied offers a significant representation of the national landscape in relation to the topic explored. The analysis of the data show that there are indeed difficulties in integrating creative tourism activities in the strategic plan of WHS.

Such difficulties are mainly posed by the management inconsistency across sites, the conflicting ideologies of a large number of actors resulting in inefficient stakeholder management strategies, and the power imbalances in the consultation process. Such findings confirm existing knowledge on the complicated dynamics revolving around the preservation, presentation, funding, and safeguarding of many international WHS (Aas et al., 2005; Hoffman, 2009; Landorf, 2007; Leask & Fyall, 2006; Lochrie, 2016; Missikoff, 2010; Riccio, 2014; Seeger, 2015; Shalaginova, 2008; Sigala & Leslie, 2005). However, the current exploration of the Italian landscape has also stressed issues of a more national-bound character.

A "national default" towards a conservative ideology combined with vague guidelines and itera for the use of the sites at regional and local level have arguably created a situation where personal views, attitudes, preferences, and indeed personal relationships are determining the exploitation (or not) of the opportunities derived by the staging of live events and festivals. This study shows how, in differing degrees, fragile "ad-hoc" local and regional networks have organically developed across the sites to bridge the gap left by institutional frameworks (Du Cros & McKercher, 2015). Thus, in this context, the lack of synergy between external and internal stakeholders and, more importantly, the tensions within the single factions, aggravated by issues of trust and lack of communication/understanding of each other's incomprehensible language, inevitably translate in a raft of missed opportunities.

The "festivalization" (Bennet et al., 2014) of special creative venues (in this case UNESCO sites) could bring benefits to the sustainable management of Italian WHS (Richards, 2011). This study stresses

the beneficial role of the event industry for the sustainability of tangible (physical) and intangible (emotional) outstanding values of Italian WHS. In fact, in the view of the event professionals, staging contemporary music performances at heritage sites is a tool worth exploiting to: bring financial support for conservation purposes, foster awareness, gain knowledge and community support, encourage place and heritage attachment, widen heritage audience, and reach disengaged market segments (i.e., the younger generations).

The efficacy of the integration of tourism and entertainment activities within the day-to-day operations of WHS sites has been proved by previous international case studies (Landorf, 2007; Leask et al., 2013; Lochrie, 2016; Richards, 2007; Richards & Palmer, 2010; Smith et al., 2006; Timothy, 2011). This leads to suggest the adoption of a benchmarking strategy on the model of other nations' more creative strategic directions to the management of Italian WHS. In order to exploit the advantageous partnership with the event industry, the research stresses the necessity to work on cross-sectional cooperation and harmonious planning between government agencies, public, and private sectors to overcome tensions and to benefit from the event industry's aid. With this regard, the study also highlights that relationship building (based on trust) and a more integrative stakeholder system that takes all views in consideration are essential factors to reach clarity and unity of mission towards a mutually prosperous future for heritage and event industries. In fact, this would enable to discuss and agree on a national decree, which would regularize the frequency and nature of activities performed at heritage sites, eliminating many of those tensions and conflicts, which have so far limited the operationalization of this product. Entertainment and heritage industries would work together to ensure the animation of the timeless landscape of forgotten sites in Italy, in alignment with the principles set out by UNESCO.

## Conclusions

The study extends the body of research on the role events play in the conservation of UNESCO heritage site venues as places and spaces of "festivalization" (Bennet et al., 2014; Du Cros &

McKercher, 2015; Richards, 2007; 2011; Richards & Palmer, 2010). The current research has industry significance because of the number of UNESCO heritage sites in Italy that may benefit from the evaluation of advantages and disadvantages implied in the reuse and adaptation of the national historical sites. Ultimately, the study equips the event and heritage professionals with an insight of the issues that are implied in the reuse of tangible WHS. The article also suggests the establishment of a national framework to consistently guide on the use and reuse of WHS, and the development of clear partnerships between the heritage and entertainment industries to produce an event heritage experience, which could bring benefits to the sustainable management of the nation's UNESCO sites.

The present study has limited the investigation to the managerial issues and ideological tensions that prevent the integration of events in the sites' strategic planning, as expressed by the key stakeholders interviewed. Therefore, going forward, it would be advisable to widen the sample, incorporating the views of the local communities and event attendees in order to provide a more complete picture of the mass phenomenon investigated.

#### References

- Aas, C., Ladkin, A., & Fletcher, J. (2005). Stakeholder collaboration and heritage management. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 32(1), 28–48.
- Aitken, R., & Campelo, A. (2011). The four Rs of place branding. *Journal of Marketing and Management*, 27(9), 913–933.
- Avakian, T. (2016). 14 Unbelievable concert venues from around the world. *Business Insider UK*. Retrieved from <https://www.businessinsider.com/amazing-concert-venues-around-the-world-2016-7?r=US&IR=T>
- Azara, I., Wiltshier, P., & Greatorex, J. (2018). Against all odds: Embedding new knowledge for event continuity and community well-being. *Event Management*, 22(1), 25–36.
- Bennett, A., Taylor, J., & Woodward, I. (2014). *The festivalization of culture*. Burlington, VT: Ashgate.
- Berridge, G. (2007). *Events design and experience*. London, UK: Butterworth Heinemann.
- Bryman, A. (2015). *Social research methods*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
- Bullen, P. (2011). Adaptive reuse of heritage buildings. *Structural Survey*, 29(5), 411–421.
- Connell, J., & Gibson, C. (2003). *Sound tracks: Popular music identity and place*. Abingdon, UK: Routledge.
- Corbin, J., Strauss, A. (2008). *Basics of qualitative research*. London, UK: SAGE.
- Crang, M., & Cook, I. (2007). *Doing ethnographies*. London, UK: SAGE.
- Cresswell, T. (2004). *Place: A short introduction*. Oxford, UK: Blackwell.
- Creswell, J. (2013). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed method approaches*. Los Angeles, CA: SAGE.
- Crotty, M. (1998). *The foundations of social research: Meaning and perspective in the research process*. London, UK: SAGE.
- Cuccia, T., Guccio, C., & Rizzo, I. (2016). The effects of UNESCO World Heritage List inscription on tourism destinations performance in Italian regions. *Economic Modelling*, 53, 434–508.
- Davis, A. (2016). Experiential places of places of experience? Place identity and place attachment as mechanisms for creating festival environment. *Tourism Management*, 55, 49–61.
- De Geus, S., Richards, G., & Toepoel, V. (2016). Conceptualisation and operationalisation of event and festival experiences: Creation of an event experience scale. *Scandinavian Journal of Hospitality and Tourism*, 16(3), 274–296.
- Denzin, N., & Lincoln, Y. (2013). *The landscape of qualitative research*. Los Angeles, CA: SAGE.
- Du Cros, H. (2008). Too much of a good thing? Visitor congestion management issues for popular world heritage tourist attractions. *Journal of Heritage Tourism*, 2(3), 225–238.
- Du Cros, H., & McKercher, B. (2015). *Cultural tourism* (2nd ed.). Oxon, UK: Routledge.
- Edensor, T. (2002). *National Identity, popular culture and everyday life*. Oxford, UK: Berg.
- Getz, D. (2008). Event tourism: Definition, evolution, and research. *Tourism Management*, 29(3), 403–428.
- Gravari-Barbas, M., Bourdeau, L., & Robinson, M. (2016). World Heritage and tourism: From opposition to co-production. In L. Bourdeau, M. Gravari-Barbas, & M. Robinson (Eds.), *World heritage, tourism and identity: Inscription and co-production* (pp. 1–24). Abingdon, UK: Routledge.
- Gravari-Barbas, M., Robinson, M., & Bourdeau, L. (2017). Tourism at world heritage sites. Community ambivalence. In L. Bourdeau, M. Gravari-Barbas, & M. Robinson (Eds.), *World heritage sites and tourism. Global and local relations* (pp. 1–17). Abingdon, UK: Routledge.
- Gray, D. (2014). *Doing research in the real world*. Los Angeles, CA: SAGE.
- Guba, E. G., & Lincoln, Y. S. (1994). Competing paradigms in qualitative research. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 105–117). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Herriott, R. E., & Firestone, W. A. (1983). Multisite qualitative policy research: Optimizing description and generalizability. *Educational Researcher*, 12(2), 14–19.

- Hewison, R. (1987). *The heritage industry: Britain in a climate of decline*. London, UK: Methuen London.
- Hoffman, B. (2009). *Art and cultural heritage: Law, policy and practice*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Hughes, H. (2000). *Arts, entertainment, and tourism*. Oxford, UK: Butterworths Heinemann.
- Janiskee, R. L. (1996). Historic houses and special events. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 23(2), 398–414.
- Landorf, C. (2007). Managing for sustainable tourism: A review of six cultural. *World Heritage Sites*, 17(1), 53–70.
- Leask, A. (2010). Progress in visitor attraction research: Towards more effective management. *Tourism Management*, 31(2), 155–166.
- Leask, A., & Fyall, A. (2006). *Managing world heritage sites*. Oxford, UK: Butterworth Heinemann.
- Leask, A., Hicks, D., & Chuchra, K. (2013). The role of Edinburgh World Heritage in managing a world heritage city. In A. Fyall & B. Garrod (Eds.), *Contemporary case studies in heritage* (pp. 104–129). Oxford, UK: Goodfellow.
- Lochrie, S. (2016). Engaging and marketing to stakeholders in World Heritage Site management: A United Kingdom multiple case study perspective. *Journal of Marketing Management*, 32(15–16), 1392–1418.
- McIntosh, A. (1999). Into the tourist's mind: Understanding the value of the heritage experience. *Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing*, 8(1), 41–64.
- Missikoff, O. (2010). World sites UNESCO. Management tourism. *Almatourism: Journal of Tourism, Culture and Territorial Development*, 1(2), 58–60.
- McKercher, B., Ho, P. S., & Du Cros, H. (2005). Relationship between tourism and cultural heritage management: Evidence from Hong Kong. *Tourism Management*, 26(4), 539–548.
- Pegg, S., & Patterson, I. (2010). Rethinking music festivals as a staged event: Gaining insights from understanding visitor motivations and the experiences they seek. *Journal of Convention and Event Tourism*, 11(2), 85–99.
- Pine, B. J., & Gilmore, J. H. (1998). Welcome to the experience economy. *Harvard Business Review*, 76, 97–105.
- Pine, B. J., & Gilmore, J. H. (2011). *The experience economy*. Boston, MA: Harvard Business Press.
- Pine J. B., & H. Gilmore, J. (2014). A leader's guide to innovation in the experience economy. *Strategy & Leadership*, 42(1), 24–29.
- Potter, J. (1996). Discourse analysis and constructionist approaches: Theoretical background. In J. Richardson (Ed.), *Handbook of qualitative research methods for psychology and the social sciences* (pp. 125–140). Leicester, UK: British Psychological Society.
- Potter, J. (2012). Discourse analysis and discursive psychology. In H. Cooper (Ed.), *APA handbook of research methods in psychology*, 2 (pp. 111–130). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association Press.
- Ricci, C. (2014). Management plans for the UNESCO World Heritage Sites, governance and training. *Almatourism: Journal of Tourism, Culture and Territorial Development*, 5(2), 77–84.
- Riccio, F. (2014). Italian UNESCO World Heritage: Forms of protection and management experiences. *Almatourism: Journal of Tourism, Culture and Territorial Development*, 5(2), 26–31.
- Richards, G. (2007). The festivalization of society of the socialization of festivals? The case of Catalunya. In G. Richards (Ed.), *Cultural tourism: Global and local perspectives*. Binghamton, NY: Haworth Press.
- Richards, G. (2011). Creativity and tourism: The state of the art. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 38(4), 1225–1253.
- Richards, G., & Palmer, R. (2010). *Eventful cities: Cultural management and urban revitalisation*. London, UK: Routledge.
- Richards, G., & Wilson, J. (2006). Developing creativity in tourist experiences: A solution to the serial reproduction of culture? *Tourism Management*, 27(6), 1209–1223.
- Salazar, N. (2009). Imaged or imagined? Cultural representations and the “tourismification” of peoples and places. *Cahiers d'études africaines*, 193(19), 49–71.
- Seeger, A. (2015). Understanding UNESCO: A complex organization with many parts and many actors. *Journal of Folklore Research*, 52(23), 269–280.
- Shalaginova, I. (2008). *Ethical principles of heritage presentation for world heritage sites*. Retrieved from: <http://openarchive.icomos.org/86/>
- Sigala, M., & Leslie, D. (2005). *International cultural tourism: Management, implications and cases*. Oxford, UK: Elsevier Butterworth-Heinemann.
- Silberberg, T. (1994). Cultural tourism and business opportunities for museums and heritage sites. *Tourism Management*, 13(5), 361–365.
- Silverman, D. (2016). *Qualitative research*. Los Angeles, CA: SAGE.
- Smith, M., Carnegie, E., & Robertson, M. (2006). Juxtaposing the timeless and the ephemeral: Staging festivals and events at World Heritage sites. In A. Leask & A. Fyall (Eds.), *Managing World Heritage sites* (pp. 11–124). Oxford, UK: Butterworth Heinemann.
- Stake, R. (1998). Case studies. In N. Denzin & Y. Lincoln (Eds.), *Strategies of qualitative inquiry* (pp. 86–109). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Starr, F. (2013). *Corporate responsibility for cultural heritage: Conservation, sustainable development and corporate reputation*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Stewart, P., & Strathern, A. (2003). *Landscape, memory and history: Anthropological perspectives*. London, UK: Pluto.
- Tan, S. K., Kung, S. F., & Luh, D. B. (2013). A model of “creative experience” in creative tourism. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 41, 153–174.
- Thomas, G. (2011). *How to do your case study*. London, UK: SAGE.
- Timothy, D. (2011). *Cultural heritage and tourism: An introduction*. Bristol, UK: Channel View Publications.
- United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. (1972). *Convention concerning the protection of the world cultural and natural heritage*. Retrieved from <http://whc.unesco.org/en/conventiontext/>

- United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. (2002). *Text of the Convention for the safeguarding of the intangible cultural heritage*. Retrieved from <https://ich.unesco.org/en/convention>
- United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. (2017). *Italian world heritage sites*. Retrieved from <http://whc.unesco.org/en/statesparties/it>
- United Nations World Tourism Organization. (2018). *Tourism and cultural synergies*. Madrid, Spain: Author. doi: <https://doi.org/10.18111/9789284418978>
- Van Klyton, A. (2015). Space and place in world music production. *City, Culture and Society*, 6(4), 101–108.
- Veal, A., & Burton, C. (2015). *Research methods for arts and event management*. Harlow, UK: Pearson Education Limited.
- Walls, A., Okumus, F., Wang, Y., & Kwun, D. (2011). An epistemological view of consumer experiences. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 30, 10–21.
- Yeoman, I. (2013). A futurist's thoughts on consumer trends shaping future festivals and events. *International Journal of Event and Festival Management*, 4(3), 249–26.
- Yin, R. (2009). *Case study research: Design and methods*. London, UK: SAGE.