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Practices and history of co-programming and co-production in Italy: The cultural sector in Trentino between public and private nonprofit organisations

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Introduction

One of the pillars of the Next Generation EU – the public expenditure program funded by the European Union’s economies following the pandemic crisis - concerns the cultural sector. The plan has been argued to go beyond the Keynesian public investment idea, as it represents at the same time a massive opportunity to reform entire sectors of our societies and economies, including the way in which the public sector provides its services and coordinates with private organizations. In Italy, the national plan for reconstruction and recovery includes 6.68 billions of euros for “tourism and culture,” with the aim to address the pitfalls suffered by the sector during the Covid-19 spread.

One of the challenges for the sector, as well as for others included in the recovery plan, is the actual implementation of the plan, finding those coordination solutions that can identify - and across communities of actors - who are the relevant publics, or stakeholders, and how they can contribute to develop innovative solutions with the public administration. For economists, the production of culture has an intrinsic value for society and is regarded as a meritorious good. In fact, its production can be coordinated either by the state, by the market, through the price mechanism, or through social cooperation, that is by associations of cooperators who join together to explicitly produce social value for stakeholders and communities. These three solutions can be combined in different ways and generate, depending on the qualities of these combinations, diverse institutional systems for the production of cultural services (or other meritorious goods, such as health or social services) (Sacchetti, Borzaga and Tortia, 2021).

The recent reform of the third sector in Italy has paved the way for public-private collaboration, explicitly involving third sector organisations in the co-programming and co-production of services. This is a practice that allows to define the services of collective interest to be provided through relationships based more on cooperation than on competing between third sector organisations, and between them and the public sector. Whether this new practice will take shape and make it possible to obtain the desired results will greatly depend on the direction taken by the European institutions. For now, the EU has not shown much openness on the issue. Indeed, it insisted on the need for the public sector to pursue maximum competition in the selection of the private organisations. However, the EU's conduct could change. This is demonstrated by the different attitude it has taken on the member countries after the pandemic. Indeed, the European Union has suspended, at least temporarily, the fiscal compact, that is the policy of rigor to which the Member States must submit. Furthermore, to combat the negative effects of the pandemic, it has approved - as seen - the Next Generation EU.

It will be necessary to see how European politics clarifies its position on the issue of the relationship between public and private. While waiting for this to happen, this article aims to investigate some good co-programming and co-production practices that are derived from history. The most recent debate has in fact had the merit of recalling some practices already

tested in the recent past. In the field of social services, for example, between the 1990s and early 2000s there was "the season of conventions". The conventions were a first attempt to co-program and co-planning. Another good practice of public-private collaboration is represented by the particular management of the cultural policy set by Trentino, a Province located in northern Italy (heron **PAT**). This area has given itself an innovative system to reach thousands of people in urban as well as remote areas. It did so by developing a number of thematic platforms (including museums, theatres, libraries, music schools, and all the cultural nonprofit sector where choirs, brass bands, folk groups find a home, festivals, as well as cultural heritage assets) all of which supporting cultural production. For each of these platforms, cultural production is coordinated with a unique combination of public-private solutions. The approach, which was developed prior to the national legislation, placed a strong emphasis on the idea of "sharing" the cultural project with community constituencies, thus interacting with private nonprofit organisations. The approach was then innovative with respect to the dominant one, which focused on public bids or by service production entirely administered by the public authorities.

To illustrate, we will focus on one of the cultural platforms promoted by PAT: the province's music school system. This includes 13 organisations (musicians cooperatives as well as associations of musicians and students, plus one municipal school. Heron **TMS** Trentino Music Schools) which do not overlap with the public school system. This system of schools was legitimized by the institution of a provincial system aimed to maximize access to music culture and education for all, without age limitations (Sacchetti and Marchesin, 2020). In our view, it represents one of the most interesting examples of how the public-private relation can be innovatively shaped to produce public value, by tapping into localized assets and stakeholders' aspirations. Such an approach has numerous advantages, first of all that of stimulating innovation and creativity, but it also suffers from some limitations. For example, the process that led to establish a fair criterion capable of determining which private actors to involve and which to exclude in the participation process has been subject to debate. This problem becomes relevant especially when the number of producers is potentially high or over time with the emergence of new potential entrant organisations.

Public-private collaboration in Italy

Co-planning and co-programming: the alternative collaboration

The aforementioned reform of the Third Sector in Italy (2017) created the conditions for a new public-private collaboration based on co-programming and co-planning. As Fazzi (2021) argues, in the Italian context the two terms refer to different activities. Co-planning has more to do with a policy-making activity, whereas co-programming represents its declination into concrete and implementable projects. More generally, it is a practice that connects the public body with expressions of civil society by relying more on the logic of collaboration than on competition. The two concepts of co-programming and co-planning take on a meaning still different from that of co-production (Alford, 2014) discussed in the literature especially in the field of management. In fact, co-production can be voluntary (Bovaird, 2007) or it can become essential for the production of public services (Osborne, Strokosch, 2013; Osborne, Radnor, Kinder, Vidal, 2015). In each case, co-production concerns the active role that the citizen-user can or does play while receiving a public service. In this case, the consumer has an important role as co-producer because the consumption of a service (social, educational) occurs at the same time as its production. This is not the case, for example, in manufacturing, where a good is made in a factory, sold in a store, and consumed in a different place at a later time. Osborne, Strokosch (2013, p. 37) explain the contribution the user makes to co-production because “the act of service consumption is the cornerstone of co-production, as it is this this action that results in the consumers' contribution to production at the operational level – their expectations and experiences are central to effective service delivery and to the outcomes of the service”. Co-production then differs from co-programming and co-design for two reasons. First, it concerns the involvement of the physical person-user, not a nonprofit organization entering into a relationship with the public administration. Second, the user need not be involved in the service planning process, defined by Osborne and Strokosch (2013, p. 37) as "co-creation." According to the same author, while co-production is essential co-creation is not necessary: it is just one more chance given to the user to participate in the service innovation process. In this case co-creation closely resembles what we call co-design. Brandsen and Pestoff (2006), on the other hand, give the concept of co-production a character of sharing the production process with both individual citizens and third sector organizations. In this way “the involvement of citizens transforms the service, but they are themselves transformed by the service. Likewise, the involvement of the third sector allows it to deliver services

differently, but in doing so it is itself incorporated into the institutionalized system of provision” (Brandsen e Pestoff 2006). This means that it is necessary to move beyond a one-way relationship between the state and the third sector as principal and agent, or provider and recipient. In other words, the two authors give the concept of co-production a meaning similar to that of co-design, although they make a further distinction in co-governance (the third sector participates in the planning and delivery of public services) in co-management (third sector organizations produce services in collaboration with the state) and in co-production (the citizens producer their own services at least in part).

In Italy, however, there is broad agreement that two factors paved the way for a radical change in the relationship between public administration and non-profit organisations. The first element concerns Article 55 of the Third Sector Code approved in 2017. This provision of the law, entitled 'Involvement of Third Sector entities', introduces the possibility of active participation by the Third Sector in co-planning and co-programming moments, allowing them to collaborate with administrations in order to better pursue their solidaristic and general interest purposes and to pool the wealth of skills and experience gained (Arena 2020). According to Felice Scalvini (2018), it is precisely in this provision of the law that the principle of horizontal subsidiarity, as laid down in Article 118(4) of the Italian constitution, finds expression.

To reinforce an approach more inclined to solidarity than to conflict, a second factor also intervened: a pronouncement of the Constitutional Court. With its ruling 131 of 26 June - 'a landmark ruling' according to Marocchi (2020) -, the court definitively clarified the provisions of Article 55 of the third sector code, ruling that there is no incompatibility between it and European Union law. The judicial authority has therefore set a new milestone in terms of co-planning and co-programming: relationships inspired by collaboration rather than competition may exist between public and Third Sector entities. The result is an unprecedented protagonism for the Third Sector entities, which can participate in the collaborative process with equal dignity and at the same level as the public body, according to criteria of transparency in pursuit of social goals (Pizzolato 2020, Gori 2020).

Competition and collaboration then become two possible options. The public authority can activate the former when it needs to 'simply' purchase a service, or it can choose the latter to put into circulation ideas, resources and skills to be translated into programmes and projects capable of providing answers to common needs.

In recent times there has therefore been a radical overhaul in the relations between the Third Sector and the public administration, facilitated - despite some ambiguities of interpretation - by the reform itself. There are, however, those who, on the point of law, speak more appropriately of 'forgotten co-programming' and then rediscovered (Frediani, 2021, pp. 172-173). By this he means that these collaborative relations, albeit in a minor form, were already present and regulated since the early 1990s (Gori, 2021). The reference here is to the law on social services (no. 328 of 2000), the law on voluntary associations (no. 266 of 1991) and others that followed, all part of the same journey that goes by the name of 'shared administration', according to Gregorio Arena's definition.

Learning by doing: private organisations programming and the failures of the public sector

Usually the regulatory parabola is accompanied (and often anticipated) by practices and customs that translate into facts, that is, into history. It is therefore necessary to look to it in order to reconstruct the evolution of relations between third sector organisations, especially in the social services, and the public administration. The aim of this section is to trace those forms of co-planning and co-programming experimented in the past and today rediscovered and reinforced by a more solid regulatory framework.

The starting point is the 1970s and 1980s. We were facing a difficult context of epochal change: it was the period of the oil crisis and stagflation, but the way of producing and working was also changing. From industrial, society was becoming increasingly post-industrial and linked to the world of services. Compared to the past, the economic crisis caused new needs to emerge: unemployment, youth distress, psychiatric suffering, but also the use (and abuse) of alcohol and drugs. To these, other needs were added: an older population, a shrinking family, which would require help in looking after children and caring for the elderly. These were issues and problems to which the traditional welfare system could not provide answers, for financial but above all organisational reasons. Firstly, the ratio of public expenditure to GDP is said to have increased from 24.8% in 1951 to 54.4% in 1982. But at the beginning of the 1980s, 25% of total public expenditure was absorbed by pensions and benefits, whereas in the early 1950s this was just around 8.5% of total expenditure (Borzaga, Ianes, 2006). The Italian welfare system was in fact based more on monetary

transfers, i.e. pensions, much less on the provision of services, especially if there was a need to organise them on a small scale where personalised intervention was required.

At that stage, the public body therefore struggled to program and plan in the specific field of social services. It simply did not intervene, resulting in what can be described as a failure of the state to respond to a social need. Similarly, for the reasons argued in the literature (information asymmetry, moral hazard, oligopolies and oligopsones), the coordination mechanism based on the exchange between equivalents (the market) would also have encountered several limitations in realising a social service, running into the so-called market failures. Finally, the very idea of organising social policies with for-profit enterprises would not have led to the desired results. The mix of authority and contractual relations that governs this enterprise and the ownership entrusted to capital contributors would have re-proposed the same problems as market failure, e.g. information asymmetry and moral hazard especially in the relationship between producer and consumer-user. Moreover, the meagre profits guaranteed by the specific sector of social services could have made it unprofitable for for-profit companies to enter this production segment, again realising a market failure, i.e. the non-solution to the new problems of collective interest.

It was voluntary work that organised an initial, provisional response to emerging social needs, and later the first social cooperatives. Between the seventies and eighties, therefore, the planning of social services was taken over - often according to the learning by doing method - by all those realities that, born from below, today constitute the relevant backbone of the variegated world of the Third Sector.

Various historical reconstructions on the evolution of third sector organisations in Italy, especially of social cooperatives (Borzaga, Ianes 2006; Ianes, Borzaga 2021), indicate how the first subjects to design services to the person were not public administrations, but those social promoters who had recognised needs, pointed out situations of hardship, noted the limits and deficiencies of the public sector, and finally mobilised human and financial energies in order to make up for the shortcomings of public welfare. This same interpretation suggests a key to understanding the nature, birth and subsequent (exponential) growth of the third sector organisations present in the social sector: it was not the public administrations that encouraged the start-up of these first initiatives, there was no initial desire to decentralise or outsource this type of service; it was, on the contrary, the most sensitive section of society that in the absence of public intervention became active and organised itself spontaneously, set up the first voluntary organisations, then the social

cooperatives, playing a proactive role in the construction of a social protection system at local level (Centro studi Cgm 1994).

Only later did some local administrations, especially municipalities, perceive the valuable service these organisations were performing for the community. They therefore became willing to contribute, at least in part, to the expenses (Ianes, Borzaga 2021). In truth, for a good part of the 1980s, economic support to the newly-established third sector initiatives took the form of episodic funding that became an acknowledgement of the meritorious activity carried out in favour of the neediest and most fragile section of society. The season of the 'one-off contribution' was thus inaugurated, a way through which the public administration, especially the local one, recognised and appreciated the vitality of a 'world'. It supported its activity financially. However, this was done with a patchy, fragmented, episodic contribution, which was not proportionate to either the quantity or the quality of the interventions put in place and only partly covered management costs. Not only that, because this same uncertainty and the impossibility of reasoning in the medium term would have prevented any planning or even design activity. In this way, local authorities became - certainly - fundamental interlocutors for third sector realities, but their relationship suffered from important limitations.

Co-programming ante litteram: the season of conventions

The public body recognised the third sector organisation with a grant, but this was not commensurate with the actual service provided, nor with the quality of the interventions undertaken. Nor was the true nature of the organisations receiving the subsidies verifiable, so that abuses or grey areas could not be ruled out. Rather than a 'market' exchange, between public and private, a 'political' exchange was established, aimed at seeking, preserving and cultivating consensus.

For this reason, it became necessary to revise the approach taken, to overcome the logic of 'extemporaneity', in order to try to establish a strong partnership relationship between public decision-makers and third sector entities.

An initial experiment in this sense took place in 1984 between the Municipality of the city of Brescia (Lombardy) and a number of social cooperatives, coordinated by their reference consortium, Sol.co. To this and through it to the associated cooperatives, the municipality entrusted the management of the city's public green spaces for the three-year period 1985-

'87 with the intention above all of employing disadvantaged workers. It was one of the first times that the agreement between the parties took the form of a 'convention', an innovative and still little known contractual formula in Italy.

The convention that was stipulated to manage the 'green operation' (as the project was called), was nothing more than a mode of ante litteram co-programming. In fact, what was established between the public administration and third sector organisations was not a simple customer-supplier relationship for entrusting the maintenance of public green areas, but concerned a more articulated agreement, which was to be filled with content through an ongoing confrontation between the parties. Third sector organisations demanded to be involved right from the planning and design phase. They were to be given an equal role in the definition of social policies and the way they were organised. For its part, the local administration demanded periodic reports on costs, guarantees on the implementation of services, timeframes and management methods; in short, on the congruence between what was planned and financed and social policy objectives.

The added value of the green initiative promoted by the Municipality of Brescia and the social cooperatives lay precisely in the fact that they were able to create an organic design of social utility, to unite within a single action two different but related needs: the need to pursue the common good (the management of the city's gardens) and the possibility of getting marginalised people into work.

The 'green operation' continued over time; when the contract expired, the convention would be renewed several times. This convention, one of the first in Italy, was followed by others stipulated throughout the state.

Further impetus to the use of this partnership formula was given by the approval of a number of national laws, such as 266/91 on voluntary organisations, 381/91 on social cooperation, and even earlier 241/90 and especially 142/90, which gave shape to the possibility of establishing solid and lasting relations between private social organisations and local administrations. They also provided for the explicit possibility of entrusting third parties, including private ones, with the organisation and provision of local public services, including social and health services.

With the conventions, the public authority's attitude also changed. If it had initially been a few citizens who had organised themselves autonomously and to whom the public authority had paid some aid to partially cover costs, it was now the public authority itself that recognised the importance of permanently providing the service because it was of interest

to the entire community. Hence the need to overcome the partial logic of periodic and occasional contributions; and hence the need to initiate a cultural change capable of introducing new logics, based on the culture of 'negotiation' in the relationship between the public and the private social sector, in order to give security to third sector subjects and continuity to their work.

By entering into agreements, in fact, the two contracting bodies - local government and private social bodies - established well-defined conditions of collaboration. The public body undertook to guarantee continuous, coordinated and non-episodic funding, requiring from the third sector organisation a commitment on results and the time coverage of services. The third sector organisation preserved its autonomy and responsibility in the management of the service, but committed itself to the funding body to be accountable for the activity performed.

This type of collaboration consolidated the non-profit sector: having a solid agreement with a public body was the best guarantee of being able to strengthen its organisational and operational structure, remunerate the productive factors involved and start a process of accumulation. In addition, the presence of an increasingly structured demand demanded that the provider organisation adapt its resources, both human and entrepreneurial, to the new requirements.

At this early stage, the number of actors involved was rather small. Many of them also had the intuition of the initial intervention and were the ones who first started the experimentation; for this reason, they possessed and held all the necessary skills and competences to organise that service. In this context, the public administration was inclined to directly commission the third sector organisation that had first given impetus to the initiative and proposed it. It certainly did not resort to an extended competition procedure. In other words, the third sector organisation that most demonstrated a marked capacity for innovation, a willingness to broaden its horizons and experiment with new activities, was the one with which the administration initiated a direct confrontation, initiated a sort of co-programming and drew up an agreement.

Competition and its limits

This way of entrusting the provision of social services, by private contracts and agreement, became a constant throughout the 1980s and much of the 1990s. In truth, this way of proceeding was not without limitations. There were no clear and shared rules in quantifying the economic commitment. Moreover, co-planning rather than a practised terrain ended up becoming a mere wishful thinking. More often than not, there was little sharing of the path taken. The intention was undoubtedly positive: the use of the convention would have fostered mutual interaction between public bodies and third sector actors. However, on the practical side, a fruitful interchange did not always occur. It was difficult to glimpse a common construction path for social policies: there was a lack of mutual involvement in the definition of the project, in the subsequent implementation phase and in the coordination and control phase. Therefore, corrective measures had to be introduced precisely to make the collaboration between the public and the private social sector effective.

However, with the European Community Directive 92/50 of 18 June 1992 and the regulations that followed, the European Community demanded that the public administration adopt a less discretionary approach in its policies for awarding social services. It was from that moment that the mechanism of the tender, often conducted according to the criterion of maximum reductions, became more and more established. It was a system that only introduced elements of competition into the process of selecting the body to be entrusted with the management of a given social service (Centro studi Cgm 1997). An exception to selection by tender was allowed only for 'innovative and experimental interventions', for which the framework law on social services, Law 328 in 2000, gave the possibility of a direct and collaborative relationship between third sector entities and the public administration. For the rest, the selection of the third sector entity by the public decision-maker had to take place through competition. This was the prevailing model that imposed itself in the 1990s and 2000s in the field of social services. However, the relationship between local authorities and third sector actors also changed. And it often changed for the worse. From a public-private relationship based on sharing - although not without its limits - it moved to a relationship with a purely performance-based value. The public body was interested in outsourcing a service, and in obtaining it at the lowest possible cost. Instead, it was up to the social private entity to play the role of supplier on the basis of specifications defined upstream by the administration. The selection therefore took place by means of a call for tenders, the purpose of which was to choose the various suppliers according to 'objective' criteria. While the contract assumed the nature of a simple exchange

between buyer and supplier of the "buy-sell" or "give for get" type. This approach made it possible to consolidate the use of third sector entities for the production of social services, making them grow in number and size.

In some cases, this same approach incentivised third sector organisations to turn into mere service providers, lacking initiative, with the public body playing a dominant role in establishing implementation methods and prices. The adoption of tender specifications based on price as the prevailing, if not exclusive, criterion for selection, further flattened these organisations to the wishes of the public body. Not only that. Public direction acted in three directions. Firstly, it oriented the activities of the third sector towards the demands of the median voter, i.e. the elderly and minors, the most politically represented, while other needs were left uncovered. Secondly, the selection of the contractor through tenders ended up introducing a marked de-territorialisation of the interventions and their depersonalisation. The offer was less calibrated to the needs of individuals, less attentive to finding original solutions, flattened instead to ordinary and routine activity, more focused on a high degree of standardisation (Fazzi, 2021). Thirdly, the same public hand favoured the emergence of new third sector realities. They promoted a high level of professionalism, but at the same time lost many volunteers and a certain approach based on participation and sharing between the different stakeholders involved. It has been argued in the literature that, as a result of contracting out, third-sector organizations have become "organizational hybrids" (Evers, 2005; Brandsen, Van de Donk, Putters, 2005), i.e., entities that have taken on in part the typical characteristics of state entities (e.g., accentuated formalization) and in part the aspects of market organizations (perhaps not profit maximizing, but income maximizing) (Brandsen, Pestoff, 2006).

Co-planning and co-programming: a good alternative to competition

Over time, after experiments and comparisons, the aforementioned limitations of competitive procedures became apparent. At times, attempts were made to deal with them by adopting tendering schemes where social quality indicators took on significant weight. Perhaps, however, it was only by overcoming the instrument of competitive tendering and fierce competition that it would have been possible to introduce correctives to ensure greater stakeholder involvement and greater sharing on how to organise the provision of social

services. Moreover, only by recovering the spirit of co-programming (and to some extent co-planning) that had animated the season of conventions would it have been possible to gain ground in terms of creativity and dynamism (Dalla Mura 2005).

This is a hypothesis that, as mentioned, has become more concrete thanks to Article 55 of the third sector code and also thanks to the aforementioned ruling, number 131 of 26 June 2020. A path, by the way, that can be taken in the relationship between public administrations and all the subjects that today make up the third sector in Italy, not only those involved in social services. To look for alternatives to the tender instrument, it then becomes interesting to search for some good practices of co-planning and co-programming not only in social services but in all those fields in which the third sector operates.

From this point of view, the negotiation process set up by PAT and the case study of the Trentino music schools (TMS), which will be illustrated in the following paragraphs, are interesting because they show how, not only in social services but also in culture, it is possible to set up public-private relationship mechanisms based not so much on competition but on collaboration.

Methodology

We have studied in depth the production of a widespread music education service in the province of Trento, Italy. The study is an ongoing project funded by Fondazione Caritro (a local bank foundation), which has involved 13 nonprofit music schools, their directors, teachers and students and other external stakeholders such as policy makers at provincial and municipality level. Data were collected both from primary (using interviews and survey instruments) and secondary sources (websites of schools and music teachers, chamber of commerce data, schools statutes and public policy documents) to build a picture of the music education system, of TMS as organisations (information were collected using a questionnaire addressing organizational features in terms of size, governance, use of resources and networking), as well as of the artistic and teaching identity of teachers and students, their relationship with their activities and motivation. We conducted 50 interviews with teachers, directors, policy makers, and administered an online survey to all teachers and students over 14 years of age (still in progress). Although it is not the aim of this work to provide a full account of the data and research approach, we think it is useful here to use some of the insights of this research to illustrate our point on the relevance of co-production

for meritorious goods production, and its impacts in terms of redistribution and access to what society deem as valuable for the large part of the population.

The cultural sector in Trentino

The Autonomous Province of Trento (PAT heron) is located in the north-east of Italy and has a special status which allows it to design laws with a primary role, which for ordinary regions belongs to the central state. This peculiarity – which exists for historical reasons – enables PAT to design development strategies sometimes anticipating the central government, as it happened with respect to social services and cultural services. With respect to the latter, in particular, it is interesting to observe how culture was conceived and promoted as a system, using the tools of public-private partnership very early, using at that time an innovative approach with respect to other national experiences. To describe this experience we rely on an extended interview with the director of PAT's cultural services, Claudio Martinelli, who has coordinating the service for the past 30 years. The socio-economic challenge – for the public actor – was not confined to the production of a highly meritorious good with its material and immaterial traits, but also to build a solid basis for a sector that is characterized by a high degree of precariousness. The development of the cultural sector has been approached by identifying its main actors (the “platforms”), which were deemed to sustain the ever-changing fluctuations of the “cultural sea”. The platform system was aimed at creating stability. It included the integrated library system (86 libraries), cultural volunteering associations (about 3000, e.g. community brass bands, philodramatic associations, association for cultural recreational activities more generally), community music schools (13), museums, theaters, festivals and their coordinating organisations, buildings and sites of historical heritage.

The guiding principle of cultural policy, for all platforms and for music schools in particular, was the construction of a solid relationship with the actors producing the service. This reflected deeper values of inclusivity, of building on existing territorial assets and amplify participation, competences and opportunities for the actors involved and the users of their services. PAT's role was “to build cultural processes” to enable (rather than constrain) actors (i.e. music schools) to produce services. Overall the efficiency of the system was meant to

improve, by sharing the construction of the processes dialogically with its main stakeholders.

The partnership was developed according to what the province called a “negotiated approach.” This was developed using specific agreements to share both the design of projects as well as their implementation and management. More in details the approach consisted in “sharing the core of an idea” with the stakeholder, and to allow the stakeholder to pursue the aim autonomously, within a shared regulation. The production of public value, which is typical of the public authority, is entrusted to the capabilities, competences and ideas of the private actor. The negotiated approach, cooperative in nature, was opposed to the alternative competitive bid mechanism. Agreements were instituted mainly with nonprofit cultural organisations that were able to meet the regulatory requirements and service production standards. These were “strong” actors, to whom PAT could trust and delegate the production of public value.

The 13 music schools that we consider in more detail below are one of the most relevant examples of how PAT has innovated for the production of cultural services, with the aim of providing the greatest possible access to music education. This is also the most interesting application of the public-private partnership at territorial level, by choice opposite to the model used in the nearby province of Bozen, where community music education is produced directly by a public institute. The music school system in Trentino built especially on the recognition of grass-roots music schools, which already operated in the province. The negotiated approach led to the institution with Law 12/1987 of a regulation and a register to which the schools that were able to structure themselves to meet the educational and administrative standards requested could adhere and receive funding. The continuity of this model was based on its proved efficiency and effectiveness to provide accessible basic music education and on the ability of the organisations involved (the public actor and the private nonprofit schools) to structure their organisations sustainably, both educationally, artistically and economically.

The efficient production of music education through public-private partnership

When we talk about the efficiency of an economic system - because this is also what we are talking about when we consider the production of music education - we are referring to its ability to use resources without waste, consistent with the effectiveness of the system, i.e. its ability to move towards the desirable goals. This implies that the public or private organisations that are part of the system ensure its efficiency when they too are, promoting welfare through the production of services that are as accessible as possible in the present and possibilities for growth in the future (Borzaga and Sacchetti, 2021). Knowing which service production solutions are most efficient, i.e. understanding how to organise the production factors and according to which rules, is therefore of interest to us in order to understand whether the PAT's music education system also contributes, as it is organised, to producing welfare and future growth, and why.

Basic music education can be interpreted from an economic point of view as a system that aims to produce a particular type of meritorious service, i.e. a service that can in principle be produced by private for-profit organisations, but is alternatively produced by the public sector or co-produced with private non-profits in order to allow for prices below market rates and to make the service accessible to the greatest number of people. This is a choice of economic policy that in the case of PAT was defined, as we have seen, through a partnership between the public actor and the private non-profit precisely because musical culture was recognised as having a public value, and it was desired to guarantee its dissemination as widely as possible through non-profit organisations, which were able to activate the resources present in the territory, in terms of music competences and teachers, municipal spaces, and organisational skills.

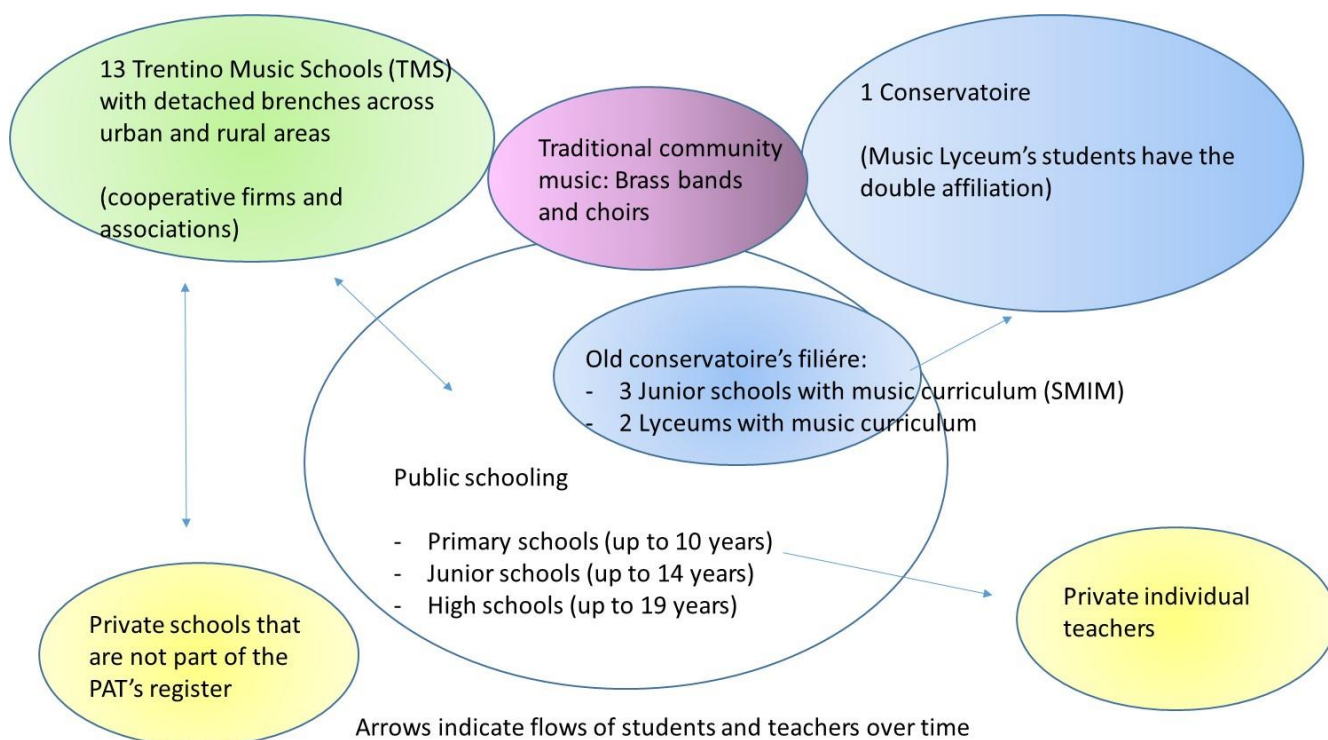
The alternatives, as mentioned, are on the one hand the production of the service by the public sector alone, or on the other hand the production of the service coordinated by the market exchange alone whereby the terms of the service are decided entirely by the organisation and the price of the service is fully borne by the user. The latter alternative, with respect to the public objective, has the clear limitation of not allowing access to the service to those who cannot pay the full price of tuition, producing a collective loss of welfare at the level of the economic system. This inefficiency is a form of market failure, indicating that the exchange of the music education service for the price set by the market is still

possible but inefficient, insofar as it excludes from fruition that part of demand that, although wanting to access the service, finds itself having to give it up due to a lower ability to pay than that demanded by those offering the service.

The public school system, on the other hand, through compulsory schooling, in particular music-oriented junior schools (called SMIM, age 11-13) and music lyceums (age 14-19), has the advantage of offering the service at no or very low cost (school enrolment fees) and therefore of guaranteeing maximum access with respect to price, but only to those of school age who want to follow a pathway based on the study of music at a young age, to then possibly continue their studies at an academic level at the conservatoire. SMIMs moreover are only available in two urban center, thus limiting access geographically to those who live in rural remote areas. Also, the system offers a service with defined standards, presenting an advantage in terms of the guarantees offered to those who use it, but also limitations in that it can be rigid with respect to specific requirements and new needs that may emerge in the users. This system therefore has benefits, but also barriers with respect to the welfare objectives that PAT sets itself.

- First of all, it allows musical training only within the school age group or within an academic pathway, thus excluding the adult population or those who, in general, are not interested in academic musical training.
- Second, it gives access prior to an entry test (testing both musical competences and attitudes).
- Third, it is a system that has traditionally been slow to recognise novelties, for example offering teaching activities on a limited number of music instruments and musical genres, thus excluding those interested in other areas.
- Forth, the geographical distribution of public music schools is concentrated in medium to large urban centres, excluding pupils who are unable to travel to attend lessons.

Table - The music education system in Trentino – multiple and coexisting possibilities



PAT however, as part the cultural policy illustrated in the previous section, uses a third way to coordinate public and private resources, which is neither residual nor alternative to the others (conservatoire's filière of primary and secondary schools). The mixed public-private system in which TMS operate does not exclude the other solutions. In fact, it exists in a music ecosystem where the public education system centred on vocational secondary schools and conservatories is well established. At the same time, we find other private organisations that are not part of the provincial register and that can take various legal forms, from association to limited liability company. These offer training services, but also recreational activities, using music as their main medium. Likewise, some form of music education can be obtained through private tuition with individual teachers.

PAT and the 13 music schools accredited form a public-private system offering a type of service, which is distinguished by the fact that it does not interpose between the potential users and the music education service elements of exclusion based on criteria of:

- age,
- instrument and musical taste,

- preparation prior to entering the school,
- geographical location, since the schools and their branches are widely distributed throughout the territory (unlike public schools with a music curricula which are concentrated in the two urban areas of Trento/Gardolo and Riva del Garda).

The governance of Trentino's music education

The organisational forms of the Trentino Music Schools (TMS) correspond to democratic forms with a cooperative or associative basis, with the exception of one (a civic school managed and owned by one local municipality). The Cultural Services Directorate of PAT, as mentioned, represents the main source of funding for the TMS system, and is therefore the main body to which the TMS must report. This does not detract from the fact that there is also a system of accountability within the schools, towards their members. Nine MS are in fact established as teachers' cooperatives. Two schools are multi-stakeholder associations (they associate both teachers and pupils), and one is a single stakeholder association (it associates music students).

Table 1 – TMS and their organisational forms

	TMS	Organisational form
1	CDM	Association
2	MINIPOLIFONICI	
3	SCUOLA MUSICALE DI PRIMIERO	
4	DIAPASON	Cooperative
5	ECCHER	
6	MOSER	
7	NOVAK	
8	OPERA PRIMA	
9	PENTAGRAMMA	
10	SIM	

11	SMAG	
12	SMG	
13	ZANDONAI	Civic school

These organisational forms chosen by the founding members between the 1980s and 1990s, introduced a system of governance that was highly innovative compared to the modes of production of the music education service practised in compulsory schools, rather than in conservatories, or within brass band corps (in the latter, the relationship between musicians and the organisation is defined by a voluntary relationship). Like cooperatives and associations, TMSs present themselves as nonprofit organisations aimed at producing a meritorious service, they are non-profit and their management follows democratic principles. That is, there is no system of ownership and the members' meetings function according to the 'one head one vote' principle, the members elect their governing bodies and approve their budgets.

The democratic principle that governs the individual organisations is part of a public-private system of co-governance and co-production of music education in which PAT acts as the main regulator and funder. In this way, the collaboration between the public and private sectors has built a system that combines different modes of coordination:

- the cooperation among teachers or teachers and students through the non-profit schools at organizational level,
- the cooperation between the schools and the public authority at territorial level,

with the aim of providing continuous access to a music education service in both urban and remote areas, as well as to people of all ages, including groups that would be excluded by traditional forms of education.

The governing and administrative boards of the music schools, specifically, have the mandate to pursue educational purposes and thus well-being for the users, but also for their workers (all the more so since they are organisations mostly based on the cooperative bond between teachers) and the community as a whole through the production of widespread

musical culture among people. It should also not be forgotten that the continuity of the educational and cultural action is guaranteed by the economic and financial sustainability of the schools. The schools' objectives therefore include the creation of:

- Accessible and quality music education
- Creation of a widespread musical culture in the territory
- Increasing the cultural offer on the territory
- Employment opportunities for musicians
- Professional growth for teachers
- Friendly and professional relationships between people
- Civic values (inclusion, solidarity, justice, diversity, interaction and openness to others)
- Financial sustainability or positive profits to reinvest in educational and artistic activities

Historically, some schools originated as municipal civic schools (only the Zandonai civic school remained as such) while the others turned into working cooperatives at the beginning of the 1990s. Others were born from the bottom up, mainly as associations on the initiative of young musicians who in the 1980s were already working as professionals or had completed their music education. The latter did not necessarily or exclusively take place within conservatories, but also within brass band schools, local parishes, or for some with alternative or complementary educational paths which included periods of study abroad or in American-style schools. Prior to the establishment of the TMS system, co-operation between teachers also involved teaching brass band participants. This was done again using a cooperative form (“musica artista”, now disappeared), but with great uncertainties for teachers who could not have a stable economic income. The existence of these experiences met the political will to create a widespread system of music education in the province. The policy maker's idea was to provide widespread access to culture through a capillary system of libraries and music schools. In short, libraries and TMS were to become the points of access to culture, the study of music (including band training), the creation of cultural initiatives and social relations. The expected benefit concerned a multiplicity of categories

of people, across age, profession, geographical location, triggering cascading synergies to the benefit of people and territory as a whole.

The stabilisation of this system, which was born spontaneously as a vital impulse from community needs (training brass band members) and from the aspirations of the musicians of the time, took place in 1987 with the establishment of the provincial register (Law 12/1987). This instituted an administrative criterion for selecting the organisations that were entitled to access public funding. Public funding aimed at covering the personnel costs of the schools according to criteria regulated by the Province. This policy choice is consistently maintained over time. Between 2008 and 2019, provincial funding for TMS increased from four and a half million to over five and a half million.

Over time, the number of schools accountable for public funding did not change. However, in eight cases new schools entered by a process of acquisition by incumbent schools. The reasons for these acquisitions are partly related to the possibility of access organizational resources with adequate teaching and organisational capacities for provincial funding. These events give us a more precise idea of the structural dynamic of the basic music education system. In fact, it suggests that the entry of other schools into the system occurred through processes of acquisition of external schools, while in the 35 years since the creation of the provincial system, no other schools have been added from scratch. On the one hand, this has ensured the continuity of stable funding flows for schools, whose catchment area was until a few years ago rather stable, also for demographic reasons and catchment area preferences. On the other hand, as can also be seen from the province's cultural planning documents, it is hoped that, despite this relative structural immobility that has partly served the logic of the system, the TMS will find a drive to renew themselves.

Table - Provincial funding for music schools (2008-2019)

<i>Year (Euros)</i>	<i>Public funding</i>
2008	4.483.293
2009	4.734.749
2010	4.657.882
2011	3.814.656
2012	n.d.
2013	n.d.
2014	n.d.
2015	4.994.919
2016	n.d.
2017	n.d.
2018	5.325.000
2019	5.625.000

Source - Annual reports on the cultural activities of the autonomous province

The next ten years, following the institution of the register, were dedicated to the institution of a shared pedagogic standard. In 1994 the schools together with PAT agreed on a shared and common educational standard and curriculum (“orientamenti didattici”). This had elements of novelty with respect to the conservatoire’s curriculum and way of teaching, as well as elements of continuity (which were and still are a source of debate and criticism). There have been changes and reforms since. The last one in 2018.

The aim of shared rules and public funding was to guarantee stability to the school system, giving continuity not only to the work of the teachers but also to the courses of the approximately 5,000 pupils who, on average, attended the provincial system courses each year (2006-20018), and the 1,800 pupils who have been attending brass band training within the music schools since 2008. TMS have also provided competencies to support music school education in public primary schools across the province, with additional programmes funded by PAT (these stopped in 2018). The provincial funding overall ensured

a more equitable access to the service, especially in the age group up to 14 years, with 70% of the individual annual fee financed by the provincial contribution.

Table - Number of music school students. Years 2006-2018.

Source: TSM on data from PAT Cultural Activities Service. Autonomous Province of Trento (2019), Annual Report on Cultural Activities 2015-2017

The policy maker's idea, which most schools shared, was centred on a democratic principle, or rather on an idea of distributive justice that guaranteed widespread access to a public good. It therefore relied, and still relies, on existing or emerging local resources. As recalled, in the 1990s most of the schools took the form of cooperative enterprises and in some cases associations, underlining the three souls of this system:

- the public one, of general direction and distribution of resources,
- the cooperative one, which relies on the interdependencies and co-production between PAT and the schools,
- the musicians' ability to give themselves shared rules and organisational structures,

<i>Year</i>	<i>school students</i>	<i>brass band students</i>	<i>other</i>	<i>total students</i>
2006-07	4.963	9	366	5.400
2007-08	4.973	52	82	5.087
2008-09	5.072	1.831	66	6.858
2009-10	5.423	1.921	105	7.316
2010-11	5.216	2.213	96	7.463
2011-12	5.636	2.100	92	7.657
2012-13	5.542	1.995	136	7.489
2013-14	5.493	1.839	168	7.336
2014-15	5.443	1.843	157	7.244
2015-16	5.396	1.891	77	7.248
2016-17	5.407	1.864	186	7.297
2017-18	5.502	1.782	138	7.233

enabling them to offer a more diversified service, useful to the needs of a varied user base and in a different way than those used in the few public music school that are part of the conservatoire filière.

To offer this innovative educational service PAT and TMS have developed a strong interdependence: PAT needs organisations that are sufficiently structured and organized to respect requirements of transparency and accountability, as well as educational standards, while TMS need public funding in order to maintain their service accessible for users, good labour conditions, and be financially sustainable. Likewise, the success of TMS in educating thousands of students every year, including additional teaching programmes funded by PAT within general public schools, has contributed to decrease the exclusion from music education, raise interest in young people for music, and fed enrollment in TMS as well as in the conservatoire filière of schools.

Co-operation was not intended for the sole benefit of the cooperators (teachers mainly), but also of the pupils and the community at large. It is no coincidence that in three TMS that take associative form we find pupils as members of the organization.¹

In terms of collaborations among TMS, these developed mainly between 1987 and 1997. During this time schools worked together and with PAT to define and redefine the approach to music education and the contents of the rules regulating their activities. However, attempts to create a formal level of coordination for all schools have failed. The attempt to create a second-tier level of cooperation by forming a consortium drifted in 2004. Collaborations now regards self-selected relationships forming groups of 2 or 3 schools that are particularly close in terms of approach and/or geographically. More recently, moreover, TMS have been more and more concerned with contractual issues for teachers and issues of generational change for both teachers and management. In general, at the moment, one of the limitation regards the need to develop a more coherent communication and collaboration among schools, to build as in the very start, a (new) common view, which reflects the current needs of potential users, teachers, and local cultural development.

¹ It is interesting to notice, on this, what our teachers's survey indicates (N=250). Formal associative rights are not matched in practice by active participation of the members in formal assembly occasions, but rather by a more participative pedagogic style that addresses the student's needs and attitudes through teaching and artistic activities.

Co-planning and co-programming: areas of efficiency and inefficiency

With the recent Italian reform of the Third Sector and in particular with Article 55 of the Third Sector Code (Legislative Decree No. 117/2017), the method of co-planning and co-programming is institutionalised as a possible method through which the Third Sector can enter into relations with the public administration. The law has thus normalised the collaborative method as an alternative option to the competitive one based on the awarding of a service or provision by tender. Moreover, in keeping with the context of the reform, the use of the collaborative method does not only concern local welfare policies but affects the entire range of activities of collective interest envisaged by the third sector code, e.g. youth and cultural policies (Marocchi, 2019). Thus, today the response to a social need, a cultural proposal, or more specifically, as illustrated, music education can be pursued either by resorting to the usual system of tendering, or by setting up a co-planning and co-programming solution between the public and the third sector, managing these same instances according to the collaborative method.

It was observed that co-planning and co-programming practices were activated well before the reform of the third sector, both in the field of social services but also in the cultural field, as the case of the Trentino music schools demonstrates. However, it is not enough to change the public-private relationship instrument in order to have an improvement in the management and delivery of services of collective interest. In order for public and private organisations to take advantage of the method of co-planning and co-programming to make the production of a meritorious good more efficient and to favour its maximum accessibility, it is necessary to consider the strengths and weaknesses of this approach, or if you like, the areas of efficiency and inefficiency, for which corrective measures will have to be introduced.

There are thus possible areas of efficiency:

- 1) if activated from the outset, the method of co-planning and co-programming fosters a better proactive climate on the part of the actors involved, of collaboration and mutual sharing. This is not so obvious, on the contrary, in a competitive context, where diverging interests emerge in the dynamic between public purchaser and third sector supplier and obviously between third sector actors competing with each other for the assignment of a task.

2) the collaborative approach, starting from a better frame of mind of the actors taking part in the process, can allow - thanks to the convergence of several ideas - to identify more innovative and creative solutions to meet needs, and thus to get out of the routine or purely performance-based offer.

3) the involvement of several stakeholders, from different backgrounds and with different skills, gives the participatory process a more unified and overall vision, capable of activating various resources and various channels to guarantee a greater possible coverage of a service, being able to satisfy the demands of a varied user base. This aspect has occurred in the case of the Trentino music schools, where the co-presence of several players in the local music scene allows access to musical training to diverse types of users, in terms of age and social background and preferences. This is made possible thanks to the service activated by third sector organisations outside the official channels of the public school and conservatoire.

4) in contexts characterised by information asymmetry, the cooperation approach seems more effective than the competitive one in reducing or containing the negative effects of an asymmetric relationship: for example, a service offered to the recipient that is inferior to the one agreed upon. In this case, a service activated through a co-programming process could guarantee cost savings compared to one entrusted through a tender, which requires additional bureaucratic and control costs to try to reduce opportunistic behaviour as much as possible.

5) Co-planning and co-programming realise the principle of horizontal subsidiarity, understood as recognition of the autonomous initiative of citizens and third sector entities to self-organise in order to carry out activities of common interest in collaboration with the public administration. This, too, represents an area of efficiency, since the third sector organisation guarantees coverage of a service on a larger scale, also in favour of users who would otherwise be excluded.

Alongside areas of efficiency, the co-planning and co-programming method can also complain of areas of inefficiency, which which must be considered:

1) there is first of all the problem of accessibility to co-planning and co-programming solutions. The problem does not arise so much when the number of stakeholders is limited, but especially when third sector entities increase in number. Here it becomes a problem to give oneself an objective and non-discriminatory criterion to decide which stakeholders to

involve in the participatory process and which ones to exclude. Moreover, it is not easy to establish which party can be entitled to take on such a responsibility. The participatory experiences that have been experimented in the past, especially in the field of local welfare, highlight the shortcomings that can emerge if one does not operate within well-defined boundaries and criteria that guard against discretionary choices. Otherwise, the risk is that only the major stakeholders will sit at the table, while representatives of smaller bodies and users will be excluded. If public administration direction prevails in any case, emerging third sector bodies or those less in line with the policy maker's approach run the risk of being excluded.

2) It is not enough to replace the competitive method with the cooperative method to obtain better and more appreciable results in the dynamics that lead to organising an activity of general interest. A great deal of energy must be invested in co-planning and co-programming. A change of mentality is needed. For collaboration to be effective, the actors involved must be willing to put themselves on the line, they must compare ideas and proposals, supplement and replace them. In other words, the participatory process is complex work that requires time, dialogue skills and mutual understanding. The difficulty lies not so much in the start-up phase, but above all in the ability to maintain these necessary preconditions over time for the participatory process to be fruitful.

3) There is not always a correct awareness of the meaning of co-planning and co-programming. Often the process is misunderstood and mistaken as a consultancy service offered by the stakeholders involved on the basis of a framework defined by the public administration. In truth, this collaborative practice must be activated even before the conception of the activity to be implemented occurs. Co-planning and co-programming in fact means co-ideating, sharing a path starting from the context analysis, even before thinking of any concrete action.

4) Finally, it does not seem easy to maintain the will to collaborate. Over time, on the contrary, this may weaken, it may lose strength and enthusiasm, it may lapse into misunderstandings, it may become a routine activity that is neither productive nor innovative.

In conclusion, the relationship between the public and private sectors to design, organise and manage activities of collective interest (in the social, cultural, sporting and other fields), can increasingly become an effective and efficient alternative to the traditional bureaucratic

and competitive method. For this to happen, however, all actors involved must be aware of areas of efficiency but also of inefficiency. To remedy the latter, corrective measures will have to be introduced. For example, fostering and improving co-planning and co-programming means giving all stakeholders involved the opportunity to actively participate. Should the number of participants increase, more discussion tables could be set up because one alone may not be sufficient to foster maximum involvement, to enhance different points of view, to allow for intersectoral and multidisciplinary interpretations and responses.

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