

**“Local mapping of old and new  
arts”- Phase B  
IISS Alessandro Volta  
(Palermo, Italy)**



**ouRoute**  
CITIZEN-CULTURAL HERITAGE

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This report has been written by students in IISS Alessandro Volta who participated in training sessions and workshops in ouRoute project, in order to investigate old & new arts from the territory of Palermo (Italy) where IISS A.Volta high school is located.

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## 1 Introduction to project aims, objectives and ideas

We are a group of students aged **14-15 yo** (lower high school in the Italian school system) who have been trained by our teachers Francesco Polizzi and Rosapiera Ribaudo, with the help of Laura La Scala from CESIE association in Palermo.

During our training, we mainly expressed our interest on knowing more about Sicilian culture and in particular, discover old arts, artistic performances, initiatives and all artistic expressions in our city.

Our training focused on:

- definition of culture and cultural heritage;
- avoiding common mistakes when referring to **“tangible cultural heritage”** and **“intangible cultural heritage”**, by understanding the difference between the two notions;
- definition of “arts”: we understood how arts is not strictly linked to painting and sculpture, but it can also include some expertises and handcrafts that people daily carried out in their job. Art includes also a series of artistic expressions that can be found in our folklore, local customs, but also in our dialect “Siciliano”;
- identify the main stakeholders from the artistic and creative sector in our city, so to engage them participating in our debates, focus groups and interviews. We elaborated the agenda for the focus group and sent invitations by mail.
- brainstorm on the main questions to be posed to our stakeholders, and start creating a model of questionnaire that we used for both interviews and focus group in our research phases.

All evidences and materials from our training can be found here:

<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1UxvS8z9t30dQGsigArRSZltYsySUf8z2>



Figure 1. screenshot of the PowerPoint presentation used during our brainstorming on culture. We adopted the Tylor definition of culture (culture includes knowledge, values, habits, but also a series of objects and materials typical of a group of people)

## 2 The research phase

### 2.1 Preparatory workshops

Once agreed on a common vision of what culture is, we met in different workshops where we started elaborating our questions for the interviews and focus group with our local stakeholders, and at the same time, we planned our study visit.

Figure 2. Action plan

10/10/2019	presentation of project to the Volta school staff	the project was presented to the teachers and the school staff
10/10/2019	presentation of project to the students aged 14-15 yo	Recruitment of the first 25 students
05/11/2019	I workshop with students	explanation of the meaning of culture, tangible and intangible. Introduction to ouRoute topics and collection of the parent permission for the 25 students
12/11/2019	II workshop with students	explanation of the concepts: interview, focus group, study visit. What are they?
19/11/2019	III workshop with students	Elaboration of the stakeholders engagement plan, students start brainstorming and discuss on the structure of the interviews.
26/11/2019	IV workshop with students	Students finalize the structure of their interviews, and start thinking about how to collect data. They also translated the consent form for the stakeholders
29/11/2019	STUDY VISIT	Students visited the Santa Caterina Church in Palermo and its monastery. They also visited the association of local artisans "Alab" in Palermo. All evidences have been collected and shared on Drive. they also recorded it and they would like to create a final video after all their fieldwork experiences
05/11/2019	V workshop with the students	Students reported their study visit and finalized their observational grids. All observational grids will be collected so to be analysed and used for the logbook.
13/11/2019	VI workshop with students	Start of the interviews. Students have been previously divided into 4 main groups that will go around and collect the interviews to the youth and local associations
13/11/2019	INTERVIEWS	Students divided in 4 groups will conduct 10 interview

- 20/12/2019		with youth and local associations
12/12/2019	dissemination activity	Article about the ouRoute project and the study visit: <a href="https://iissvolta.edu.it/2019/12/12/a-scuola-con-ouroute-per-diventare-ambasciatori-culturali/">https://iissvolta.edu.it/2019/12/12/a-scuola-con-ouroute-per-diventare-ambasciatori-culturali/</a>
20/12/2019	programming phase C and start the selection of the 2nd group of 25 students	Teachers meet to select the new 25 students
07/01/2020	analyse the interviews and start writing the training program	Students analyse the interviews collected on January, and they start writing the training program for their peers in phase C → delayed because of the COVID19 crisis
21/01/2020	finalisation training program writing for students	Students finalise the writing of the training program for their peers
28/01/2020	FOCUS GROUP	focus group with 10 seniors and artists/artisans

During the workshops we focused on writing our Research Protocol (brainstorming, working on small groups of five) which included the questions to be used for the interviews and the focus group. During the study visit, we filled some observational grids including our main observations, findings and comments: <https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1hn0YsiLNS9vXd25UbNc-08Jdj4K2zn8U>

From our preliminary discussions, it emerged our interest to know more about:

1. The **origins of a job** related to a particular artistic expression and expertise: some types of jobs are very old and traditional ones, transferred from generation to generation;
2. How this job/activity contributes to the **promotion of the cultural tangible and/or intangible heritage** in Palermo and its surroundings;
3. Compare past and present: explain **how this job/activity evolved** and which are the positive aspects or criticalities of this evolution through the time;

The questionnaires have been structured on the basis of our interest and we freely selected our stakeholders according to that. For that aim, we tried to elaborate a stakeholder engagement plan as in the table here below. Starting from that we elaborated our questions (find it in the interviews).

Who do we want to interview?	What do we want to ask?	Other possible stakeholders
Pupari		
Agricoltori (olive)		
Venditori ambulanti		
Pasticcieri (Martorana)	Storia della frutta Martorana, dolci più tipici e antichi di Palermo	Dolceria del monastero di Santa Caterina, la sorella di Giuseppe Di

		Stefano
Museo Sant'Elia		
Pescatori (Tonnara, pesca in generale)	Tecniche di pesca e conservazione	
Artigiano del tamburello	Storia della gruppo folk, occasioni di uso	Tammurina di Ficarazzi, bottega delle percussioni
Capi scout		
Comici		
Street food		Caruso
Danza folk		Abballafolk, circolo arci
Artigiani	Come è cambiato il mestiere nel corso del tempo	
	Come sei arrivato a questo lavoro?	
	Cosa ti appassiona del tuo lavoro?	
	A quanti anni hai iniziato a lavorare?	
	Come hai imparato questo lavoro?	
	Perché il tuo lavoro fa parte della cultura palermitana?	
	Che cos'è per te la cultura palermitana?	
	Qual è il futuro del tuo lavoro?	
	Ti aiuta qualcuno?	

Figure 3: Stakeholder engagement plan (the translated questions in EN can be found in next chapter where we analyse the main findings from the focus group, the interviews and the study visit)

## 3 The discovery activities

### 3.1 The focus group

During the focus group, held in our school on January 28<sup>th</sup> 2020, we focused on the promotion of our local culture and how it can be encouraged and preserved, also by using the Sicilian dialect “il siciliano”. This focus group was very important as it allowed us to better analyse the cultural issues within our school, IISS Volta, highly specialized in technical and professional subjects.

We focused on the **Sicilian language and all oral popular expressions** as tools to convey messages that are not always expressible in Italian. The Sicilian language is rich in Arabic terms and contaminations of other cultures, and also reflecting different contexts and socio-cultural worlds: the peasant world but also the world of artisans and their leather processing.

Our participants were local artists and craftsmen, where the border between art and craftsmanship is often subtle. Most of them worked on popular stories and narration as through orality we receive the Sicilian cultural heritage. Importance of the narrative technique “*u cuntu*” in Sicilian language.



For that purpose, a project on Sicilian narration is currently underway in our region: "Young storytellers growing up".

Among our participants in the focus group, there were those who dealt with the **tradition of puppets**, a centuries-old tradition that has now become an intangible cultural heritage protected by UNESCO. The art of puppets and the puppet theatre is very important, as it's a good way to communicate culture and transmit messages, and addressing to some educational purposes: "entertain by educating"

During our focus group we also talked about the importance of **popular music**, and in particular with reference to the historical and musical influences from other cultures and populations, that spread in Sicily and in the neighbouring islands in the past centuries. The Sicilian language is also rich in metaphors so to convey messages and values. It is therefore rich in meanings. This is why its preservation is for local people fundamental.

Nowadays, our school the IISS Volta carries out several activities in order to promote the local dialect, including the organization of theatrical performances, inspired by the Greek literature and philosophers: Aristotle and Euripides. We are the main players in this theatrical performances where we act in Sicilian (our dialect) during the show.

Some evidences and materials from the focus group can be found here:

[https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1\\_FGPL93NSicYeXQtdTgCvq5jY0JttY8z](https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1_FGPL93NSicYeXQtdTgCvq5jY0JttY8z)

## 3.2 The interviews

Here below, the main findings from the interviews we carried out with 10 stakeholders in Palermo.

All interviews and evidences can be found here:

[https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1PIEpEuprLKTyLIQt\\_5HBURlp9Ooseilu](https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1PIEpEuprLKTyLIQt_5HBURlp9Ooseilu)

### 1. According to you, why did we choose to interview you in relation to your work?

Many of our interviewees are aware of their role in the promotion of cultural heritage in our city, while others have a more marginal role but they would like to be engaged in the cultural promotion. For that purpose, they expressed their will to exchange with us and our teachers, in order to think about new initiatives and new strategies for collaboration.

### 2. What is it "Cultura palermitana" (Palermitan culture) for you?

It has been defined as a set of art expressions such as architecture (but not only), traditions handed down over time (such as the work of the puppets and the puppets theatre), shared ways to think and do things, but also some common attitudes (such as the social anti-mafia movement and its initiatives) .

### 3. Why does your job is part of the "Cultura palermitana"?



The answer that seemed the most significant to us is the following: *“because through my work I can explore the history of Palermo and transmit it to the new generations... my art is born and grown together with the city!”*

#### **4.Can you tell us something about the history of your work?**

Some interviewees told us very strange details about their job and the rediscovery that animated their research, often lasting a lifetime. Many of them agreed in affirming that through their work it is still possible to discover always new things.

#### **5.How many years did you start working?**

The age at which the respondents started their discovery journey of old arts is different: from childhood to adolescence, but also in university studies in some cases.

#### **6.Why did you choose this job?**

The desire to discover something more about our city and its main culture, but also the desire to be engaged in something that could generate a positive change for our local community.

#### **7.How did you learn this job?**

The interviewees learned their job mainly through an in-depth, informal and individual study, often made up of a lot of practice, sometimes even observing the work of masters who preceded them or of their fathers and grandfathers.

#### **8. What do you like the most in your job?**

To get in touch with different cultures and people, and be able to propose things that were about to be forgotten.

#### **9.Are you helped by someone?**

Many of our respondents belong to cooperatives or non-profit organizations, so they usually work in team.

#### **10.How many hours do you work per day? How many days per week?**

Some interviewees work in cooperatives or non-profit organizations, therefore their professional commitment is around 40 working hours per week, over 5 working days, although some of them highlighted how the commitment is more than these hours.

Other interviewees, such as small entrepreneurs, artists, freelancers, claim to be totally absorbed in their mission.

#### 11. During which period is your work the most profitable?

In some cases the size and profit of the work are variable according to holidays, cultural events or manifestations.

#### 12. Do you use social networks to promote your job?

Everyone claimed to use social networks for promotional purposes.

#### 13. Do you recommend your job to another person?

Many of the respondents recommend their work to other people, in order to transmit old traditions and cultural heritage.

#### 14. How did your job change?

In most cases, through combining tradition with modernization and use of technological tools, mass media etc. In this way, it's possible to take advantage to spread and promote our cultural heritage beyond our local reality.

#### 15. What is the future of your work?

Today, a typical Sicilian job or artistic expression could be promoted and known very far away from Sicily, even through social networks. Our respondents are not very worried about the possibility of a traditional job being lost but remain rather confident. The new technologies also make it possible to **digitize part of their information, knowledge and experiences** that otherwise would be lost.

### 3.3 The study visit and supporting observational grids

On November 29th 2019, we met in the morning in "Piazza Bellini" in Palermo (Piazza Bellini is one of the most important square in our city) where we visited the "Monastery of Santa Caterina".

We interviewed Mrs Maria Oliveri, the responsible and contact person of the confectionery shop located inside the Monastery. All evidences from our study visits together with the observational grids we filled (which main findings are resumed in this document) can be found here:

<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1hn0YsiLNS9vXd25UbNc-08Jdj4K2zn8U>



Our team from IISS A.Volta in Palermo (Italy)

Mrs Oliveri told us about the history of the nuns who lived in the monastery and how thanks to them many sweets and candied took origins and still be very spread in the Palermitan culture (The “Martorana fruit” in particular).

In Palermo, each year (after the feast of All Saints, November 2nd) we usually celebrate the “Commemoration of the Dead” (*Festa dei Morti*) from the ancient catholic tradition. This day of remembrance of loved ones is experienced as a real day of celebration for us, and we usually celebrate with banquets and exchange of gifts. According to the tradition, parents bring to the children the gifts left by their dead on the night of All Saints, among which the typical dessert “The Martorana fruit” better known as marzipan. The tradition of martorana fruit is something that falls within our Palermitan folklore, while it is considered not so much a food as an artistic and symbolic element of our religious culture, thus being part of the intangible cultural heritage of our city.





Visiting the shop: traditional sweets and Martorana fruit. All sweets and desserts are inspired by the ancient tradition and the typical working methods (confectionary) of the nuns.

Visiting the Monastery



Interview to Mrs Maria Oliveri: responsible of the shop and our contact person in the Monastery



Visiting the shop: inside the laboratory which is an integrating part of the Monastery. In the past it was used as rooms for the nuns and today, there is a shop where traditional sweets are sold.

On November 29th 2019, we also visited some puppet shops and we interviewed Mr Francesco Scherma in his laboratory for wood processing. We used 15 general questions we elaborated (we used these questions during the focus group too). Mr Scherma told us about his experience in wood processing, how he does his job and how he manages his timing.

In Sicily we have a great tradition of wood processing and traditional techniques such as the *intarsio* (marquetry in english). Today, this baggage allows us to face new challenges not only with the help

of technology but with the experience of the oldest techniques that we learned by speaking with Mr Scherma. It's something that still be preserved in our intangible cultural heritage as it refeers more to ancient knowledge, expertise and experience of a traditional and very old job.



Interview to Mr Francesco Scherma: local crafts and artistic expressions related to wood processing.

Souvenir from our school visit and interview with Mr Francesco Scherma



## 4 Evaluation and impact

This first experience in ouRoute was very important for our knowledge of the Palermitan culture and our personal background, as we learned that it's very important to continue remembering and talking about our local cultural heritage, so as not to erase and loose memories on that.

In general, all topics discussed in ouRoute were interesting, especially those referring to the art of puppets, puppets opera and theatre, the “Martorana fuits” processing and its origins related to the expertise of the nuns, but also all those elements and issues related to Palermitan cultural heritage (which emerged during our focus group and interviews).

From this experience, we understood that culture is something very broad, and it also includes the habits of a people, the ability linked to an ancient craft and all the knowledge around it. Thus, we can speak of intangible culture and not only of tangible culture linked to the objects themselves.

While talking with the various artists and professional from the cultural sector, we understood how culture is something that concerns both **personal identity of an individual and common identity of a group**. Some artistic expressions are handed down from father to son, or from generation to generation (as in the case of the nuns' expertise in confectionery processing). That's why culture is the heritage of everyone, both old and new generations and we should preserve it thus being active citizens.



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