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New challenges of cultural observatories

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New challenges of cultural observatories

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Chapter 7

Italian Regions and the Coordination of Cultural Observatories: ORMA Project

Antonio Taormina

Premises

The current situation of the Italian cultural observatory is characterised by:

- the presence of already well-established observatories, one national and four regional (created between 1985 and 2005);
- seven new observatories established in recent times at the initiative of specific regions;
- the implementation of the inter-regional project. The implementation of Regional Observatories and the collaboration of the National Observatory on entertainment policies (known by the acronym ORMA Project), sponsored by the Cultural Heritage and Activities Committee of the Conference of the Regions and the Autonomous Provinces by initiative of the Emilia-Romagna and Piedmont Regions, scheduled for 2007-2010.

The project deals particularly with live entertainment (performing arts) and cinema. Given the experimental nature of the project, this choice is primarily due to the need for a well-defined area within culture which in the future, may also be extended to all cultural areas.

Nineteen Regions and Autonomous Provinces¹ have joined the ORMA Project: Basilicata, Emilia-Romagna, Piedmont, Lombardy, Liguria, Autonomous Province of Trento, Autonomous Province of Bolzano, Friuli, Venice, Giulia, Veneto, Tuscany, Marche, Umbria, Lazio, Abruzzo, Molise, Campania, Puglia, Calabria and Sardinia².

The project is financed in conjunction with the Ministry of Cultural Heritage and Activities, mainly through funds provided for the covenant *Patto per le Attività Culturali di Spettacolo*³ and through other financing channels.

Firstly, the description of this scenario requires a diachronic synthesis of the processes which identify it.

Events in the history of Italian cultural Observatories

The 80's and the birth of the National Performing Arts Observatory

The process linked to the birth of cultural observatories began in the 80s. It emerged first in public institutions and to some extent in academia, because of the need to address the cultural sector through new scientific and functional instruments at the operational level, which enabled a deeper understanding of the economic and structural relationships imbedded in social dynamics.

All this happened in an atmosphere of great activism, emerging mainly from the new tasks allocated to the regions, the increase of public investment in culture and the changes that promoted supply and consumption.

Following the establishment of the Regions in 1970, the first response to the need to decentralize state administration — as embodied by the transfer of some responsibilities which defined the new and effective powers of local authorities — was to consolidate the provision of some of them, governed mainly by the left wing, to invest in culture and entertainment.

¹ The autonomous provinces are Bolzano and Trentino Alto Adige. As regards to this report, they can be considered regions.

² The Coordination of the Regions has entrusted the management of the project to three organisations with ample experience on building Cultural Observatories: Fondazione ATER Formazione, Fondazione Fitzcarraldo and ECCOM (European Centre for Culture Organisation and Management), which have established a Business Temporary Association.

³ The Pact for cultural entertainment activities established between the Ministry of Cultural Goods and Activities, the Regions, the Autonomous Provinces and the Municipalities was signed on January 25, 2007.

The increased investments at various levels of government from the early 80s confirmed the change in the overall picture, as well as the trend towards decentralisation, the beginning of a process that would eventually redefine the balance between institutional levels. Therefore, the subjects which promote and finance cultural activities changed in parallel with the development of the entrepreneurial capacity of private agents operating in the sector and the evolution of the transformation processes that comprise the most strictly social aspects of cultural consumption. The local governments were the first to take them into account.

The local administrations assessed the implications of supply and the new grouping needs; they realised that «leisure time» was a driver of demand, and correlating administrative decentralisation and «emerging» new patterns and cultural needs. But at that stage problems related to the extreme disparities between different areas arose in the country (between capitals and peripheral areas): there was a widening imbalance between cultural supply and demand.

Currently there is a trend towards demand stagnation in live performances and cultural heritage opposed to the substantial growth in supply (related to increased investments). As a response to a steady increase in supply, other sectors such as the publishing industry show a limited and unsystematic growth. Due to the hard effects of the crisis on the whole sector, the film industry registers a decrease in both sides.

These, as well as other factors, forced the development of tools which would measure, analyse and interpret everything that happens in culture. This awareness gave birth to the first Italian projects of cultural observatories, which had a central reference point in whose article 5 of the constitutive law of the *Fondo Unico dello Spettacolo*⁴, entitled Performing Arts Observatory:

«It is established, in the field of research and programming of the Ministry of Tourism and Entertainment⁵, the Performing Arts Observatory, whose mission is:

- a) to collect and update all data and information on the progress of the performances, in their various forms, in Italy and abroad;
- b) to get information on all annual costs in Italy, including those of the regions and local authorities, and abroad, for the support and encouragement of performances;

⁴ Law of April 30, 1985, n. 163 (en Gazz. Uff., May 4 n. 104), «Nuova disciplina degli interventi dello stato a favore dello Spettacolo». The Ministry of Tourism and Entertainment, established in 1959, was withdrawn after the popular referendum of April 18, 1993. 1998 saw the establishment of the current Ministry of Cultural Goods and Activities.

⁵ *Ibid.*

- c) to prepare a summary and analyse documents of such data and information to identify trend lines of the performances as a whole and of their individual sectors in the national and international markets.

The text unveils an important uncertainty regarding the role of the National Performing Arts Observatory. It determines its missions but not its goals, and in turn it shows an evident lack of a planning methodology.

First projects

In 1987, the Autonomous Province of Trento set up, by its own initiative (the first measure in this area undertaken by a local authority, excluding the state), an Observatory of Cultural Activities, conceived as an «office»⁶.

From that year on, the global landscape of initiatives classified as institutions and cultural observatories able to conduct feasibility studies to establish new ones (a much larger category) were wide and varied. Some pilot projects were established: promoters desired to create (not without some approximation) the first databases and to build reality interpreting tools. The lack of role models made this process totally empirical. On one hand, the observatory projects reflected the complexities and socio-cultural contradictions of the territories they represented, and, on the other, they strived to acquire their own physiognomy.

The major institutions working in this area included the Region of Lombardy, the Region and the Province of Bologna, the city of Lecce, the Region of Tuscany, the National Association of Municipalities, the Union of Italian Provinces with the CISEM-Research Institute of the Province of Milan, some research institutes (such as Gemelli of Milan), University of Bologna, and the Region of Piedmont or the Censis (Centro Nazionale Studi Investimenti Sociali) among others.

The National Working Group on Cultural Observatories was created in 1988 at the initiative of public and private institutions (among which are *l'Assessorato alla Cultura e Informazione della Regione Lombardia*, *l'Assessorato alla Cultura della Provincia di Bologna* and the Department of Sociology at the University of Bologna).

Its main task was to promote the first national discussions in this area, launching the first exchanges with the emerging observatories in other European countries.

⁶ The experiment in Trento was unsuccessful and the observatory was closed. Only in 2007, by virtue of a new law, has Trento seen the construction of a new observatory.

It is difficult to classify the observatories of that time (or the feasibility projects aimed at building them). However, they raised general interest towards research and the ability to interact with the environment by adapting their own tools to the dynamics of the sector.

2000 and the Conference of the Regions

The creative impulse, which at the end of the eighties led to the proposal of a fuzzy system of cultural observatories implemented with the support of public authorities, universities and private organisations, came to a halt, at least in part.

Many of those proposals saw financial and organisational problems, the lack of a legislation which would legitimize their support, and the misgivings of some sectors (if we think of performances). Observatories were seen as control tools manned by the authorities which financed the companies to limit their autonomy.

By the beginning of 2000, almost two decades after the creation of the National Performing Arts Observatory, three other regional observatories were born, besides those already mentioned:

- The Cultural Observatory of the Region of Lombardy, established in 1989 within the *Ufficio Studi e Rilevazione del Servizio Programmazione della Direzione Generale Cultura*, whose activities are held in conjunction with other regional structures, such as the *IRER-Istituto Regionale di Ricerca*, universities and research centres.
- *The Cultural Observatory of Piedmont (OCP)*, established in 1998 on the basis of a Memorandum of Understanding which, besides the region, involves the *IRES-Istituto di Ricerche Economico-Sociali*, the Fitzcarraldo Foundation, the City of Turin, the Compagnia di San Paolo, the *Fondazione Cassa di Risparmio of Turin* and AGIS.
- The Regional Performing Arts Observatory of the Emilia-Romagna Region, managed by *Fundazione ATER Formazione*, established in 1996 as a «permanent observatory on culture and economics» and constituted at a legislative level in 1999 under Act 13 «Standards in Performing Arts».

The process which led to the creation of the observatories seemed to have finally settled, but since 2004 and mainly due to the intervention of the Conference of the Regions, the development process (and «proliferation») of culture observatories experienced a re-launch hitherto unforeseeable.

The reasons can be found in the expected transfer of a series of powers to the Regions and Local Authorities following the reform of Article V of the Constitution of 2001 and the allocation of the sector of Performing Arts to the legislative powers shared by the State and the Regions⁷.

The issue was the core of the national conference, *Le Regioni e lo spettacolo*⁸, during which the Bill on the fundamental principles for the performing arts in accordance with Article 117, paragraph 3 of the Constitution was presented, by initiative of the Regions themselves. The proposal, among other tasks entrusted to the Regions and the Autonomous Provinces, says: «developing and tracking observatory activities even through the creation of databases on performances promoted and developed in the regional territory». It also indicates that the task of «gathering local, statistical data and information»⁹ is entrusted to the Municipalities, Provinces and Metropolitan cities.

A little later, the then called Regional Performing Arts Advisors Coordination Council approved a document that stressed the need to «deepen the knowledge of the existing regional observatories (performing arts or cultural with performing arts competence), through the creation of a working group composed of representatives of their own observatories and by the representatives of the regions concerned. Its mission was to highlight the roles and tasks assigned to their own observatories, management and operation modalities, the scientific and technical tools which they use, and the relations between them and the National Performing Arts Observatory.»

In 2005 the Regional Observatory for Culture of the Region of Marche¹⁰ was established.

In September 2006 the Cultural Heritage and Activities Committee of the Conference of the Regions and Autonomous Provinces drew up a document proposing a system of regional observatories linked together and to the Performing Arts Observatory of the Ministry of Cultural

⁷ For more information, B. Caravita di Torotto «Legislazione dello spettacolo e riforma del Titolo V: aspetti giuridici» and M. Trimarchi «Chi ha paura delle Regioni?» monographic section «Fondo unico per lo spettacolo e regionalizzazione», by A. Taormina, in *Economia della Cultura n1/2006*, Il Mulino, Bologna, 2006.

⁸ The conference, «Le Regioni e lo spettacolo. Le proposte delle Regioni per una legge nazionale di principi nel quadro delle riforme costituzionali», was held on July 9, 2004 in Bologna.

⁹ Article 6 (Duties of the Regions and Autonomous Provinces); Article 7 (Duties of the Municipalities, Provinces and Metropolitan cities) of the bill regarding Entertainment and presented by the Inter-Regional Coordination, Rome, June 16, 2004.

¹⁰ Regarding to the Legislation of the Region of Marche 75/1997 «Guideline on regional programme and financial interventions actions and procedures in the area of cultural goods and activities.»

Heritage and Activities. It advocated (also in regard to a combination of resources and intervention tools between the State, the Regions, the Provinces and the Municipalities) the establishment of common methodologies for data collection and analysis and the adoption of systems for the comparing of different realities beyond territorial specificities.

In October the same year, the Emilia-Romagna Region organised the conference, Cultural Observatories: institutional goals, organisational structure, and policy relevance¹¹, in collaboration with the European Network of Cultural Administration Training Centres (ENCATC) and Fondazione Ater Formazione (ATER), under the auspices of the University of Bologna.

The Bologna conference allowed the comparison of the Italian experience with some of the major foreign observatories, insisting on matters related to the areas of investigation and research methodologies adopted. It also allowed deep reflection on the degree of influence exerted on the definition of public cultural policies, organisation and relationship systems within the territory¹². The main intention of the organisers was to «take stock of the situation» nearly twenty years after the emergence of the first Italian projects. Hence the re-thinking of the concepts related to cultural observatories. The Bologna Conference continued in two workshops very close in time that were very important in the European debate on cultural Observatories, held in collaboration with ENCATC. The first took place in Bilbao and it was organised by the University of Deusto, and the second was organised by the Observatory of Budapest and it was held in Budapest.

In May 2007, the Coordination of the Regions, in collaboration with the *Associazione Nazionale Comuni Italiani* (ANCI) and the *Unione Provincie Italiane* (UPI) presented and activated the interregional project, «Realisation of Regional Observatories and collaboration with the National Observatory in the field of Performing arts policies», later known by its acronym ORMA.

¹¹ The conference, sponsored by the University of Bologna and the European Commission, was held in the *Sala Auditorium della Regione Emilia-Romagna*, in Bologna on October 18-19, 2006.

¹² In addition to the directors of Italian observatories, representatives of Observatorio Interarts of Barcelona, Arts Council of Finland of Helsinki, Observatory on Financing Culture in East-Central Europe of Budapest, LabforCulture.Org of Amsterdam, *Observatoire des Politiques Culturelles of Grenoble*, *Observatoire des Politiques Culturelles of Brussels*, *Observatoire de la Culture et des Communication* and *Institut de statistique of Quebec* also took part in the conference.

Observatories within the laws of the Italian regions

The ORMA Project would not be understood if the Italian regions had not shown a real interest to support and develop it.

This interest was supported by numerous legislative initiatives enacted in various regions, starting in 1999 (Observatory of the Emilia-Romagna was established in this year) onto the most recent measures concerning Sicily, Umbria and Sardinia. We must not forget that the creation of the Osservatorio Nazionale dello Spettacolo derives from the law of 1985.

We will discuss in a more summarised manner the measures taken since 1999, and we will highlight some key aspects.

With regard to its institutional and organisational management, the cultural observatory can be designated as an independent body, or as an activity or function of the Region. We find several possibilities regarding its management: Emilia Romagna and the Autonomous Province of Trento, for example, study the possibility of using local external structures and bodies (although linked to the administration); Umbria considers its creation within a competent administrative structure; in Campania and Sicily the observatory is an agency within the regional government. The main activities of the observatory, which are made explicit by the implemented laws, are primarily informational: monitoring, documentation, data collection and information on the sector. At a second level we find purely scientific activities such as data processing, analysis, research, and impact assessments (also defined in specific ways) as for example the law of the Region of Marche, which pays more attention to the economic and occupational impact. At a third level we find more explicit references to the political purpose, which can be declined as a form of «transparency» regarding the proper use of the resources and achieving the programme objectives of the regional intervention (Marche, Emilia Romagna, Umbria, Sardinia) or as a regional programme organisational advisor (Puglia, Sardinia, Sicily). There is only one case where the purpose of the observatory (to «assess the degree of user satisfaction», considering the sector as an expression of service to the people and the community) is made explicit. Only some regional laws (Sicily and Campania) refer to the collaboration with the National Observatory.

Therefore, we can single out three types of regional laws regarding the observatories and, more generally, the activities which are usually carried out by them: the laws which do not explicitly consider the observatory as a structure but as a function (Liguria, Lombardy, Tuscany); the laws that frame it to the functions of the region but give it a purely administrative / technical / scientific connotation (Emilia

Romagna, Umbria, Marche, Province of Trento, Puglia, Friuli); and lastly, the laws which emphasize aspects related to governmental policies (Campania, Sicily).

The ORMA Project

Options of the Regions

The ORMA Project was borne from the desire of the Conference of the Regions to create a regional system of observatories (with networking features) whose work would support their government's actions and would allow a more effective measuring programme. Observatories are defined here as information and knowledge tools, as well as centres of production and analysis aimed at assessing the patterns, critical points and perspectives of the sector. The cultural observatory is also considered (despite its wide range of approaches) a place to delve into emerging themes and as a staff training support venue.

When the initiative was launched, it fully reflected the spirit and guidelines of the «Pact for Cultural Performing Arts Activities» signed in 2007 by the State and the Regions, which included among its goals, «the adoption of tools for the rationalisation of interventions [...] greater spending efficiency, by monitoring the cultural offer of the territory and the mutual exchange of knowledge and information on culture and the economic intervention tools adopted»¹³.

The ORMA Project was created as a response to the desire of the Coordination of Italian Regions to operate in two directions:

- to establish (if not already present) — and set up — regional culture and entertainment observatories grounded on the actual requirements of regional and sub-regional organisations, within the framework of a Unified and Coordinated Project;
- to enable discussions between the regional observatories and the National Observatory, setting up a common design of activities in a

¹³ According to the objectives of the Pact, Article 1, the signatories were obliged to collaborate in supporting the harmonisation process of the legal code with the Constitution's report regarding the assessment and support of the cultural and entertainment activities...» In order to support the measures within that agreement (which will finance several national activities) the Ministry established a 20 million Euro fund for each of the years comprised in the 2007-2009 period. In fairness, the financing plan would have suffered a significant shortage in the last year, according to the change in the government, from centre-left to centre-right.

logical categorisation of the initiatives, and mutual evaluation and benefit of all.

With regard to the objectives, the project reads:

The general objectives that the Regions, Autonomous Provinces, ANCI and UPI want to achieve with this project are:

- to provide constant and reliable information on the entertainment industry at a territorial level in order to implement more effective programme measures which apply to the definition of the objectives and priorities for action, the characterisation of the initiatives, the rules for the use of available financial resources, the adoption monitoring and evaluation tools with regard to interventions and the effectiveness and efficiency of spending;
- to provide a network of shared monitoring and research tools to enable the acquisition of systematic and comparable information on the evolution of the sector and on the policy initiatives undertaken at national and territorial level, enabling individuals to discuss and establish common operational strategies for culture, economy, finance and institutional relations;
- to carry out and develop a stable and coordinated system of regional observatories which would be then understood as a venue for methodological development, technical and scientific support, strategic impulse, support for policy implementation, and training of personnel, based on a common protocol and taking into account the autonomy of each Region and Autonomous Province regarding management, requirements, relationships and territorial characteristics;
- to implement economies of scale through the introduction of common methodologies and analytical tools, optimising cost in terms of design and management, and data collection and processing;
- to make more evident the institutional and financial commitment of the government institutions to the sector, at a national and especially at a regional and territorial level;
- to promote research and exchange culture, a *modus operandi* based on the availability and competence of individuals to acquire knowledge and information for a better administrative work fostering design and innovation.
- to establish and coordinate systematic relationships with other organisations, particularly with research, statistics, data collection and processing institutes operating in the sector¹⁴.

¹⁴ «Inter-Regional Project for the construction of Regional Observatories and the collaboration with the national observatory on entertainment policies», Rome, May 2007.

Framed within the wider objectives outlined above, two more specific objectives can be found:

- a) to develop an information tool based on a common methodological approach (beyond territorial specificities) which will enable the Regions to conduct annual monitoring and will offer the Local Authorities a common ground for action, while allowing the development of further study through more specific research activities;
- b) to identify modular applications applicable to diverse organisational, structural and dimensional situations through the application of easily adaptable, upgradeable and user-friendly tools which the administrative structures and operators will use on their procedures.

Lines of action and research areas

Firstly, the choice of the Regions to share goals and methodologies led to the questioning of the approach of pre-existing Observatories, and secondly, to the attempt to achieve sustainable systematisation of the operation applicable to the various territorial realities. Hence the identification of a framework based on three lines of action:

- permanent monitoring of live entertainment and cinema;
- study and research activities;
- communication activities.

Circumscribing the area of intervention to performing arts alone (although entertainment and cinema belong to two «different cultural domains»), somehow simplified the implementation of the project and thus the determination of the main research areas, which are:

- the dynamics of public;
- spending on entertainment;
- the organisational and occupational dimension of industry.

It is worth indicating that the Italian model of coordination proposed here is indeed native. It has been designed by life experience and the opportunity to transfer skills and methodologies. However, it has also emerged from the urgent need for information on performing arts, which despite their great tradition and relevance to the socio-cultural role they play in a country, do not have, except in specific territories and specific areas of interest, reliable and coordinated information tools.

The ORMA Project provides the foreground of analysis in demand and supply in performing arts. Issues related to the enjoyment and access to culture —understood here as a meeting point for social and cultural policies— are assuming increasing importance, as evidenced by the attention paid in this regard by the Regions themselves. Knowledge of the characteristics, motivations and expectations of the spectators (considering that the obsolete image of a generic and indistinct public of the performing arts has definitely been replaced by the «publics») is now a priority derived from the requirement to invest in actions which bring the existing stalls to the current «no public» encompassing in that definition the unexpressed demand or the potential¹⁵.

It is widely believed that up to now investment in performing arts in Italy has been lopsided. Yet, very little time has been dedicated to assessing the impact of the product in the real market. In fact, in the past, studies on the public have often been confined to the grey literature of institutional diligences or functional marketing practices for exclusive business knowledge¹⁶.

However, public administrations need tools to assess the effectiveness of intervention policies and goals achievement. The observatories need information that helps innovate programming methodologies in order to expand the range of available services and improve the quality of the existing ones to address the communication levels.

To meet this requirement, the ORMA Project has established a registration system for the various levels: local, provincial and regional. It foresees the convergence of data in a single information system, whose implementation considers establishing agreements with each individual company and theatre in order to obtain a systematic collection of data on the public. These actions are accompanied by qualitative studies using several techniques.

The statistical and economic analysis of state, regional, local and private resources is also at the core of the overall project, which includes the identification of economic and financial strategies common to all government levels among its objectives. In this sense, the project also

¹⁵ As an example, the Emilia-Romagna Region indicates between its prime objectives for the period 2009-2011 of the Regional Programme on Entertainment (Ir 13/1999), «At a regional level, the initiatives of communication, information, public training and spreading, which foresee the (coordinated) implication of more organisations, people and targeted projects, including age groups». Regarding the allocation of financial resources to subjects who perform live entertainment activities, the programme contemplates using artistic data and public access fostering activity indicators, in addition to artistic data.

¹⁶ For further information, see: Taormina A. (2006), «Il teatro e i suoi pubblici» in *Economia della Cultura*, n. 2/2006, Il Mulino, Bologna.

considers data collection and analysis. At a state and regional level, this will inevitably lead to the assessment of the legislative elements and production and distribution systems. Hence the emphasis on the analysis of organisational and management models and the working arrangements in public and private entertainment companies and institutions of each territory. Hence the need for a mapping of companies and locations, the evaluation of human resources in the different fields of entertainment, their strengths and weaknesses, in order to implement appropriate support and employment development policies.

The two basic research areas of the project necessarily involve both monitoring (which we can consider first-level), and «study and research» (which we will consider second-level).

The perspectives of the project include, among the information needs, the role and evolution of private financing, with special reference to the foundations associated to banks.

Another area for later study will be the international comparison of trends in other European regions, taking into account the increasing exchange capacity and the tendency to develop conjoint projects and initiatives.

In the short term, the ORMA Project also suggests investigating unrecognised issues (those not supported by public bodies or the Regions) whose structural features, economic dimensions and socio-cultural impacts are not being valued due to the lack of institutional linkage.

At this stage, however, it is crucial to define the activity evaluation indicators as tools necessary for the development of criteria for granting financial resources.

It should be noted that although at this stage the entertainment industry is a priority, the demands of comparison, development of knowledge and assessment tools concern all aspects of cultural production at a national level.

The third line of action concerns dissemination activities designed to communicate and spread the information, the interventions and their results. This is done using focused and differentiated tools. Thus, annual reports, publications, seminars and conferences addressed not only to administrators, operators, and scholars, but also to a wider audience have been predicted.

Methodology

The implementation of the project included, as a prelude, a registration of the concerned regional administrations, whose aim was to deepen their

knowledge on industry standards, administrative procedures, the forms filled out, and then proceed to the analysis of the statistical instruments and information management systems existing in the administrations and the active observatories.

The next phase was the analysis of the information needed for the definition, the implementation and circulation of useful elements to describe the profile of the entertainment industry in each local context.

Thus, the construction of a model aimed at recording the acquisition of comparable data within the information systems to enable their communication began. It complied, with the specific goal of enabling all regions to develop annual follow-ups, offering them and the local authorities (municipalities and provinces), «a consistent basis for common actions while allowing further study to develop through focused research activities»¹⁷.

To that end, an executive working method was adopted. It was characterised by continuous feedback (necessary to ensure a coordinated construction of the instruments and to allow access of each region or autonomous province to the global system at its own pace). The resulting organisation of data-logging programmes, which considered the arrangements already made by each region, (involving the definition of general guidelines), has taken into account elements attributable to activity indicators such as personnel and days worked, the number of productions and performances, the number of users, as well as financial statements (reclassified succinctly), the descriptive elements of the company, financial data and information relating to activities for which the companies apply for funding to the regions.

In terms of methodology, the most innovative aspect of the ORMA Project was the proposal for the adoption, of standardised application forms for funding requests, firstly by all regions, and later by the provinces and municipalities, banking institutions, and other entities involved, which unified data and other relevant information to meet the objectives of the Regional Observatories. By doing so, the companies optimise the task of preparing the information requested and the general information on the public administrations themselves.

The global implementation of the ORMA Project therefore develops along two parallel paths. The first is closely related to the administrative activity of granting subsidies, while the second refers to rules adopted in socio-economic research in the cultural field.

Through the ORMA Project, the regions have responded to the need to establish partnerships with research bodies and institutions whose

¹⁷ Pact for Entertainment Cultural Activities, «Inter-Regional project for the construction of regional observatories and the collaboration with the national observatory on entertainment policies», *op. cit.*

activities are complementary to those of the regional observatories and the network as a whole, and also with agencies operating similarly in neighbouring fields. Collaboration with such subjects is important to avoid duplicating activities, to enhance skills and performance and to reduce costs.

Hence the comparisons and in some cases the establishment of agreements with Italian institutes dedicated to the production of statistics:

- *Istat-Istituto Italiano di Statistica*, Sistan, SIAE, CNEL and also CISIS¹⁸, as an instrument of the Conference of the Regions;
- ENPALS-*Ente Nazionale Previdenza e Assistenza Lavoratori Spettacolo* and AGIS-*Associazione Generale Italiana Spettacolo* produce, in parallel with agencies (but without being an institutional role), useful data (always within performing arts) for statistical purposes.

Conclusions

In the last decade and at the initiative of the regions, Italy has witnessed the establishment of a large number of cultural observatories. Those regions have given life to a project which aims to develop through them an information and knowledge system that will support the political decision-makers and those involved in the cultural sector. The homogenisation of objectives and collaboration among the various levels of government, particularly between the State and the Regions, is among the main themes of the ORMA Project. The ORMA Project represents the first steps of a process whose completion will require a development timeline (which is not easily determined), although it also represents a major challenge at a particularly complex time for the country's cultural life.

¹⁸ *Società Italiana Autori ed Editori* (SIAE), was established in 1927; *Sistan Sistema statistico nazionale* is a network of Italian public and private subjects which provides official statistical information; *Consiglio Nazionale dell'Economia e del Lavoro* (CNEL) was established in 1957. It is named in the Constitution of the Italian Republic in Art. 99 as: «Provider of advice for the Chambers and the Government on the matters and functions legally entrusted to it; The CISIS is the technical body of the Conference of the Regions and the Autonomous Provinces regarding IT, geographical and statistical systems, for exclusive and conjoint matters.»