

The Effects of Managerial Autonomy on Organizational Culture: The Case of the Archaeological Park of Paestum



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Abstract The chapter analyses the influence that managerial autonomy may play in the role of human resources in cultural organisations. Based on the Old Institutional Economics approach and investigating organisational rules and routines, the chapter examines the case of the Archaeological Park of Paestum, an autonomous museum and archaeological site of the Italian Ministry of Cultural Heritage and Tourism. Through interviews, reports, data collected and ethnographic observations, the research reveals how managerial autonomy affects roles and routines, positively contributing to the development of human resources and the overall performance.

Findings reveal that the introduction of managerial autonomy in cultural organisations, coupled with the leadership ability of the Director, have further enhanced human resources' skills and competences, one of the key components of cultural organisations. The role played by professional managers has also improved the entire performance of the organisation.

The research unveils the implications of managerial autonomy on the organisational rules and routines and the consequent effects on human resources. The effects of these changes on the overall performance of a cultural organisation are also discussed, offering new outlooks on managerial changes.

Keywords Cultural organisations · Archaeological park of Paestum · Human resources · Organisational routines · Case-study

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1 Introduction

Public-sector cultural organisations have been traditionally managed by adopting a conservative culture, based on a bureaucratic approach. However, reforms inspired by the New Public Management (NPM) (Hood 1991; Kickert 1997; Pollitt and Bouckaert 2011) provoked the development of new forms of managerialism in this area.

Gaining a managerial autonomy is one of the key factors of this wide process of reform. Indeed, managerial autonomy has determined (and it is still determining) an in-depth changing process, based on the redefinition of strategic objectives and the implementation of a managerial culture focused on the output and the outcome. More specifically, managerial autonomy is changing the organisational behaviour of managers and employees in cultural organisations. While human resources were not adequately appraised under the traditional bureaucratic approach, mainly playing a “passive” role, the managerial autonomy is increasing their awareness of the mediator and active role they could play between the organisation itself and both the visitors and the territory (Marzano and Castellini 2018).

This study aims to investigate the effect of the cultural organisations’ autonomy on the development of human resources, changing their roles and the organisational routines, unveiling the related impact on the overall performance.

From a theoretical perspective, this study firstly considers the role of the managerial autonomy in an NPM perspective (Liguori 2012; Liguori and Steccolini 2012), and then adopts the Old Institutional Economics (OIE) approach (Scapens 1990; Burns and Scapens 2000). OIE appears to be the proper lens through which changes, occurred in organisational rules and routines, can be observed as a consequence of managerial innovations (Burns and Scapens 2000), enhancing the role of human resources. Furthermore, the effects on the overall performance and the relationship with the visitors, the donors and the local community are discussed. To this end, a case study method is adopted (Scapens 1990; Ahrens and Chapman 2006) by analysing the experience of the Archaeological Park of Paestum (hereafter PAE), an autonomous museum and archaeological site of the Italian Ministry of Cultural Heritage and Tourism. The case study follows an ethnographic approach through documentary sources, interviews, data and observations in order to examine the effect on human resources due to the autonomy of the PAE (Scapens 1990).

Findings from this study underline the importance of the managerial autonomy of public-cultural organisations, as it can strengthen leadership and induce the implementation of new organisational routines, positively affecting the behaviour of managers and employees, as well as the overall performance.

The remainder of the chapter is structured as follows. Section 2 presents the situation of cultural heritage in Italy, summarising the main changes that have occurred in the last decades. Section 3 depicts the theoretical background, framing the research in the OIE in order to create the point of reference for the analysis. Section 4 explains the research design and methodology, while in Sect. 5 the reader is briefly introduced to the case study of the PAE. Section 6 discusses the results

collected, by adopting the theoretical lens depicted above, and Sect. 7 concludes, setting out the limitations and the practical and theoretical consequences of the research.

2 The Process of Reform in Italian Heritage Assets Management

Italy is the country with the richest cultural heritage in the world (Settis 2002). To manage and preserve this immense treasure, in 1975 a specific Ministry of Cultural Heritage and Tourism (MiBACT) was established.

In-depth changes and incisive reforms have taken place since the '90s regarding the Ministry's organisation, including a merger with performing, contemporary arts and films. As a consequence, several Directorates were constituted, each of them devoted to the management of a specific area. Although the ownership of cultural assets can be public or private, in Italy they are considered of public interest and thus subject to public laws (Zan et al. 2007). Therefore, until the '90s, the Ministry has taken care of both the protection and the managerial functions.

Following a tendency implemented in Italian public-sector organisations, specific norms were issued to affirm a culture of "economising" in the management of heritage assets, in order to render each entity self-sufficient through its own revenue deriving from exhibitions, visitor's entertainment and marketing practices. For instance, the so-called Ronchey Law, in 1993, introduced the possibility to out-source certain activities (i.e. publishing services, museum shops, restaurants and coffee shops) to private entities, in order to obtain higher efficiency and effectiveness.

In 1998, taking advantage of the experience acquired in Pompeii (Zan et al. 2018), act no. 368 introduced the "regional superintendences" to reinforce the idea of decentralisation and federalisation of functions. Therefore, a model akin to the majority of the public services was implemented, conferring to the Italian Regions a wide regulatory and managerial power. For the most significant superintendences (Pompeii, Rome and four Museum hubs: Florence, Naples, Rome and Venice), some degree of autonomy was recognised, introducing a director and a management board, a financial report to control income and expenditure and the possibility of retaining revenue obtained (Bonini Baraldi 2014; Zan et al. 2018). A relevant novelty of the reform consists of the possibility for a superintendence to endorse conservation projects which have been approved by the board of directors, instead of waiting for ministerial authorization, utilising the revenue from tickets to cover the related expenditure (Ferri and Zan 2019). However, the overall result of all these reforms was an increase in bureaucratic requirements, coupled with a sort of confusion in the management of heritage assets. In fact, while the Ministry lost part of its power, to be shared with the regions, the creation of different units resulted in fragmentation in the management of cultural heritage (Bonini Baraldi 2007). It is

worth noticing that neither superintendences, nor national museums gain total autonomy, remaining dependent on the Ministry for human and financial resources (Bonini Baraldi 2014).

The Cultural Heritage Code, in 2004, was the first code to comprehend all rules related to the protection, conservation and enhancement of cultural assets, allowing and regulating the management of these assets to private and public organisations. Even if the code evolves towards an increasing autonomy of cultural organisations, nonetheless the limited amount of financial resources in the national budget, devoted to cultural heritage, still persists, creating a strong uncertainty on the budget available for superintendents and limiting their ability in programming activities. For instance, the Ministry retains the power to assign up to 30% of the revenue obtained by “autonomous superintendences” (Pompeii, Rome, Venice, and so on) to other entities; in case of cuts to the national budget, the central government can reduce part of the funds already assigned; autonomous superintendences cannot include their own revenue in their budget, thus creating a further obstacle to their ability in managing external resources.

Among the several legislative changes introduced during the following decade, it is worthy of notice the transfer of functions in the field of tourism to the same Ministry occurred in 2013 (Act no. 71/2013).

An in-depth transformation to the MiBACT’s structure was induced by the Decree no. 171 in 2014, the so-called Franceschini’s Reform, which has determined an increased autonomy through participative management and innovation in the domain of Italian heritage assets. In accordance with the new law, the organisation of the Ministry has been deeply changed, by establishing a Directorate of Museum (*Direzione generale dei Musei*), Regional Museum Centers (*Poli Museali Regionali*), the recognition of a status of special autonomy for more than thirty cultural institutes, and the merges of superintendences, coupled with the appointment of Directors for autonomous institutes under a private contract (Marzano and Castellini 2018).

The new governance model drawn by the reform represents the main innovation, giving rise to the establishment of a national museum system, favouring partnerships with other private and public institutions and introducing the possibility of network governance, which has already proven to be successful in public cultural organisations (Manes-Rossi et al. 2018; Minuti et al. 2012).

However, despite the claimed autonomy, museums still do not have a regulatory capacity, which pertains to the Ministry or the region, depending on the specific issue. Furthermore, the directors are not allowed to employ staff members directly. They are responsible for the management of the museum, the organisation of the exhibits, the conservation, protection and promotion of the heritage assets under their control. The directors can also collect financial resources through sponsorships and donations, as well as regulate the entrance fee. The resources collected can be employed for carrying out activities and investments, developing relationships and, ultimately, improving the reputation of the organisation (Marzano and Castellini 2018). Nonetheless, as already stated, “the ‘original sin’—the lack of control of

human resources and the organization of labour—is still in place” (Zan et al. 2018: 535).

Due to the autonomy in managing their activities, autonomous museums “can become a central node for relations between other cultural institutes and the territory” (Marzano and Castellini 2018: 215). Furthermore, directors can stipulate agreements with institutional and private partners, entering into contracts and managing the resources collected within the budget approved by a Board of Directors. Full accountability is mandatory, in accordance with the transparency law involving all Italian public administrations since 2013. Consequently, budgets, annual reports and performance plans must be made available on the website of each organisation.

The reform introduced in 2014 still contains some conceptual contradictions, between centralisation and decentralisation, autonomy and dependency, with different degrees of accountability characterising the different organisations working in the cultural domain (Forte 2015). These limitations are not discussed here, since they go beyond the boundaries of the main research question of this study.¹

3 Autonomy, Routines and Changes: The Old Institutional Economic Approach

Public cultural organisations—such as museums, public libraries, archaeological areas, and so on—are experiencing important managerial innovations. While the traditional managerial style, as for other public organisations, was principally based on a bureaucratic approach, the new forms of managerialism implemented more recently are centred on a different managerial culture, focused on output and outcome (Zan 2000). One of the critical aspects of the resultant in-depth process of change is the managerial autonomy achieved by public cultural organisations. As a matter of fact, the debate concerning the autonomy of this kind of organisations has been around for decades, being considered as a part of the NPM reforms (Belfiore 2004). It has been claimed that the lack of autonomy can severely affect the managerial style of public cultural organisations, especially the management of both financial and human resources, with the main risk being that they remain in a sort of *limbo* or “structural purgatory” (Zan et al. 2007).

The new forms of managerialism have been introduced as a possible solution to several challenges, such as the reduction in resources available by central governments and the increasing competition in the world of art and tourism, coupled with a large number of reforms inspired by the NPM (Hood 1991; Kickert 1997; Pollitt and Bouckaert 2011). In fact, as in many public-sector entities, also within public cultural organisations the attention has shifted from what cultural organisations

¹Further changes in the structure of the Ministry have been requested by a recent decree in July 2018, reassigning functions related to tourism to a different Ministry (agricultural and forests). In the next years, further changes may derive in the management of heritage in Italy.

should do, towards *how they perform*, leading to the utilisation of performance indicators, both suggested by scholars (Weil 1994; Chiaravalloti and Piber 2011; Manes-Rossi et al. 2016a) and developed by national and international organisations (ICOM, DCMS,² 2016; NEA³; MiBACT). However, these indicators, on the one hand, may provide an impression of rationality and efficiency, with scarce attention to internal processes (De Lancer Julnes and Holzer 2001); on the other hand, they could cause a resistance within the organisation, where human resources may feel under scrutiny, preferring to maintain the same (old) routines. Furthermore, routines are coupled with rules, which are necessary to coordinate and give coherence to the action of a group of individuals inside an organisation (Scapens 1994). Hodgson (2008, p. 19) states that “routines are not behaviour; they are stored capacities or capabilities”. Rules can be *formal*, such as laws and regulations, or *informal*, such as taken-for-granted assumptions, and both constrain members of the workforce (North 1990). At a micro level perspective, routines relate to the cognitive process of individuals, while at a macro level they are part of institutional constraints. However, as Burns and Scapens (2000) maintain, routines are a recognisable pattern of actions, that might involve different actors and that may represent both a source of change, as well as of stability, rather than inertia. Taking into account the aim of this study, changes in organisational routines have been investigated.

As stated by Quattrone and Hopper (2001, p. 404) “little is known about what change is”. Nonetheless, there is a consensus that changes can be triggered both by internal and external factors, and it is part of the organisational life, at an operational as well as at a strategic level (Burnes 2004).

In the case investigated in this study, one of the main pressures derives from external cues, namely the decentralisation and the consequent recognition of managerial autonomy of public cultural organisations, which can cause modifications in rules and routines. According to Burns and Scapens (2000), management systems, as part of organisational rules and routines, can be affected by innovations triggered by the environment. These innovations, in their turn, can represent a favourable occasion for selecting the organisational culture, preserving the appropriate routines and removing the old ones (Bisogno et al. 2015). However, human resources might resist changes, especially when a modification in rules and routines question consolidated behaviours and beliefs, and actors have the power to impede the process.

As observed by Becker (2004), routines provide a sense of stability, in opposition to the uncertainty related to changes. In fact, routines represent the “way of doing things” (Nelson and Winter 1982; Burns and Scapens 2000): because of their collective nature, they represent the behaviour of an organisation, being

²The Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport (DCMS) releases performance indicators for sponsored museums and galleries in the UK <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/sponsored-museums-annual-performance-indicators-2016-17>

³The National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) operates in the USA <https://www.arts.gov/artistic-fields/research-analysis/program-evaluation-resources-and-performance-measurement>

institutionalised in everyday life (Scapens 1994), and originating a resistance to change.

Considering this aim, which requires a conceptualisation of how new routines evolve over time (Nelson and Winter 1982), this study could have adopted the institutional theory to investigate how public cultural organisations respond to pressures from the institutional environment. However, scholars have raised several criticisms in this respect, claiming that the institutional theory does not make it possible either to recognise the processes through which institutions are created, adapted, transposed and/or discarded (Dacin et al. 2002; Scott 2001; Seo and Creed 2002), or to comprehend the power and interest at the organisational level (Scott 2001; Dillard et al. 2004; Lounsbury 2007). Accordingly, a different approach, based on the Old Institutional Economics (OIE), has been selected for this study, as it allows gaining a greater understanding of processes of change and “why practice variations embedded in competing institutional logics emerge within an institutional field” (Modell and Wiesel 2008: 255).

OIE, in particular, examines institutions that “shape the actions and thoughts of individual human agents [...] and it] seeks to explain the behaviour of economic agents in terms of rules, routines and institutions.” (Scapens 2006: 11). While New Institutional Economics and New Institutional Sociology devote attention to how the environment exerts an influence on organisations, OIE attempts to understand the motivations that determine the economic behaviour inside the organisations, recognising that behaviour can become institutionalised (Scapens and Varoutsas 2010). According to Laughlin (1991), one of the main reasons that determine organisational changes are *environmental disturbance* or *jolt* and to correctly interpret the transformations occurred, it is necessary to observe the *process* of change. In other words, it is pivotal to recognise how and why behaviours of human agents change as a consequence of this disturbance.

3.1 Organisational Routines and Human Resources: A Model of Change

Changes in an organisation can be planned and deliberate or unplanned and random (Greenberg and Baron 1993). Planned changes require a sequence of activities, processes and leadership aimed at producing organisational improvements to enhance the performance, creating an advantage over competitors (Cummings and Worley 2014). However, in an increasingly rapid changing business environment, changes can follow an emergent approach (Burnes 1996).

A well-known model of change, including economic, social and political events coupled with specific features that can regard each organisation, has been proposed and applied in a public sector organisation by Lapsley and Pettigrew (1994), elaborating on a model already used in the private sector. The authors identify several factors, namely: a *high quality and coherent policy*, availability of *key people*

to lead the change, existence of long-term environmental pressures, presence of a supportive organizational culture, development of effective managerial and clinical relations, existence of cooperative inter-organizational networks, articulation of simple and clear goals, and stipulation of a change agenda and its locale (Lapsley and Pettigrew 1994: 88).

With regard to the internal factors, the authors consider how the needed changes are formulated, by whom and how the change effort itself is managed. Moreover, they consider of utmost importance to examine the process of change and the sustainability of the programmed changes over time, which means sustaining the implementation of new routines and their institutionalisation. In order to obtain the expected outcome, all these factors have to be managed as interlinked and mutually reinforcing loops (Padovani et al. 2014).

Moreover, to institutionalise changes, systems of rewards and punishment may be adopted, taking into account the feature of the context. For instance, public managers can be rewarded with more budgetal and extra-budgetal resources, as well as with more decision-making autonomy (Meier 1980; Dixon et al. 1998).

Bearing in mind that managerial autonomy should affect mainly the management of human resources, this study intends to investigate how organisational routines change in a cultural organisation over time as a result of the acquisition of managerial autonomy and the consequent appointment of a director. The effects of changes occurred on the overall performance represent a further issue that deserves attention.

More concretely, this study delves into the changes affecting the role of both managers and employees, exploring the mechanisms adopted to institutionalise the changes, hypothesising that the managerial autonomy of public cultural organisations is increasing their awareness of the mediator and active role they could play between the organisation itself and both the visitors and the territory (Marzano and Castellini 2018). In effect, the new forms of managerialism are expected to cause the dismissal of the “passive” role of human resources, typical of the traditional bureaucratic approach, moving towards a proactive behaviour, based on the strengthening of skills and competences and the differentiation of responsibilities and power. The changes due to the managerial autonomy can affect the overall performance, and allow active participation of the visitors in the management of cultural organisations, moving towards models of participatory cultural initiatives (Piber et al. 2019).

4 Research Design and Methodology

Focusing on a defined context, Italy, this study investigates the process of organisational change that public cultural organisations are experiencing, due to the managerial autonomy they have achieved, which means a change in managerial rules. The context is particularly appropriate, as “Italy and cultural heritage are virtually synonymous”, and a high percentage of the world’s most important heritage is situated in Italy (Zan et al. 2007).

The chapter adopts a qualitative approach, which allows an in-depth investigation of an empirical phenomenon which is not yet well understood (Berg 2004), highlighting the social, inter-personal and inter-organizational relationships that a positivistic approach usually fails to reveal (Lodh and Gaffkin 1997).

The investigated case study, the Archaeological Park of Paestum (PAE), was selected by taking into account the basic criteria for a theoretical sampling approach (Eisenhardt 1989; Eisenhardt and Graebner 2007). Firstly, public cultural organisations such as the PAE are complex entities, having multiple objectives. Secondly, the managerial autonomy of the PAE, coupled with the steering at-a-distance role of the MiBACT, has stimulated a pro-active approach of employees towards the visitors, aiming at improving efficiency and effectiveness. More specifically, this autonomy has determined (and it is still determining) an in-depth changing process, based on the redefinition of the PAE's strategic objectives. Although these innovations could be considered as a near natural effect of the NPM paradigm, it should be observed that they are not so frequent in this context, traditionally managed through a conservative culture (Zan 2000), as underlined in previous sections. Only recently, the opportunities related to the managerial autonomy have emerged, stimulating the analysis of the impact on organisational routines (Burns and Scapens 2000) as well as on the global performance, by adopting a holistic approach.

Following Scapens (1990), the PAE's case study can be classified as explanatory, as this research aims to understand and explain the reasons for changes concerning human resources and the impact on the PAE's decision-making processes and performance.

The case study is carried out *ex-post*, and the research team attempts to reconstruct the antecedents of the change by interviewing the main actors before the research began (Liguori and Steccolini 2012). Changes occurred in the post-reform period (2014–2018) are considered. To avoid bias in the ex-post rationalisation of the occurred changes (Ahrens and Chapman 2006), multiple data including semi-structured interviews (Qu and Dumay 2011) was triangulated with open-answer questions, archival analyses, and ethnographic observations. The sources of data used include statistical data provided by the MiBACT (http://www.statistica.beniculturali.it/Visitatori_e_introiti_musei.htm) and data available on the website of the organisation. The triangulation of the data attempts to increase the ratio of the credibility of the results. Furthermore, following Badia et al. (2019), transcripts of interviews were sent to the interviewees for an evaluation.

5 Research Setting: The Archaeological Park of Paestum

The PAE is located in Capaccio-Paestum (near Salerno, in the South of Italy) and it is part of a wider Park named: "Parco Nazionale del Cilento e Vallo di Diano con i Siti archeologici di Paestum e Velia e la Certosa di Padula". It became a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1998. The event that triggered the change in the management of the archaeological site occurred in 2014, when the PAE gained autonomy



Fig. 1 Temple of Neptun (known as “the Basilica”)



Fig. 2 Temple of Athena

(d.p.c.m. 29 August 2014, n. 171), due to the reform of the MiBACT. In 2015, Gabriel Zuchtriegel was appointed as a new director, promoting from his appointment a change in the management of the site.

In Paestum, ancient Greece is still palpable, and the Museum narrates the age-old history of the city: the annexe archaeological site to the Museum contains three Doric temples, built almost 2500 years ago, some of the best-preserved in the world. Figure 1 portrays the temple of Neptun and Fig. 2 illustrates the Temple of Athena

(The authors thank the courtesy of the Paestum and Velia Park for the pictures provided).

The Museum opened in 1952 and was later enlarged. The exhibited collection includes stone and terracotta sculptures, thousands of painted vases and hundreds of frescoed tombs. The “Tomba del Tuffatore” (“Tomb of the Diver”) is the oldest Greek painted tomb, and the scientific debate on its meaning is still continuing. In 2017 the PAE reached the record of 440.000 visitors, almost re-confirmed in 2018, despite a crisis in tourism of the province occurred during the summer.

The PAE’s mission is to preserve, study, promote and manage a unique group of monuments and collections. Taking advantage of the recognised autonomy, the PAE adopted several initiatives in order to increase its visibility, through events, concerts, midnight strolls, meetings and, recently, aperitifs at sunset. In achieving its mission, the PAE cooperates with the MiBACT, the local government of Capaccio-Paestum, national and international universities and research institutions, as well as several NPOs.

Own revenue—including donations and sponsorships—and public funding maintain the PAE. For special projects and major investments, it also relies on the European Union funding, donations and sponsorships.

6 Analysis of the Interviews and Discussion of Results

The first round of interviews was conducted between February and July 2018, and they involved the Director and key managers. The second round of interviews occurred between February and July 2019, including four managers/employees of the PAE, two representatives of NPOs (“Legambiente” and “FAI”) and a follow up with the Director and the Press office Manager (see Table 1).

Table 1 Role of the interviewees and duration

Role of Interviewee	I round (hours)	II round (hours)
The director	2	1.5
The press office manager	2	1.5
The visitors and surveillance manager	1	
The accounting office manager	1	
The front office manager	2	
An archaeologist		0.5
An HR manager		0.5
One employee responsible for visitors and surveillance		0.5
One employee from the ticket office		0.5
A representative of FAI		1.0
A representative of Legambiente		1.0
Total	8	7

To validate the results of the interviews, the research team triangulated the data received from the PAE with those of official and internal sources, also adopting ethnographic observations.

The research interviews were centred on the theoretical framework mentioned in previous sections. The *process*, and not merely the *outcome*, of the managerial changes is investigated (Burns and Scapens 2000; Scapens 1994), adapting the model of Lapsley and Pettigrew (1994) to the context being examined. More specifically, researchers focus on changes affecting the behaviour of economic agents (Scapens 1994).

As regards the *existence of long-term environmental pressures* (Lapsley and Pettigrew 1994), the managerial autonomy of the PAE was the key trigger. Accordingly, the interviewees were asked to illustrate its effects, primarily focusing on the role of the employees, their organisational behaviour, and on if and how it was affecting the PAE's performance (in terms of the number of visitors, revenue, sponsorships, and so on).

The Director and his staff perceived a broad dissatisfaction among visitors concerning several issues, such as: the low quality of many collateral services; the lack of clear information regarding how to reach the Park; the lack of a path accessible to wheelchairs; the opening hours; the events organised; and so on. Furthermore, some parts of the archaeological site were not accessible to the public. Lastly, it was underlined that the PAE did not have a systematic communication channel with visitors at that time (2015), and the need to establish a more collaborative and stronger relationship with visitors and the local community, including local public administrations and NPOs, was considered important. According to scholars (Lawrence et al. 2002; Scapens and Varoutsas 2010), information flows are critical in the configuration of inter-organisational routines.

When I was appointed as a Director, initially I tried to improve the quality of the services provided to visitors. I perceived the dissatisfaction of many visitors, but I lacked the information in order to improve them. I felt that the Park needed to improve its relationship not only with visitors but also with the local community. (Director of PAE).

The Director played a crucial role in stimulating the managers and the employees to change their organisational behaviour. As a consequence, a *coherent policy* was defined, articulated in *simple and clear goals* (Lapsley and Pettigrew 1994), such as: motivating and training employees to develop and strengthen their skills and competences; defining a plan of maintenance and restoration; delineating projects concerning both research and new digs in collaboration with universities; strengthening the relationship with visitors, also supporting the communication activities; increasing the quality of services, and improving the whole performance.

Therefore, progressively, a *change agenda* (Lapsley and Pettigrew 1994) was introduced, through a sequence of planned activities as stated below (Cummins and Worley 2014).

First, the Director interviewed all the employees individually, to better understand their personal attitudes and to identify their willingness to participate in training activities to support better quality visitor services. More specifically, within

the largest group of employees responsible for visitors and surveillance (46 employees out of 80), the Director defined different roles and related responsibilities, which, on the one hand, complied with their contractual profile, on the other hand, took into account the personal abilities and competences.

The strategic reorientation of the Park is possible only if employees and all the staff concretely perceive how essential their role and their collaboration is. Their positive thinking helps make visitors' experience memorable (Director of PAE).

Second, a new plan for restoration activities regarding the three main temples was defined and carried out, due to several agreements with institutional partners, allowing the visitors to visit the temples internally. Furthermore, in 2017, a pilot project was initiated, making it possible to visit the deposit of the museum; the success of the initiative led to the institutionalisation of this visit, which is currently part of the ongoing practice of the PAE. Moreover, a specific project dedicated to disabled people, which will be better explained later, was programmed and implemented.

Third, the website was entirely renewed (www.museopaestum.beniculturali.it) to make its use easier for potential and real tourists visiting the Park. Furthermore, the use of social media was actively enhanced: a Facebook page was opened, coupled with Twitter and Instagram profiles, to promote events, to engage visitors and so on, with the aim of improving both efficiency and effectiveness.⁴

Day by day, we peek at the Facebook page, to get visitors' feedback, to answer their questions and to respond quickly to criticisms. Furthermore, we received 15/20 daily reviews on average on Google. This information has helped us in understanding how we [Director's staff members and employees—ed.] can support this new way of thinking (Press Office Manager).

A fourth point of the *change agenda* consisted in obtaining the collaboration of the local government of Capaccio-Paestum, several hotels and NPOs involved in the same territory, encouraging them to implement joint projects. The aim was to improve the quality of several services, ameliorating the global touristic experience of the visitors, with a positive effect in terms of the number of visitors and the development of the territory.

In the past, the collaboration with the PAE was sporadic. In 2016, an agreement was drawn up, making the collaboration now continuous. Since then, several initiatives have been carried out. One of the first initiatives consisted of cleaning up the path from the Park to the sea, and on the first week of each month, the tourists are accompanied along the path. The first walk was a great event, with 400 tourists participating! (Legambiente representative).

We have a long-lasting relationship with the PAE. However, since the new Director has been appointed, we have intensified events and opportunities, taking reciprocal and continuous advantages through our cooperation (Local FAI coordinator).

⁴An outsourcing strategy was implemented by the PAE, initiating a collaboration with a web agency, which currently manages both its website and the Facebook page.

Notwithstanding managers and employees interpreted these preliminary innovations as a sort of a “little revolution”, a bureaucratic organisational culture still prevailed, and resistance to change was observed (Becker 2004; Nelson and Winter 1982). As a matter of fact, the behaviour of employees was anchored to a bureaucratic set of rules, and organisational routines were based on formal procedures with which to comply. A passive role was still maintained, as employees merely continued to keep under surveillance the archaeological site in order to prevent damage. Besides, employees were (and still are) paid directly by the MiBACT, which hampered the implementation of a system of punishment and rewards, through more budgetal and extra-budgetal resources (Meier 1980; Dixon et al. 1998), directly connected with the way they carried out their tasks.

The autonomy of the PAE has progressively changed—and it is still changing—the organisational behaviour of most of its managers and employees. The Director retains employees as pivotal “assets” of the Park, as human resources should be considered not as a cost, but as an investment (Manes-Rossi et al. 2016b; Roslender 1997). Therefore, his abilities have boosted the personal involvement of human resources, who are now better motivated to improve their knowledge and skills.

The Director was a breath of fresh air! He brought energy, enthusiasm, and new ideas! (HR Manager).

I've been working here for more than 30 years. Past Directors were very competent, but the potentialities of the PAE did not emerge because of their lack of autonomy. The achievement of this autonomy, step by step, has led to several changes. The Director organised several ad hoc courses, so many of us had the opportunity to improve their skills and competences (Employee responsible for visitors and surveillance).

The Director was the *key person leading the change* (Lapsley and Pettigrew 1994) and his leadership has had a great impact on the organisation as a whole. In fact, due to the feedback received from visitors via social media and the motivator role played by the Director, most of the managers and employees progressively understood the importance of being more active and collaborative, especially with the visitors. Therefore, they became aware of the relevance of their mediator role between the visitors and the PAE. Accordingly, it could be claimed that human resources are emerging from the “structural purgatory” (Zan et al. 2007) where the bureaucratic culture traditionally confined them.

As a result, new organisational routines were established, encouraging employees to undertake an “active” role. Therefore, this *supportive organisational culture* (Lapsley and Pettigrew 1994) was the stepping stone for launching new initiatives, directed towards visitors, local firms, and the territory (Marzano and Castellini 2018). For example, the project named “Paestum alive” (“Paestum viva”: <http://www.museopaestum.beniculturali.it/paestum-viva-tutti-i-giorni/>) dedicated to families, consists of interactive activities, laboratories, musical therapies, to explain to children the history of the temples and the whole Park in an entertaining and enjoyable manner. Moreover, the initiative named “Paestum for everyone” (“Paestum per tutti”), where the collaboration of employees is essential, allows disabled people to visit the areas within the temples, through a path accessible to wheelchairs.

In order to prepare employees to manage visitors' needs, several *ad hoc* training programmes have been directly organised by the Director, with the support of external professional trainers, to those employees that demonstrate an interest in participating in the programme.

In the past, employees acted mainly as guards, and their competences were not sufficiently appreciated. The strategic reorientation of the Park has radically changed this. Now, employees play an active role, giving visitors a warm welcome, providing them with all the information they require, assisting disabled people during their visit to the temple of Hera and the temple of Athena, making the innovations possible (Visitors and surveillance Manager).

Additionally, an annual membership card has been launched, giving visitors the possibility to access the museum and the Park at any time, as well as to participate in events (such as concertos, dramas, "Paestum by night", and so on) paying a nominal fee (1 or 2 €). Furthermore, specific fundraising strategies were implemented, to establish a "sense of belonging" and create a *cooperative inter-organisational network* (Lapsley and Pettigrew 1994) which involves visitors, the local community and local firms. The most relevant ones are:

- "Adopting the wall of Paestum" (see <http://www.museopaestum.beniculturali.it/adotta-un-blocco-delle-mura/>): people can contribute to the maintenance and restoration of the site by giving 50 €, receiving an annual membership card and a periodical newsletter;
- "Circle of Athena" ("Circolo di Athena"), a group principally composed of local firms, which is financing the restoration of the façade of the temple of Athena;
- a local factory (named Pastificio Amato) has financed three researchers to carry out digs;
- a no-profit organisation, named "Friends of the Park" ("Amici del Parco") is financing several restorations.

The fundraising activities have made the activation of a new restoration and conservation plan possible. In fact, the resources stemming from donations and sponsorships increased from 13,591 € in 2016 to 41,018 € in 2018 (source: financial statements of the PAE). The amount collected, together with the European funds granted, was (and is) invested in restoring both the museum and the archaeological site (perimeter wall, temples), at the same time financing new digs. There has been an increase in the investments undertaken in restoration, which have increased from 184,074 € in 2016 to 325,720 € in 2018.

Furthermore, the new strategic approach has led to the development of a restoration and conservation plan, abandoning the behaviour of sporadic and costly work carried out in isolation.

We have developed a strategic plan for restoration and conservation activities. Every month, we visit the whole area to re-assess priorities and consider changes to be introduced in the plan. This approach has guaranteed the restoration of the three temples and has enacted an excavation program of new areas in cooperation with universities. Currently, we are projecting the restoration of the perimetrical walls. (Archaeologist of the PAE).

Table 2 Number of visitors and gross revenue (2014–2017)

Year	No. of visitors	Gross revenue
2014	280,503	938,897.32
2015	300,343	1,100,489.93
2016	383,172	1,621,820.59
2017	441,196	1,917,050.23
2018	427,339	1,927,250.08

Source: http://www.statistica.beniculturali.it/Visitatori_e_introiti_musei.htm

The interviewees claimed that the strategic management changes described above are boosting internal *managerial relations*, having a positive effect on the PAE's performance.

Table 2 illustrates both the number of visitors and gross revenue during the period 2014–2018. A significant increase in both indicators can be easily observed, especially in the last 2 years. It is worth recalling that all the initiatives described above were implemented from November 2015 onwards.

During the several visits over the 2 years, the research team had the opportunity to observe how employees interact with visitors and their increased consciousness of representing the institution. This is progressively reinforcing a *supportive organizational culture* (Lapsley and Pettigrew 1994) where people perceive the challenge to be part of an in-depth innovation and feel proud of the role they can play. Moreover, the new managerial culture is leading to new routines and a certain degree of initiatives autonomously taken by managers (Meier 1980; Dixon et al. 1998).

A few days ago, I discovered that a new initiative was going to be carried out. This means that the PAE staff is able to take new initiatives and to organise the related activities, independently from me. A new organisational culture is now permeating the PAE (Director of PAE).

Future projects and goals, involving other NPOs operating on the same territory and with similar cultural or social interests, are going to be enacted, as well as other improvements to the website and IT supports for visitors, boosting *high quality and coherent policy* (Lapsley and Pettigrew 1994).

Therefore, even though the autonomy stemming from the reform is only partial as employees are still selected and paid by the Ministry, the ability of the Director in instilling a sense of belonging in the workforce has led to an innovative approach to visitors. This has contributed to an improvement in the overall performance, together with the other innovations that are taking place.

7 Conclusions

The research contributes to the scant literature analysing archaeological sites in a managerial perspective (Ferri and Zan 2014, 2019; Manes-Rossi et al. 2018; Zan et al. 2018). The PAE has been selected not only for its importance but also because

it is an example of organisational changes undertaken as an effect of the managerial autonomy headed by the new director and his staff.

The autonomy of the PAE has led to a planned and deliberate process of change (Greenberg and Baron 1993), causing a significant and positive impact on human resources, producing organisational improvements and boosting performance (Cumings and Worley 2014). The contribution of this process of change to the strategic re-orientation of the PAE has been investigated, focusing on both modifications of organisational routines and the results achieved in terms of the number of visitors, revenue, sponsorships, investments in restoration and conservation projects and so on.

As far as the organisational routines are concerned, the OIE approach adopted in this study has facilitated the analysis of the process of change, not only focusing on the outcome of the changes. Accordingly, gaining a managerial autonomy would imply, for a public cultural organisation, selecting the organisational culture, and therefore removing the old routines (Bisogno et al. 2015). Moreover, the new implemented routines express the evolution of stored human resources' skills and capabilities (Hodgson 2008), highlighting that a policy of increasing autonomy in the management of cultural organisations, where professional managers play a significant role in stimulating the development of human resources, can have a positive impact on the overall performance.

The Lapsley and Pettigrew's (1994) model of change has been adapted to the context being investigated, highlighting that long-term environmental changes would trigger the establishment of a new supportive culture. Results collected can highlight important implications, applicable in any cultural organisations. Firstly, although resistance to modify the old routines has been observed, the stipulation of a change agenda led by new management and based on simple and clear objectives can produce important and long-lasting effects. For instance, it can reinforce the relationships with the visitors and the territory, as well as improve the information flows (Lawrence et al. 2002; Marzano and Castellini 2018; Scapens and Varoutsas 2010). Secondly, human resources are encouraged to reject a passive role, typical of the traditional bureaucratic approach, adopting a proactive behaviour. In turn, this change can lead to a greater supportive organisational culture. Furthermore, changes due to the managerial autonomy can improve the overall performance, in terms of revenue, donations and sponsorships received, as well as in terms of conservation and restoration projects and the number of visitors and their positive experience.

A limitation of the research, however, relates to the fact that the changes introduced may be linked to the personal capabilities and human attitude of the director who has led the changes. However, at least in the case of the PAE, the changes stemming from the new policies sustained by the autonomy seem to be institutionalised, with a new culture starting to permeate the whole organisation.

Future development of the research would like to investigate to what extent the reform has introduced similar changes in other Italian cultural organisations, as well as considering the effect of increased autonomy in different contexts. Further developments would also examine the implication of the digitalisation and, more broadly, the use of information technologies and social media in cultural

organisations, to promote participatory cultural initiatives, nourishing an emerging strand of research (Piber et al. 2019).

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