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Interaction Processes in Production Theatre Organisations

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Abstract

The Italian theatre system is characterized by notable complexity and variety. The ability to maintain this rich tradition clashes with the gradual reduction of public funds and static demand. In this context, theatre managers have to activate, develop and manage relationships with the market that can be represented as a network of actors¹ who contribute in different ways to their artistic and economic objectives. Our work aims to analyze a) the constituent actors of the market as a network; b) the interaction processes and their relation to market representation; c) the contribution of interaction processes to the creation of outcomes (economic, artistic, social) in production theatre organizations. In this analysis we also propose to identify some possible contamination areas between managing relations in theatre organizations (creative network) and handling creative interaction processes in within the network of actors. The methodology consists in a case analysis study of theatre production organizations.

Keywords: Theatre, Network, Interaction, Creativity

¹ In this paper the term 'actors' is to be understood in the economic meaning of 'subjects involved', while the term 'players' will be reserved for the meaning of 'theatre performers'.

1. The performing arts and theatre production enterprise: towards a convergence between art and the market

The aim of the paper is to analyse the role of the interaction in productive activities of theatre organizations (producing theatres and companies). More specifically with reference to production organization theatres we propose to a) identify the meaning and the actors of market according to managers operating in producing theatres; b) recognize their interactions and to analyze them as a cumulative and continuous process c) focus on the different interactions and to distinguish for each of them the progressive changes in their structural components (actors, activities and resource) and the outcomes produced.

The performing arts enterprise is a cultural enterprise that stages theatrical performances, in other words *complex creative productions* which presuppose that a dramaturgical text is shared by numerous converging art forms (music, dance, set design etc.); these art forms jointly share the constant quest for balance between artistic content and economic-organizational factors (Sicca, 2000).

Prose and *opera* constitute the main forms of theatre *performances* in Italy, representing the result of the productive activity of *companies* and *theatres*. The companies can be defined as organizations that deal exclusively with the production aspects, staging their shows within the host facilities. Theatres are enterprises with fixed premises; they not only plan and stage theatre performances but also fulfil the role of distributors, hosting shows created by third parties, which may be either companies or other theatres. The companies are suppliers of theatre performances, and their supply has a predefined temporal duration (the theatre season) expressed by means of the "programme schedule", which represents a synthesis of the theatre's strategic positioning and artistic identity (Brunetti, 2000). Together, the companies and the theatres embody the characteristics of the variety and at the same time the complexity of the live theatre system (Tab. 1), which in Italy is supported through specific public funding². The main justifications for public funding of theatre productions lie partly in the social benefits generated by show business enterprises, namely the characteristic of a "merit good" that is an intrinsic aspect of artistic production (Benhamou, 1992; Trimarchi, 2002) which can be enjoyed by the collective community, and partly in the structural economic imbalance attributable to the fact that theatre productions belong to a "stagnating sector" (the "cost syndrome" of Baumol and Bowen, 1967).

In the sphere of *prose* there are over 400 funded organizations, operating with a variety of different roles (production, distribution, promotion) in which, overall, more than 20,400 persons work in different capacities, giving a total production of over 87,000 plays and shows (Tab. 1). The main production units of these organizations consist of the *companies* (more than 200 companies) and the *stable theatres* (70 theatres). The companies are flexible organizations which are extremely numerous and heterogeneous (prose companies, musical comedy companies, operetta companies and innovation companies), and thus represent a fragmented area of dramatic production. In contrast, there is a limited number of stable theatres, which are characterized by the stability of their workforce both as regards artistic and technical-organizational personnel. However, they are differentiated by their business or institutional structure (stable theatres set up by public initiative, or by private initiative, and innovation-oriented theatres) and also differentiated by management-structural factors (size of the auditorium, the overall number of annual working days, the number of annual days devoted to performance of shows, whether directly produced by the theatre itself or hosted shows, number of repeat performances, etc.). In addition, they diverge in the contents of the range of plays and shows put on (different authors of the pieces, different level of skill of the players, etc.). The share of public funding for *prose* destined to stable theatres is higher (almost 50% of the total) compared to that destined to the companies (roughly 25% of the total).

Opera production is carried out by opera houses (Operatic Foundations, Tradition Theatres, and Ordinary Opera Bodies). These are production units which the ministerial programmes identify as belonging to the sphere of music (Tab. 1); within this framework, the Operatic Foundations constitute a distinct and autonomous production area by virtue of their size and the complexity of their range. The *Operatic Foundations* include 14 theatre institutions with a total staff numbering over 11,000, for a total of 2800³ operas staged. Major investment in functional components (production and directing, stage sets, costumes

² Public funding for performing arts organizations are allocated through the Unified Fund for the Performing Arts (FUS), set up with Act of Law nr. 163 of 1985. It gathers together the various resources the State allocated, through the Budget Law, to the entire sector of the performing arts (prose, opera, dance, circuses, travelling shows and cinema).

³ The data in brackets indicate the number of organizations belonging to the reference category.

etc.) is required in order to put on operas, and the task calls for the stable commitment of important human resources entrusted with artistic, technical and organizational tasks. The *Operatic Foundations* are rigid organizations with high fixed costs (preparing the set, personnel hiring), which can be covered only thanks to the elevated public funding available (over 45% of the public fund destined to stage productions). Somewhat more streamlined operations in the sphere of opera production are found in the *Tradition Theatres* (27) and the *Ordinary Opera Institutions* (30). The Tradition Theatres are rooted in areas with a strong artistic tradition, and fulfil the task of promoting, facilitating and coordinating musical activities, with special reference to opera in the local areas of their respective provinces. The Ordinary Opera Institutions are public bodies or private subjects that are granted funding for the stage of opera performances, of which the Ordinary Opera Institutions may in some cases be merely the promoters. The Tradition Theatres are granted a share of public funding (25.3%) that is greater than the share awarded to the Ordinary Opera Institutions (4.8%); taken together, these two categories of organizations constitute parts of the musical sector which, on account of the elevated number of units (832) and of persons working in various capacities in this sector (51608), are the most extensive area in the sphere of the performing arts and also that with the greatest intensity of work activity (tab. 1).

(1) Sphere	(2) Organizations (units)	N. units	N. workers	N. shows	Public funding	% Funding
Prose	Public Stable Theatres (17), Private StableTheatres (16), Innovation Stables (37), Companies (212), Figure Theatres (25) Regional circuits (11)	437	20.492	87.581	84.256.000,00	17,92%
Music	Operatic foundations(*)	14	11.381	2.800	215.000.000,00	45,74%
	Tradition Theatres(27), Concert-Orchestral Institutions (13), Concert and Choir activities (162), Ordinary Opera Bodies (30), Festivals (57), Competitions (31); Courses (26), Promotional Activities (27), Musical bands (421), Promotional bodies (5), Special projects(4), Foreign activities (28), Biennale of Venice(1)	832	51.608	13.433	63.208.000,00	13,45%
Dance	Dance companies (66); Dance promotion (16); Subjects engaged in promotion and public education of the general public (14); Practice in theatre dancing (3); Dance promotion (16); Courses (3); Proms and festival s(23); Foreign (12); Institutions of national relevance.(2)	139	2.758	6.365	9.586.576,00	2,04%
Circuses Travelling shows	Circus activities, circus activities abroad, Promotion, Travelling shows	152	1.432	21.494	6.945.000,00	1,48%
Cinema	Production activities , promotion and distribution	1.174	50.406	1.220.229	90.000.000,00	19,15%
Other	Evaluation Board, Ministerial fund, Committees, etc...				1.100.000,00	0,23%
Overall funding					470.095.576,00	100%
Source: Ministry for Cultural Heritage and Activities (2008). (*) The Operatic Foundations are the following: La Scala of Milan, the Opera House of Rome, the Maggio Musicale of Florence, the Teatro Massimo of Palermo, the Carlo Felice Opera House of Genoa; the Teatro Regio of Turin, La Fenice of Venice, the Lirico G. Verdi of Trieste, the San Carlo Opera House of Naples, the Municipal Oopera House of Bologna, the Arena of Verona, the National Santa Cecilia Academy, the Opera House of Cagliari, the Fondazione Petruzzelli and Opera House of Bari. Note. The parentheses in column (2) indicate the number of organizations belonging to the category specified..						

In addition to prose, opera and music, the performing arts system in Italy includes dance organizations, circus activity, travelling shows and various types of cinematographic performances. However, maintenance of the variety and wealth of live performances clashes with *progressive reduction of public funding* and with a generally static demand in comparison to the growing attendance at other forms of entertainment. Even though the Fondo Unico per lo Spettacolo [National Live Performance fund] has shown a rising trend over the last three years, a comparison between the 2008 level (470,095,576. 00 Euro) and the level in 2001 (516,456,899.09 Euro) reveals a roughly 9% reduction, with a marked imbalance between North and South. The Fus data (2006) show that 42.9% of the funding is destined to the North, 38% to the Centre and 19% to the South. At the same time, demand has risen very little and discontinuously, despite the numerous initiatives devised by theatres and opera houses to attract the public (price reductions, educational activities, etc.). The Istat cultural statistics (years 2002-2006) show that in 2002 tickets sold for live performances amounted to an overall total of roughly 27 million, then decreased in 2005, and subsequently in 2006

reaching 32 million tickets sold. This situation of more or less static demand may be due to the increasing competition from new forms of entertainment (pay TV, home TV, etc.) which constitute cultural services that can easily be understood and enjoyed even by a mass public (Throsby, 1994; Stigler and Becker, 1977). Faced with the complexity of this situation, theatre enterprises have inevitably had to revise their scale of priorities. They now focus not only on objectives of an artistic nature, but also pursue conditions of affordability and economic viability: thus not only theatre productions, but development of differentiated policies and of projects designed to highlight and enhance the value of the range of activities they supply (accessory services, promotional activities, merchandising etc.). In short, their relations are no longer limited to the world of art and culture but reveal a quest for greater integration with the surrounding area in its private (enterprises, spectators) and public (state, region⁴, provinces and municipalities) components.

In this context, a highly significant development is the recent transformation of the Operatic Bodies from Bodies of National Relevance Governed by Public Law to Foundations governed by Private Law (Leon, 2004). This transformation was due to the need to provide an incentive for a more managerial type of management and to reduce dependence on public financial resources. It is not our intention here to go into detail on the consequences this transformation has involved for the Operatic Bodies, but we feel it is important to underline that since the reform, the Foundations have found themselves operating according to "entrepreneurial and efficiency criteria in compliance with budgetary constraints" (art. 3 D.L. 367/1996). This means that their artistic production is increasingly planned and conducted with respect for the economic balance of the organization, drawing not only on public funding but also on private resources deriving from relations with enterprises (the latter in the capacity of founders or sponsors) and from the development of commercially characterized accessory activities (merchandising, publishing, hiring, cultural events, etc.) recognized by the law. Overall, managers of opera houses and more generally of theatre enterprises finding themselves interacting with an increasingly broad and dense network of interlocutors from whom benefit can be drawn with regard to both the economic and artistic perspective. For instance, in addition to strategies for greater managerial efficiency, in some theatre organizations one finds the implementation of production agreements with a variety of actors of the theatre system (co-production), partnerships with manufacturing and service enterprises (sponsorships, stakeholder partnerships, etc.), and cooperation with other cultural enterprises (experiences of integration between the supply of theatre performances and the supply of museum events).

Thus among theatre operators there prevails the conviction that in order for the theatre, with its multifaceted language, to continue to be an irreplaceable interpreter of our real-world situation, they will inevitably have to look at the world of theatre from a new perspective and adopt a new approach to the complexity of theatre organizations, so as to develop constructive interaction with the different interlocutors that make up the market. In our view, this means that the ability to manage the relation between art and market will become a strategic asset for those who have a high-ranking managerial role in a theatre enterprise. Therefore the aim of the present study is to enquire into the specific meaning that managers operating in the field of the performing arts attribute to the market concept, and into the way in which subjects belonging to the performing arts sector interact with the market. We believe that art and the market do not constitute two antithetical worlds: rather, they are increasingly complementary. To be sure, it is still the cases that there are some in the world of art who believe art management to be a tool designed to make art more commercial according to the laws of the market (Benhamou, 1992; Green 2003; Brown S., 2005), while at the same time, some performing arts managers consider and justify certain economic-management rigidities of the cultural world as the consequence of the predominance of the genius of art (Kotler and Scheff, 1996; Troilo and Addis, 2001; Franzen, 2002). These two distinct positions have proved to be unproductive both for the world of art and also for the business world; increasingly, the need is felt to identify and define areas in which these two worlds can be overlapping. Art creates and management contributes to managing, but at the same time the creativity of the art-based enterprise with its business-oriented rationale can generate spin-offs for manufacturing and service enterprises. This is the approach which in our view is the most interesting to unite two worlds which so far have been kept too separate and distinct.

⁴The Regions, Provinces and Municipalities constitute sources of funding that integrate funds allocated in the framework of the Unified Performing Arts Fund (Fus).

2. The market and the network paradigm in theatre organizations: interaction as opportunity and as a change driver

Cultural management studies have over the last decade displayed an evolutionary line in which one can detect a progressive shift of attention from analysis of the organizational-management core of cultural enterprises (management control, performance measurement, cultural enterprise networks, etc.) to study of their relations with the external environment (users, local and surrounding areas, institutions, etc.).

Economic-organizational analysis has been the focus of interest of a group of scholars who have experimented with the application of accounting parameters to cultural enterprises in order to measure their performance (Chirieleison, 1999; Zan, 2001), defining quantitative systems for control of their economic management. The need for a balance between viability of economic management and cultural aims has led researchers to study the networks of cultural enterprises as complex economic forms capable of engaging in joint management of common services, generating cognitive resource interchange on shared projects and, more generally, of triggering relational mechanisms of co-production that have cultural value within the context of particular geographic areas (Danilov, 1990; Bagdadli, 1995; Grandinetti and Moretti, 2004). By networking, cultural enterprises can enhance the value of the shows they supply and reinforce their social role by improving the utilization and consumption of their cultural supply. Furthermore, their cognitive impact is dependent not only on the intensity and depth of their interaction, but also on their capacity to develop and manage relations with the users of their supply (Spranzi, 1995). Such relations are not natural exchange mechanisms within planned networks where the cultural enterprise is a closed economic entity; rather, they take shape through links with external subjects, and the cultural significance and economic survival of the network and the enterprises belonging to it may crucially depend on the potential for relational development of these external links. The external subjects involved belong to a wide variety of categories and can be identified as individuals (users) and organizations (sponsors, State etc.) whose interaction may be crucial in determining whether the social, cultural and economic goals of a cultural enterprise can genuinely be reached. Thus this transition from an *internal organizational approach* to a *dynamic-interactive perspective* implies that the market begins to become a reference paradigm for the definition of management policies in the cultural sphere. In particular, the attention of researchers (Mokwa, Dawson and Prieve, 1980; Reiss, 1984; Hirschmann 1983; Bradford, 1994; Kotler and Scheff, 1997) has focused above all on analysis of relations between cultural enterprises and their users, with special emphasis on the role users can play in defining the cultural supply (product-oriented versus market-oriented attitude). Thus a perspective (Hirschmann, 1983) based on a unidirectional relation between culture and the public, where the latter is the passive user of predefined cultural experiences (orientation towards the product) is increasingly combined with a vision of the opposite type (Bradford, 1994; Kotler and Scheff, 1997; Valardo, 1998; Voss and Voss, 2000), which sees the range of cultural supply as the result of a meeting and exchange of ideas between the artist's creativity and the social context. Artists are called upon to incorporate into their production some features of the current social background, filtered through their creative sensibilities (orientation towards the market).

Recent papers have gone further, looking beyond the identity "market equals user" and formulating a broader *vision of the reference framework* of a cultural enterprise. For Colbert (2000) the market is composed of "the consumer, the distribution agents, the State and the sponsors"; Brunetti (2000) analyzes some performing arts enterprises, in particular the Operatic Foundations, and argues that their market is constituted by the "competitive system" and the "system of social actors", where the former is composed of the viewers, the suppliers and other theatre enterprises while the latter includes all the economic-social forces (artists, founders, State, sponsors, etc.) involved in planning and production. A deep study (Voss, Cable and Voss, 2000) analyzes the funders (government, foundations and corporations), society (community, other cultural organization), suppliers and costumers. Basically, then, *cultural enterprises* engage in relations with a wide range of subjects, and they view this *relational network* as a channel for mobilizing and combining resources as well as a means to enhance and add value to those they already possess (Buresi, Guercini and Ranfagni, 2009). Their market can thus be interpreted as a structured context formed by interlinked subjects-organizations and resulting from relations that have been built up over time (Granovetter 1985; Snehota, 2004). Looked at from this perspective, we believe that the concept of the "market as network" of the IMP Group constitutes a valid paradigm of analysis capable of interpreting the functioning of cultural enterprises and, in particular, theatre enterprises. *That is to say, there exist elements of convergence between a cultural enterprise and the market paradigm of the IMP Group, and these can be found precisely in the founding elements of the paradigm itself.*

In the IMP Group perspective, the *market* is the *result of interaction among actors* (Tab. 2), and by taking on different roles the actors move within networks that result from the stratification of relations set up and managed by the actors themselves. Even if the network may seem to be enacted, i.e. created by the actors that have forged it, the complexity of its substructure is such that it cannot be globally comprehended by the individual subjects that belong to it. The market is a network with arbitrary borders, which are identifiable only in individual actors' subjective vision of the network of which they form part; moreover, it is an emergent network inasmuch as it is the outcome of continuous processes of structuring and reorganization of links among the various parts (network process) (Granovetter, 1985; Snehota, 2004). In an approach of this type the product does not delimit the borders of the market (neoclassical perspective), but it is instead a variable in the single exchange relationship and across relationships among actors. A recent study conducted by our research team (Burrese, Guercini and Ranfagni, 2009) has found that the performing arts enterprise conceives of the *market* as "that place in which it interacts with subjects that are distinguished by their different roles but are pursuing a balance between economic, artistic and social goals". Thus the market is a *relational space* definable as a structured situation composed of organized subjects that are interlinked, and

Neoclassical perspective	Imp Group perspective	Market in theatre organization (Burrese A., Guercini S., Ranfagni S., 2009).
The boundaries of a market are given by the product	The set of actors and relationships define the market Markets are not defined by the product. Product is a variable in the single exchange relationships and across relationships between actors	The market is a relational space, i.e. a structured situation formed by subjects-organizations linked up together and emerging as the outcome of interactions developed over time (the market as a relational space)
The interaction is reduced to price signalling The exchange takes the form of the "best" price available	Interaction includes information exchange and social elements (the degree of trust and of commitment). Time dimension of interaction: mutual adjustments, continuity and interdependency.	The relation as an indispensable tool to generate equilibrium among artistic, social and economic goals (the relation as opportunity)
Markets are stable or tend to stability Factors that can induce change in the market can be the technology and new preferences of the customers	The markets are inherently unstable (evolutionary); the participants continuously change and revise their aims and change the content of their relationships	The theatre enterprise is a "creative enterprise", in other words "a system with a marked propensity to change, which follows lines that are not always definable a priori (the relation as change)
Source: our elaboration		

this relational space is the result of interactions developed over time. The performing arts enterprise is a complex enterprise from the organizational-management point of view; its production and distribution of shows and plays imply that cultural projects must be shared among all the members of the artistic team (the players, the director, the technical staff, etc...); furthermore, it also needs to gain approval in the institutional frameworks (State, enterprises, sponsors) and maintain a social role through educational and instructive projects addressed to the public. Overall, however, the complexity of the theatre enterprise reflects the "creative chaos" of the artistic background and skills that orient the cultural choices made by performing arts enterprises; in this sense, complexity becomes the driver of an intricate web of relations that are not always easily predictable or traceable to predetermined evolutionary paths (Burrese, Guercini and Ranfagni S., 2009).

Viewing the market as a relational fabric (Tab. 2) presupposes, according to the IMP Group perspective, that it is not "an exchange facilitating mechanism" based on the "*price mechanism*", but rather a complex behavioural system (Alderson and Cox 1948; Cox and Goodman 1956; Alderson, 1965) in which various actors interact with different roles. In particular, Ford et al (2003) point out that the market is a platform that facilitates the economic behaviour of market actors, permitting them to find and work out solutions to problems they meet by drawing on the experience, capabilities and resources of the other parties with whom they interact. Whereas in the neoclassical perspective, exchange takes the forms of single discrete transactions with the various parties offering and agreeing to the "best" price available, in the IMP Group's vision the creation and maintenance of relationships is a continuous problem-solving process. In this sense, relationships existing in the market appear to be instrumental in solving, broadly put, the actors' resource problems. Interaction is no longer reduced to price signalling but includes information and social exchange, and the degree of trust and commitment is a particularly necessary condition for economic exchange transactions. Furthermore, being competitive is strictly linked to the ability to act, manage and especially to match specific relations. Let us now consider how this vision can be implemented for theatre production

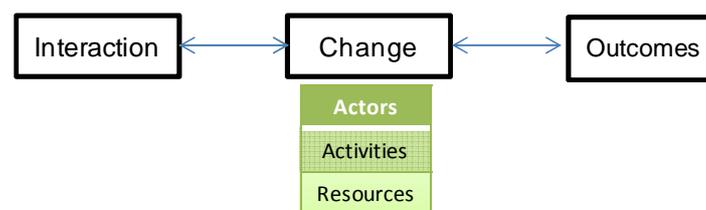
enterprises. As a performing arts enterprise, a theatre production enterprise is a cultural enterprise, and as such it could in fact be described as "anti-economic". It fulfils a social role by producing a merit good which, since as it can be utilized by the entire community, is an object of exchange that is not constrained by the price mechanism. In addition to creating a common good, it seeks to achieve this social role while respecting its own artistic project: the creative dimension opens up collaborative relations with the whole team that is working on the production project (artists, theatre directors, etc.), where trust and the degree of reciprocal adaptation are fundamental in order to achieve a process of identifying oneself with what is being performed, that is to say, the change of individual identity during production of the theatrical performance (process of self-communication) (Sicca, 2000). The social goal does not jeopardize this artistic dimension if the theatre enterprise succeeds in gaining access to external sources of funding, whether public or private, capable of guaranteeing maintenance of conditions of economic balance (Solima, 2004). Thus the *theatre enterprise* creates its *product* in the pursuit of a balance between the *artistic, economic and social dimension*; maintaining this balance signifies interacting with different subjects (actors, theatre directors, State, sponsors, co-producer, users, etc.) and making interaction into an indispensable tool for generating artistic value, social value and economic value (Kotler, 1997).

Relations generate the market; they are not static, but undergo modifications and evolutionary processes over time (Tab. 2). The market, in the vision of the IMP Group researchers, is not static: rather, it is subject to continual transformations as a consequence of changes taking place within the ongoing relational processes (Snehota, 2003). This view diverges from the conviction typical of the neoclassical perspective which holds that markets are stable or tend to stability. The neoclassical approach believes that transformations in the market can be traced to technological change that has an impact on production, and to all the social changes that influence purchasers' attitudes and preferences. In contrast, theatre enterprises are guided by artistic objectives that are completed within the framework of a theatre season and are therefore periodically redefined, thereby generating changes in the ongoing relations and leading to the activation of new relations (Burrelli, Guercini and Ranfagni, 2008). This market dynamism, which also translates into dynamism of the relational fabric, is intrinsically justifiable within the world of theatre, given that the theatre enterprise is a "*creative enterprise*", that is to say, "a system with a marked propensity to change that follows lines not always definable a priori" (Vicari, 1998). Through the performances it puts on, the theatre enterprise is able to produce new representations of reality, giving rise to relational processes among components – even if the components are extremely heterogeneous – within a setting characterized by self-organization, or in other words, freedom of choice. Indeed, it is precisely in this environment that creative processes take shape. At the same time, if it is true that creativity resides in the interaction (Woodman, Sawyer, and Griffin, 1993; Styhre and Sundgren, 2005), the production of creativity results in the development of complex relations that generate change on the level of actors, resources and activities. This means that interaction becomes opportunity, but also transformation: it is access to new resources, but also contamination and openness to new paths of relational renewal. In our view, this relationship between interaction, change and outcome constitutes the crucial key for an understanding of the web of relations built up by theatre enterprises.

3. Interaction processes, structural change and outcome

Interaction is opportunity, but it is also *transformation* of the components involved in the exchange (Håkansson and Snehota, 1995). Thus interaction is a cumulative and continuous process that generates

Fig. 1. Interaction as transformation



Our elaboration from Ford, D., Gadde L.E., Håkansson H., Snehota I., Waluszewski A., 2008, Ford, D., Gadde, L-E, Håkansson, H., Snehota, I. and Waluszewski, A. (2008), Analyzing Business Interaction, 24th IMP-Conference, Uppsala university, September

progressive change in its structural components, which are associated with an outcome that can be evaluated

in economic terms (outcome) (Fig. 1). This framework is underlined in the recent contributions of the IMP Group, which aims to broaden knowledge on the forms of governance of a network and networking processes, by an in-depth investigation of interactive mechanisms in dyadic relations. In effect, analysis of these mechanisms allows significant insight into the evolutionary paths of networks, and makes it possible to devise appropriate management policies for complex relational structures. Interaction is a highly structured and dynamic process: it is a “confrontation process that occurs between companies and which changes and transforms aspects of resources and activities of the involved companies and of companies themselves” (Ford , Gadde , Håkansson, Snehota , Waluszewski , 2008).

Therefore *interaction* is an *evolutionary process* that transforms the participating *actors*, the *activities* carried out and the *resources exchanged*. The study of interaction requires an analysis of the changes taking place at each of the three structural levels and which are the result of the interaction itself. But variations within the relational structure are difficult to identify, since they cannot be observed from outside the interactive context; they have to be reconstructed together with the parties involved in the relational process, through an analysis of the interaction focusing not merely on its temporal aspects, but also on its spatial characteristics. Every interactive process is composed of a sequence of actions within a temporal space; and far from constituting an isolated actor, it comes alive and is influenced through the web of relational flows to which the various parties are directly or indirectly correlated. Here we will set aside the interpretive complexity of the interaction, and identify some qualitative descriptors that make it possible to outline some variations on the level of the relational structure.

On the level of the *actors*, the contents of the social dimension of the interaction constitute change descriptors (Tab. 3). The actors are those who manage and liaise with one another in the relations, developing interpersonal relations. Their interaction changes the social intensity of the relations among actors, and in particular it modifies their reciprocal knowledge and perception, the level of trust and also their mutual involvement (Wilson and Jantrania, 1994; Wilkinson and Young, 1994).

Tab. 3 Qualitative descriptors of structural change	
Components	Qualitative descriptors
Actors	Reciprocal knowledge and perception, level of trust, degree of mutual involvement
Activities	Degree of coordination and integration
Resource	Degree of reciprocal combination and adaptation
Source: our elaboration	

content of the interactions form part of the coevolutionary path of the actors, and these paths do not undergo autonomous modifications but rather are a reflection of changes in the choices and relational modes of the interacting elements. The relational orientations within a network allow the

actors to take up a position that is functional to the complex of resources and knowledge that can be mobilized and absorbed through activation of interactive relations. This means that each actor co-evolves and modifies the social contents of the relation, thereby becoming a "node" of the network that receives the influx of activities and resources. And precisely because these activities and resources are shared with the other actors within a network of relations, they give rise to an overlapping relational area (jointness) within relational spaces.

The *activities* (Tab. 3) constitute the main pillar of the connective tissue through which exchange of resources among the actors takes place. The interactive processes may influence the degree of coordination and integration of activities. Close-meshed relations imply efficient organization in management of the activities, and complementariness among the activities themselves; that is to say, these are relations that drive processes of activity specialization and interdependence among the actors.

The *resources* (Tab. 3), whether tangible or intangible, can be exchanged within interactive processes; their transformations concern variations in the degree of combination and reciprocal adaptation. A high level of adaptation can generate more efficient utilization of resources, but at the same time it can favour evolutionary paths in which adaptation among resources is defined on the basis of predetermined evolutionary lines (path-dependency). The combination of new resources and recombination of existing resources can enhance the integrational potential of the resources themselves within an interaction, and generate independent evolutionary paths. The greater the heterogeneity of the resources exchanged, the greater is the area of integration and potential for the rise of innovation processes.

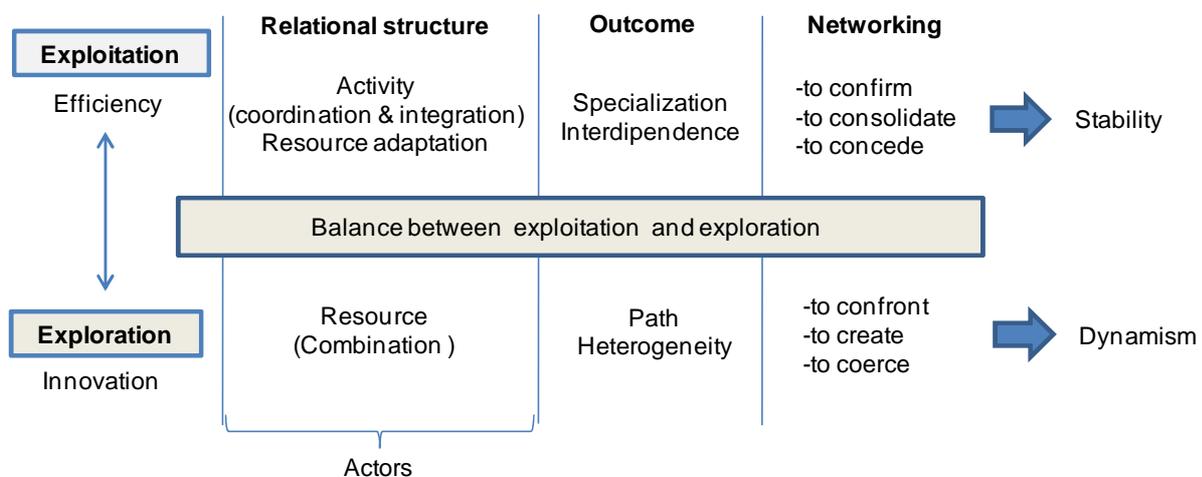
Changes produced on the level of actors, activities and resources are the result of voluntary interactive actions, and they are undertaken by the parties which are not isolated but are part of a network. It is precisely on the basis of their representation of the market and their relational expectations that the actors orient their manner of interaction, thereby contributing to the rise of certain changes in the relational structure. For the actors, the picture is the basis for perceptions of what is happening around them and of their actions (networking) and reactions in the network. So each one of the actors develop relational expectations, and they have a subjective representation of the network and their role within it (Guercini; 2003). All this influences the view of interacting and produces different interpretations of what has emerged from the relation.

The relational results (outcome) generated by the interactive process depend on the combined change brought about on the level of actors, activities and resources. Such results can be interpreted through the mechanism of "exploitation" and also of "exploration", which constitute two distinct activators of interactive processes. These activators are associated with a different impact on the level of the relational structure, different networking orientations, and static or dynamic networking conditions (fig. 2).

Exploitation means acting in pursuit of efficiency and of the certainty of positive economic effects: "exploitation includes such things as refinement, choice, production, efficiency, selection, implementation, execution. The essence of exploitation is the refinement and extension of existing competences, technologies, and paradigms. Its returns are positive, proximate, and predictable" (March, 1991). Exploitation generates change above all on the level of activities, and it translates into a strong coordination and integration among the activities themselves, leading to positive economic consequences. For instance, Ford et al (2008) argue that "the relative strength of specific activity links in a business relationship has been shown to have substantial economic effects on the actors involved". The resulting relational effect (outcomes) consist of an orientation towards specialization and also toward interdependence, which can be correlated with adaptations in resource combination (resource adaptation) and a tendency towards interactive stability. In effect, exploitation presupposes networking processes in which the enterprises are prompted "to confirm" a particular way of interaction, "to consolidate" their position in the network or alternatively "to concede" to the wishes and initiatives of others (Ritter and Ford, 2004).

Exploration implies tension towards innovation, with economic effects that are uncertain and cannot be achieved in the short term. "Exploration includes things captured by terms such as search, variation, risk taking, experimentation, play, flexibility, discovery, innovation. The essence of exploration is experimentation with new alternatives. Its returns are uncertain, distant, and often negative. Thus, the distance in time and space between the locus of learning and the locus for the realization of returns is generally greater in the case of exploration than in the case of exploitation, as is the uncertainty" (March

Fig. 2 Exploitation-Eploration, relational structure and outcome



Source: our elaboration

1991). It is a relation activating mechanism that does not necessarily produce interdependence among resources; thus interdependence can on the one hand favour greater efficiency, and on the other the possibility of innovation within the enterprise. "The actor's dependence in its existing relationships restricts its freedom to act in the directions of its own choice and require it to invest in interaction within its existing

relationships. The interdependencies in an actor's existing relationships simultaneously empower and constrain its ability to achieve change and growth" (Håkansson and Ford, 2002). It has to be kept in mind that with increasing interdependence the resources involved have less scope to express their reciprocal integrational potential; therefore it is necessary to bring about a systematic reappraisal and exchange of resources within ongoing relations or, alternatively, induce new joint resource combinations within the framework of new relations in order to be able to drive the process of innovation (Håkansson 1987, Biemans 1992, Håkansson and Waluszewski 2002). The tension towards innovation has a marked impact on the resources, so that the relational effect produced (outcome) takes the form of the development of resources (path) as well as the pursuit of heterogeneity in combining resources (heterogeneity). It is this interaction among heterogeneous elements that generates complementarity and creative combination, thereby engendering the conditions to create value in the enterprise through innovative processes. "Resource heterogeneity means that interaction is a means for value creation across company boundaries" (Ford et al.; 2008). Relations oriented towards innovation favour a certain dynamism in network relations. The mechanism of exploration is typical of relational choices in which enterprises decide to engage with the other parties involved and appraise their reciprocal achievements or to create a new position in the network, or else to try, in appropriate and pre-established situations, to coerce others into carrying out their wishes (Ritter and Ford, 2004).

In both of the orientations examined, i.e. exploitation and exploration, changes in activities and resources are accompanied by modifications of the *actors* involved in the interaction: their coevolution is correlated with the effects produced by the interactive processes. In addition, intermediate situations mid-way between exploitation and exploration can be identified, in which there is a coexistence of different combinations of activity coordination and also of resource integration, specialization and experimentation, as well as economic certainty or investment risk. This can lead to situations and relations that cannot individually be defined as belonging to one of the mechanisms identified, and this can generate different levels of dynamism and relational stability. "Adaptive systems that engage in exploration to the exclusion of exploitation are likely to find that they suffer the costs of experimentation without gaining many of its benefits. They exhibit too many undeveloped new ideas and too little distinctive competence. Conversely, systems that engage in exploitation to the exclusion of exploration are likely to find themselves trapped in suboptimal stable equilibria. As a result, maintaining an appropriate balance between exploration and exploitation is a primary factor in system survival and prosperity" (March, 1991). Balance between the two orientations translates into the coexistence of opposed relational situations, and the combined and coordinated management of these opposites on the basis of a unitary strategic project is increasingly being seen as the driver of any form of network governance (Voss, Sirdeshmukh, Voss, 2008; Burrelli A., Ranfagni, S., 2006).

4. Research plan and analytical methodology

This study constitutes the first part of a complex research project that aims to analyse the interactive processes that come into play in theatre production enterprises. In this first stage we aimed to:

- (a) analyse the concept of the market in the eyes of producing theatres and companies, and identify the subjects belonging to it;
- (b) analyse the interaction processes that producing theatres and companies establish with the different actors.

The methodology adopted consists of the case study approach (Yin, 1993; Guercini, 1996) applied to theatre enterprises, carried out by means of in-depth interviews with the persons in charge of the organization of two public theatres (Teatro Stabile of Turin and Piccolo Teatro of Milan), a Tradition Theatre (Teatro Verdi of Pisa) and two theatre companies (Arca Azzurra and Sandro Lombardi). The decision to interview theatre enterprises characterised by different structural profiles and a different cultural range is closely connected with the aim of gaining insight into their potentially different concept of the market and their different representations of the market itself. The interviews are divided into three parts: in the first part we gathered structural data on the organizations under analysis and in particular on their role within the Italian theatre system, their cultural range and some performance indicators. In the central section, we endeavoured to reconstruct their concept of the market and its relation with the complex process of theatre production. Finally, in the last part, we analysed the relations with the individual subjects that compose the market. In this analysis we sought to examine the interactive processes (interaction), the changes such processes brought about on the level of the entire relational structure (actors, resources and activities) and the results obtained (outcome) by the interacting parties.

The further stages of the currently ongoing research process will involve:

- (c) study of the individual subjects indicated as part of the market, and of their interactive processes;
- (d) identification and analysis of the relational processes brought into play for creativity transfer among organizations belonging to highly differentiated contexts. Interaction is transformation and therefore it can generate contamination among the market actors; insight into the mechanisms involved in the activation of interaction, sharing and transfer could lead to more extensive and meaningful study of theatre enterprises which, as we will see, can be defined as creative enterprises that are increasingly capable of swaying the market of which they feel themselves to be a part.

5. Interactions in theatre production enterprises: results of a qualitative study

5.1 Structural data of the theatre production enterprises forming the object of analysis

The research group interviewed two theatre companies (Arca Azzurra and Sandro Lombardi) and three theatres (Teatro Stabile of Turin, Piccolo Teatro of Milan and Teatro Verdi of Pisa). The companies in question are flexible enterprises that deal with production only, while the theatres are more complex structures which not only put on performances but also deal with hosting, i.e. the organising of the distribution of performances produced by third parties. In this section of our study we propose a cross-sectional reading of the cases analysed; it therefore seems appropriate to outline these five production units from the point of view of their historical evolution and their management-organizational approach, followed by an investigation of their representation of the market and the interactive processes they engage in with the actors that make up the market itself. It should be borne in mind that the temporal space within which the interactive processes develop consists of the theatre season; thus an interaction takes the form of a process within a limited span of time, at the end of which it is not necessarily reactivated in a perspective of permanent continuity.

Profile of the companies Arca Azzurra and Sandro Lombardi

The companies interviewed (Tab. 4) were set up in the 1970s -1980s in Tuscany. Arca Azzurra was founded at the end of the 1980s in San Casciano Val di Pesa (province of Florence), by a group of theatre lovers who decided to start producing performances as their main working activity. The company is registered as a cultural association which is characterized by the production of performances displaying elevated artistic quality, but essential and streamlined in the set design and structural components. The Sandro Lombardi company was set up in Florence in the 1970s by three of its current members (Sandro Lombardi, Federico Tiezzi and Marion D'Amburgo) who at first concentrated on a type of production typical of Image Theatre and Experimental Theatre and then later turned towards Poetry Theatre, staging classical and contemporary authors. Its performances are complex and require the commitment of an extensive team of players as well as the creation of highly elaborate set design. From the organizational point of view the companies are streamlined and flexible. Arca Azzurra is composed of core group of seven players brought together by the director (Ugo Chiti), and some of the players are not only artists but also conduct management activities, as administrators of the company, or engage in technical work as electricians and costume designers. The

	Composition	Production	Public Funds
Arca Azzurra	7 members 3 employees	At least one production a year Plays endowed with high artistic quality, but essential and streamlined in their stage set and structural components Price of the show: 4000-5000 Euro	95,072.00 Euro (Fus data 2008)
Sandro Lombardi	3 members 3 employees 3 external consultants	At least two production a year Plays endowed with high artistic quality and complex in their stage set and structural components Price of the show: 9.000-12.000 Euro	345.100 Euro (Fus data 2008)

Source: our elaboration from empirical research

company also has three employees, namely an administrative clerk and two members of staff in charge of managing the production secretariat and distribution activities. A similar form of organization is found in the Sandro Lombardi company which, in addition to its three members, is also composed of an organizational director, an assistant who is in charge of production and running the secretary's office, and three external consultants (one for distribution, one for payroll management and an accountant). Within the companies the role of coordination is carried out by the production secretariat and the staff in charge of distribution. The production secretariat deals with putting on the performance in all its phases, from contact with the theatre

director and the players to coordination of the activity of technicians in the host theatres. The staff in charge of distribution have the task of liaising with potential host theatres, defining the sales conditions for the performance and organising all the preliminary logistic activities in the run-up to the performance (transport, overnighting, etc.). Arca Azzurra puts on at least one production a year, with a sales price varying between 4000 and 5000 Euro, and it can benefit from public funding for an amount up to 95,072,00 Euro (Fus data 2008). Sandro Lombardi produces at least two shows a year, which it sells at a price ranging between 9,000 and 12,000 Euro. It receives public funding for a total of 345,100 Euro (Fus data 2008).

Profile of the Teatro Stabile of Turin, the Piccolo Teatro of Milan and the Teatro Verdi of Pisa

The Teatro Stabile of Turin and the Piccolo Teatro of Milan (Tab.5) are two stable theatres operating in the sphere of prose performance production. The Teatro Stabile of Turin was set up in the 1950s and has always been distinguished by its ability to attract renowned players and artistic directors. The Piccolo Teatro of Milan was set up at the end of the 1940s as a "theatre of art for everyone", in other words a theatre that would combine a public service with respect for artistic excellence, with a "mixed" repertoire, i.e. a repertoire partly linked to its local roots, but also open to the international scene. Both theatres produce over ten performances every season and are characterized by their complex organization: the Teatro Stabile of Turin has a staff of over 50 persons, as well as 300 seasonal staff; the Piccolo of Milan has 70 employees and 200 occasional staff. The leading figures within the organization of the two theatres are the artistic director and the organizational director, who have the respective tasks of defining the artistic project of the theatre season together with assessing its technical-economic feasibility, and that of overseeing all the production and sales processes. The two directors answer both to the administrative director and the Board of Governors, whose president is a political representative of the city in question, and whose members are

Tab.5 Structural elements of the Teatro Stabile of Turin, the Piccolo Teatro of Milan and the Teatro Verdi of Pisa				
	Composition	Structure	Production	Public funding
Teatro Stabile of Turin	50 employees 300 seasonal staff	5 auditoria	At least 10 shows produced	2,030,785.00 Euro (Fus data 2008)
Piccolo Teatro of Milan	70 employees 200 seasonal staff	2 auditoria	At least 10 shows produced	3,685,116,000 Euro (Fus data 2008)
Teatro Verdi of Pisa	27 employees 6 three-year contracts External staff with seasonal contract	1 auditorium	At least 1 co-production of opera	19,665.00 Euro (Fus data 2008)
Source: our elaboration from empirical research				

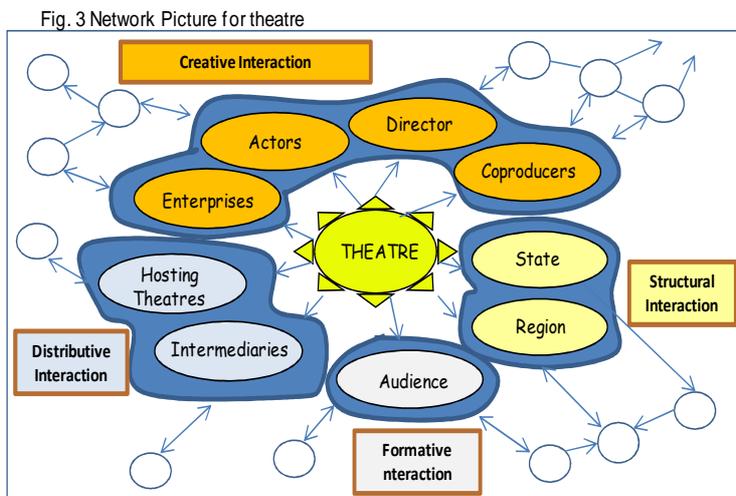
appointed by the funding bodies which may be public or private. In addition, the directors interact with the production office and the planning office. The production office is in charge of managing all the activities related to the artistic production process: it contacts the theatre directors and the players, negotiates their pay terms and coordinates them during the period of planning and creating the performance; the planning office deals with sales of the performances produced and manages the hosting aspects, by contacting the companies for purchase of their shows and dealing with inclusion of the pieces within the programme schedule. The activities of these two offices are also assisted by the marketing function (or external relations), the administration and the human resources office. The performances produced by the two theatres are sold at a maximum price of 12,000 Euro. The Piccolo Teatro of Milan has access to funding up to 3,685,116,000 Euro (Fus data 2008) and has two auditoria (Strehler Theatre House and Studio Theatre House); the Teatro Stabile of Turin receives public funds in the amount of 2.030,785.00 Euro (Fus data 2008) and stages its performances in five auditoria (Carignano Theatre, Gobetti Theatre, Astra Theatre, Vittoria Theatre and Fonderie Limone).

The Teatro Verdi of Pisa (Tab.4) differs from the other two in that it is a Tradition Theatre set up according to the model of the German theatre, that is to say, characterized by a notable variety of theatrical genres and also by the fact of being open to young artists. Thus the Verdi of Pisa offers a season composed of music, dance, prose and opera. This heterogeneous range is made possible by outsourcing the production of the performances belonging to the various genres, which are in effect hosted within the theatre. The theatre itself also engages in co production of opera performances, whose distribution circuit consists of the auditoria of

the co-producing theatres. Overall, the Teatro Verdi has 27 staff working within the theatre as permanent employees, 6 persons with a three-year contract, and also a variable number of external staff working on seasonal contracts. The present-day Teatro Verdi Foundation was set up at the beginning of this millennium and is characterized by a hierarchical organisational structure: the main orientations are defined by the Board of Governors upon the recommendation of an Orientation Board which meets at least twice a year to approve the budget plan and the balance sheet. The Director's Office is answerable to these organs, and has the task of planning both the dance season and the prose season. The various functional areas (marketing area, administrative area, educational area, technical area) are dependent on the Director's Office. The Teatro Verdi co-produces at least one opera during a season and has public funding amounting to 19,665.00 Euro (Fus data 2008)

5.2. Representation of the market: actors and interactions

Our research shows that the representation of the market in the theatre enterprises is more complex as compared to that of the companies.



Source: our empirical research

The **market** of the **theatre enterprises** (fig.3) is extremely **variegated** and internally **heterogeneous**; the subjects forming part of this market belong, in an order of priority, to the core of the actual and potential recipients of the performances (the audience and the public), the theatre production system (the team of players, the co-producers), the public funding bodies (State, Region and Municipality), the distributors (host theatres and intermediaries) and enterprises.

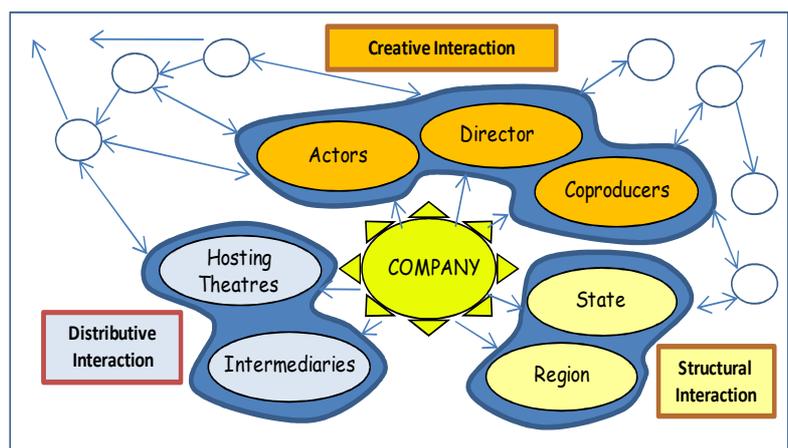
In the **theatre companies** (fig. 4) the representation of the market is less

complex from the point of view of the number and variety of interacting subjects. According to a perceived order of significance, the reference subjects are those that are functional to carrying out the production activities (players, directors, co-producers), obtaining financial resources (State and Region), and distribution (hosting theatres and intermediaries).

The audience and enterprises do not constitute major subjects in the representation of the companies' market.

Both the theatre enterprises and the companies develop various different relational approaches with the market components. Thus one finds *creative interactions* with the subjects involved in the artistic production (players, theatre directors, co-producers, enterprises), whereas *distributive interactions* are found with the distributors (intermediaries, host theatres) and, finally, *structural interactions* with the funding bodies (whether public or private). In addition to these interactions there are also educational interactions activated by the theatres vis-à-vis their audiences. These different typologies of relational processes develop over time (interaction); they produce change in the entire relational structure (change) and lead to the achievement of a given result (outcome). Our intention here is to analyse the features of the different relations (prerequisites for activation, activities carried out, relational intensity), to identify their respective activators (drivers), the level of transformations produced as well as the

Fig. 4 Network Picture for company



Source: our empirical research

ensuing consequences (tab. 6 and 7). In assessing the transformations, the qualitative indicators adopted are defined as the degree of coordination of activities and the degree of combination of resources. Different degrees of both these factors can be associated with a different impact in terms of transformation of the interacting subjects as well as different orientations towards conditions of relational stability or dynamism. The results (outcome) examined here go beyond the effects of specialization, interdependence of the activities and evolution of the resources (path), which can easily be deduced from the degree of integration of activities and from the degree of resource combination. In general, the results identified (*outcome*) are strongly linked to the nature of the objectives (*social, artistic and economic*) pursued by the different interactive processes

Tab 6. Educational, creative and distributive interactions in theatre enterprises

Thatres	Role	Actors	Nature of the interaction	Prerequisites and Presuppositions	Driver	Activities	Intensity	Change Level	D vs S	Outcome
T.Stabile Turin Piccolo T. Milan T.Verdi Pisa	Retailer	General public Audience	Educational	The theatre performance as a tool for cultural and social growth	Educational office	educational	Continuous	Elevated coordination of activities Elevated coordination of resources	Dynamism (constant exchange of ideas)	Social goals
T.Stabile Turin Piccolo T. Milan	Producer	Theatre directors Artists Technical staff	Creative	Economic feasibility ;sharing of an artistic project ; respecting production and tournée times	Artistic director	production	Continuous	Elevated coordination of activities Elevated coordination of resources	Dynamism (constant exchange of ideas)	Artistic goals
T.Stabile Turin Piccolo T. Milan T.Verdi Pisa	Producer	Co-producers	Creative	Sharing of an artistic project; economic feasibility; respecting production and tournée times	Artistic director	production	Continuous	Elevated coordination of activities Elevated coordination of resources	Dynamism (constant exchange of ideas)	Artistic goals
Piccolo T.Milan	Producer	Enterprises	Creative	Sharing of a corporate communication project	Artistic director	production	Periodical	Elevated coordination of activities Elevated coordination of resources	Dynamism (constant exchange of ideas)	Economic goals
T.Stabile Turin Piccolo T. Milan	Producer	Public intermediaries	Distributive	Coherence between the theatre performance and the educational-cultural policies of host theatres	Staff in charge of distribution	distribution	Periodical	Elevated coordination of activities Low coordination of resources	Stability(main-taining relations)	Economic goals
T.Stabile Turin Piccolo T. Milan	Producer	Host theatres	Distributive	Coherence between the theatre performance and the educational-cultural policies of host theatres; development of personal relations	Planning office	distribution	Periodical	Elevated coordination of activities Low coordination of resources	Stability(main-taining relations)	Economic goals
T.Stabile Turin Piccolo T. Milan T.Verdi Pisa	Distribut or	Theatres	Distributive	Coherence between the theatre performance and the educational-cultural policies of host theatres; development of personal relations	Planning office	distribution	Periodical	Elevated coordination of activities Low coordination of resources	Stability(main-taining relations)	Economic goals
T.Stabile Turin Piccolo T. Milan T.Verdi Pisa	Distribut or	Companies	Distributive	Coherence between the theatre performance and the educational-cultural policies of host theatres	Planning office	distribution	Periodical	Elevated coordination of activities Low coordination of resources	Dynamism (maintaining relations)	Economic goals
T.Stabile Turin Piccolo T. Milan T.Verdi Pisa	Producer	Institutions (State, Region)	Structural	Respecting qualitative and quantitative production parameters	Organisatio nal director	institutional	Periodical	Low coordination of activities Low coordination of resources	Stability (respecting the parameters)	Economic goals

Tab.7 Educational, creative and distributive interactions in the theatre companies

Theatre companies	Role	Actors	Nature of the relation	Prerequisites and Presuppositions	Driver	Activities:	Intensity	Change Level	D vs S	Outcome
Arca Azzurra Sandro Lombardi	Producer	Artists and technical staff	Creative	Economic feasibility; sharing of an artistic project; respecting production and tournée times	Theatre director	production	Continuous	Elevated coordination of activities; elevated coordination of resources	Dynamism (constant exchange of ideas)	Artistic goals
Arca Azzurra Sandro Lombardi	Producer	Co-producers	Creative	Economic feasibility; sharing of an artistic project; respecting production and tournée times	Theatre director; players	production	Continuous	Elevated coordination of activities; elevated coordination of resources	Dynamism (constant exchange of ideas))	Artistic goals
Arca Azzurra Sandro Lombardi	Producer	Public intermediaries	Distributive	Coherence between the intermediary's artistic project and that of the company Audience	Staff in charge of distribution	distribution	Periodical	Elevated coordination of activities ;low coordination of resources	Stability	Economic goals
Arca Azzurra Sandro Lombardi	Producer	Host theatres	Distributive	Coherence between the theatre's artistic project and the show supplied	Staff in charge of distribution	distribution	Periodical	Elevated coordination of activities ; Low coordination of resources	Dynamism (constant exchange of ideas)	Economic goals
Arca Azzurra Sandro Lombardi	Producer	Institutions	Structural	Respecting qualitative and quantitative production parameters	Company director	Institutional	Periodical	Low coordination of activities Low coordination of resources	Stability (respecting the parameters)	Economic goals

Source: our elaboration from empirical research

i) Educational interactions: actors, change and outcomes

The *educational interactions* (Tab. 6 and 7) constitute a relational peculiarity of theatres. They are activated vis-à-vis the public, i.e. the audience, which constitutes their main recipient in the network representation; a *constant dialogue* is set up with the audience, and it consists not only of information but also and above all of *educational consciousness-raising* by means of the theatre performances and specific initiatives. These are relations that are observed to be *continuous* and *dynamic* during the theatre season; they are activated by subjects internal to the theatre (educational office) with the aim of creating an *interactive process of exchange of ideas* and reciprocal change. The theatre (having the role of a retailer) organizes educational and instructive pathways and offers experiences for its audience, many of which have a considerable impact on the audience. If the audience, in its multifaceted composition, is appropriately heeded, then this dialogue, conducted through the performances produced, can make the theatre into a genuine interpreter of emerging social values. Activation of these relations presupposes recognition that drama has a cognitive role; when this role comes into play, then the possibility arises of producing change and achieving *social objectives*, in the sense of contributing to the cultural growth of a collective community and ushering in a relation of osmosis between the theatre and its audience, and more generally between the language of theatre and social dynamics. "...The sharing of a new theatre language comes about through the performances, but also through activities of educational awareness conducted continuously in conjunction with the schools and the universities. The theatre educates the community not only with ad hoc activities, but also with performances... The performance acts as an accompaniment for the individual not only from the pedagogical perspective, but also as a means of sharing in the individual's fears, doubts and uncertainties... in charting this course the theatre does not produce performances to provide answers, but to open up questions. "Infinity", a show we put on, provided no answers, but it testifies to a social situation and addresses the theme of irreducible complexity" (Piccolo Teatro of Milan).

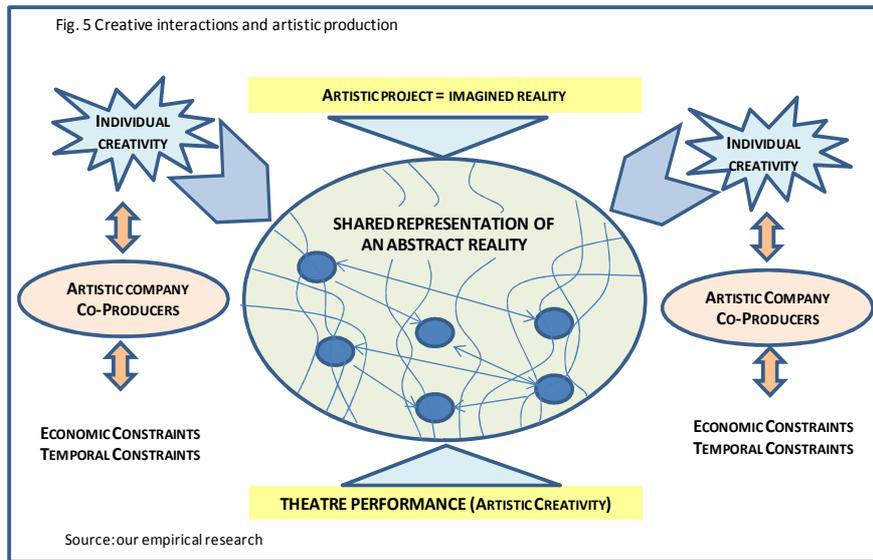
The potential audience among the general public may be extremely diversified, and one way to satisfy this variety consists in devising a highly varied and complex artistic supply which includes a number of different theatre genres. "... Our audiences are very diversified and fragmented... For this reason we put on a wide variety of performing arts genres (dance, music, opera, prose)... those who are interested in opera have a higher cultural background and also attend the concert season. This type of audience may come from the University or from the Sant'Anna Graduate School and is generally looking for artistic quality in the Theatre's range. Younger audiences prefer entertainment shows (pop music, musicals) and the dance season. Both of these categories of audience can appreciate prose performances..." (Teatro Verdi of Pisa).

ii) Creative interactions: actors, change and outcomes

In their representation of the market, both the theatre enterprises and the companies (Tab. 6 and 7) award importance to all the subjects with whom they enter into *creative interrelations* seen as instrumental in enhancing their artistic production. These subjects are composed of the bearers of artistic competences (director and players), the technical staff (set designer, machine operators, costume designers, etc.) and the co-producers. We will enquire here into the interactions with the first two of these groups of subjects, and then address the mechanisms of cooperation among theatre production enterprises.

Continuous relations among subjects composing the team of players and artists are developed during the theatre season, and the driver of these relations is the *artistic director*, in the case of the theatrical enterprise, and the *theatre director*, in the case of a theatre company. These are relations characterized by exchanges based on strong coordination of the activities and an elevated degree of resource and competence integration. The activities and resources merge in the process of production of artistic creativity, where the *relational dynamism* based on constant exchange of ideas and progressive reciprocal adaptation determines and orients the evolutionary paths of the interacting subjects. Creativity generation is the activity *par excellence* of theatre production enterprises, and it is the means through which the artistic objectives manifested in the theatre performance are pursued. The performance becomes the context in which *heterogeneities* are combined and coexist; and if the interaction within diversity generates innovation, then the performance itself becomes a place of creativity. "Creativity lies in the interaction among components which, taken singly, could not become integrated... in order to give expression to creativity it becomes important to mingle languages, and in our productions we try to blend the language of art with the language of science and physics... that's how the idea of the theatre performance "Infinity" arose, and it's been one of our highly successful shows... by opening up to the external context our theatre becomes a production nucleus with a marked degree of entropy capable of generating novelty..." (Piccolo Teatro of Milan).

Creative relations (fig.5) in theatre production enterprises are based on a *process of abstract reconstruction of the situation represented* in the performance. This process is triggered by the director's artistic project or by that of the artistic director, in other words, by the imagined reality that is to be reconstructed in the



It develops and is structured through the creative sensibilities of the entire team of players together with the director. The creativity of the individuals converges in a process of reproducing a represented and shared reality, which in turn creates interactions and renders the creative individualities indistinguishable, combining and blending them in an intricate web of complexity that is both artistic and economic-organizational. "... The director shares the artistic

project with the players and the other staff, and sets up processes of abstracting away from reality and of entering into imagination, which then form the basis for defining the dramaturgical plan of the performance (role of the players, stage set, lighting, etc.). ... Together with the players and the technical staff, the director begins to imagine the theatrical production on the basis of an overall artistic project. The artistic team composed of the players and the director becomes a complex relational system made up of persons whose competencies are little by little mutually integrated, in a process of continuous exchange of ideas where second thoughts, conflict, roles taken on and different states of mind orient the production and produce continuous modifications within the company's creative process... " (Sandro Lombardi). "One fundamental moment for producing a performance is that of the rehearsals; during the rehearsal period automatisms arise among the players, a sense of cohesion arises and leads to a group spirit: these are indispensable conditions for giving expression to artistic creativity..." (Lombardi Tiezzi).

Creativity production implies a choice of technical-artistic contents and the development of dramaturgical plans (role and behaviour of the players); it is the result of continuous "internal relational cycles" (relational loops), linked to the constant reciprocal learning processes among the artistic components, but also to the exchange of ideas between the creator of the idea (theatre director or artistic director) and the person in charge of the organizational aspects, in order to check whether the artistic project is economically feasible and to assess its organizational complexity. "...The director devises an artistic project and supplies the information to define the economic weight of the individual performance; in particular, the director indicates what type of scene is going to be portrayed, the number of players and other staff members, as well as the number of days of rehearsals. This information is needed in order to allow the organizational director to assess the economic feasibility of the artistic project... choice of the team of players implicitly means sharing the artistic project with them..." (Sandro Lombardi). "...The limit on expenses becomes a constraint on any variation we may wish to introduce into the artistic project while it is still undergoing development..." (Arca Azzurra). "...The artistic director supplies a list of the titles of the various shows, indicating the economic burden involved and also suggesting who would be the ideal director to share the artistic project with. Once the economic feasibility of the project has been verified together with the organisational director... it is then up to the production office to enter into contact with the players and artists, negotiate their pay and draw up an estimate of the expense...which the production office then submits to the organisational director... once this has been accepted, the director shares the artistic project with the company in order to proceed with preparing the show and the production office sees to drawing up the contracts with the parties involved..." (Teatro Stabile of Turin). "... Every idea is subjected to an economic feasibility evaluation with the involvement of the person in charge of production who is also responsible for the budget... the director may be external or coincide with our artistic director..." (Piccolo Teatro of Milan).

Evaluation of *feasibility* even as early as the planning stage and *the sharing of an artistic project* constitute the main prerequisites for the development of creative relations. While in the companies the project is shared by the team of players together with the director, in theatre enterprises the path leading to artistic sharing is more complex. The artistic director chooses the director and then engages in exchange of ideas with the director on the project, which is subsequently also shared with the players and the other co-workers, who may be individuated by the artistic director, but also by the theatre director. If the artistic director is actually

also the theatre director, then it is up to the theatre director to choose the team of players, with the result of streamlining the preliminary activities that take place in preparation for production. Creative relations are activated, develop and then come to an end in the framework of a given period of time; therefore borders are set on the expressive potential of creativity due to *constraints* that are both *economic* and *temporal*. Respect for the temporal constraints constitutes a further prerequisite for the activation of creative relations, which come into play at the moment of production (imagined creativity) and of rehearsals (emergent creativity) and are renewed every time the show is performed in the theatre (reproduction of creativity). The span of time within which these relations continue in existence is predefined on the basis of the calendar of the theatre season, which in Italy begins in October-November and concludes in April-May. It is precisely this calendar that dictates the time allotted to the planning, artistic production and marketing of the artistic production. "...By the months of February-March prior to the opening of the season, the company has defined what to produce, has checked whether it is economically feasible to stage the performances... as from March-April the company proceeds to contact the artistic components, formalise the relationship, and share the artistic project jointly with them... this makes it possible to also set production of the stage components (stage sets, costumes, lighting) in motion...the transition to the next stage, i.e. the rehearsals, generally occurs a month before the opening night..." (Arca Azzurra). "By the month of December before the beginning of the season the artistic planning has already been completed as well as the economic feasibility assessment; by April the production office has defined the contracts with the director and is in the phase of defining the contracts with the players... at the end of the negotiations, the artistic co-workers will have to liaise with the Theatre's production office to make agreements on what it is necessary to produce... the time required for staging a piece is a period of three months.... In June the programme schedule is presented and by that date the titles and at least the contracts with the directors should already have been defined..." The production office has a fundamental role in that it contributes to endowing an artistic project with a concrete embodiment... its role is that of making sure that everything which has been planned actually does come about... establishing the time periods and deadlines and fostering communication among persons" (Teatro Stabile of Turin).

Additional elements that play an important role in artistic production are the figure of *the co-producers*, with whom the company or the theatre may develop continuous creative relations that display a high degree of coordination of activities as well as an elevated blending of resources. This approach based on jointness and coordination aims to facilitate the achievement of artistic projects by sharing some of the major aspects with third-party subjects: thus the economic investments necessary for setting up and creating the project, the market risk linked to the potential failure of the production, as well as the artistic content of the performance, are all undertaken jointly. In the sphere of opera the very high production costs virtually oblige enterprises to have recourse to co-production, which requires intense mediation and willingness to exchange ideas while respecting the artistic orientations pursued. "... co-productions constitute a necessary choice due to the high production costs of an operatic production... the various parties discuss their ideas on the choice of title and on how the individual opera should be evaluated. Choice of the title takes into account the span of time that will elapse before the hypothesised performance can effectively be put on, and also tries to ensure coherence between the artistic project and the cultural orientation of the various partner theatres... Additional criteria that need to be discussed together include respecting the available budget and providing strong support and opportunity for young artists...." (Teatro Verdi of Pisa).

Our analysis shows that theatre enterprises can also set up creative relations with *manufacturing* or *service* enterprises. We found that the exchange of ideas between theatre enterprises and manufacturing or service enterprises revealed an affinity with the production of theatre pieces that are the expression of their story, their contradictions and their evolutionary paths; at the same time, theatre enterprises also engage in consultancy activities on specific corporate communication projects. Interaction with manufacturing or service enterprises allows the identification of new utilizations of the language of theatre, and artistic creativity is produced in order to increase the enterprise's capacity to enter into relations with the market. The aims pursued by these relations do not have an artistic nature, but rather an economic nature. "We're devising some interesting communication projects with Eni; it's here that the advertising claim "the culture of energy, the energy of culture" was first thought up; and we also created an ad hoc theatre show for Eni which tells its story and the Group's strategic choices... Those who turn to the Piccolo Teatro buy shows, but also services, they buy our professional skills, our approach to the world of work, our dedication, our awareness of the pride that comes with putting on a performance.. this is the reason why preference is awarded to the Piccolo rather than to event organising companies..." (Piccolo Teatro of Milan). So these interchanges embody a meeting between two different worlds, one of an economic nature and the other springing from the cultural scene: the combination of these two kinds of competencies produces artistic creativity (a new show, a new advertising claim). The point of contact between these two situations is constituted by the fact of sharing the same abstract vision which is to be communicated to the recipients of the new creativity generated by the performance. The need to develop the range of performances to be put on as well as the pursuit of economic objectives leads theatres to make

choices that involve diversification, and in the case of the Piccolo Teatro of Milan diversification takes shape concretely not only in terms of a highly varied range (lateral diversification) but also in the form of new products for a new public (conglomerated diversification). Effectively, the Piccolo's ability to utilize the language of theatre to interpret corporate reality has paved the way to collaboration with the world of business.

iii) Distributive interactions: actors, change and outcome

In the enterprises interviewed as part of our case study the artistic project becomes the driver both of distributive and of structural distributive relations. At the point when the theatrical production enterprise plans its shows, it not only has to identify the potential host theatres and the intermediaries through which to distribute its performances but it also has to define the sustainable investments on the basis of the funding obtainable from public funding sources (State and Region). The public funding assigned to the companies and the theatres – which they are entitled to in their capacity as public institutions – are defined and limited by specific qualitative and quantitative parameters pertaining to artistic production and are allocated in order to cover the production enterprises's structural expenses.

The performing arts enterprises and the companies set up periodic relations with subjects belong to the distribution circuit; such relations are concentrated in some moments of the season and are aimed at achieving predominantly *economic objectives* (Tab. 6 and 7). The production enterprises interviewed during our study interact mainly with the *host theatres* and with the *public intermediaries* (Regional Circuits)⁵; the latter manage smaller municipal theatres owned by local authorities and they constitute the indispensable interlocutor for access to minor theatres, which are sometimes located in peripheral areas.

The activation of distributive interactions presupposes a *coherence* between the artistic-educational project of the host theatre and the pieces to be staged, and also, in the case of relations between theatres, relations of trust between artistic directors. "... In the negotiation, the choice of show by the host theatre depends on the theatre's interest in the performance proposed and on the relation of trust that has been built up with the company. When the company is choosing where to have the show performed, it must choose the right theatre, in other words a theatre that is consistent with the company's artistic identity and with the show performed; this is because the wrong type of show may result in the company losing for ever the possibility of putting on other shows in the future in the given theatre... (Arca Azzurra). ..."In choosing the shows, what counts is not only the artistic content but also the social relations holding between the directors of the two theatres involved..." (Teatro Stabile of Turin).

In the *companies interviewed*, the relations associated with distribution activities are activated by *internal members of staff* who liaise directly with the theatre directors and with the persons responsible within the *public intermediaries*. The negotiations are complex; they are based on intricately structured mechanisms and can take place on several levels, or involve more than one subject within the host theatre or a number of intermediaries at the same time. " Distribution activity is managed directly by staff within the company, who send a circular letter to a list of national theatres specifying the shows on offer... the staff in charge of distribution divide up the regions among their group and begin to phone the various theatres... a sort of diary is drawn up containing the calls they have made, and a note is made in the diary to indicate when the call was made, whether the potential host theatre expects to be called back and the level/state of the negotiation... on average, a venue is called about three times..." (Arca Azzurra). "... What sometimes happens is that you speak to a theatre director, make an agreement, only to discover a bit later that the director already has an agreement with the private agency... and so a proposal is made to the director, but it's also necessary to liaise with the agency because the director wants to keep up good relations with the agency that guarantees inclusion of commercial shows in the programme schedule... in other cases relations may take place not on two but on three levels .. this happens when a theatre has an artistic committee that does not correspond to the director..... you have to interact with the director, the potential agency and the committee as well... "(Sandro Lombardi). In the theatres, negotiations are the duty of the *planning office*, which not only sees to the sale of directly produced shows but also takes care of the hosting and thus proposes to the artistic director a series of theatre performances to be included in the programme schedule. The planning office works jointly with the production office: the planning office distributes and chooses shows, while the production office oversees the process of artistic production of directly produced shows. This joint work leads to production of the programme schedule and the playbills, that is to say, it defines the pieces to be staged within a given season.

⁵These are public intermediaries (in the form of associations, consortiums or foundations), numbering thirteen in total, with the participation of the regions and local authorities (municipalities and provinces), which distribute shows in the theatre venues located in their respective regional areas under their jurisdiction and made available by the member bodies themselves. The planning decisions are made on the basis of specific projects designed to have an educational function for the local public, favouring a relationship with the regional companies with which the circuits engage in co-responsibility relations with regard to the cultural development policies pursued in a given local area.. Thus the circuits are organisms that deal not only with distribution but also with education of the public and promotion of a regional theatre culture.

"... The planning office offers to the various theatres the possibility of hosting shows that have been produced and acts as the sales promoter, but it works together with the artistic director in choosing which shows produced by third parties are to be included in the programme schedule... it works in tandem with the production office, and communication between the two offices is made possible by an intermediate figure that plays a connecting role..." (Teatro stabile of Turin).

Distribution interactions have a low impact in terms of change induced in the parties involved; they are not characterized by a combination of resources and competences, but are restricted to the development of strongly coordinated activities (above all of an organizational-logistic nature); such interactions translate into exchange of ideas among the parties in order to define the contents of the negotiation. However, when it is a question of interaction with *public intermediaries* the scope for negotiation is rather limited, both for companies and theatres. "... The public intermediaries manage public theatre venues by adopting policies that are defined together with their members, namely local authorities (municipalities and provinces); these intermediaries, working on the basis of an artistic-educational project they themselves have formulated, choose the companies to be hosted, awarding preference to regional companies, and they define what is to be performed and the level of pay that can be afforded... In this case, discussing the issues with the companies is helpful above all to define the dates and venues where the performances are to be put on... The public intermediary... takes note of the different dates we propose... and then arranges meetings with the various member municipalities and works together with these local authorities to define the dates and venue of the performances... we may find ourselves having to put on our show in any one of the theatres managed by the intermediary..." (Sandro Lombardi). As a consequence, theatre production enterprises end up accepting predetermined conditions, developing relations that tend to become static. The same aspects are found in distributive interactions among theatres where distributive relations become a more routine matter and maintenance of such relations is part of their general approach. "... We distribute our shows through the repertory theatres and we try to set up an internal exchange circuit with these theatres... The repertory theatre means a large theatre, a well-known title that is easily recognizable, a director of repute who is recognizable for the city... and a prolonged run in the hosting theatre..." (Teatro Stabile of Turin).

In contrast, distributional interactions between a company and host theatres are marked by considerable scope for negotiation and thus give rise to more dynamic relations: "When dealing with theatres, there is greater scope for negotiation concerning payment terms, number of performances and the moment of the season when the show is to be held... factors influencing choices no longer consist simply of the title, the performers and the director but also the size of the stage, as the stage dimensions also affect decisions as to whether it is economically feasible to carry out stage set adaptations. Payment terms may be a) for a fee (the risk is taken on by the host venue); b) percentage on box office takings (shared enterprise risk) or c) percentage on box office takings with a guaranteed minimum. Payment of a fee is preferable if the performance is to be put on only for a very short period" (Arca Azzurra). "... If the theatre adopts the method of payment based on a percentage of takings, this means that the venue is desirable and the theatre is strong with a high number of season ticket holders... if performances are going to run for long periods, more than three weeks, it is more advisable to negotiate payment of a percentage on takings with a guaranteed minimum... if the company succeeds in holding its performances in the same theatre for a greater number of days then it may decide to lower its price..." (Sandro Lombardi).

The theatre fulfils the function of the producer, but also the distributor. Therefore it can interact with theatres and companies for distribution of their shows, and in these relations one finds a situation that is asymmetrical in comparison to what was described above: relations are more static in interaction with theatres and more dynamic when interaction with companies is involved. For instance, the Teatro Verdi of Pisa co-produces operas and distributes prose, musical and dance performances of theatre organizations to which production has been outsourced; such shows are then hosted by the Teatro Verdi and help to complete its artistic range.

iv) Structural interactions: actors, change and outcome

Among the various forms of interaction, the theatres and companies (Tab. 6 and 7) also develop structural interactions with public institutions such as the State and the Regions, as a means of seeking to obtain their annual share of the public funding that is destined to the world of entertainment. In order to be awarded funding, a company must demonstrate that it possesses the required parameters of artistic quality and production quality, which are defined by the funding body. such parameters will then guide the company's production choices and the corresponding economic plan. These relations are activated and managed by the company's administrator, and translate into *stable conventional* relations, distinguished by the absence of a genuine negotiating table. In fact, they constitute interactions which can almost be considered as *routine relations*, practically automatic, in which involvement of the various parties in terms of coordinating their activities or resource integration is very low. "Producing a show implies that the company has to make an investment... In order to cover these expenses, it is indispensable to have a relation with the public institutions, and these institutions establish quali-quantitative criteria for access to funding" (Sandro Lombardi). "The company's

expenses are partly covered by public funding (covering roughly one-third) deriving from the State and the Region, and in part by sales of the show (covering roughly two-thirds). The State and the Region cover the fixed costs associated with the functioning of the association's premises (electricity, telephone, stationery, employees) while the sales revenue covers tournée costs" (Arca Azzurra).

6. Educational, creative, distributive and structural relations: some overall considerations

The analysis presented in this study suggests several major findings, which we will outline in this final part of the paper.

Creative interactions are the *drivers* of other interactive processes (educational, creative, distributive and structural). If we analyse the relation between interaction, change and outcome, we find that the *relations which produce transformations in the parties involved consist of creative relations*. These are continuous relations, which are crucial for the success of the artistic production, since its aim is the achievement of artistic goals. Such *relations constitute the driver of distributive and institutional relations*, the nature of which is instrumental in furthering the diffusion and survival of the show itself: in other words, distributive and institutional relations pursue economic aims and do not generate change in the interacting organizations. In theatre enterprises the creative relations are correlated with educational and consciousness-raising relations: creating a culture of theatre constitutes the prerequisite for appreciating a theatre's cultural range.

The *production of creativity is a complex evolutionary process*, the basic presupposition of which is the artistic project nurtured by the theatre director or the artistic director. The artistic project sparks a process of shared reconstruction of an imagined reality, furthered by the involvement of the individual creativity of the members of the team of players guided by the director. The artistic project kindles the unsettledness that generates creative chaos; the return to order comes about through identification of productive variants of the proposed project and thus variations in the way of representing an imagined reality. The variants then translate into a number of different operational plans which are selected on the basis of the economic and artistic constraints. Creativity is the result of the interaction of individual competences which develop in an almost progressive manner and thus shape an imagined reality that is to be represented in the show. The language of theatre allows the coexistence of heterogeneity and antithetical elements; if creativity arises through interaction within diversity, then the show is a place of creativity. The diversity manifested in the performance is the result of interaction among forms of diversity involved in its production. That is to say, in the quest to create creativity what really counts is the way relations among individuals generate the conditions that effectively enable the organization to create. Creativity is not the sum of individual sparks of creativity; creativity resides in the interaction among elements which, taken singly, do not give rise to creativity. In creative interaction one finds modes of interaction characterized by reciprocal adaptation of the resources involved, and this is a progressive process guided by tension towards the creation of an abstract reality: this is the goal to which the players, directors, set designers and costume designers aspire and it is precisely through this process that they engage in exchange of ideas, modify their perception of the reality to be represented, rethink their roles and generate the special kind of reciprocal interactive cohesion that produces creativity. Thus what one finds is a blending of the resources and competences of the team of players and artists, resulting in production of a reality that is abstract, but shared: the immersion of the players in certain roles and the re-creation of the contexts in which the performance takes place imply interactions among individuals who feel they are an active part of a constructed reality. The players and the director, although working as a team, operate in a destructured context in which each component can structure its own activity autonomously and independently.

The creativity produced within the performing arts enterprise has a strong impact on the subjects involved in the production of shows, whether they are members of the internal artistic team or co-producers. The production of artistic creativity generates *areas of contamination* which involve subjects and organizations in a shared process of representation of an abstract reality. But it should be borne in mind that the subjects involved speak the same language and have a common culture and the same values, as well as sharing the "artistic beauty" represented in the theatre performances. In actual fact, creativity generation is designed not merely to enable the language of art to bring vividly to life the experiences of the represented world in the mind of the public and the audience, but also to make a more restricted sector of the public, namely that of the enterprises, aware of evolutionary corporate dynamics. *Artistic creativity can contaminate the corporate world*: the theatre performance becomes a means to communicate the enterprise and to create cohesion

among its components. The prerequisite for this contamination resides in sharing an artistic project in which the imagined reality is one of the ways in which the enterprise can be represented in the eyes of its own audience. Convergence towards a shared concept of abstract reality is fundamental and calls for a new and adaptive way looking at and experiencing certain corporate issues, which must be remoulded to the language of theatre. This adaptation is engendered through the influx and contribution of artistic organization, which makes the language of theatre into a means of sharing corporate contexts. In this manner, the theatre performance induces a process of change within the enterprise, but also in the reference public and audience. Thus the theatre is increasingly entering into the corporate world. Its language, as testified by the literature on this theme (Schechner, 1988) has supplied tools for interpreting corporate organization: there is a close correlation between roles within the artistic organization (playwright, set designers, technical staff and players) and roles within the enterprise. In our view the theatre and drama in general, and above all the creativity it produces, should be studied in depth with regard to the processes of transformation of the enterprise and its public; in this context, we believe that it is particularly interesting to analyse the contamination between artistic creativity and corporate creativity. Within enterprises, creativity induces change and this can influence their strategic orientations and their innovation processes; creativity constitutes an essential factor for development of the enterprise. For this reason it will be important in the subsequent steps of this research project to investigate the way in which creative abilities pass from one organizational species to another, and thus from the theatre to the enterprise.

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