

“And yet it moves!” An institutional analysis of the Immobili’s motion towards hybridity

Immobili’s
motion
towards
hybridity

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Maria Cleofe Giorgino
Department of Business and Law, University of Siena, Siena, Italy

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Abstract

Purpose – This paper aims to inform the discussion on why and how non-profit organizations can experience a hybridization process to address the criticism that would assume hybridity as an intrinsic characteristic of all organizations. Specifically, by referring to the academies of intellectuals as the non-profit setting in which investigating the emergence of hybridity takes place, this paper aims at exploring, first, to what extent this emergence could be induced by institutional conditions, and, second, which structural innovations could sustain the academies’ “motion” towards hybridity.

Design/methodology/approach – This paper relies on the institutional logics perspective and adopts the case study method applied to a historical context. The case under analysis is the Academy of “the Immobili”, which, in spite of its name, experienced a hybridization process in 1720 because of the decision to involve an impresario in the management of its theatre.

Findings – The findings highlight the significant role played by institutional conditions in inducing the emergence of hybridity, even in presence of internal resistance to any “motion” from the non-profit setting. Moreover, the analysis of the innovations associated with this emergence detects the intertwined action of the different decision makers involved in the hybridization process, in spite of their formal separation. These findings strengthen the conceptualization of hybridity within non-profit organizations.

Originality/value – Besides referring to a historical period that is still little explored in terms of hybridity within organizations, the paper focuses on the original context, i.e. academies, representing an ancient typology of cultural organizations. Therefore, the paper also provides the first insights into the hybridization process of cultural organizations from a historical perspective.

Keywords Non-profit organizations, Hybridity, Institutional theory, Academy, Impresario, Cultural organizations

Paper type Research paper

Introduction

This study speculates on the emergence of hybridity within non-profit organizations in reply to the recent calls for additional observation on this subject (Smith *et al.*, 2013; Jäger and Schröer, 2014; Doherty *et al.*, 2014; Skelcher and Smith, 2017; Grossi *et al.*, 2017; Vakkuri *et al.*, 2021). In doing this, the study embraces the institutional logics perspective (Meyer and Rowan, 1977; DiMaggio and Powell, 1983; Alford and Friedland, 1985 and 1991; Thornton and Ocasio, 1999)

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to conceptualize hybridity as the enduring establishment of “multiple logics” and “actor identities” (Skelcher and Smith, 2015, p. 434) within one organization (Powell, 1987; Borys and Jemison, 1989; Billis, 2010; Pache and Santos, 2013; Battilana and Lee, 2014).

In the past decades, the phenomenon of hybridity and its emergence within organizations have been increasingly attracting the interest of management and organization scholars (Billis, 2010 and 2016; Battilana and Lee, 2012, 2014; Pache and Santos, 2013), above all in the public and non-profit fields, whose recent reforms have originated a great variety of organizational forms that could be labelled as hybrid (Skelcher and Smith, 2015). In the non-profit literature, in particular, this phenomenon is frequently associated with the practice of combining commercialization with non-profit purposes (Schröer and Jäger, 2015), but some uncertainties exist about the exceptionality or normality of such a practice (Salamon and Anheier, 1992a, 1992b; Evers, 2005). In detail, many doubts are directly cast on the practical utility of conceptualizing hybridity, which could represent an intrinsic feature of all non-profit organizations (Brandson *et al.*, 2005; Evers, 2008). These doubts open “a promising research agenda” (Skelcher and Smith, 2015, p. 433) on *why* and *how* these organizations can experience a hybridization process, therefore “moving” from their initial non-profit setting, to provide evidence that hybridity is not necessarily an inborn condition of non-profit organizations, and consequently strengthen its conceptualization (Evers, 2008; Smith, 2014).

Particularly, regarding the *why* issue, useful insights on the hybridization process may be traced from the institutional perspective (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983, 1991; Meyer and Rowan, 1977; Scott, 1995), which explores the effect of external factors on organizations’ behaviours. Specifically, this perspective emphasizes the role played by external agents and the need of obtaining legitimacy on intra-organizational structures and practices (Moll *et al.*, 2006; Tolbert and Zucker, 1983), therefore suggesting that there could be a relationship also between institutional complexity and the establishment of hybridity within non-profit organizations (Greenwood *et al.*, 2011; Micelotta *et al.*, 2017). However, additional evidence is required, particularly in not yet- or little-explored contexts, to confirm the existence of this relationship and verify to what extent institutional conditions may induce the hybridization of non-profit organizations (Smith *et al.*, 2013; Doherty *et al.*, 2014).

Regarding the *how* issue, instead, previous studies have emphasized that the emergence of hybridity requires departing from traditional non-profit structures to embrace new forms (i.e. governance, resources and procedures) to incorporate multiple logics (Cornforth and Spear, 2010; Smith, 2014; Mair *et al.*, 2015). However, also considering that the heterogeneity of hybrid organizations complicates generalizations, additional empirical observation is required to inform theory and practice on the innovations related to hybridization processes (Jäger and Schröer, 2014; Skelcher and Smith, 2017).

To contribute to fill both the outlined research gaps, we share the opinion that hybrid organizations have long existed (Battilana *et al.*, 2012) and, particularly in the non-profit sector, hybridity represents “a long-standing characteristic” (Smith, 2014, p. 11). Some evidence of this “longevity” has been provided by the previous studies that have adopted the historical approach to investigate hybridity within organizations (Carter and McKinlay, 2013; Gillett and Tennent, 2018; Fowler and Gillett, 2021), and have eventually identified specific cases of hybrid organizations in the past centuries among both enterprises (Antonelli *et al.*, 2017) and social entities (Lusiani *et al.*, 2019, 2023). However, based on the still limited number of these studies, we believe that the past still provides several unexplored contexts that could contribute to deepening our knowledge of hybridity within organizations. This opens avenues for further research in historical contexts to inform the debate on hybridity in non-profit organizations and sustain both researchers and

practitioners when facing the present challenges related to these organizations (Schröer and Jäger, 2015; Skelcher and Smith, 2017).

These challenges particularly concern the non-profit organizations operating in the cultural field, because of the increasing market orientation of their activities in conjunction with the traditional pursuit of a non-profit cultural mission (Toepler, 2006; Ekström, 2019). In the past decades, several studies have highlighted the increasing interest of scholars in the hybridization process of organizations such as museums and theatres (Schuster, 1998; Ruusuvirta, 2013; Rius-Ulldemolins, 2016). However, the lack of similar studies set in historical contexts implies that, to date, little is known about the hybridization processes that could have affected cultural organizations in the past centuries, even though this knowledge could inform the present debate on the combination of for-profit and non-profit logics in the cultural sector (Schuster, 1998; Rushton, 2014).

In spite of their central role in the progress of all branches of culture and learning in Italy and Europe since the 16th century, a typology of non-profit organizations not yet analysed according to the management literature on hybridity is represented by the academies of intellectuals (hereafter, only academies) (Everson and Sampson, 2016). Academies originally were associations aimed at both supervising the cultural production of their territory and supporting the development of noble values, such as cavalry, by relying on the resources provided by their members or through the voluntary donations of external noble families (Baggio and Marchi, 2000). However, no study has so far investigated why and how academies could have experienced a “motion” from such a non-profit setting towards hybridity that could inform the debate on hybridity within non-profit organizations.

By referring to this gap, this article consequently aims at answering the following research questions:

- RQ1.* To what extent institutional conditions could induce the emergence of hybridity within academies?
- RQ2.* Which structural innovations (i.e. in governance, resources and procedures) could sustain the academies' motion towards hybridity?

To address these research questions, the article embraces the case study method (Stake, 1978; Yin, 2009) by focusing the analysis on the “Academy of the Immobili” (hereafter, only the Immobili) which was founded around the middle of the 17th century in the Grand Duchy of Tuscany (Italy). Besides the relevance of this case, still operating in the Italian region of Tuscany, its selection was because of the innate aversion of this organization to any change or “motion” from its original setting, as also evoked by its name (i.e. “Immobili”, indicating something that is fixed, motionless). Such aversion is favourable to the *RQ1* of this study because it allows to investigate the “extent” of the role played by institutional conditions in promoting hybridity in an organization characterized by internal resistance to changes. Moreover, the same occurrence of a “motion” from a different original setting, if identified, would entail the Immobili's adoption of some innovations that could be analysed according to the *RQ2*.

The analysis reveals that the Immobili experienced a hybridization process after the decision to involve an impresario in the management of its theatre (in 1720). Particularly, our findings, first, emphasize the role of institutional conditions in inducing the emergence of hybridity, even in presence of an initial internal resistance, and, second, depict the innovations, particularly in the governance model, that could sustain the motion towards hybridity. By contributing to understanding why and how hybridization processes could occur within academies, these findings sustain the usefulness of the concept of hybridity

within non-profit organizations in general and in cultural organizations particularly, therefore supporting researchers and practitioners when dealing with these organizations. Specifically, about non-profit organizations in general, the original context investigated in this study provides novel knowledge on the phenomenon of hybridity within these organizations. Additionally, this study presents the first evidence of the reasons and modalities affecting the hybridization process of cultural organizations from a historical perspective. Besides emphasizing that the combination of the typical non-profit mission of these organizations with a market orientation represents an ancient issue of the cultural sector, the novel insights provided in this article may support both researchers and practitioners when facing this issue in the present.

The article is structured as follows. After introducing the theoretical framework, the article presents the research questions and methods. The following sections report the historical background of the case, and the results collected with our empirical observation. The next section discusses these results according to the two research questions, and it is followed by the last two sections presenting the conclusions of the study.

Theoretical framework

In the past decades, the phenomenon of hybridity within organizations has been increasingly attracting the interest of management and organization scholars searching for a definition of this phenomenon (Billis, 2010 and 2016; Battilana and Lee, 2012 and 2014; Pache and Santos, 2013). To this aim, different theoretical approaches have been suggested, such as the transaction cost framework theorized by Williamson (1996), which essentially explains hybridity as the intermediate form of governance structure between market and hierarchy. However, this approach, besides reducing the practical utility of conceptualizing hybridity, which is essentially associated with networks, does not explain the great heterogeneity characterizing hybrid organizations in comparison to the categories of market and hierarchy (Skelcher and Smith, 2015). In detail, “while market and hierarchy” can be unitarily defined and “are mutually exclusive”, hybridity “manifests itself along a continuum of which market and hierarchy are the discrete end points” (Skelcher and Smith, 2015, p. 435).

Other scholars have consequently suggested that hybridity is not a category included in a taxonomy of organizational structures but a combination of different categories (Lounsbury, 2007; Thornton and Ocasio, 2008; Pache and Santos, 2013). This suggestion relies on the institutional logics perspective, as better explained below.

Institutional logics perspective

Institutional theory explores the influence of institutional forces (e.g. government and society) on individuals’ actions by adopting different theoretical insights mainly provided by economists and sociologists (Meyer and Rowan, 1977; Wilber and Harrison, 1978; DiMaggio and Powell, 1983; Rutherford, 1995).

When studying hybridity, a useful strand of institutionalism is particularly represented by new institutional sociology (Meyer and Rowan, 1977; DiMaggio and Powell, 1983; DiMaggio and Powell, 1991; Scott, 1995), which emphasizes the impact of environmental factors on individuals’ (or organizations’) behaviour. This approach briefly associates the influence of external agents with the organizations’ need for obtaining legitimacy by taking decisions reflecting the rules, values and procedures considered fair by society (Meyer *et al.*, 1983; Moll *et al.*, 2006). Therefore, according to this approach, organizations could adopt a structure or procedure recognized as appropriate by society even in conditions of conflict with efficiency (Meyer and Rowan, 1977; Tolbert and Zucker, 1983). The process by which

cultural and socio-politic mechanisms affect organizations' decisions is explained by the concept of institutional "isomorphism", which is declined in coercive isomorphism (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983), whereby the adoption of specific intra-organizational procedures is forcibly induced by external factors such as government policies or regulations; mimetic isomorphism, whereby organizations voluntarily define their internal structures and procedures by imitating the other organizations' choices; and normative isomorphism, whereby intraorganizational changes are linked to the address received by specific professional figures (i.e. consultants or other professional categories).

However, studying hybridity and the "collection of weirdos" characterizing this multifaceted phenomenon (Ménard, 2004, p. 347) requires a theoretical approach that could explain "not simply homogeneity but also heterogeneity" among organizations (Thornton *et al.*, 2012, p. 15). This capability is part of the theoretical breakthrough of new institutional sociology appointed as institutional logics (Friedland and Alford, 1991; Thornton and Ocasio, 1999, 2008).

According to the institutional logics perspective, organizations must evaluate the central logic of the institutional order constraining their actions when making decisions to gain an advantage. Indeed, because an "institutional logic is the way a particular social world works" (Jackall, 1988, p. 112), each logic defines "the formal and informal rules of action, interaction, and interpretation that guide and constrain decision makers", and by which power and legitimation are obtained or lost in organizations (Thornton and Ocasio, 1999, p. 804; Lounsbury, 2007).

However, this perspective also underlines that any organization is potentially influenced by different logics that are established with time and can even coexist in complex contexts, which are consequently characterized by a condition of "logic multiplicity" (Besharov and Smith, 2014, p. 364). In these contexts, organizations are unlikely to gain legitimacy by adopting taken-for-granted goals and behaviours. They rather must reconcile internally the logic multiplicity of their environment, even incorporating durably adversarial actions (Kraatz and Block, 2008; Greenwood *et al.*, 2011; Pache and Santos, 2013). Stated differently, to obtain legitimacy for their action, organizations are induced to reconcile different logics in their practices, thereby configuring the hypothesis that is theorized by the modern institutional literature as institutional complexity or hybridity within organizations (Greenwood *et al.*, 2011; Lounsbury and Beckman, 2015; Micelotta *et al.*, 2017; Aksom and Tymchenko, 2020). The "process in which plural logics and thus actor identities are in play within an organization" (Skelcher and Smith, 2015, p. 434) instead defines the emergence of hybridity within organizations, i.e. the hybridization process.

Hybridity and non-profit organizations

In its original formulation, the institutional logics perspective identified five institutional orders, namely, market capitalism, state bureaucracy, democracy, nuclear family and Christian religion (Alford and Friedland, 1985, 1991). However, modern literature has under-theorized the set of different rationalities from which hybridity may arise by referring to the basic triptych of state/business/community (Skelcher and Smith, 2015). In these terms, hybridity may be briefly associated with the enduring co-existence of the practices from the non-profit (or association), the public and/or the for-profit (or market) sectors (Battilana and Lee, 2014; Doherty *et al.*, 2014; Vickers *et al.*, 2017).

When studying non-profit organizations, the detection of hybridity may rely on different elements, such as the presence of multiple missions (Minkoff, 2002) or the implicit meaning of specific managerial choices (e.g. signing a contract to pursue revenue objectives in addition to altruism) (Smith, 2014). As suggested by Billis (2010 and 2016), identifying and

depicting the different typologies of hybrid organizations may comprehensively rely on the characterization assumed by the five core elements identified by the author for each one of the three ideal type sectors. These elements briefly define the form or structure of any organization and are as follows: *ownership*, defined in terms of possession of decision rights and allocation of returns; *governance*, related to the form of governing body adopted; *operational priorities*, guiding the decision-making process; *distinctive human resources*, i.e. the typical categories of workers involved in the organization's activities; and *distinctive other resources*, which are the additional resources characterizing the value creation process (see Table 1).

Because these ideal sectors do not represent three completely separated spheres of economic activity, some “grey” (or overlapping) zones emerge from the different combinations of the five core elements in a specific organizational form or structure. These zones correspond to the different typologies of hybrid organization, which can be briefly defined as “an organization that constantly incorporates, at the very core of its identity”, the characteristics of more than one sector (Busco *et al.*, 2017, p. 192).

By relying on the scheme theorized by Billis (2010 and 2016), hybridity may be therefore detected in the non-profit organizations that durably associate some structural elements of the private or public sector with their non-profit practices, while the innovations implemented to sustain this association depict the hybridization processes affecting these organizations.

The results of these processes are different typologies or archetypes of hybrid organizations, such as the ones identified as community-based non-profit organizations, combining elements from the non-profit and the public sectors to support mixed welfare systems for the provision of social service, or the American typologies of hybrids known as Benefit Corporations and Low-Profit Limited Liability Companies, integrating some key features of the non-profit with the private sectors (Evers, 2005; Haigh *et al.*, 2015).

About the non-profit organizations including elements from the private sector, prior studies have particularly highlighted that most of them operate in a few fields – namely, health, education and culture (Battilana and Lee, 2012) – and their hybridity is frequently related to the necessity of gaining new revenues to be devoted to their non-profit mission, for instance, with the support of private subsidiaries (Cooney, 2006; Smith, 2010). However, much debate exists on whether such practices are unusual or normal in the non-profit context (Salamon and Anheier, 1992a, 1992b; Evers, 2005), as well as on the possibility of blurring the lines between different institutional logics (Dees and Anderson, 2003; Billis, 2010).

Core elements	↓ Private sector principles	Public sector principles	Association principles
1. Ownership	Shareholders	Citizens	Members
2. Governance	Share ownership	Public elections	Private elections
3. Operational priorities	Market forces and individual choice	Public service and collective choice	Commitment about distinctive mission
4. Distinctive human resources	Paid employees in managerially controlled Firm	Paid public servants in legally backed Bureau	Members and volunteers in Association
5. Distinctive other resources	Sales, fees	Taxes	Dues, donations, legacies

Table 1.
Core elements of the three ideal type sectors

Source: Reproduced from Billis (2016, p. 210)

This debate particularly concerns the organizations operating in the cultural sector that, traditionally characterized by pursuing a non-profit mission, are experiencing an increasing market orientation (Toepler, 2006; Ekström, 2019). Indeed, to the best of the author's knowledge, so far no study has investigated the establishment of hybridity in a historical case of cultural organization, such as an academy of intellectuals, in spite of the growing interest of scholars in the hybridization process of organizations such as museums and theatres (DiMaggio, 1983; Schuster, 1998; Ruusuvirta, 2013; Rius-Ulledemolins, 2016).

All these considerations open further research opportunities on hybridity to strengthen the usefulness of this concept (Evers, 2008; Smith, 2014), particularly by investigating how and why non-profit organizations can experience a hybridization process (Smith *et al.*, 2013; Jäger and Schröer, 2014; Doherty *et al.*, 2014; Skelcher and Smith, 2017; Grossi *et al.*, 2017; Vakkuri *et al.*, 2021).

Research questions and methods

In spite of its recent increase in novel contexts, it is a shared opinion that the phenomenon of hybridity has a long history, particularly in certain sectors (Battilana *et al.*, 2012; Smith, 2014). This opinion is confirmed by the studies presenting hybrid organizations that were active even a few centuries ago (Antonelli *et al.*, 2017; Lusiani *et al.*, 2019, 2023). Useful insights about hybridity could be consequently gained by investigating it in a historical context, as implicitly suggested by the call for a "historic turn" advanced in management and organization literature (Clark and Rowlinson, 2004; Rowlinson and Hassard, 2013). The past theoretically represents an endless source of data on the emergence of hybridity within non-profit organizations, which could guide the action of researchers and practitioners by informing the present debate on this topic (Smith *et al.*, 2013; Jäger and Schröer, 2014; Doherty *et al.*, 2014; Skelcher and Smith, 2017; Grossi *et al.*, 2017; Vakkuri *et al.*, 2021). This is especially true for the non-profit organizations operating in the cultural sector, because, so far, to the best of the author's knowledge, no study has investigated the hybridization of these organizations from a historical perspective, in spite of the increasing interest of scholars in the combination of non-profit and for-profit logics in this sector (Ruusuvirta, 2013; Rushton, 2014; Rius-Ulledemolins, 2016; Ekström, 2019).

Based on these considerations, this study refers to a typology of non-profit organizations that have been assuming a central role in Italian cultural progress since the 16th century and have contributed to the founding of similar organizations across Europe: the academies of intellectuals (Everson and Sampson, 2016). Academies originally replaced the old guilds of artists in pursuing the non-profit mission of supervising the cultural production of their territory and might be associated with "a kind of society that [...] was structured around defined objectives and activities and, increasingly, formally constituted with membership rules, lists of members, and statutes" (Everson and Sampson, 2016, p. 4). Because of their typical non-profit setting, in this article, we argue that investigating why and how academies could have experienced a hybridization process could inform the debate on hybridity within non-profit organizations.

Based on this assumption, this study specifically intends to answer the following research questions:

- RQ1: To what extent institutional conditions could induce the emergence of hybridity within academies?
- RQ2: Which structural innovations (i.e. in governance, resources and procedures) could sustain the academies' motion towards hybridity?

To address these questions, this article develops a qualitative analysis by relying on the case study method (Stake, 1978; Yin, 2009). The historical context under investigation is the Grand Duchy of Tuscany, i.e. the most internationally renowned of the States dividing the Italian peninsula before its unification in 1861 (Davies, 2009), during the period at the turn of the 17th and 18th centuries, which was characterized by the greatest flourishing of academies (Baggio and Marchi, 2000).

Among the several academies that were active in this context, the case selected was the Florentine “Academy of the Immobili” (hereafter, only the Immobili) because of two main reasons:

- (1) First, the relevance of this case, which played an essential role in the social and cultural enhancement of the whole Grand Duchy of Tuscany by developing an intense and innovative theatrical activity for about three centuries (Strozzi Guicciardini, 2000).
- (2) Second, the innate aversion of this academy to changing the structure guiding its activities, which were mainly devoted to promoting the cultural development and cohesion of the Florentine nobility (Alberti, 2005). This aversion, even emphasized by the name “Immobili” evoking something that is fixed or motionless, is demonstrated by the initial resistance of the academy to the significant changes that were characterizing the main Italian theatres – such as the Venetian ones – since the 17th century (Rosselli, 1984; Piperno, 1987). This attitude of the Immobili represents a favourable point for this study because it allows to ignore the influence of internal pressures in promoting innovations when studying the “extent” of the role played by institutional conditions in inducing a hybridization process (our *RQ1*). Additionally, these innovations, if identified, could be analysed to answer our *RQ2*, therefore allowing to rely on the Immobili’s “motion” to strengthen the concept of hybridity within academies.

The analysis focused on the period 1651–1720, that is from the founding of the Immobili to the drafting of the new laws governing the academic activities, which led to the involvement of an impresario in the management of the Immobili’s theatre. However, to analyse accurately the Immobili’s “motion” related to this involvement, our sources also include some data referred to the following years of the 1700s, since after 1720, no other significant changes affected the activities of the Immobili for over a century (Maccabruni, 2000).

The sources of the article are both primary and secondary. Specifically, the primary sources include the minutes of the executive board meetings, the academic rules and any other administrative document referring to the academic activities for the period selected that are today preserved in the archive of the Immobili. We collected these sources by accessing the archive twice: with the first access, we particularly searched for the documents useful to understand the governance model of the academy, while in the second one, we mainly focused on the additional documents useful to study in depth the Immobili’s activities. Table 2 summarizes the main documents used for the analysis with their numbering in the inventory of the archive and a brief description.

This documentation was first analysed to understand the logic guiding the Immobili’s activities during the period under investigation within the “physical and symbolic space” that was strictly connected with its history (Everson and Sampson, 2016, p. 4). Indeed, as for any academy, the Immobili’s activities were strongly conditioned by the place where they could be carried out, which had to represent “visually and architecturally” the “recognizable and autonomous identity” of the academy’s programmes (Everson and Sampson, 2016, p. 4). For the Immobili, this place had to be particularly linked to the mission of promoting culture

Table 2.

Primary sources used
for the analysis

No.	Title	Numbering in the inventory of the Immobili's archive	Brief description
1.	Capitoli dell'Accademia degli Immobili 1651–1652	I.1.5	First “chapters” governing the Immobili's activities
2.	Spese per la fabbrica del Teatro 1650–1655	I.1.6	List of the expenses supported by the Immobili for the theatre factory in Via del Cocomero and in Via della Pergola
3.	Capitoli vecchi dell'Accademia degli Immobili 1686	I.1.22.	Second version of the “chapters” governing the Immobili's activities
4.	Memoria per il granduca	I.1.27	Note to the Grand Duke Cosimo III for the transfer of the Pergola ownership to the Immobili in 1718
5.	Leggi della Nuova Accademia degli Immobili 1720	I.1.28 and 1.5.10	New laws governing the Immobili's activities starting from 1720 (manuscript version and 1723 reprint)
6.	Quaderno per l'Impresa dell'Opere 1741	I.1.30	Accounts of the performances realized at the Pergola by the impresario Antonio Guerretti in 1741
7.	Cartone del negoziato 1749–1750	I.1.36	Decree of the Immobili on the negotiation concluded with the impresario Gaetano del Ricco in 1747

Source: Table by the author

and cohesion among nobles with firmness and stability (Alberti, 2005), as the Italian word “immobile” evokes in the meaning of real estate. Consequently, our analysis focused on the place that, after a brief period in the premises rented in Via del Cocomero, was destined to accommodate the Immobili's activities, i.e. the Pergola theatre (still active currently, even if under different ownership), which represents one of the oldest and main Italian theatres (Holmes, 1993). The analysis was particularly oriented to verify whether, after the law of 1720, these activities experienced the rise of a condition of “logic multiplicity” (Besharov and Smith, 2014, p. 364), which could be interpreted as the emergence of hybridity within the academy.

The hybridization process eventually detected in the Immobili could be subsequently analysed to answer the two research questions.

Specifically, the association of this process with the main events occurring in the Grand Duchy of Tuscany during the period under investigation could be the basis to understanding to what extent institutional conditions induced the Immobili's motion from its initial setting towards hybridity. Instead, the comparison of the two structures (i.e. governance, resources and main procedures) adopted to manage the theatre in the period preceding and following the new laws could identify the innovations that sustained the hybridization process of the Immobili.

Historical background

Grand Duchy of Tuscany and founding of the Immobili

After the political difficulties that had involved the Grand Duchy of Tuscany at the beginning of the 17th century, also because of the terrible plague that had affected this area in 1630, the long reign of Ferdinand II de' Medici (1628–1670) restored a period of stability

but also severe austerity in the territory (Diaz, 1997). Because he had found the Tuscan finances ruined by the previous regency, Ferdinand II reduced the court expenses and imposed an excessive tax burden, thus severely limiting the economic development of the Grand Duchy. However, he had been taking a deep interest in science since his childhood, and, in addition to consistently supporting the experimental research of Galileo Galilei, Ferdinand II offered hospitality and protection to scientists of all nations with the awareness that the scientific practice could bring economic advantages to Tuscany (Beretta, 2000).

Under his patronage, the duchy was characterized by the flourishing of several cultural initiatives aimed at strengthening the social identity of the Tuscan nobility, which frequently resulted in the formal establishment of an academy (Baggio and Marchi, 2000).

Among the many academies that flourished in the Grand Duchy of Tuscany during this period, in 1651, a reunion of nobles founded the Immobili under the protection of Cardinal Giovan Carlo de'Medici. The academy assumed as its emblem a windmill associated with the motto "In sua movenza è fermo" (i.e. "in its motion it is motionless") to recall the turtle proceeding against the wind that was represented in the emblem of Cosimo I de'Medici, who had been the founder of this extraordinary family (see Figure 1).

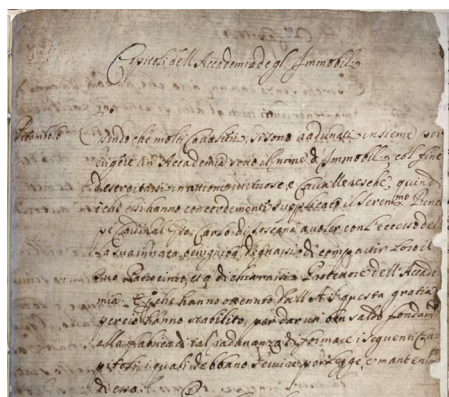
The motto aimed to emphasize the noble origin of the Immobili and the purpose of ensuring firmness and stability over time to the Academy through the exercise of the virtuous and cultural activities constituting the essence of academic associationism.

These activities, initially carried out within the space rented and converted into a theatre in Via del Cocomero, had to promote the cohesion of the noble class and reaffirm the cultural values that legitimized the nobility in governing the city (Michelassi, 1999). "To give a solid foundation" to the Academy, some *Chapters* (Capitoli) disciplined both the organization and the management of the Immobili according to the stated purpose of allowing academics "to practice virtuous and chivalrous deeds" (excerpts from Figure 2).



Figure 1.
Picture of the
Immobili's emblem
kept and exhibited at
its archive

Source: Figure courtesy of Fondazione
Teatro della Toscana



Source: Figure courtesy of Fondazione Teatro della Toscana

Figure 2.
Preamble of the
Immobili's chapters
of 1651 (document n.
I.1.5 of the Immobili's
archive)

Because the space in Via del Cocomero was too small to allow lavish set-ups and the broad participation in academic initiatives required for the court celebrations (Baggio and Marchi, 2000), in 1652, the Immobili took into use some buildings of a disused woollen mill in Via della Pergola to realize a new theatre that could be considered worthy to accommodate the court and its guests. The buildings were initially owned by the “Arte della Lana”, i.e. the powerful association controlling the production and trade of wool in Florence in that period.

The Immobili kept a record of all the expenses incurred for the arrangement of the new buildings, as well as for the performances previously held at the premises in Via del Cocomero (see Figure 3).

The works finished in 1657 with the inauguration of the “space” that would have been indissolubly linked to the fate of the Immobili and nowadays represents the oldest and main theatre in Florence: the Pergola (Garbero Zorzi and Zangheri, 2000).

Socio-economic scenario under Cosimo III and new laws

Since its inauguration, the Pergola assumed a central role in the court celebrations, starting with the wedding of the future Grand Duke Cosimo III with Marguerite Louise d’Orleans in 1661, which attracted a large audience belonging to the Tuscan nobility (Baggio and Marchi, 2000).

In 1686, the intense activity at the theatre also promoted the revision of the chapters of the Immobili to increase the number of gentlemen involved in academic activities “since the small number would arouse the low esteem of the Academy and would prevent it from engaging in noble and virtuous operations and exercises” (document n. I.1.22, Chapter VIII). Besides increasing the number of the Immobili’s members, the chapters of 1686 consequently established to give “admission to others who wanted to engage in the Academy’s exercises” by forming “another body appointed Aggregates”, who could participate in the Immobili’s activities although without retaining “either the title or the authority of “Academics”” (I.1.22, preamble).

Unfortunately, at the turn of the seventeenth and 18th centuries, the external scenario radically changed. During this period, the Grand Duchy of Tuscany was under the control of Cosimo III, who had succeeded Ferdinand II in 1670 and reigned until his death in 1723 (Greco, 2020). He had received a rigid religious upbringing, which strongly conditioned his

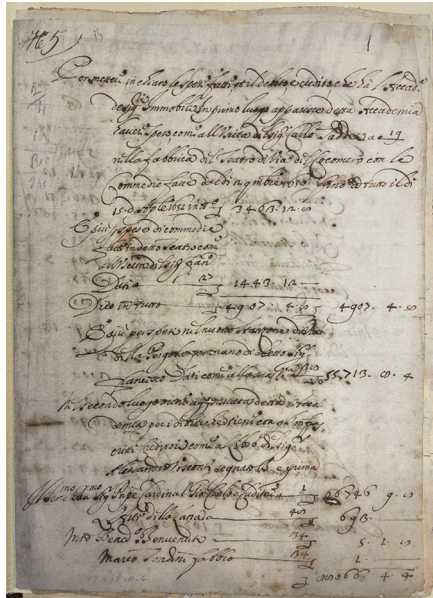


Figure 3.
Expenses for the
theatre factory
(document n. I.1.6 of
the Immobili's
archive)

“To clarify the expenses incurred and the debit and credit of the Immobili’s Academy. First, the Academy appears to have spent as for the exit of Mr. [...] in the Theatre factory in Via del Cocomero for the comedies made from [...] to [...]”

“And more for the expenses made in the new premises in Via della Pergola ...”

Source: Figure courtesy of Fondazione Teatro della Toscana

reign in terms of both international politics, which remained influenced by the foreign Catholic powers, and internal politics, which became affected by a climate of bigotry (Fantoni, 1993). Regarding culture, secondary sources emphasize the Grand Duke’s interest in promoting scientific collecting, which contributed to developing a new museum sensibility throughout his reign (Pinchera, 1990). However, the deep faith of Cosimo III led him to assume the role of defender of both sacredness and the spiritual health of his subjects, which could be endangered by the contents of some theatrical performances. He consequently implemented a censorship action on all the Tuscany theatres, therefore bringing his reign to a decline that did not concern only the political and economic sphere (Fantappiè, 2008).

At that time, in the other Italian states, theatrical activities were developing, while in Florence almost all the theatres went through a period of stasis that in de’Medici historiography is widely identified as the mirror of the decline in which this family was by now (Conti, 1909; Acton, 1962). In all of the Grand Duchy of Tuscany, performances became limited and artistically uninteresting (Fantappiè, 2008), and the Immobili’s activities suffered a drastic reduction, as testified by the scarce documentation preserved in the archive for the period at the turn of the 17th century (Garbero Zorzi and Zangheri, 2000).

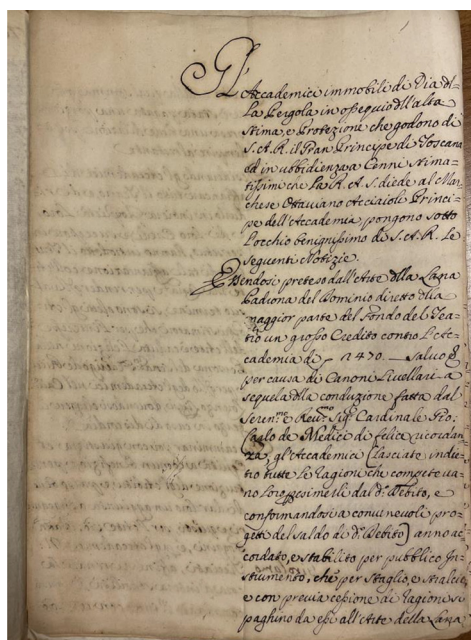
These activities gradually intensified only when, in 1713, the role of Protector passed to the Great Prince Gian Gastone, who was the last Tuscany Grand Duke belonging to the de’Medici family (Scotti, 2021). He was one of the most learned princes of his time and reacted to the climate of bigotry imposed by his father, Cosimo III, by starting a renewed cultural vitality in the Duchy. Particularly, it was under his protection and mediation that, in 1718, the Immobili could obtain the Pergola ownership from the Arte della Lana by

providing the documentation concerning the expenses borne for the construction and maintenance of the theatre (see Figure 3) and by paying the arrears of its rent (Baggio and Marchi, 2000; Alberti, 2005). Figure 4 displays the first page of the note that the Immobili submitted to Cosimo III to acquire the Pergola ownership by agreeing to settle the credit owned by the Arte della Lana for the unpaid fees and by appointing two arbitrators to estimate the value of the ownership transfer.

However, in spite of the central role assumed by the Pergola theatre in the court celebrations (Garbero Zorzi and Zangheri, 2000), in the following years, the Grand Ducal protection for the Immobili's activities was essentially limited to the exhibition of the royal effigy in official contexts and the modest grants constrained to the restoration of the Pergola (Baggio and Marchi, 2000). In this period, after a long discussion among the academic members, the Immobili decided to involve in the Pergola management an *impresario* (Rosselli, 1984), i.e. a professional producer, who, as in the experience of the Venetian theatres since the 17th century, had to ensure that the performances at the theatre would guarantee the achievement of monetary profits (Holmes, 1993). At the Pergola, the impresario's involvement was enabled by the new Immobili's chapters, labelled as laws (see Figure 5), which were signed in 1720 and subsequently printed to be disclosed to the community for the first time in the history of the academy (Baggio and Marchi, 2000).

Results of the document analysis

Since its founding, the ultimate purpose of the Immobili (Figure 6) has been to ascertain the aristocrats' culture and cohesion by "practicing delightful and virtuous actions" (document n. I.1.5, Chapter IV), initially within the space rented and converted into a theatre in Via del



"Since the Arte della Lana, owner of the direct dominion over most of the Theatre fund, claims a large credit against the Academy [...]"

"due to level fees",

"the Academicians [leaving behind all the reasons to exempt themselves from the debt and complying with the pleasant project of paying off the debt] have agreed and established [...]"

"to pay [...] to the Arte della Lana"

Figure 4.
First page of the note to Cosimo III for the transfer of the Pergola ownership in 1718 (document n. I.1.27)

Source: Figure courtesy of Fondazione Teatro della Toscana

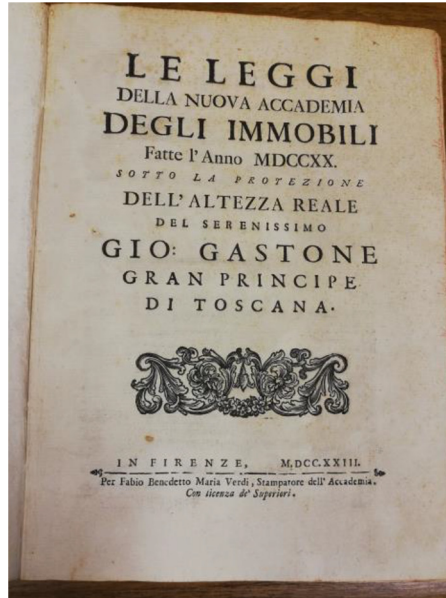


Figure 5.
Title page of the laws
of 1720 in the 1723
reprint (I.5.10)

Source: Figure courtesy of Fondazione Teatro della Toscana

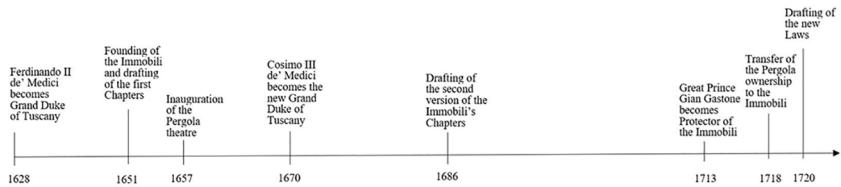


Figure 6.
Significant events for
the Immobili

Source: Figure by the author

Cocomero (Michelassi, 1999). Since the beginning, the activities of the Immobili had been mainly oriented towards the realization of comedies, which were generously financed by Cardinal Giovan Carlo and by the academicians, who, “with their money, [had] rented the premises in Via del Cocomero, built there a Theatre, [and] set up the sceneries” for performances (document n. I.1.5, Chapter V).

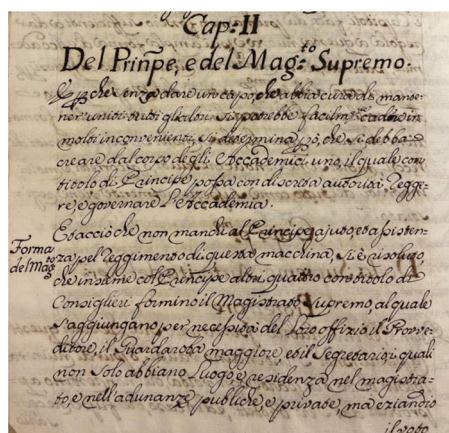
Specifically, according to the first chapters disciplining the activity and the organization of the Immobili, the academy could have a maximum of twenty members, who had to contribute to the rent of the theatre by paying a membership fee. At the same time, each academician personally had the key to the premises rented “to be able to go there at will as a true sign of Dominion” (document n. I.1.5, Chapter V).

The control of the Immobili’s activities was the responsibility of a small executive board (Consiglio direttivo) acting under the supervision of the *Protettore* (Protector), who belonged to the de’Medici family (see Figure 2). With his unquestionable judgment, the Protettore

decided on all of the main associative issues or disputes, such as the possible modification of the chapters, “which had no value, in whole or in part, every time they had not been approved by the Protettore” (document I.1.5, Chapter I). The executive board was elected by the academicians and had a hierarchical structure, with the *Prencipe* (Prince or President) at the top position to avoid that, in the absence of “a Chief who takes care to keep all the others united”, the Immobili “could easily fall into many drawbacks” (document I.1.5, Chapter II). The Prince was responsible for coordinating the meetings of the executive board, but his assignment lasted only three months so as not to affect the absolute pre-eminence of the Protettore. The other members of the executive board were the *Provveditore* (Managing Director), with bookkeeping functions for one year, and the *Segretario* (Secretary), who was responsible for the minutes of the academic meetings and the Archive of the Immobili for the seven months of his assignment (document I.1.5, Chapter III).

With the drafting of the chapters of 1686 (I.1.22), however, this internal organization slightly changed since the Prince began to be assisted by four councillors (*Consiglieri*) in the decisions to be taken. The five academicians assuming these roles constituted the *Magistrato Supremo* (Supreme Magistrate) of the Immobili with managerial functions, while the administrative offices of the *Provveditore* and the *Segretario* were associated with the office of *Guardaroba Maggiore* (i.e. Major Wardrobe), who oversaw the moveable assets of the Immobili (see Figure 7).

Moreover, as previously mentioned, the second version of the Immobili's chapters increased the number of academic members from 20 to 32 (I.1.22, Chapter VIII), and, because the Academy desired “to be prodigal of its teachings, and virtues and worthy deeds”, it regulated the admission of the “aggregated” gentlemen, who could benefit from these deeds, under specific conditions of sharing the academic values (I.1.22, Chapter XII). While the academicians had to pay a membership fee, the aggregated gentlemen “had only to pay six scudi for their entry, and no more, but they had to be ready to assist, and to put all their work, for [the Immobili's] advancement and glory” (I.1.22, Chapter XII). Figure 8 displays the governance model of the Immobili resulting from the 1686 chapters. Each position of the model, as well as any other role required by the implementation of the Immobili's activities,



Source: Figure courtesy of Fondazione Teatro della Toscana

Figure 7.
Excerpt from the
1686 chapters of the
Immobili (document
n. I.1.22, Chapter II)

was played by the academicians without receiving any payment because of their voluntary commitment to contributing to the mission’s achievement (Alberti *et al.*, 2010).

Formally, the depicted governance model did not even change when, in 1720, the Immobili established the new laws “to give a better order and a better shape to the Academy” as required by the increasing number of gentlemen “behind the praise and applause that the Academy daily received” (I.1.28, preamble). Beyond the Supreme Magistrate and the other three administrative officers (I.1.28, Chapter IV), the main authority of the model remained the *Real Protector* (Royal Protector), whose opinion was binding for both “any dubious resolution” of conflicts among academics and for any “transgression of the Law” (see Figure 9). The number of academicians was instead set at 30, with the confirmed obligation of paying a membership fee or tax (“whenever an academic remains a debtor of one year’s taxes and duties [. . .] he be considered irretrievably forfeited” – I.1.28, Chapter XIII), but it was also established that “no aggregate [was] to be admitted” from then on (I.1.28, Chapter II).

Regarding the management of the theatre, the new laws particularly stated that, with the permission of the Supreme Magistrate, any academician could use the Pergola “to have dances, dinners, and similar amusements for the own honest recreation there” (I.1.28, Chapter XVI), and additionally, that the theatre “could be lent with the sole aim of staging parties and comedies” (I.1.28, Chapter XV). Following this generic prescription, the academy began to entrust the realization of the performances at the Pergola to an *impresario*, i.e. a professional producer acting as a “businessman” but with a slightly different meaning from the modern sense (Rosselli, 1984, p. 101).

The role of impresario could be played by academic members or external gentlemen (such as court suppliers) who assumed this role by signing a contract with the Academy (Holmes, 1993). The contract had to report all the established conditions for the use of the theatre, as in the example in Figure 10, which displays the agreement signed by the Immobili with the impresario Gaetano del Ricco in 1747 (I.1.36).

Particularly, the contract had to report the amounts of capital required to the impresario for the use of the Pergola (“for the convenience of the theatre and other belongings, the impresario must pay to the cash desk of the Academy [. . .]”) and as a guarantee for the debts contracted by the impresario in the realization of the performances (“a suitable deposit should be given both for the interest of the Academy and for the security of the fees and manufactures of all the people who will serve in the performances”) (I.1.36). In detail, the expenses occurring for any performance were several, first concerning the hiring of artists and workers (singers, dancers, musicians, choreographers, set designers, etc.) whose engagement had to be competed for within the free market. The impresario had to manage and finance not only the personnel selection but also the theatre setups, which were his

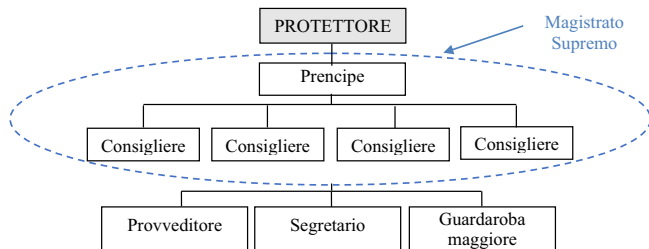
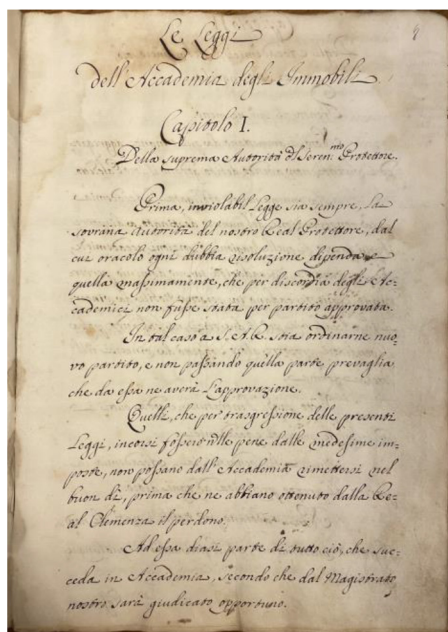


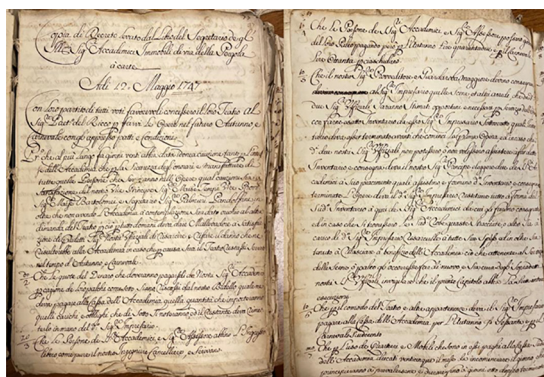
Figure 8.
Governance model of
the Immobili
according to the
chapters of 1686

Source: Figure by the author



Source: Figure courtesy of Fondazione Teatro della Toscana

Figure 9.
First page of the 1720
chapters of the
Immobili (document
n. I.1.28)



Source: Figure courtesy of Fondazione Teatro della Toscana

Figure 10.
Decree of the
Immobili on the
negotiation concluded
with the impresario
Gaetano del Ricco
(document n. I.1.36)

property (Alberti, 2010). Some furnishings and sets could be supplied to the impresario by the Immobili according to a special “inventory of delivery” and upon the payment of a fee, in addition to the impresario’s commitment to compensate the academy “in case its stuff was found damaged” (see Figure 10).

Besides from personal availability, any impresario recovered the capital needed to carry out the performances from both the sale of tickets (“biglietti” or “bulletтини”) and the advance collection of the “appalto” (Rosselli, 1984, p. 5), i.e. the proceeds collected by the academicians for the rental of the boxes (“the shares of money that our academicians will have to pay for their boxes”, after having paid the obligations subscribed by the impresario, “have to be placed in the impresario’s hands” – I.1.36). Figure 11 displays an excerpt from the register of the receipts (for “appalti” or “biglietti/bulletтини”) collected for the performances realized at the Pergola by the impresario Antonio Guerretti in 1741.

However, not all the boxes could be rented because some of them remained reserved free of charge for the Grand Duke (with his ministers), who could still recognize some subsidies for the Pergola management, although now rarely (Maccabruni, 2000; Alberti, 2010).

The planning of performances was exclusively the responsibility of the impresario searching for the financial success of his activity by trying to satisfy the tastes of the audience willing to pay for the ticket. However, the Immobili could supervise the quality and decorum of all the activities implemented in the theatre, respecting the interests of the ducal family (Baggio and Marchi, 2000). Moreover, the Immobili maintained direct control of the Pergola as real estate, continuing to take care directly of any maintenance or renewal intervention on the structure (Alberti, 2010). This intervention included the Pergola renovation according to the model of the Venetian public theatres to accommodate the paying public (Garbero Zorzi and Zangheri, 2000).

Discussion

These results highlight the radical changes that affected the Immobili, and particularly the management of the “physical and symbolic space” (Everson and Sampson, 2016, p. 4) housing its activities (i.e. the Pergola), starting from 1720 in spite of the early ideal of “immobility” that should have characterized the action of this academy (Alberti, 2005).

Specifically, the analysis of our primary and secondary sources confirms the initial association of the Immobili’s action with the institutional logic of the non-profit sector (Friedland and Alford, 1991; Billis 2000 and, 2016), whose “formal and informal rules of action” (Thornton and Ocasio, 1999, p. 804) included pursuing a “distinctive” non-profit mission by using the resources provided by the “members and volunteers in association” (Billis, 2016, p. 210), in addition to the external donations. Indeed, the ultimate purpose of the Immobili was to promote the cultural enhancement and cohesion of the academic members and the noble class by practicing “virtuous and chivalrous deeds” (I.1.5, preamble; Alberti, 2005), and essentially by relying on the resources directly provided by the same members in terms of membership fees and voluntary employment in the academic activities (I.1.5,

Figure 11.
Excerpt of the receipts collected for the “impresa” of Antonio Guerretti at the Pergola in 1741 (I.1.30)



Source: Figure courtesy of Fondazione Teatro della Toscana

Chapter VII), in addition to the financial support deriving from the royal subsidies (Michelassi, 1999; Baggio and Marchi, 2000).

However, with the new laws, the logic guiding the Pergola management had to include the “rules of action” of an additional “decision maker” (Thornton and Ocasio, 1999, p. 804), i.e. the impresario that, since acting as a “businessman” (Rosselli, 1984, p. 101), pursued an individualistic and profit aim for the necessity of remunerating the capitals invested for the use of the Pergola with the proceeds deriving from the ticket sales and the “appalto” collection (I.1.30 and I.1.36; Holmes, 1993). In brief, the association of the non-profit purpose of the Immobili with the for-profit purpose (or market orientation) of the impresario led to the emergence of plural “actor identities” within one organization (Skelcher and Smith, 2015, p. 434), therefore to the Immobili’s “motion” from its initial pure non-profit setting towards a condition of “logic multiplicity” (Besharov and Smith, 2014, p. 364). This “motion” corresponded to the process of hybridization entailing the emergence of hybridity within the academy (Evers, 2008; Billis, 2010; Haigh *et al.*, 2015), which can be analysed according to the two research questions of this study.

Role of institutional conditions

To understand the extent to which the emergence of hybridity within the Immobili was induced by institutional conditions, it is necessary to remind ourselves that at the turn of the 17th and 18th centuries, the socio-economic scenario of the Grand Duchy of Tuscany radically changed because of the climate of bigotry and the restricted cultural policy established by Cosimo III (Fantoni, 1993; Fantappiè, 2008). Even if in 1718, the Immobili was able to resume its activities by gaining the ownership of the Pergola (Alberti, 2005), its cultural initiatives suffered from this climate and the decline of the de’Medici family, whose last members stuck out for their government incapacities and lack of interest in the cultural setting (Greco, 2020). The consequent reduction of the performances commissioned by the reigning family, also demonstrated by the poor archival documentation for this period, entailed two negative effects on the Immobili’s action: the drastic decrease in subsidies and the strong delegitimization of this action, which had been forever linked to the protection of the de’Medici family (Baggio and Marchi, 2000).

In brief, this period was characterized by the establishment of a new institutional environment that, while limiting the Florentine nobles from practicing those virtuous activities that had previously legitimized their role in the Grand Duchy, drastically reduced both the financial and protection support provided by the de’Medici family as an external agent of the Immobili (Moll *et al.*, 2006).

The laws of 1720 aimed to address both of these issues. In detail, besides increasing the capital to be devoted to the cultural initiatives of the Immobili by including the impresario’s investment for the use of the Pergola and for “the fees and manufactures of all the people who will serve in the performances” (I.1.36; Cooney, 2006; Smith, 2010), the new laws had to restore legitimacy by reflecting the rules perceived as fair by society (Meyer *et al.*, 1983). This is testified by the Immobili’s decision to give external relevance to these laws, which were printed and made public for the first time to communicate the values inspiring academic activities to all of society (see document n. I.5.10 in Figure 5; Baggio and Marchi, 2000).

In spite of the restricted cultural policy of the last de’Medici members, the new laws emphasized the educational usefulness of practicing virtuous activities such as attending performances, which were finally opened also to the non-noble classes with the prescription that the Pergola “could be lent with the sole aim of staging parties and comedies” (I.1.28, Chapter XV; Garbero Zorzi and Zangheri, 2000). This openness, as well as the same decision

to involve an impresario in the Pergola management, followed the model of the Venetian theatres, in which impresarios had assumed a relevant role since the 17th century (Rosselli, 1984; Piperno, 1987). Moreover, the influence of this model on the Immobili's activities was also evident in the Pergola renovation carried out to accommodate the paying audience, which followed the examples of the Venetian public theatres (Maccabruni, 2000; Garbero Zorzi and Zangheri, 2000). These findings allow configuring a hypothesis of mimetic isomorphism in the Immobili's decision to imitate the choices made by similar successful organizations to face the cultural and socio-economic dynamics of institutional conditions (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983).

The degree to which these dynamics induced the Immobili's motion from its initial non-profit setting towards hybridity can be additionally evaluated by considering that, before 1720, the Immobili had faced other changes in its institutional conditions, such as following the approval of the 1686 chapters (I.1.22). As revealed by our analysis, these chapters had slightly changed the governance model of the Immobili (I.1.22, Chapter II) and had particularly increased the number of gentlemen that could be admitted to the "noble and virtuous operations and exercises" of the Immobili (document n. I.1.22, Chapter VIII) by both expanding the number of academicians (I.1.22, Chapter VIII) and regulating the body of the "Aggregates" (I.1.22, Chapter XII). However, these changes had not affected the principles guiding the Immobili's activities, which, before 1720, had not changed even when the successions occurred in the role of Protector had caused the drastic reduction of the performances at the Pergola theatre (Zorzi and Zangheri, 2000). The academy resisted embracing the innovations implemented by the Venetian theatres until the drafting of the new laws (Rosselli, 1984; Piperno, 1987). In other words, only a very significant change in institutional conditions (and the delegitimization that followed this change) was capable of inducing the Immobili to move from its pure non-profit setting towards hybridity (Greenwood *et al.*, 2011; Pache and Santos, 2013; Skelcher and Smith, 2014). Additionally, because this motion happened in spite of the early idea of immobility that should have characterized the Immobili's activities, this study allows to emphasize the great relevance of the role assumed by institutional conditions for the emergence of hybridity within non-profit organizations (DiMaggio and Powell, 1991; Scott, 1995).

Innovations sustaining the hybridization process

Regarding the structural innovations that could sustain the academies' motion towards hybridity, our results show that the involvement of an impresario in the management of the Pergola theatre caused significant changes in almost all five core elements defining an organization's structure (Billis, 2010 and 2016), starting from governance.

Specifically, the new laws did not formally modify the governance model of the Immobili, which continued to rely on the Supreme Magistrate and the support provided by the three administrative officers (I.1.28, Chapter IV). No normative change was implemented to include institutionally the impresario in this model, but, in 1720, the executive board of the academy almost entirely lost its decisional power regarding the performances to be realized at the theatre (Alberti, 2010; Baggio and Marchi, 2000). The impresario's action remained formally separated from the Immobili's action, as shown by his involvement in the Pergola activities by contract and with the clear signing of all the responsibilities assumed towards the academy, for instance in terms of the payments due as a fee for the use of the theatre or as reimbursements for any damage to the structure and its furnishings (I.1.36; Alberti, 2010). However, the two actions were so closely intertwined to make the linkage between the two "decision makers" (i.e. the impresario and the Immobili by its executive board) more like an internal link than an external one (Powell, 1987 and 1990; Williamson, 1996). The result was

the establishment of a new governance model relying on the inter-organizational links between the Immobili and the impresario, that maintained their operational autonomy (Cornforth and Spear, 2010; Mair *et al.*, 2015). Specifically, the former was solely responsible for the restructuring and expansion of the Pergola since it had become the exclusive owner of the theatre (I.1.27), while the latter, after having obtained specific concessions, was solely responsible for all the performances to be implemented there during the concession period (“the academic lords Immobili [...] granted their theatre to Mr Gaetano del Ricco to perform operas there in the future autumn and Carnival”, Figure 10). However, the former’s decisions could impact the latter (because the Immobili defined the “terms and conditions” to be respected by the impresario for the use of the Pergola – I.1.36) and vice versa (because the academicians’ attendance at virtuous activities such as comedies depended on the impresario’s action) (Holmes, 1993; Alberti, 2010).

In this governance model, however, the Immobili and the impresario did not have an equal relationship because the latter also had to comply with the general indications dictated by the former in terms of the quality and decorum of the performances realized (Baggio and Marchi, 2000). Additionally, both had to act in respect of the Grand Duke of Tuscany, who became the third element of the new governance model given the twofold roles of primary inspiration and condition of existence that the *Real Protettore* had assumed for the Immobili with the laws of 1720 (“the first inviolable law is the sovereign authority of our Royal Protector” – I.1.28, Chapter I; Maccabruni, 2000). Even during the period of his disinterest in the cultural activities organized in the Grand Duchy of Tuscany, the Royal Protector had a dominant position for both the Immobili and the impresario, whose decisions however implied direct consequences also on the Royal Protector for the boxes reserved to him and his ministers.

Based on these considerations, we claim that the process of hybridization that affected the Pergola Theatre in 1720 led to the development of a multi-level model of governance that, while confirming in broad terms the previous structure for the internal governance of the Immobili, overall included two main (operative) levels of governance, plus a supervising level, as displayed in Figure 12. These levels, respectively corresponding to the impresario and the Immobili, in addition to the superordinate level of the Royal Protector, were related to the multiple missions (Minkoff, 2002) pursued through the Pergola management (i.e. the non-profit mission for the two upper levels, the for-profit mission for the lower one). Moreover, in this governance model, the “private election” (made by the academy’s members) governing the appointment of the Immobili’s executive board (I.1.28, Chapter IV) had to be combined with the rights deriving from the capital invested by the impresario for the fee of the theatre, as well as for the sets and the wages of the people involved in performances (I.1.36), according to the principle of “share ownership” of the for-profit sector (Billis, 2010, pp. 54–55).

However, the Immobili’s motion towards hybridity required some innovations also in the other core elements depicted by Billis (2010 and 2016), as summarized in Figure 13.

Specifically, about *ownership*, the establishment of the depicted “logic multiplicity” (Besharov and Smith, 2014, p. 364) was associated with a derivation of “multiple ownership” for performances because, even if the Immobili remained the exclusive owner of the main immovable asset managed by the new governance structure (i.e. the Pergola) and its furnishings, impresarios were the owners of the other moveable assets (i.e. scenic equipment, costumes, etc.) used in performances (Alberti, 2010).

Moreover, the hybridization process affecting the Pergola innovated the *operational priorities* of the new governance model, given the necessity of combining the non-profit purposes of the Royal Protector and particularly the “commitment” of the Immobili in

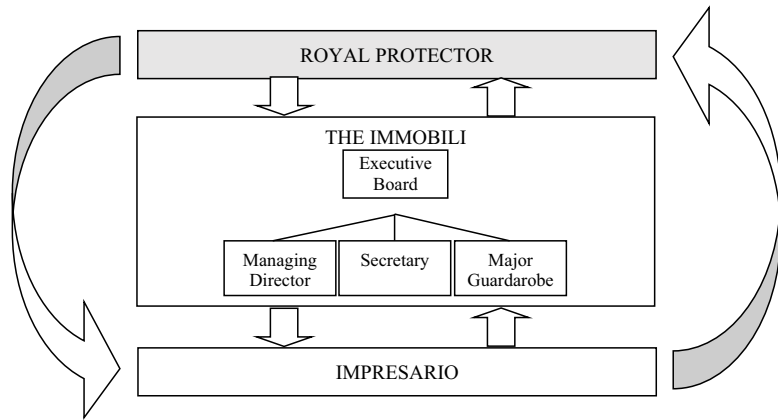


Figure 12.
Multi-level model of governance following the laws of 1720

Source: Figure by the author

Core Elements	Before the new Laws	After the new Laws
Ownership	Academicians	Academicians and impresario
Governance	Executive board elected by the academicians	Multi-level governance defined by election and contract
Operational priorities	Commitment to the cultural mission	Commitment to the cultural mission with market forces and impresario's choice
Distinctive human resources	Academic volunteers	Academic volunteers and paid employees under impresario's control
Distinctive other resources	Academicians' dues and royal subsidies	Royal subsidies, Academicians' dues, and ticket sales

Core Elements	Private sector Principles	Public sector Principles	Association Principles
1. Ownership	Shareholders	Citizens	Members
2. Governance	Share ownership	Public elections	Private elections
3. Operational priorities	Market forces and individual choice	Public service and collective choice	Commitment about distinctive mission
4. Distinctive human resources	Paid employees in managerially controlled Firm	Paid public servants in legally backed Bureau	Members and volunteers in Association
5. Distinctive other resources	Sales, fees	Taxes	Dues, donations, legacies

Figure 13.
Immobili's structures before and after the laws of 1720 in association with the scheme theorized by Billis (2016)

Source: Figure by the author

relationship to its non-profit “distinctive mission”, with the impresario’s necessity of facing “market forces” to pursue a profit (Billis, 2016, p. 210). Specifically, the Immobili’s mission was, from the beginning, the development of the aristocrats’ culture and cohesion through the practice of “delightful and virtuous actions” (document n. I.1.5, Chapter IV), while the impresario aimed to obtain remuneration for the capital invested in the performances realized at the Pergola (I.1.36) by satisfying the tastes of the paying public.

Finally, the combination of different institutional logics implied further innovations in the *distinctive resources* to be managed at the Pergola, here including both the human resources and the other ones. On the former, previously limited to the voluntary work of the academicians and of the aggregates that “had to be ready to assist, and to put all their work, for [the Immobili’s] advancement and glory” (I.1.22, Chapter XII), the new laws implied the adoption of a different organizational model that had to combine volunteers and

“employees” (Holmes, 1993). Specifically, the employees were the artists and workers contractually hired by the impresario and managed according to market logics, which eventually included the necessity of defining “a suitable deposit [. . .] for the security of the fees and manufactures of all the people who will serve in the performances” at the Pergola (I.1.36). For the latter, the other distinctive resources became characterized by different levels of risk, because the new governance model had to associate the remaining “certain” revenues, corresponding to the fees necessarily paid by the academicians to remain members of the Immobili (I.1.28, Chapter XIII) and to the “appalto” of their boxes (I.1.36), with the “uncertain” revenues related to the ticket sale (I.1.30), as well as to the dubious royal subsidies (Michelassi, 1999; Baggio and Marchi, 2000).

Conclusions

Based on the analysis developed, some insights emerge from this study, as summarized below.

About *RQ1* and the related *why* issue, this study suggests that the emergence of hybridity within academies was essentially because of the change of institutional conditions in terms of:

- reduction of external financial sustainment; and
- operational constraints as censorship action on the activities to be implemented.

These results contribute to informing the discussion on the role played by institutional conditions in the emergence of hybridity within non-profit organizations (Smith *et al.*, 2013; Doherty *et al.*, 2014), specifically confirming, even in the hypothesis of internal resistance, the emphasis given to this role by previous studies (Greenwood *et al.*, 2011; Micelotta *et al.*, 2017). Additionally, by focusing on a cultural organization, our results highlight that institutional conditions affecting the resources at disposal and/or the legitimacy recognition for cultural activities have historically incentivized the motion towards hybridity, as nowadays happens for theatres and museums that, with increasing frequency, combine their non-profit mission with the market orientation to meet the public's tastes (Schuster, 1998; Toepler, 2006; Rushton, 2014).

About *RQ2* and the *how* issue, this study indicates that, to realize their motion towards hybridity, academies implemented a variety of innovations affecting their form in terms of:

- operational priorities, because of the aforementioned pursuit of a non-profit mission with a contemporary market logic;
- governance, which assumed a multi-level structure to include different decision makers with unequal decisional power;
- ownership, because of the development of a timeshare model for the assets to be used in activities;
- distinctive human resources, for the definition of a combined organizational model integrating volunteers with paid workers; and
- distinctive other resources, for the combination of “certain” revenues, collected on a mandatory basis, with “uncertain” revenues, earned according to market rules.

These results contribute to informing theory and practice on the hybridization processes of non-profit organizations by providing empirical observation on the innovations that could sustain the “motion” towards hybridity from an initial non-profit setting (Smith, 2014; Jäger and Schröder, 2014;

Skelcher and Smith, 2017). Moreover, based on the longevity of our case after the adoption of the new structure, the analysis supports the idea that “logic multiplicity makes organizations more enduring, [. . .], and innovative” (Besharov and Smith, 2014, p. 364). Finally, because this study has been focused on a particular typology of cultural organizations (i.e. academies), it provides useful insights into the strategies that could face the tensions related to the combination of non-profit mission and market orientation in the cultural sector (Toepler, 2006; Schröer and Jäger, 2015; Ekström, 2019).

In brief, this study contributes to understanding the phenomenon of hybridity within non-profit organizations by addressing the criticism that would assume hybridity as an intrinsic characteristic of all organizations (Salamon and Anheier, 1992a, 1992b; Evers, 2005). By providing additional insights into why and how non-profit organizations such as academies could experience a hybridization process, the study specifically contributes to strengthening the concept of hybridity by questioning its association with an inborn or intrinsic condition of non-profit organizations (Brandsen *et al.*, 2005; Evers, 2008). Moreover, the analysis informs the present debate affecting the cultural sector about the combination of its traditional non-profit mission with the for-profit logic (Rushton, 2014; Schröer and Jäger, 2015; Ekström, 2019).

This evidence opens future research opportunities on the hybridization process that could affect non-profit and, particularly, cultural organizations in response to recent changes in institutional conditions, such as those stemming from current governmental pressure for the achievement of social aims, such as equity, inclusion and environmental sustainability. Non-profit organizations are indeed required to play a relevant role in this achievement by providing social services to an increasing number of users, and by developing activities, also in the cultural field, which are capable of promoting education on these social topics. Future research could be consequently devoted to verifying if the fulfilment of this role may incentive the non-profit organizations’ motion towards hybridity, and which innovations could support this motion, for instance in terms of the development of coproduction processes, community participation strategies, or use of environmental reporting and disclosure tools.

As for the limitations of this study, it is necessary to outline that because our findings are drawn from a single (even if remarkable) historical case, they cannot be extended identically to the universe of non-profit organizations, also considering the outlined heterogeneity affecting hybrid organizations and the operational peculiarities of academies. However, with the necessary adaptations, these findings could be used for the analysis and interpretation of the hybridization process affecting all the typologies of non-profit organizations deciding to permanently entrust the management of some services or activities to external for-profit entities. In the non-profit organizations of the cultural sector, this hypothesis occurs, for example, with the stable integration of cultural services such as exhibitions or performances, with income-generating services (e.g. bookshops and catering services), managed by third for-profit entities, by contract or other structural conditions such as the formal involvement in the governance model. Anyway, further research on additional case studies and different typologies of non-profit organizations could be useful to inform the discussion on hybridity and hybridization processes within these organizations.

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Corresponding author

Maria Cleofe Giorgino can be contacted at: giorgino@unisi.it

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