



Heritage counts

Koen Van Balen & Aziliz Vandesande (eds.)

Reflections on Cultural Heritage Theories and Practices
A series by the Raymond Lemaire International Centre for Conservation, KU Leuven

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Heritage Impact

Looking for Models to Understand the Impact of Externalities

Stefano Della Torre

Abstract

This paper aims at clarifying how much the evaluation of the impact of heritage, i.e. the set of effects produced by the set of actions concerning heritage conservation and valorisation, depends on the purposes that prompt the evaluation itself. The methods and the outputs will be different whether we are advocating for heritage sector, aiming at a legitimization of the costs of heritage preservation, or checking the performances of policies and practices as we aim at improving them. A first requirement for the analysis of heritage impact is to take into account the whole process of activities concerning movable and immovable heritage. In other words, it is important to study heritage game as a whole, in order to understand the mechanisms for the production of value. Alternative models can be implemented to recognize activities, phases, relationships and to highlight where and how value is born. The paper will try to show that the real alternative is to evaluate earnings and expected benefits versus acknowledged externalities. Then the most important aim of the research should be to find the way of ruling and planning 'heritage game' in order to internalize externalities.

The evaluation of the impacts of the heritage sector, i.e. of the effects of interventions carried out in the heritage field, requires to clarify the purpose of that evaluation. The methods and the outputs will be different whether the aim is advocating for heritage, seeking the legitimization of the costs of heritage preservation, or the improvement of the performances of policies and practices.

A requirement for the analysis of the heritage impact is to take into account the whole process of activities concerning movable and immovable heritage, in order to understand the mechanisms for the production of value. The analysis of cultural heritage activities as a process is required also for different purposes, e.g. because it can be useful to identify the needs for education and training (Della Torre, 2008). Alternative models can be implemented to recognize activities, phases, relationships and to highlight where and how value is born, but the real alternative is between the evaluation of expected benefits and the acknowledgement of side benefits, sometimes unexpected and not controlled, that is externalities. Given the nature and the relevance of these side effects, the most important target of our research should be to find the way of ruling and planning the 'heritage game' (referring to the lucky title introduced by Peacock & Rizzo, 2008) in order to internalize externalities.

Production of Value: the Value-Chain Models

To highlight the mechanisms through which value is produced, it is customary to transfer models from Business Economics and Management Science. For instance, the Value Chain model introduced by Michael E. Porter is often used (fig. 1), and Porter himself produced a model for museums (Porter, 2006, fig. 2). Porter recognized Primary Activities (Assembly and Preservation, Exhibition, Hospitality

Services, Marketing and Sales, Visitor/Constituency Services) and Support Activities (Firm Infrastructure, Fundraising, Human Resource Management, Program and Content Development, Educational Programs). This model is very useful and undoubtedly contributed to an empowerment of valorisation activities thanks to such a transfer of attitudes and procedures from the business world to heritage sector, showing that some value can be produced, which can make cultural firms sustainable and capable to produce social benefits at reasonable costs.

Two main remarks can be developed about this concept.

Porter's model deals with museums, that is a part, although relevant and significant of heritage; it gives minor relevance to conservation activities: at least, the model shows these activities as concerning only the collections, not the facility, which in European countries is often a historic building itself.

Heritage activities are often split in activities meant as capable to produce value (benefits), which are called the valorisation activities, while conservation is understood just as a cost, both speaking of the major repairs and restorations needed to make a property usable, and of maintenance operations needed to keep the property and the objects. The management of museums encompasses evolving practices (Ferraro, 2011), including preventive conservation, whose development has been definitely fundamental for the contemporary vision of heritage activities (Staniforth, 2013). If conservation activities should include initial works, the balance would become almost impossible, as the revenues of a cultural property can hardly cover the repair costs. Therefore to tackle the real problem it is definitely crucial to model the whole heritage game, not only the activities which look more similar to a business organization.

The second remark on Porter's model is that it is focused on the performance of a museum as a business

unit. Social impacts and involving activities are meant as marketing strategies to increase the number of visitors or to make them loyal. This means that some benefits are not taken into account as they affect people who are not involved in the 'heritage game': in other words, people who are not the customers of museums and other heritage sites.

Put otherwise, heritage activities are analysed as if they were carried out in the frame of a narrow 'supply chain': benefits and costs are acknowledged and evaluated inside that frame, not outside. Effects on other supply chains and on the society at large are not

recognized as valuable economic effects, so nobody pays for them. This could be described as a huge phenomenon of free riding, but the public expenditure for cultural heritage should not be forgotten. The problem is that the rationale for public funding still relates to a mostly obsolete approach to heritage. The democratization of heritage in a mass and globalized society requires something new, especially as public resources are shrinking.

The analysis has therefore been enlarged through the acknowledgement of a broader set of targets addressed by the heritage sector, far beyond the narrow supply

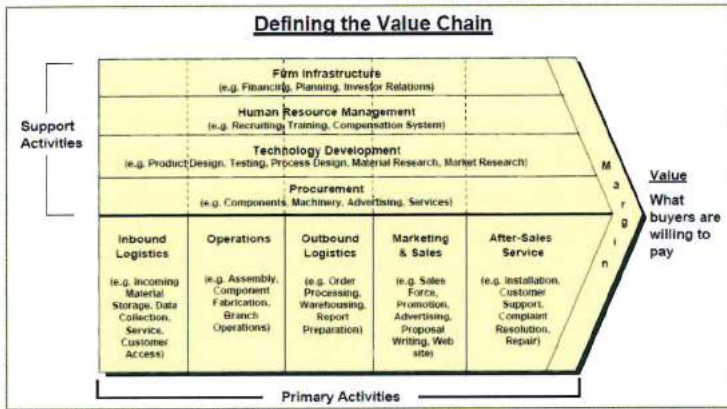


FIGURE 1

The Value Chain Model. Source: Porter, 2006.

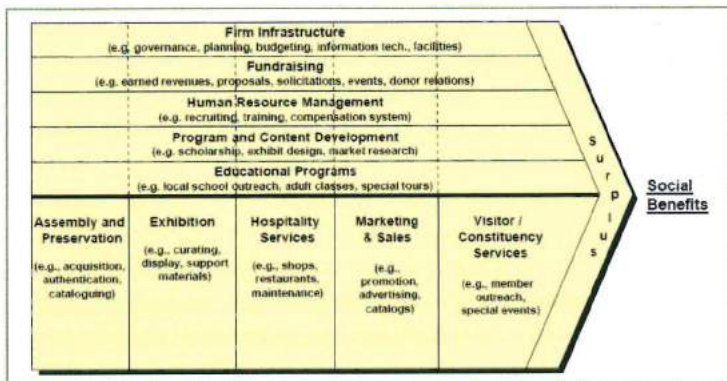


FIGURE 2

The Value Chain model for museums. Source: Porter, 2006.

chain of edutainment and cultural tourism. Conservation, display and service (that is valorisation) are still the main categories of the heritage activities, but it is not difficult to realize that the aims of projects centred on heritage in many cases go further and further. Physical conservation may be the most evident concern, but it is often just an intermediate goal, or a false target, the real target being at societal or even political level. No special investment is required to get such intangibles effects of activities on tangible heritage, it is just a matter of few meaningful choices. Heritage, as dealing with an inheritance, used to be exploited in order to raise arguments for keeping the past and symbols for nationalist movements, but it can work also for openness, inclusion and sharing. The famous restoration of Haut-Konigsbourg castle in Alsace, on a hill just on the border between France and Germany, commissioned to Bodo Ehardt by Kaiser Willem II few years before World War I, was a clear political message; the works were extremely careful of archaeology and loyalty to historic and stylistic knowledge, but the sense of the operation, celebrated by newspapers for the direct involvement of the Kaiser, could be easily detected

(Taylor, 2007). On the other hand, besides the examples illustrated in other contributions to this book, we can cite the experience on Nicosia walled city after the war in Cyprus (Demi, 1997; Kirsan, 2003), as the oneness of the city required one master plan for recovery and management of the historic environment, and this was the first step to restart the dialogue between the two communities after the conflict.

In both cases, the political aims were of utmost relevance, far more urgent than the preservation needs. The operation in the heritage field was used, or abused, as it produced the required output, maybe better than through other means. But in the analysis of the events, the outputs in terms of communication, connection, commitment of people reached by the message were not part of the business: they can be described as externalities, even if their 'value' could overtake the value of the operation in itself. This means that the focus on the economic impact of heritage can be moved from direct earnings to benefits which by their nature are priceless, but many methods have already been developed for 'pricing the priceless' and 'valuing the invaluable', both in environmental economics and in the Economics of art (among others: Ackerman & Heinzerling, 2002; Grampp, 1989).

Externalities Produced by Heritage Activities

Many externalities are produced everyday also in ordinary heritage activities, even when heritage is not deliberately exploited or abused for other reasons. This happens mainly because cultural heritage activities entail a strong investment on human and intellectual capital (Della Torre, 2013): they are labour intensive, require special skills, both on the side of traditional skill kept alive and on the side of the introduction of new techniques and technological transfer, they play

on the involvement of people and are addressed to public fruition.

In the last decades research in Regional Economics, focusing on themes as local development factors, innovation, mutual externalities exchanged inside a regional border, has more and more built human capital into the model of local development. Models and theories seek to identify the endogenous elements that build up local competitiveness. As built cultural heritage (or 'built environment') is a feature of local space, and one of the main factors of its identity, it is obvious that these theories are of the utmost relevance for any research on the economic side of preservation. Models like 'milieu inneweater' or 'learning region', largely adopted in the last fifteen years to study local development in developing countries as well as in marginal or urban areas, could be useful also to understand the mechanisms by which heritage, and its forms of recognition, build local 'identity', that is Territorial Capital (Camagni, 2007). The concept of Territorial Capital helps to identify mechanisms of collective learning which are necessary to make innovation happen. As Camagni writes, some kind of tangible goods, in conditions of mixed-rivalry, are affected by processes that produce a strong sense of belonging and territorial loyalty (the 'local identity') coupled with a far-sighted business perspective and the social stigmatisation of opportunistic behaviour. This is the effect that, according to Roberto Camagni, may produce fruitful local synergies, favourable collective actions and easier public/private agreements, so that 'the milieu itself may be the true territorial capital allowing long-term efficiency in the economic exploitation of local resources'.

The externalities of the conservation phase of the process are the most interesting in our research, both because this phase is often neglected in the analyses, and because they promise to be a key to overcome the bias of unsustainable spending in conservation, thanks to a transition from short-sighted interventions to a planned conservation process (Moioli, 2011).

The concept is that built heritage plays many more roles and has more values than its use value (Mälkki & Schmidt-Thomé, 2010), and already during the renovation works it is possible to acknowledge side benefits, or spillovers, in terms of capacity building, training of workers, networking, 'discoveries' useful to enrich the presentation of the site, updates of the value assessment, and so on. During the 'service life', it will be possible again to foster the production of knowledge on the culture of prevention, learning from careful use, learning about energy saving, implementing ICT.

The acknowledgement of externalities is therefore the step forward. Externalities can be positive or negative: it is well known that Arthur Pigou tackled the problem of strategies to correct externalities, e.g. by means of the so called Pigovian taxes. Costs of negative externalities are taken into account very often, but seldom the positive externalities are internalized and evaluated.

From Value Chain to Value Network

In this section, we are going back to the analysis of the business model to check if it is possible to find other models, alternative to Porter's one, which could better represent the multiple purposes of heritage activities and the mediation required to internalize externalities. In the matter of fact 'heritage game' is not so similar to a production process, from raw material to demand-matching objects, but what really counts is the role people can play in the game: the aim being to involve people and to enhance territorial (human, social, intellectual) capital. Connecting and networking could be claims more interesting than production. Therefore it could be suggestive to try a comparison with the 'value-network' model. The firms that have a business model described as 'value network' create value by facilitating a network relationship between their

customers using a mediating technology (Stabell & Fjelsdtad, 1998).

This model can be inspiring, as connecting people became one of the most relevant aims in managing heritage. Of course the transfer from business economics to the cultural heritage field has to be cautious. Heritage is not for profit but for general benefits. Economics of culture look for sustainability in spending, not for profit: the ultimate target are not earnings, but an empowerment of local economy and society. Therefore heritage does not deal with customers but with citizens, i.e. potential players whose involvement in the 'heritage game' should empower their citizenship.

What is relevant for our research, in business models of this kind service value is a function of positive network externalities. This is very important for the development of the research on Heritage impact, as the external benefits of conservation activities are so relevant for this research.

There are different understanding of the ways external benefits can be managed and used for development purposes (Glaeser et al., 1992). Economists had a long-lasting dispute about alternative models of externalities, the discussion being focused on industrial clustering. One model claims that the concentration of an industry in a region promotes knowledge spillovers between firms and facilitates innovation in that particular industry within that region; the model proposed by Jane Jacobs in 1969, on the other hand, argues that the most important knowledge spillovers are exchanged between different industries, and the source of innovation are cities, as in cities the diversity of knowledge sources is greatest (Jacobs, 1969). Jacobs' theory emphasizes that the variety of industries within a geographic region promotes knowledge externalities and ultimately innovative activity and economic growth, and emphasizes as well the role of human capital as a factor in the development process: 'A person can exert some effort, pay some cost, and

acquire more human capital. With a higher level of human capital – more skill or knowledge – this person's personal productivity and earnings associated with this productivity will be higher ... this individual's higher level of human capital raises the average level in the economy and so the productivity of everybody ... ' (Nowlan, 1997).

Externalities in 'heritage game' are not only network externalities, because of the diversity of players: it is quite obvious that the externalities produced by the 'heritage game' will not be restricted in the field of the heritage industry, the narrow supply chain sometimes object of reductive analyses, but will be relevant just because of their diversity, which impacts on human capital. Therefore for the evaluation of heritage impacts the Jacobs model of externalities can be more inspiring, and this seems to hold especially to foster innovation in regions already characterized by advanced industries and a reflective society: 'In high-tech regions, on the other hand, policy should focus on the creation of a diverse set of economic activities, which should enhance future economic development' (Beaudry & Schiffauerova, 2009: 335). It is obvious that the heritage sector could be a strategic field for a policy aiming at creating diversity in economy: these theories on the diversity of spillovers can work very well also in the frame of the Territorial Capital concept cited above.

Conclusions

The change of the model from value-chain to value-network is not just the change of a picture: this move implies a change of the sense for heritage activities: the heritage industry should no longer be understood as a small supply chain, but as a powerful tool for social policies. Such a model helps in improving the organizations as it focus on the real targets (intangible benefits) and not only on production. More and

more the research on conservation shows that the improvement of practices requires new policies based on a participatory approach (Van Balen & Vandesande, 2015).

Such a model can imply relevant practical consequences. Shortly said, heritage can create value by network if the understanding of heritage evolves from the traditional concept of merit goods to new roles for mediation among a broader set of stakeholders.

Dealing with externalities is not easy, especially when externalities are mostly positive and nobody has ever thought of paying for them. Put otherwise, the network model should represent the exchange between stakeholders affected by externalities but never before involved in the 'heritage game', and 'heritage people' accustomed to work inside a traditional frame referring to a set of unquestioned values and criteria. The network value model means mediation and negotiation in order to implement policies able to internalize externalities.

This vision opens to several opportunities: among them we can enumerate only a few themes, more or less linked to the paradigm shift to preventive conservation, which is the condition to design and implement new policies taking profit of the network vision. As a matter of fact, preservation approached as a process gives more opportunities to mediate and to share. It means a more comprehensive process (more commitment by professionals, involvement of more citizens, more opportunities for networking and increasing the relational capital ...). Within this framework, every intervention is carefully programmed: the quality of the works is defined, the applied technologies have been specified as well as the required qualification of professionals and contractors, attention is paid to compatibility for respectful uses, maintenance and management plans, resources for aftercare ...

Furthermore, opportunities emerge for integrated policies: e.g. Public Private Partnership, or win-win

processes, in which heritage proves to be useful for other sectors as well as money coming from other sectors is used for conservation works, the most clear example being the Halland model conceived and studied by Christer Gustafsson (Gustafsson, 2009).

This is of course also a research agenda: the opportunity is evident of implementing action-research in pilot projects, in which intangible effects (capability building, territorial capital, social cohesion) are assessed and measured with methods adequate for complex schemes (e.g. theory-based evaluation).

The choice of network as the main target affects therefore even the acknowledgement of values, which should not be stated once forever by the experts, but should emerge from the network, while experts should become mediators, or provocateurs.

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The idea of heritage as a “capital of irreplaceable cultural, social and economic value” was already present in the European Charter of the Architectural Heritage, adopted by the Council of Europe in 1975 (par.3). Today, this discourse is getting increasing attention on the research agenda. Some argue that, although heritage is always valued highly, the current interest in the impact of heritage is caused by the democratisation of heritage and the increased importance of heritage in today’s society. Others argue that a universal scarcity of funds for heritage management and conservation is the reason to give it its proper attention.

Therefore, the Raymond Lemaire International Centre for Conservation (University of Leuven) considered “Heritage Counts” a relevant and timely topic for its yearly international conference, the “thematic week”. This edition twins with the “Cultural Heritage Counts for Europe” project, funded by the EU Culture Programme. The opening day of the conference was co-organised by the lead partner of this project, EUROPA NOSTRA, and brought together European policymakers and international researchers involved in cultural heritage.

This volume specifically reports on the lectures and fruitful debates on heritage impact during the 2015 thematic week. It was observed that evolutions in discourse and policy hold a significant prospect, which also entail an increasing demand for shared insights and formation. In response, this publication reflects on heritage impact by providing research, case studies and reflections that can serve as baseline records, guidance - and hopefully inspiration. The findings are subdivided in three main chapters: “Framing the paradigm”, “Impact assessments: research, methods and practice” and “Linking management, conservation and sustainable development”.



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