

Supporting arts and culture to enforce community values

The case of the Saison Culturelle in Aosta Valley

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Abstract

The Saison Culturelle is one of the major cultural events organised by the Aosta Valley regional administration. This festival is aimed to promote arts and culture mainly for the local population. Originally it was designed to promote in this small alpine region a wider overview of the artistic international production and to support and disseminate the knowledge, comprehension and use of the French language. Indeed, Aosta Valley is an autonomous region of Italy, recognised in this status by the Constitution, even because its history is deeply steeped in a French-speaking culture. Initially proposed by a group of cultural organisations in 1983/1984, the Saison Culturelle has become, over the years, one of the flagships of the Aosta Valley regional administration cultural proposals. Compared to the beginning, this festival boasts today a variety of shows, from theatre plays to different kinds of music recitals and conferences.

Until now no specific studies have not been carried on despite the importance of the festival for Aosta Valley cultural scene. So, the research aims to investigate what is its importance as a public good supported by public funding. Moreover, it has been studied in which way the Saison Culturelle is a contribution to the identity of the local community.

The research firstly analyses, through documents provided by one of the officials of the regional administration of Aosta Valley in charge of the management of the Saison Culturelle, the reasons and the background of the Festival organisation. From these data, the research tries to point out the social reputation of French-speaking culture as a motivation for the public administration spending for the Saison Culturelle. Afterwards, through a series of semi-structured interviews with a selected group of politicians, officials of the regional public administration and some specialists in charge of the expertise for the cultural program, the current situation is studied, seeking to understand the reasons that justify the support of the regional administration to this festival. These interviews will also enable to understand some collateral elements such as the role of the identity and the culture and tradition of this alpine community.

The results provide useful information in two directions: on one side, a model of analysis and evaluation is applied to this specific cultural festival allowing the appreciation of the relationship between the regional funding of a cultural event and the creation of a public good consisting in the reinforcing of community identity. On the other hand, the research provides the organisers of the Saison Culturelle with some reflexions that can help them in understanding whether they are still pursuing the original motivations which gave birth to the festival and whether

the festival really contributes to cultural participation.

Keywords

Francophonie, cultural heritage, identity, public good, community values, public spending, cultural minority

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1. Introduction

State expenditure to support arts and culture is a common procedure motivated by the will to produce public goods, considering this procedure one of the tasks of a government (White, 2012). Nevertheless, sometimes this aid is motivated by specific purposes linked to a particular social framework. This is the case of Aosta Valley, an autonomous region situated in the northwest of Italy. This region is characterised by a history that left, as a heritage, a close affinity with the bordering French territory. Indeed, even if Aosta Valley borders a larger Francophone territory, including the Valais, a French-speaking Swiss district, the ties, especially in the past, were stronger with the French area. Until the end of the 18th century, both sides of the north western Alps were under the rule of the Duchy de Savoie, with the capital in Turin. Today, an important part of the Aosta Valley population deems to belong to this historical French-speaking community which extends on both the sides of the western Alps. The roots of the Aosta Valley Francophone culture date back to the Middle Ages, when this Alpine region received a special recognition from the Ducs de Savoie, probably for the strategic geographic position it had in controlling the crossing of the Alpine mountain chain. In 1948 this political, social and cultural particularity has been recognised by the Italian Constitution that acknowledges to Aosta Valley the statute of autonomous region, having special competencies in legislation, political organisation and government. The autonomy, over a period of 70 years, has yielded the Valley with important funds coming from the possibility to manage and reuse locally the money coming from taxes. In short, the autonomy, based on the cultural specificity of the region, has been and still is today, an extremely important factor of wealth. Preserving culture is an essential element in scaffolding the principles of the political and economic autonomy. Nevertheless, this representation of the Aosta Valley autonomy, not to be too simplistic, must be detailed with some elements which belong to a mixed cultural/political sphere. In the past decades, especially between the 70s' and the 90s', Aosta Valley undergone political claims and many people were standing for the recognition of the ethnic particularity of the region. The existence of an Aosta Valley ethnic minority group was motivated not only by French-speaking language and culture, but more radically, by the presence of a Francoprovençal culture, which characterised several communities in the western Alps.

The Aosta Valley is characterized by a set of traditions that are part of the historical memory and are considered a value that should be preserved as a sense of belonging to the community and an instrument of inclusion. Among these are the occasions that facilitate relations, especially in the cold seasons, such as, on 30 and 31 January, the thousand-year-old Sant'Orso Fair, where the exhibition of traditional wooden handicrafts and conviviality are enhanced in the Vieillà, a festive moment gathering people all these nights long, the traditional week of December of the Charaban, a

theatre in the Francoprovençal language, and the Carnivals. (Sibilla & Torrione, 1997) To describe the richness of the typical costumes it is worth mentioning the traditional breeding in the high mountains pastures which ends on the third Sunday of October with the Batailles de Reines (these latter are cows that are in a dominant position with respect to the others in the herd) which reward the strongest cow in the Region, the traditional team games *fiollet*, *rebatte*, *tzan* and *palet*, until a few years ago reserved to adult men only (Sibilla & Torrione, 1997). The local traditional heritage is completed by music, poetry and specific knowledge about alpine nature and environment (fauna, vegetation, weather).

Both the cultural and political particularities are important to understand the reasons which underpin many of the policies and strategies adopted by the regional administration when supporting arts and culture activities. Indeed, among the several cultural activities that received public funds from Aosta Valley region, such as festivals, events, museums, artistic organisations, there were many activities aimed to promote the safeguard and the encouragement of the use of the French language, since it was, and still is, a distinctive feature of the regional political autonomy. The *Saison Culturelle* is one of these festivals, the aim of which was originally intended to contribute to maintain the French language and culture alive, developing its use amongst the population, while entertaining the audience with a rich cultural program, initially focused mainly on theatre plays.

Over the decades, the social, economic and cultural context in which the *Saison Culturelle* is organized has greatly changed. Aosta Valley's current cultural policy is primarily directed to improve the capacity of tourist attraction, a kind of strategy that has been largely studied by Mellander (2011). According to this theory, also the community identity might be considered a type of cultural enticement for tourism. In this perspective, Aosta Valley, while being an Italian region, has a cultural proximity with France, expressed mainly recalling historic facts and because of the use of French language. The importance of the ethnic/identity-maker characteristics of a community for tourism have been studied by many scholars (Smith, 2006; Diekmann & Maulet, 2009) and, more in general the cultural politics of tourism has been discussed by others (Hall & Tucker, 2004; Hollinshead, 2009; Smith & Robinson, 2006). But, even if today the policies of public spending of the Aosta Valley for culture can be principally motivated by an economic development purpose, thirty-five years ago, at the beginning of the *Saison Culturelle*, the intentions which supported this festival were motivated by political and merely cultural reasons. In fact, there was, within a large part of the population, the sentiment that through arts and the preservation of use of French language it was possible to endure and consolidate the sense of community. This cultural attitude was, actually, connected to the politics and especially to the will of the *Union Valdôtaine*, a regional

political party, to develop public initiatives oriented to emphasise the particularity of Aosta Valley. Helping culture, therefore, was intended to reinforce the basis of its ideology, while maintaining a strong connection with an electorate, mainly rooted in the rural context. Nevertheless, despite this political background and influence, the Saison Culturelle was the expression of a grassroots movement, based on the struggle of many local associations to improve the quality of the regional cultural scene. In the '70s, Aosta Valley, like other parts of Europe, was permeated by a wave of public opinion that would like to change the traditional capitalist and patriarchal society. In this Alpine region, the movement took, especially in the rural areas, specific characteristics mixing the general leitmotifs of the '68 protest with the ambition to preserve, valorise and innovate the local cultural and social identity (Jacquemod, 2004). This idea was endorsed by many cultural associations, not only in the small decentred villages, but also in the main regional town of Aosta, by some organisations operating in theatre production and artistic performance. These last groups already organised cinema discussions and theatre programs and they were considered by the politicians a qualified representative of the local culture's expression. Thus, these organisations succeeded in their objective to transform their limited cultural offer, managed with little money and few human resources, in an artistic program, supported by public funds.

This process was intertwined with another political movement, connected with ethnic claims. At the end of the 1960s, in Aosta Valley, a vast spontaneous mobilization, aimed to enhance the economy and preserving the territory, became the protagonist of a cultural movement, that of the Centres Culturels. Their slogans, in Francoprovençal, such as "Ven pa ta tera" (Do not sell your land), "Le sou son de papì, la tera lè d'or" (The money are paper, the land is gold) promoted by the notary Ottavio Bastrenta, of Walser origins, expressed the need to start from the local dimension to read the phenomena of the world, avoiding that these last erase the first one (Curtaz, 2004). It was a truly "revolutionary" approach that brought to a different way of being from Aosta Valley. At the heart of this ideology there was the pride and dignity of men who become a community by sharing a language and a territory.

The '68 underwent the clash, as in the European and in the international scene, between right and left, but also experienced the maturation of a new dynamic that inspired the birth of the Centres Culturels. These ones were spontaneous aggregations of people who discussed about politics and culture and proposed cultural activities, often at the municipal level. Among these Centres, the most significant was the Équipe d'Action Culturelle (E.A.C.). The team, born in Aosta between '67 and '68, was a spontaneous group, a variously composed organism. The name Équipe d'Action Culturelle was officially adopted only later in 1973 (EAC, 1973, December 15), but it was clear, since its first steps, that the group was oriented towards a cultural "action", conceiving culture as a

dynamic process and not as an intellectualistic exercise (EAC, 1979, April 3). The E.A.C. firstly expressed its action as a Centre Culturel trying to bring an international sensitivity into an Aosta Valley where the social and political processes that were producing arts and culture were too strongly influenced by the Italian national-state vision. In addition, for them, the regional cultural panorama was too little linked to the historical Francoprovençal cultural area and not very sensitive to the French-speaking context (EAC, 1977, January 20)

The Centres Culturels became a movement strong and original, and so widespread on the territory of Aosta Valley that it forced the institutions to deal with the social and cultural problems in a new way (EAC, 1981, April 3) (in this handwritten note speaks for the first time about the creation of a "Saison Culturelle managed by the Centres Culturels and Councillorship). The institutional response, starting from the end of the 70s, stifled the spontaneity of the Centres, but, by now, they had given a formidable boost to the whole Aosta Valley culture and politics. In the 80's the E.A.C. and other associations were officially recognized by the Region obtaining the first funding. Consequently, they had to give themselves a structure with President, Secretary, Executive and Assembly of Members (Regional Administration, 1981, December 9). Within this scenario, in order to defend the identity of the Aosta Valley, the E.A.C. proposed a dynamic image of this one, not linked to simple folklore, but instead taking care of its prospects, and highlighting the elements of openness instead of those of withdrawal (This document proposed to the Municipality of Verrès of a Saison with the same characteristics as the one that will later be organized by the Region).

From this beginning, which was fostered by a sheer will to valorise community identity through arts and culture, and the ongoing situation where public spending in culture must produce direct or, at least, indirect economic revenues, the scenario has greatly changed. A fundamental step intervened between 1996 and 2001, when the Italian government undertook a radical transformation of the public administration (Italian Law 15 May 1997, n. 127 (Bassanini bis)) with a simplification of the bureaucratic procedures and the progressive introduction of a model inspired by private company's management. Since then the role of the public administration evolved towards an increasing search for efficiency and financial balance. The funding of cultural activities, as many other investments in arts and culture, became more connected to the rentability of the investment in itself. What is interesting to note is that, despite this situation, which impacted all sectors of the public administration, the "Saison Culturelle" continued to receive an increasing public funding until 2008 - 2012, when the international financial crisis struck all the European countries, Italy included. This investment decision of Aosta Valley administration speaks volumes about the importance of the Festival for the regional cultural strategies. It is also worth to point out that the department of education and culture of the regional administration was always managed by a

representative of the autonomous parties, notably the Union Valdôtaine. This arguably means that funding the Saison Culturelle was quite a “moral” obligation for those political parties which have the autonomy at the core of their principles. For them, defending French-speaking culture was, and still is, an essential mission to maintain their political recognition.

First of all, it is important to define what is the Saison Culturelle. Actually, it is a festival that regroups shows and other artistic and cultural events, which have mixed contents, from traditional theatre plays in French to more renowned artists’ staging. The first edition of the Saison Culturelle dates back to 1985. Initially this festival was designed around highbrow forms of arts, namely classical music and theatre. During the following years, the Saison evolved promoting also other forms of art, such as pop music or stand-up comedy, adding conferences and connections with local traditional forms of theatre and music. In fact, the Saison Culturelle touches different topics that spans from safeguarding of cultural heritage, with a specific focus on intangible heritage, promotion of local artists, enhancing of cultural diversity and, finally, boosting tourism and local participation.

Today, the Saison Culturelle is a tradition in the cultural panorama, which gathers an audience of fans and appreciators. But, at a first glance, the style and the contents of the festival editions are today trendier at the expenses of the French-speaking side. As an example, the programme is now more focused in some very famous pop artists, while theatre plays in French are attended mainly by a loyal but not large audience of fans. So, it is interesting to understand what has changed since the beginning and how the motivations of the public funding have evolved over the decades. Actually, even if the promotion of French-speaking arts and culture remains strongly rooted in the Festival, the analysis of its current contents shows a higher attention to artistic proposals that can attract a vast audience. This, also with the intention to increase the level of incomes coming from ticketing. Especially the last editions of the Festival demonstrate an increasing attention in recruiting famous artists, as if the will was to allow Aosta Valley public to enjoy the performances of personalities who otherwise would not have played in a context where the demand is too weak to pay back a show organized according to market rules. Consequently, it is reasonable to think that the public funding contributes to create a semi-public good consisting in the offer to the local audience of shows and artistic performances that otherwise would be inaccessible.

Looking at the way the Saison Culturelle has operated since its beginning, it is possible to outline how the construction of a cultural public good has changed. This can be done considering the evolution of the society in its whole but more precisely the transformation of a small community which recognizes itself as a linguistic minority. Doing this, another aspect should be considered, namely the importance of culture in order to pursue social and political strategies. The specific case

study of the Saison Culturelle shows how arts and culture can be part of a “soft” propaganda, where movies, theatre plays and specific types of music are the vehicles to promote a defined set of values, in this case those related to the French-speaking orientation of Aosta Valley autonomy.

On the whole, all these components, namely the representation of a minority, the cultural affinity to the French-speaking area, the aim to create a semi-public good, the soft propaganda to underpin the Aosta Valley autonomy ideology, took part in the construction of the Saison Culturelle over the years. This scenario introduces to the objective of the research, which is to investigate how the Saison Culturelle contributes to the contemporary Aosta Valley culture and tradition. All the elements presented until now are the framework in which developing a study that is also related to cultural economics, trying to understand whether the festival can be considered a public good, and if yes, how it has evolved over the time.

2. Scientific, academic and social relevance of the thesis

The thesis discusses a topic that has been largely treated by many scholars, namely the role of cultural policy in creating and maintaining over the time public goods. Nevertheless, this research approaches a specific aspect: the role of cultural identity as a constituent in the formation of a public good. Indeed, the fact that cultural identity is an element owning an intrinsic social value is widely recognised. An example is the worldwide listing of Intangible Cultural Heritage carried out by the UNESCO, where identity elements are considered an essential part of many heritages listed by the organisation. Thus, the research aims to contribute to the scientific debate about how community identity can be a component of a cultural public good, interpreting cultural identity not like a form of mere preservation of ancient tradition and folklore but instead considering it a vital part of a small region which strives to have its particularity recognized. The same considerations can be done for the academic relevance, as the research, not having the ambition to be completely exhaustive, traces a direction for further analysis, notably those that might study the relationship between culture, community identity and identification of the public goods created by the combination of these two components.

Concerning the social relevance, the thesis is a contribution, in terms of information and investigation, for a large and diversified public of Aosta Valley, amongst which the debate about the importance of francophone culture is still very animated, specially between those who think that the region has by now lost the bilingual characteristics and other who strongly defend the cultural and linguistic specificity of the Valley. The thesis provides this discussion with a number of elements and information that had never been analysed, pointing out how, over the past 30 years, the regional administration has invested intelligence and money in proposing a French-speaking

festival, considering it a valuable public good. The research is therefore an opportunity for both the supporters and the opponents of the French culture in Aosta Valley to take stock of what are the results of such activity. The finding of the study might, indeed, provide elements for decision making about the planning of the future public funding of the Saison Culturelle and for its management.

2.1. Why cultural economics matters for the research

The cultural economics approach is fundamental for the thesis. Indeed, the research revolves around one of the more discussed topics of this field of economics, namely the public funding of cultural organisations and cultural events, especially when the government has to manage limited resources or has to decide between competing demand from different demands. Many concepts of this discipline are necessary to analyse the processes involved in the public funding of the Saison Culturelle. In particular, cultural economics perspective can explain why the simple political motivation and will is today not sufficient yet to justify a relevant public investment in a regional festival. Cultural economics provides the analysis with concepts like public good, social reputation and organisational management applied to public administration.

Using these conceptual tools, the thesis can interpret the political and ideological stance of the Aosta Valley regional government, as something that is connected with the transformation of public money in intangible values of which both the single individuals and the community in the whole can benefit. Thus, the research will investigate whether the decrease of the audience's perception of the social recognition or of the value for a French-speaking community, of the Saison Culturelle might result in a cut of the public funding. A confirmation of this assumption will establish a strong connection between cultural value and public funding which creates this value, confirming that cultural economics approach is today essential to drive public investments in culture activities. At the opposite, if the assumption will not be confirmed, a different evaluation will arise, namely the independence of the strategy of public funding of arts and culture from the ideology linking Aosta Valley culture and tradition to those of the French speaking area.

3. Literature Review

The literature review is based on the purpose to explore what has been studied until now in a field where scholars are mainly oriented to the traditional identity of those communities which features folkloristic and somehow archaic forms of arts and culture. So, what is presented through the existent state of the art of the literature, are those studies which can support the understanding of some identity characteristic of a community that, contrary of those described just above, is strongly embedded in the contemporary global society. So, this chapter, starts from a first review about the

fundamental definition of cultural heritage, because its defence is at the centre of Aosta Valley policies concerning arts and culture. After this initial chapter, a part is dedicated to the Francophonie and Patois that will explain the historical origin of this cultural minority embedded in Italy. Afterwards, the scientific references for path dependency and isomorphism are analysed because, from a first glance to the evolution of the Saison, it seems that it is quite repetitive. An essential part of the literature for the thesis is that discussing the nature of the public goods; this because it is interesting how the Saison Culturelle can be associated to this economic category. Then, the review investigates rapidly some topics that are relevant for the purposes of the research, in order to fully understand the nature of the Saison Culturelle. These themes are, namely, identity, cultural participation and promotion of local artists and cultural tourism. All these theoretical approaches will be useful to establish the framework of the interviews.

3.1. Intangible Cultural Heritage and Values

Cultural heritage has an important role in the Saison Culturelle. Heritage, however, does not have a clear definition. Indeed, there is no specification on the extensiveness of this concept (Rizzo & Throsby, 2006, p. 985). In general, heritage can be defined as an object or practice inherited from the past (Throsby, 2010, p. 106). Cultural heritage can be differentiated in three categories: built heritage, moveable heritage, and intangible heritage. Built heritage is defined as all the sites that are built and that cannot be moved from the place where they are located. Examples of built heritage are historical dwellings, but can be also churches, or even factories. Moveable heritage is represented by all the cultural objects and artefacts that can be moved from the place where they are created. Paintings are a classical example of moveable heritage. Finally, intangible heritage is a recent concept developed by UNESCO (2003) in order to define the category of cultural heritage represented by practices and traditions. In addition, heritage can be seen as an economic asset for governments, especially the first two groups among those mentioned above (Throsby, 2010, p. 107. Rizzo & Throsby, 2006, pp. 986-988). In fact, there is an extensive literature on cultural heritage about how to estimate the monetary value of it. Cultural policy makers usually value cultural heritage following different criteria, such as use values, non-use values and beneficial externalities (Throsby, 2010, p. 108-111).

Intangible heritage, which is an important component for the understanding of the importance of the Saison Culturelle, is more complicated to value, especially in monetary terms. Throsby (2010, p. 125) suggests that the policies related to intangible heritage should have the same managing dimensions as the tangible one. Actually, the Saison Culturelle is an attempt to valorise practices taking part of the intangible heritage of Aosta Valley while managing the public expenditure. This lead, inter alia, to the need to understand the monetary impact of the festival.

Furthermore, the policy makers engaged with the promotion of intangible cultural heritage have to pay particular attention to the stakeholders involved (Throsby, 2010, p.126), because, ultimately, they can be considered the owners of this heritage. To represent these stakeholders, the values related to the traditions featured and promoted in the Saison Culturelle need to be congruent with those embedded in the social fabric of Aosta Valley. This aspect is particularly complicated to analyse, even because despite the little number of people (126.883 inhabitants - ISTAT, 2017) living in Aosta Valley, the region has inside of it very different cultures and traditions, which are impossible to be represented all in one edition of the festival.

Moreover, the importance of values in the Saison Culturelle is evident. A significant part of the spectators has certain expectations about the values proposed by the event. These values can be both cultural and social (Klamer, 2017, p. 65). But, while considering the values expressing the traditional heritage of the community, for the Saison it is also necessary to pursue and promote artistic values, otherwise if the contents of the festival do not satisfy the possible audience, the halls would remain empty.

3.2. Francophonie and Patois

The reading of the existing literature has been focused on books, newspapers and other media concerning Aosta Valley culture and tradition. This analysis enables the possibility to describe a scenario where language holds an important role and this aspect is particularly relevant to understand the choices about the Saison Culturelle program.

Particularly interesting and relevant is the relationship between French and the Francoprovençal dialect, also known as Patois. Before the unity of Italy in 1861, in Aosta Valley the majority of people spoke French and the dialect. After Italy was born, the new national governments operated, progressively, to Italicize this small mountain region. For example, there was a change in the language spoken during the mass in the churches and also in the bureaucratic system since the unification with the province of Turin. In this way, it was ensured that the bureaucratic and religious officials were trained in an area of Italian language. The language that then would have been exported to Aosta Valley. At this point, the defence of the French of a part of the Aosta Valley society, with the catholic world at the forefront, overshadowed the importance of the "Patois", which was not seen as a true symbol of identity against Italianization, contrary to the French (Omezzoli, 1995). The 20th century saw a constant increase in the Italianization of Aosta Valley. The First World War, which saw the soldiers of the Aosta Valley fighting alongside Italians from all regions in combination with a massive immigration of workers and traders from the rest of the country, which began around 1920, contributed to the increasingly erosion of the French and the Francoprovençal (Omezzoli, 1995). Even Aosta's Church was forced to use more and more the

Italian language in order to continue its work of evangelization. Moreover, also due to political divergences with the autonomist movement that emerged in the Second World War, the church was increasingly uninterested in the cause of language, giving priority to the importance of the evangelization in whatever language was necessary to reach the faithful. With the ecclesiastical disengagement, the defence of the local language in Aosta Valley lost one of its most important allies. In addition, fascism, being an extremely nationalist movement, decided it was a clever idea to Italicize the names of the villages, often with quite clumsy and ridiculous results. Thus, the protection of the French language became a fertile ground for the valley's anti-fascist movement, that was based on both liberal and autonomist values.

After the WWII, France, that fought alongside the Allies, demanded, once the conflict ended, the "total reunification" of Aosta Valley to its territory (Omezzoli, 1995). These expansionist aims alarmed some autonomists of the Aosta Valley, afraid of being crushed by the heavy French centralism, considered no less dangerous than that expressed by fascism. The Aosta Valley's anti-fascists therefore worked to get a solution of autonomy, including the cultural and linguistic aspects, within the Italian state. It is in this scenario that some of the most important positions on the protection of minority languages are expressed. For example, the "Chivasso Declaration", signed in December 1943 by a group of the representatives of the Resistance of the Piedmontese Alpine valleys and by the representatives of Aosta Valley (Omezzoli, 1995). This declaration claimed, among other things, the right to be able to use the local language alongside the Italian in all public documents, the right to teach French in schools and having restored the original names of the villages and toponyms.

Also because of these events, the Italian Republic undertook to protect linguistic minorities with appropriate regulations, through the Article 6, included in the Republican Constitution of 1947 (Toso, 2008). The regions that took advantage of this regulations were the ones that had a special status, above all Südtirol with Austria and Aosta Valley with French. On February 26, 1948, the Special Statute for Aosta Valley became an Italian constitutional law (Toso, 2008). Meanwhile, however, French continued to lose importance, because it was increasingly less used by the elites and replaced by the use of Italian, also due to a strong immigration of other Italians, especially from the South of the peninsula, from Veneto and from the islands, Sicily and Sardinia. Therefore, since the public role of the French was inexorably falling, the Patois acquired a greater identity weight, as it was the native language of a large part of the population of Aosta Valley (Toso, 2008). Since the 70s, the Aosta Valley's autonomist political movements began to reject the French, considering it the colonizing language on a par with the Italian, and an expression of the notables and the ruling class. Despite all these intellectual and political oppositions, French is the co-official language of

Aosta Valley: all public documents and even the road signs are bilingual. The toponymy instead is, with the exception of Aosta and a few other exceptions, exclusively monolingual French. The education system recognizes to the French language a particular importance and in all the school levels, there is a considerable amount of lessons thought in French.

All these elements, also the social dichotomy between French and Patois, are essential to understand why the Saison Culturelle is a stronghold of an important, though contrasted, element of the community identity. This political and cultural background has to be always taken into account, especially when analysing the results of some interviews, for example those of the politicians.

3.3. Path-dependency and Isomorphism

In order to avoid possible risks about investments, and negative comments and feedbacks from the audience, especially the aficionados, the format of the Saison Culturelle has not changed much since its first edition. As said above, the sole element that evolved is the content of the festival. The concept of path-dependency comes handy to understand this scenario. Path-dependency means, in this case, that the policy makers base their new policy on the previous one(s). Considering the case of the Saison Culturelle, it is clear that the policy makers involved in the development and in the funding of this festival, got the inspiration from the editions of the past. If, on one hand, path-dependency might be a meaningful tool to overcome the issue of “nobody knows” (Caves, 2000), on the other side it might lead to a situation of “sedimentation” (Jessop, 2010 p. 8). This form of routinization of the cultural policy usually causes to forget the initial practices and traditions that were at the base of the first policy (Jessop, 2010 p. 8). This aspect is particularly significant for the Saison Culturelle as in the recent years the festival is heading towards this phenomenon, because of its tendency to look more at the monetary revenue, which is clearly signified by the presence of renewed artists.

The issues emerging from the concept of “nobody knows” (Caves, 2000) not only affect the cultural policy in terms of path-dependency, but they also entail a situation that can be easily understood through the notion of isomorphism (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983, p. 149). The format of the Saison Culturelle was not an innovation created by the regional administration of Aosta Valley, but it was already existent in other Francophone places (almost every French speaking city, mainly in France, has its own Saison Culturelle). The choice of a consolidated format over an uncertain novelty is a demonstration of the homogeneity of the cultural policies of places that share similar culture and traditions. However, revolving a cultural policy around a similar one of other places might have positive consequences on tourism, a very dear aspect to the regional administration of Aosta Valley.

3.4. Quasi-public good

The Saison Culturelle initially was completely public funded, then it also started implementing the sponsorship of the bank CRT (Cassa di Risparmio di Torino). The reasons why governments, in this case the regional administration, should spend public money to sustain arts and culture have been discussed thoroughly by cultural economics academics. The central notion of all the existent literature is the concept of public good (Towse, 2010, p.28). Public goods are, by definition, non-rival and non-excludable. Non-rivalry means that an individual consumption of that good does not prevent another individual from consuming it. While, non-excludability refers to impossibility (or extremely difficulty) of preventing individuals from accessing the good (Towse, 2010, p. 28). The Saison Culturelle is a semi-public good, as it shares only one of these characteristics, namely non-rivalry. At the opposite, non-excludability is impossible to achieve due to the nature of the festival. The shows are usually taken in a theatre or in a stadium, which means that the tickets are limited and, consequently, there is the possibility that some individual will not have access to the performances.

It can also be argued that some of the shows proposed by the Saison Culturelle would struggle to achieve financial sustainability without the public funds given to them throughout the festival. In fact, the shows would be too expensive to produce, and costs would fall on the tickets sold to the audience. The public funds allocated to the Saison Culturelle serve, also, to cover this possible market failure (Zimmer & Toepler, 1999, p. 34). Nonetheless, Aosta Valley administration's expectations for the Saison Culturelle are to increase cultural participation and audience attendance. This is one of the reasons why the shows of renowned artists, who demand high fees for their performances and whose tickets would be inaccessible for the average audience, are in the Saison Culturelle easily affordable. Indeed, with the financial support of the public administration, the organisers can lower the prices and make the events accessible for a larger audience. Though, the choice of giving public funds to organize the shows of renowned artists is particularly arguable, especially because in that scenario market failure is not a deterministic factor (Zimmer & Toepler, 1999, pp. 35-36). On the other hand, one of the main rationales behind the Saison Culturelle concerns the prices of the tickets, as the regional administration aims to set "democratic" prices for the tickets. This aspect is also maintained for the renowned artists, meaning that the regional administration has to allocate substantial public funds for popular artists, as their appearance fees are usually quite high and normally the tickets for these types of event are much more expensive than the one proposed for the Saison.

3.5. Identity

Identity is one of the most important factors intertwined with traditions and, in general, with

intangible cultural heritage. Existent literature (Gonzalez, 2008, p. 807) differentiates between “defence identity” and “project identity”. “Defence identity” is anchored to local traditions and adopts the already existent identity, usually related to the place (Gonzalez, 2008, p. 807). It is connected with an image derived from the heritage, that ensures a sense of security and stability. On the other hand, “project identity” is a globalized view of the concept of identity (Gonzalez, 2008, p. 807). It enables the possibility to choose identity origins in different countries and cultures, as it is not connected to a specific place. The Saison Culturelle has an ambiguous stance about the topic of identity. If on one side this event is meaningful only in the region of Aosta Valley, on the other hand it tries to convey the identities of different cultures and countries throughout the plurality of performances presented in the festival. This two-edged situation might be justified by one of the aims of the Saison Culturelle, namely increasing the participation to this event. By inviting artists coming from different disciplines and arts, the attendance of the Saison increases, including also the individuals who are not interested in the high-brow arts, such as theatre and classical music. So, the research will investigate how the feeling to be a small and particular region can be reflected in a form of identity that bases its roots on languages, specifically French and Patois, and traditions.

3.6. Cultural Participation and Promotion of Local Artists

Cultural participation is one of the fundamental reasons that pushes the regional administration to invest public funds in the Saison Culturelle. This is not an isolated case as many governments, both at a local and (inter)national level, chose to invest money in order to foster participation in cultural activities. Stevenson, Balling and Kann-Rasmussen (2017) define three main discourses used by governments in order to justify state expenditure for increasing the participation at cultural activities and events. The *discourse of enlightenment* (p.97) describes the view that supposes that culture is strictly intertwined with the education of a cultivated citizen. This facet of culture can be traced back to the enlightenment period, when it was thought that through the mean of culture people could develop and improve themselves (*Bildung*). The second discourse, usually, stresses about the cultural policies that aim at fostering participation, is *the discourse of redistribution and the democratisation of culture* (p.98). The notion of ‘barriers’ is fundamental to understand this justification of state expenditure for culture. In fact, these impediments are causes that prevent people from attending cultural activities. These ‘barriers’ can be geographic, economic or even social. Through the discourse of the democratization of culture, governments commit to eliminate these aspects and, consequently, provide access to everyone. This is a typical European view of cultural policy, that emphasizes on the collective enjoyment of the arts, rather than secluding it from certain groups of people. Besides, this discourse involves an ethical obligation of governments towards the redistribution of culture to the whole society. Finally, *the discourse of social inclusion*

and cohesion (p.99) relates to a recent trend that sees culture as a cohesive element for connecting people. According to this point of view, culture, in this theory, glues together, metaphorically speaking, individuals, creating then communities, societies and nations. This discourse is related to the intention of governments to intervene in order to tackle down the social exclusion (including that concerning cultural participation) of certain groups of citizens, who lack the means to actively take part in social, cultural, economic and political activities.

3.7. Cultural Tourism

Tourism is another aspect related to the Saison Culturelle. If at the beginning of the creation of the Festival the main focus was the local audience, the development of the Saison and an increase in the variety of the shows enlarged its scope, reaching, thus the tourism sector. It is worth to consider that Aosta Valley highly relies on tourism, mainly in connection to the alpine sports, as main economic source, capitalizing also on the high quality of the natural heritage. Cultural tourism (Throsby, 2010, pp. 152-1539 is still a niche market in Aosta Valley, and it is motivated by the presence of Roman heritage, middle age castles, museums, and, last but not least, cultural events, among which the Saison Culturelle.

4. Aims and objectives of the research

Considering the origins and the evolution of the Saison Culturelle, it is interesting to understand what are, today, the reasons that motivate Aosta Valley administration, to be the main contributor financing this festival. Through this investigation it will be possible to comprehend the role of the local cultural organisations and more in general of the Aosta Valley community, as an entity expressing a specific set of values. According to Moore and Khagram (2004), it will be possible to appreciate their social legitimacy in influencing the choices of the Aosta Valley administration, when deciding the contents of the Saison Culturelle. Even more interesting will be to analyse the evolution of the local government attitude towards those arts and culture activities that promote identity or that are addressed to maintain and reinforce the link with the French-speaking cultural area, often in synergy with the promotion of the Francoprovençal Patois.

Considering this theoretical framework, the research question is: *To what extent does the Saison Culturelle still represent nowadays' culture and tradition of Aosta Valley?* In addition, sub-research questions are formulated to underpin and complement the main one. The sub-research questions state: *Why is the Saison Culturelle still proposed as an efficient way to increase cultural participation in Aosta Valley?* And *To what extent is the organisation of the Saison Culturelle still motivated by the wish to generate a public good?* Finally, *to what extent has the substance of the public good created through the Saison Culturelle changed over the period elapsed since the*

beginning until today?

5. (Methodology and) Methods

This research will be carried out following a qualitative method of analysis (Bryman, 2012). This approach usually relies on an inductive strategy, which means that the hypotheses derive from the analysis and coding of the interviews (Bryman, 2012). Actually, the research gets its most important information from semi-structured interviews conducted with individuals who take part in the regional administration, both politicians and officials, or, more in general, people who have participated in the organisation and development of the Saison Culturelle. The qualitative approach is particularly effective in this situation because it allows a deep understanding of the topic. Semi-structured interviews enable the interviewees to express their thoughts and opinions about the topic freely, without any type of constraints, instead easily fundable along surveys and questionnaires. It is also true that a qualitative approach has its own limits. In particular, the number of interviewees is very limited compared to a quantitative approach. In addition, it is complicated to generalize the results obtained through the analysis of the interviews (Bryman, 2012).

The research design proposed to approach the topic of the Saison Culturelle is a comparative case study. The Saisons Culturelles can be divided chronologically in three groups, based on the total expenses of each edition of the festival. However, for the purpose of the research it will be mainly taken into consideration the first and last groups, namely “Saisons before CRT” and “Saisons after Crisis”.

This longitudinal comparative study allows the analysis of the different peculiarities of the first editions with the recent ones. Indeed, this research design is particularly effective to understand the evolution of a specific event or phenomenon focusing on the moments where, thanks to a prior research of information, it is known that are concentrated the most relevant passages of the Festival evolution (Bryman, 2012). Nevertheless, a specific attention has been dedicated to the fact that the initial values, ideas, and, maybe, even the cultural references of the Saison Culturelle mutated in order to adapt with society and new cultural tastes.

In particular, an interview guide (Appendix B) has been prepared, according to Bryman (2012) who focuses on the main points that are on the basis of the interview purpose. Indeed, the interview guide is a useful tool to maintain a strong link between the objectives of the research and the contents and information that have been acquired through a kind of interviews that have a certain degree of liberty in developing topics not precisely considered in the research planning phase. Following the Bryman methodology (Bryman 2012), a set of elements are considered before conducting the interviews: a) defining a specific order in the questions, so they facilitate the

investigation of the research theme; b) using a language suitable for the interviewees, who are, presumably, more keen on presenting cultural topics under an administrative point of view, avoiding academic terminology and vocabulary; c) avoiding leading questions, that can emerge from the analysis of the documents and data referring to the Saison Culturelle. This point requires a specific attention, because the Francophone culture is a sensitive theme in Aosta Valley, that often involves personal and ideological evaluations and points of view; d) considering the previous point, the “factsheet” has been particularly detailed in order to acquire as much as possible information about the interviewees, in order to understand whether there are personal elements that can bias the interview.

The interviews were conducted mainly in Italian and when needed in French. The rationale behind this choice is that the majority of the individuals interviewed speaks little or does not speak English at all. In addition, the transcriptions of the interviews have not been translated into English, but they have been kept in Italian or French in order to maintain the data as close as possible to the original ideas and opinions of the interviewees. Only the extracts of these interviews, which have been used in the analysis part of this research, have been translated into English in order to facilitate the readability of the thesis.

The individuals interviewed are divided in four groups: 1) politicians who are in charge, 2) politicians who are no longer in charge, 3) officials (bureaucrats) still part of the regional administration, and 4) officials no longer part of the regional administration and experts.

5.1. Other materials completing the framework of information

In addition to the interviews other materials were provided by the office in charge of the organisation of the Saison Culturelle, mainly the brochures about the program of the Festival in different years and some data about the costs and revenues of all the editions of the Saisons Culturelles and about the number of tickets and seasonal passes sold. In particular, the brochures are an interesting documentation because they show the evolution of the contents and they can support the understanding of the evaluation and thought expressed by the interviewees. Moreover, the research was enriched by a written contribution from the expert Michèle Chenuil, who was in charge of the artistic and cultural choices about the French part of the Saison. This person, who was in the list of the people to interview, was prevented for personal reasons to participate by physical availability and so she provided the research with a written contribution, of which the elements relevant for the research are included in the following part of the thesis.

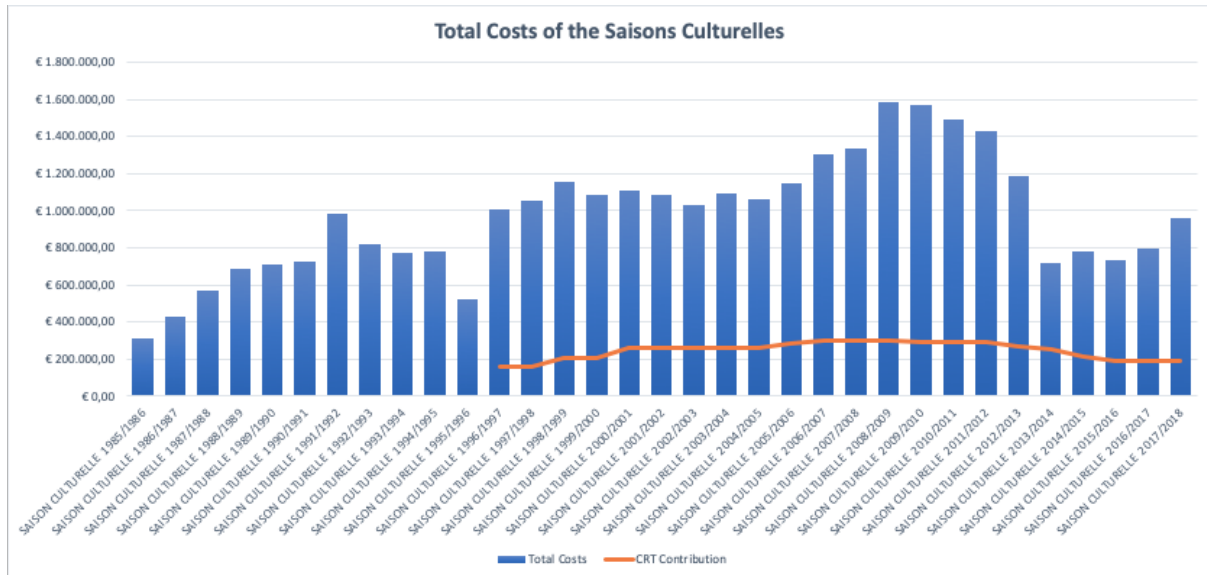
5.2. The coding system

In order to apply correctly the methodology proposed by Bryman (2012) it has been necessary to develop a coding system. The coding system created for the analysis of the interviews is based on

the main concepts and arguments retrieved from the literature review (Bryman, 2012). After having defined the main concepts, these have been applied, through the use of different highlighting colours, to all the transcriptions of the interviews. Then this information has been transcribed into a matrix created on Excel. The coding technique used to analyse the data is the *open coding* one (Bryman, 2012). This process allows breaking down data into categories that can be later compared. In this matrix (Appendix D) there is a summary of what the interviewees said about that concept and this allow the comparison between the ideas and opinion of each individual that has been interviewed. This matrix, completed with the summary of the main concept derived from the interviews, can be found inside the author archive.

6. Data

This chapter provides a description of the data used for the research. The first part of this chapter shows, in detail, the rationale behind the groups' division of the Saisons Culturelles. This division is, in fact, underpinned by the data about each edition of the Saisons, given by the regional administration. The second part of this chapter is dedicated to the description of the individuals interviewed. In particular, it their profession and the group in which they will be allocated are highlighted for the analysis of this topic.



Graph 1: The figure shows the total costs and contribution from the CRT of each edition of the Saison Culturelle (Data received from the office of the regional administration in charge of the Saison Culturelle) (Appendix A)

Graph 1 shows why the Saisons Culturelles can be divided in these groups. The first group ranges from the first edition of the Saison Culturelle to the 95/96 edition. This group is characterized by the fact that during this period the Festival was completely subsidized by the

regional government. In addition, this group represents the moment in which the pulsion for the development of a new cultural approach to the Francophone culture was stronger and where there was the involvement of a large number of cultural associations and organisations. For the purpose of the research this group is named: Saisons Before CRT. The second group is comprised between the 1996/97 edition and the 2012/2013 edition and it is characterized by a significant number of public subsidies given to these editions in combination with a relatively high monetary contribution from the Bank CRT foundation. The consistent budget dedicated to the Festival allowed the participation of renowned artists, also from international backgrounds. The edition of 2012/2013 represents the last year included in this group, as from the following year the budget was sharply cut. This group of the Saisons Culturelles is named: Saisons Before Crisis. Finally, the last group is represented by the editions that were organised after the financial crisis effect impacted on Aosta Valley. These editions are characterised by a relatively small budget, especially if compared with the editions of the second group. This reduction had consequences on the artists' choices and on the organisation system of the event. This last period, conversely, is that where the impact of the public budget cuts and new strategies about capturing the interest of the audience are completely affirmed. The decrease of funds invested in the Saison Culturelle is motivated by the financial crisis of 2008. In fact, the financial crisis initially did not have any type of impact on the economy of Aosta Valley, because of the capacity of this small region to compensate, with its public budget, the negative consequences of the crisis on the private sector. Only some years later, mainly because of the effect that the crisis had on the tourism sector, the Francophone region had to cut the expenses in all the sectors where the public policies intervene including that dedicated to arts and culture.

As stated in the chapter above, the interviewees are divided in four groups. Amongst the first group, the interviewees are Laurent Viérin, actual and former assessore (councillor) for the culture and former president of the Aosta Valley region, and Joël Farcoz, actual counsellor and vice-president of the regional administration and former assessore (councillor) for the culture. The second group is composed of Renato, René, Faval, the first assessore (councillor) in charge for the Saison Culturelle, and Dino Viérin, former assessore (councillor) and former president of the Aosta Valley region. The third group, on the other hand, is formed by Elmo Domaine, regional official in charge of the Saison Culturelle since the beginning, Isabelle Godecharles, official in charge of the Francophone aspects of the Saison Culturelle, and Raphaël Desaymonet, former official in charge of the Saison Culturelle, now part of another regional department. Finally, the fourth group is represented by the experts and officials who do not work anymore inside the regional administration. These experts are Guido Corniolo, former manager of the regional administration and active part of the EAC, Patrizia Bongiovanni, former responsible of the office in charge of the

management of the schools in Aosta Valley and, nowadays, working as a dean, Lino Blanchod, former music teacher and dean of the Istituto Musicale of Aosta, Anna Ugliano, first organizer of the Saison Culturelle and theatre expert, and, lastly, Emanuela Lagnier, music expert.

7. Interview analysis and Results

The results of the research arise from two different parts of the analysis:

- documents and data provided by the Aosta Valley regional administration. This information provides a quantitative overview about budget, contents of the Festival and ticketing which allow a better understanding of the elements collected through the interviews. Also, these data have been used to build up the interviews and even to define who were the persons in charge of the management of the Saison Culturelle;
- analysis of interviews, that are the most important and original source of information.

In the following section, the first point of the previous list is not presented in detail because it is embedded both in the questions and in the resulting answers. Nevertheless, related data are available in the author archive as an additional source of information.

According to the methodology described before, the most important part of the research has been carried out through a qualitative investigation involving, on the whole, 12 people, plus one written contribution. The language of the interviews was Italian excepted one with a person who speaks French. Also, the written contribution was in French. The interviews were organized contacting directly each person and they were held at their home or office, always in optimal conditions for the recording and for the complete reciprocal understanding. The average duration of the interviews was around 30 minutes. Each interviewee has been punctually informed about the purpose of the interview and all of them have signed the authorisation for the use of their contribution.

7.1. The macro analysis of the interviews' results

The first step in approaching the output of the interviews is to interpret the general framework resulting from the coding activity. Amongst the group of interviewees there can be found three subgroups: the politicians former or in charge, the officials in charge and the former officials and external experts. It is interesting to extract and to examine some common elements which characterise the vision of the Saison Culturelle within each subgroup. Doing this, for every category of interviewees it will be outlined what are the most recurrent positions, considering the topics used for the coding in the whole.

Starting from the politicians, in charge or not, what appears as a relevant idea that is

common to all of them, is that supporting the Saison is given for granted. For them the Saison is vital for the cultural policies of the Region and so, even in a period of sharp reduction of the budgets, the Saison deserves to receive public funds. They explain this quasi-obligation by the will to provide the Aosta Valley population with a cultural offer that without the public financial support simply would not exist. In this group of interviewees there is, nonetheless, a slight differentiation. While the politician initiator of the Saison was more interested in a cultural improvement of the audience, even, through the proposition of refined artistic expressions, for the majority of those who followed, the Saison had to pay attention to the traditional part of Aosta Valley culture. Moreover, for one of them, the Festival must be less “Aostacentric”. What has to be said, is that the politicians who were interviewed for the research, were all from the most important autonomous party of Aosta Valley, the Union Valdôtaine (even if some of them have abandoned this party to create a new one, the Union Valdôtaine Progressiste).

Considering the group of the officials of the regional public administration still in charge, three people are responsible of functions within the department of culture. The results of their interviews are quite interesting because the motivations which push the politicians have in part involved also these managers in charge of the organisation of the Saison. Within them is strong the conviction that the Saison is a public good and that they are working to bring to Aosta Valley population something that is necessary not to be excluded by some financial and economic trends, that might take away the public funds intended for cultural activities. Together with the politicians they share the idea that Aosta Valley region is very small and so that the market is not able to organise such an important Festival, moreover on a regular basis.

Finally, the group of already retired officials and external experts. A part of this group, namely the experts, includes the most critical voices about the evolution of the Saison and this attitude can be easily explained by the fact that in recent years the budget shrinking has obliged the public administration to reduce their role in the organisation, also limiting their possibility to choose amongst the artistic and cultural panorama the best offer to present in Aosta Valley. Anyway, what all of group claims, is the capacity to stay in touch with the world of arts and culture, proposing an artistic program of quality and being able to avoid those commercial shows and artists who should not be part of a public cultural strategy. From another point of view, some of them are not so concerned by the importance of French language and local traditions, because for them the focus of the Saison must always be on the quality of the cultural offer.

7.2. The results' analysis according to the coding's topics

A finer analysis of the interviews' results is made through the investigation of what emerged considering some of the topics used for the coding activity. This analysis enables to focus on

relevant information to answer the research questions, while precisising some elements already illustrated that present the ideas of the three groups of interviewees. It is worth to note that not all the topics of the coding have been used, because little information about them emerged from the interviews.

Thus, this part presents the most important elements extracted from the interviews. These ones are available, integrally and in the original language inside the author archive. In order to make the presentation of the interviews contents coherent with the purposes of the research and with the coding framework, these ones are divided in different sub-sections, more precisely: a) culture, traditions and the Saison Culturelle; b) the promotion of local artists; c) the role of the Saison Culturelle in the Francophone scenario of Aosta Valley; d) Communities and identity; f) cultural participation and accessibility; g) the regional investment for the creation of the Saison Culturelle as a quasi-public good; h) path-dependency; i) cultural tourism.

7.2.1. Culture, traditions and the Saison Culturelle

Contrary to the expectations, the Saison Culturelle is not the main festival that represents and valorises the local traditions and culture. For example, one of the interviewees stated:

“having worked a lot in that period on the issue of Aosta Valley traditions to be rediscovered, to also let young people rediscover them, [...] the Saison Culturelle was not the vehicle of this.” (Bongiovanni, 2019)

Indeed, since its beginning, the Saison was not aimed to valorise the traditional local culture linked mainly to the rural part of the society, but, instead, to be an important and high-quality artistic festival. Other events and festivals, such as the Charaban and the Printemps Théâtral are the flagships of the popular tradition of the region. Nevertheless, the interviews point out that the Saison is the reference for another important element of the Aosta Valley culture, that oriented towards the Francophonie, which has a totally different history and roots. For many interviewees the Saison is the way through which to improve the level of the local culture while maintaining and developing links with French culture and artistic expressions. For example, one interviewee specified:

“For the Francophone section, I would say that there is the possibility to see shows in French and therefore to continue to promote the French language in Aosta Valley. We promote not only shows coming from France but from the whole Francophone world, so Belgium, Quebec ... we do not limit ourselves to France” (Godecharles, 2019)

Here, it is worth to add some information coming from the analysis of the literature about the history of Aosta Valley. The Aosta Valley has often experienced over the centuries this dichotomy between the popular tradition, almost exclusively transmitted orally, and that of a more cultivated society which was strongly oriented toward a French culture and politics. This preference was expressed publicly through the use of this language. There was also a spatial distinction, with the Francoprovençal culture found in the rural areas and the French speaking one more concentrated in Aosta and in its bourgeoisie. These two cultural expressions coexisted and coexist still now, and some hints of this situation can be found in the interviews. But Patois and French help themselves reciprocally. Actually, without the large presence of French language in the history and politics of Aosta Valley, it would be not easy to justify the particular identity of the region and obtaining consequently an autonomous status within the Italian constitution. This autonomy has permitted to the Aosta Valley rural community not only to survive but also to thrive, having so the social energies to maintain the Patois as vernacular language. On the other side, for people speaking Patois it is easier to understand and even speak French, considering that large part of vocabulary and phonetic is common to both the two languages (even if for the writing the situation is not at all the same). So, someway, the Francoprovençal and the French are two languages that can be learnt together.

This picture of Aosta Valley culture is confirmed by some interviews, especially considering that the politician who first promoted the creation of the Saison (Faval, 2019), was strongly aimed by the will to use the Festival to improve the cultural level of the population, and the shows, especially theatre in French, was part of this policy. Considering all these elements, the Saison is the concretisation of the cultural vision of the French speaking oriented part of the Aosta Valley community. This vision is shared also by those, less motivated culturally, who know that the use of French language is essential to enforce the regional identity and consequently the political and administrative autonomy. A clear example of these identity values can be found in this extract of one of the interviews:

“the fact that this Saison Culturelle has a bilingual connotation already reflects what is the identity of this community” (D. Viérin, 2019)

The large majority of the interviewees converge on the idea that the Saison is an essential part of the cultural panorama in the region, recognising this way that its offer expresses, also for the presence of shows and films in French, a relevant aspect of Aosta Valley culture.

This consideration must be related to the ideological stance that wants to characterise Aosta Valley as a cultural minority. Undoubtedly, the Saison Culturelle is not the reference for the Patois, which constitutes the most evident element of an intangible heritage strongly rooted in the community. Nevertheless, the Saison, according to the theory of Benhamou and Peltier (2017) contributes to the cultural diversity, emphasising the difference in comparison to a national one. This difference is outlined mainly through the use of French language, but also paying a specific attention to arts and culture of France. In this sense the role of the Saison, by reference to the concept of cultural minority, can be read following the approach of Gonzales (2008), considering the identity an essential instrument to underpin and characterise a community that considers itself as a minority. As Gonzales states, there can be two ways to stand for their own identity: through a defence or through a project. While the Charaban and the Printemps Theatral seem to carry on a defence of the Aosta Valley popular tradition, the Saison Culturelle is more projected to an evolution of this identity, trying to elevate the cultural level of the public while maintaining and possibly reinforcing its intellectual proximity with the French culture.

Nevertheless, the Saison, according to many interviewees, trying to match the expectations of a large variety of publics, features also some relevant expressions of the popular local culture. An example that emerged from the interviews is:

“Ours (editor’s note: Saison Culturelle) is a generalist season that aims to offer the public an overview of what the culture and arts are in Italy and beyond” (Domaine, 2019)

An example are the brass bands and the singer-songwriters invited to the Saison. Some of them are very engaged in the safeguard of the values of the cultural minority and they bring to the scene cultural values shared by a large part of the Aosta Valley population. This operation of a cultural melting pot is nowadays easier to do with new bands of young artists, like the *Orage*, while in the past some artists, standing with their work for the defence of the peculiarities of the Aosta Valley ethnic minority, did not share willingly the same scene with other performers that they considered too commercial. This situation confirms the Klamer idea (2017), that artistic performances have to propose both social and cultural values.

7.2.2. The promotion of local artists

One of the motivations that can justify the public funding of culture is the promotion of the local artists who, otherwise, would have not the opportunity to propose their works. This condition is particularly evident when the artists are too much linked to the specificity of the community, or when they do not have the means, economic and logistic, to compete in a cultural market wider than

their local community. The results of the majority of the interviews converge towards a description of the Saison where the presence of local artists is somehow complementary to the mainstream of the Festival. Indeed, this latter is oriented to present cultural elements different from the local, such as performances of high quality, trendy artists, these ones to fill the houses with blockbuster shows, and last but not least, a noticeable presence of French shows. For example, one interviewee said:

“the Saison Culturelle gives an enormous space to traditional music” (Lagnier, 2019)

In this context, the local artists who are included in the Saison are rewarded by the possibility to perform side by side with well renowned stars and emergent national or international artists. Even if this aspect is not part of the research, it is worth to point out that, anyways, concerning the promotion of local artists, Aosta Valley regional government invests considerably in the education of young musicians, e.g. financing the Istituto Musicale, now having acquired the status of Conservatorio, and the SFOM (Scuola di Formazione e Orientamento Musicale) and in supporting the local companies of popular theatre through a specific law of financing .

7.2.3. The role of the Saison Culturelle in the Francophone scenario of Aosta Valley

The Saison Culturelle has a major role in the promotion of the French language and Francophone culture. It has to be said though that, in general, the public of the Saison Culturelle is not very receptive towards the shows in a language that is not Italian. French is, for a relatively large segment of the population, a barrier that prevents them the access to the contents of the performances, especially theatre and cinema. One interviewee stated that the theatre hall is usually half empty during the performances in French (Godecharles, 2019). Another interviewee, for example, during the interview said:

“for example, French companies of the highest level are coming, which have performed at the Olympia with great success and [...] in the end, perhaps, the hall is not full, and we miss opportunities” (Corniolo, 2019)

This aspect is particularly interesting as it shows that even if the bilingual nature of Aosta Valley is undoubtedly fundamental, in terms of cultural identity and social values, French is still seen as a language for the so-called *bourgeoisie valdôtaine*, or simpler the elites. On the other hand, one of the main objectives of the Saison Culturelle is the increase cultural accessibility and participation. What has been described above about the difficulties to attract a large audience to French performances is one of the reasons used by the interviewees to justify the devolution of

public funds to this event. In addition, from several interviews emerged that there is also a political willingness to safeguard the use of French in Aosta Valley. Especially, one interviewee stated:

“I must say, still for my sector, for the defence of the French language, until now it is important that there is a political will” (Godecharles, 2019)

The other important tool born from the Saison Culturelle, and unfortunately disappeared, were the *matinées*, the result of the collaboration between the high schools of Aosta Valley and the regional government. The *matinées* were created in order to facilitate the approach of students to the cultural activities proposed by the Saison Culturelle, organising special plays of the shows in the morning, during the school hours. In addition, these activities had become a meaningful moment in which students could interact with the artists and could learn important notions that could be used in class (Chenuil, 2019, D. Viérin, 2019, Godecharles, 2019, Bongiovanni, 2019).

7.2.4. Communities and Identity

One of the goals of the Saison Culturelle, that emerged from the interviews, is the importance given to the communities of Aosta Valley and their cultural development.

“I am for the cultural elevation of the community, and in the community, there is the farmer, the professional, the worker of the Cogne (Editor's note: Cogne Acciai Speciali is the metallurgic factory of Aosta. Born with another name in the early years of the twentieth century, it has marked the demographic growth and urban development of the capital city of Aosta Valley), everyone, and what gives me enormous satisfaction, has given me and continues to give it to me, is that in the Saison [...] I see people of all social categories and this seems to me the success of the proposal.”
(Faval, 2019)

Since the first editions of this event, the regional administration sought to create a cultural programme involving these communities and that was aimed at their cultural development. In fact, the Saison Culturelle was the first institutionalized event that offered diversified cultural performances, spanning from classical music to theatre plays, both in Italian and French. The choice of the promotion of Francophone artists inside the Saison Culturelle was, and still remains, mainly due to the will to contribute to the identity of Aosta Valley. Another reason was related to the importance that the relationship with French culture had for political debate at the time in which the Saison Culturelle was conceived. Actually, politicians saw French as a pillar for the safeguard of the autonomy of Aosta Valley and this idea was also reflected in the cultural choices. The Saison

Culturelle was originally conceived for the locals and in this scenario, it can be seen the transformation of the collective perception and use of French language, from a political tool to a cultural one. The Saison Culturelle offered the local communities the possibility to attend performances that otherwise would have never showcased in Aosta Valley, because of its small number of inhabitants and their relatively limited capacity of expense for culture. The geography of Aosta Valley is a recurrent reason in the interviews in order to justify the spending of public funds for the Saison Culturelle. One interviewee, for example, declared:

“the objectives are perhaps to allow the population of Aosta Valley to benefit from activities that would otherwise be difficult for a private individual to bring to the territory, because the numbers do not allow it and therefore, since they cannot do business, the public body is forced to intervene and perhaps compensate for the shortcomings of a market, which is lacking due to the territory and perhaps our numbers” (Desaymonet, 2019)

This event was conceived as an instrument for cultural growth of the community and embedding in this event the identity values of Aosta Valley, namely the French language, in all the editions, and the Patois, in the recent editions, helped its longevity and financial stability. The majority of the people that were interviewed have a positive thought about seeing the Saison Culturelle as a tool that glues together the communities of Aosta Valley and foster their cultural growth. However, one interviewee (Farcoz, 2019) specifies that the Saison Culturelle is too much “Aostacentric”, as the majority of the shows are performed in the theatre Splendor located precisely in Aosta. This theatre is owned by the Aosta Valley region and it was renovated as a purpose for the development of the Saison Culturelle.

7.2.5. Cultural participation and accessibility

The interviewees have nearly the same opinion about the extremely positive contribution of the Saison to the cultural participation, and this pointing out two elements. Firstly, the relevant dimension of the loyal audience, compared to the whole population, which follows the majority of the events proposed by the Festival. Secondly the program of the Saison, very diversified and capable to attract a wide range of spectators. Even if some of the interviewees regretted that in the Saison are included some shows too commercial, this fact, in reality, contributed to approach some targets, like the teenagers and the young generations, otherwise left aside from the possibility to attend cultural events. However, some grey areas affect this scenario. In fact, compared to the first period of the Saison, in which the budget was not shrank by the financial crisis, the most recent editions of the festival underwent a compression of the offer, for example with the elimination the

matinées, causing a loss of students' participation. Some interviewees stressed the negativity of this situation, pointing out the importance of educating the young generations to the understanding of performing arts, especially those typologies that are not usually followed by them, like the theatre. For example, from one interview emerges:

“things have been lost, things have been lost because there is no more, for example, this link with schools, there are no more matinées, it is not given.... there are several teachers, and also people I know, who bring the students voluntarily to see some shows in the evening, but there is no longer this big connection with the young generations” (Bongiovanni, 2019)

For the rest, the evaluation of the interviewees is unanimous, signalling as the Saison, also with a policy of low pricing, facilitates the cultural participation. Another aspect is relevant to answer the research sub-questions and it is the choice to structure the Saison as an overview of many different genres, giving the spectators the possibility to access good, and often excellent, shows proposing very diverse types of performing arts. A consequence of this choice, low price and diverse genres, is also that the audience is not only diversified according to the cultural tastes but also considering a social point of view, for example allowing low income people to access the shows of their favourite artists.

What has to be said, is also that, in fine, the Saison is, in itself, an instrument of cultural participation. In the majority of the interviews this is an aspect that remains quite untold as it is considered implicit in the decision to invest a relevant budget for culture. For example, one interviewee commented:

“We had, at the time, contrary to what is happening now, we had finances that allowed us ... on the other hand this thing (Editor's note: Saison Culturelle), we couldn't have done it if we didn't have the money.” (Faval, 2019)

All the strategies to entice the audience, with a festival that wants to be rich and varied, with well-known stars and new talents in very niche branches of performing arts, are in themselves the evident indicators that Aosta Valley region aims to increase cultural participation through its policies. The interviews demonstrate also that the public administration does not want to leave the monopoly of cultural and arts entertainment to the private sector, considering culture a fundamental tool to promote the wellbeing of the community. For some of the interviewees, especially the

politicians, the cultural participation is also a demonstration of the validity of their policies, in particular for the French side of the Saison. The fact that even today a large number of spectators, the subscribers, attends all the shows of the Saison, is a sign that to be bilingual is still something relevant, at least for a part of the population. The participation at the shows in French language is even more meaningful if we consider that the ties with the other side of the Alps are today more difficult to maintain, also because a large component of the population is more rooted with Italy,

Nevertheless, some interviewees suggested that the current formula of the Saison is not so effective in order to increase the cultural participation. In particular one interviewee (Lagnier, 2019) underlined that the structure of the Saison must be completely revised, and the reason is because it is not able anymore to produce an offer of quality, capable to favourite the extension of the audience. This vision is related with the idea that the cultural participation is today connected with new forms of aggregation of the public, especially amongst teenagers, where the choice to participate to an event is very often part of social network life.

A final, little note concerns the accessibility. If price policy is undoubtedly an effective tool to facilitate accessibility, something remains to do about the location of the shows. The term “Aostacentric”, used by one of the interviewees (Farcoz, 2019) is bivalent: from one side it means that the Saison is sometimes too exclusive, considering the town of Aosta as the symbol of a bourgeoisie having the cultural education and the pleasure to appreciate some kind of shows from classical music to innovative theatre. From the other side, it is true that the population of Aosta Valley is spread all around a mountainous region and that for many people it is difficult to take the car, in the evening, driving for 30 - 40 kilometres to attend a show in Aosta. For some of the interviewees, some has to be done in this direction, even if this would imply investments that perhaps are not affordable in this moment, in a situation of limited public budgets.

7.2.6. Semi-public good and public involvement

The Saison Culturelle is surely a semi-public good. All the interviewees agree that it has contributed, and still does, to the cultural growth of Aosta Valley population. Nevertheless, over the time the characteristics of this public good have changed. At the beginning, when the Saison was firstly conceived, and during the first editions, but it is possible to extend this reflexion until the moment when there was a sharply budget reduction, the Saison was a semi-public good for at least four aspects because it consisted of the following instruments to enhance community values of the Aosta Valley:

- A cultural offer which compensates the difficulty, if not the impossibility, for the private artistic companies and managers to organize quality events for an audience that was too small, and that, for a large part, cannot afford high prices for the tickets;

- An instrument to support education, especially proposing to the schools a specific programme (the *matinées*) which contributed to make them more informed and possibly passionate on arts and culture;
- A way to elevate the cultural level of the local population, proposing shows, films and conferences that usually were not included in the offer of private cultural operators. This facet of the Saison as a public good might derive from a sort of patronage, promoted by enlightened politicians, but that at the end is very important to stimulate the audience about trends and artistic proposals that do not have room in the market:
- A meaningful tool to safeguard and promote the French language in Aosta Valley (Godecharles, 2019). In a hypothetical scenario where the Saison Culturelle was owned and organized by a private organisation, there would be little, or no, attention to the francophone artists, as, usually, they attract less audience, because French is seen as a barrier, and, consequently, they are unsustainable in monetary terms.

Nevertheless, this semi-public good did not come out from a precise political strategy. Indeed, in the beginning the Saison did not have a clear and defined mission. In that period, the beginning of the 80s, it was more common to adopt the strategy of trial and error. As the politician (Faval, 2019) who started the Saison Culturelle affirmed, before the introduction of the Saison Culturelle there were only some sporadic events organized by some private organizations. The Saison was, in fact, the first institutionalized cultural event. During the years, the Saison developed various objectives and aims, but as far as it concerns the mission, the regional administration did not propose a precise mission for this festival. There is however a general vision, which also transpires from the interviews, about the Saison Culturelle. According to this vision, the Saison is an instrument that provide the access to culture to the inhabitants of Aosta Valley. So, it is reasonable to argue that the Saison Culturelle has become a semi-public good over the time.

7.2.6.1. The regional investment for the creation of the Saison Culturelle as a semi-public good

What is interesting to point out in some of the interviews is that the allocation of the public funding has greatly changed from the first editions to now. Without doing a detailed analysis but taking as reliable the information provided by the interviewees, it turns out that at the beginning the majority of the budget was paid for the artists and, after a while, for the experts who had to design and propose the program. All this with the aim to guarantee a high level of quality and also to stay in touch with the most relevant artistic trends. Since 2012, when the effects of the international crisis impacted on public budgets, the types of investment changed. The quantity and the level of professional support coming from the external experts decreased and the role of decision maker

about the Saison contents was taken by officials of the public administration. At the same time, the expenses for the artists were concentrated on those who provided the higher possibility to fill the house.

So, considering the elements emerged from a large part of the interviews, these changes in the organisation and in the funds' allocation, modified somehow the nature of the Saison as a semi-public good. Indeed, if in the first editions it was clearly evident a situation where the Aosta Valley regional administration acted as a patron, supporting culture for itself, with important investments allowed by a solid public budget, in the recent years the administration policy has completely shifted. Pushed by the pressure to limit the public expenditure, the politicians decided to shrink the public budget, but doing this they tried to maintain the quantity of cultural offer - same number of shows, long period of festival, etc. - with two effects: the first was the impossibility to afford famous artists whose fees were too high, the second, even more important, to adopt an attitude more similar to the for-profit cultural operators, choosing those shows that guarantee a higher attendance and consequently higher incomes from tickets. This policy is far-distant from that of patronage and reflects an increasing approach between the behaviour of public and private cultural operators about festivals organisation.

7.2.7. Path-dependency

The Saison Culturelle did not change so much over the years in terms of the format of the spectacles proposed, while in terms of financing it underwent some changes. This is the evaluation of almost all the interviewees and for the majority of them, since the beginning there have been many improvements. The original formula, even if its name was copied from pre-existing festivals, was completely suitable for the expectations of the audience and for the cultural demand of Aosta Valley. The Saison brought a wide choice of shows, films and conferences, and for several months, to a public that did not have the possibility to access easily other cultural events. A clear example of this situation can be found on this extract from one of the interviews conducted for this research:

“Right now, I fundamentally hope that the Saison Culturelle will change, let's say, in its organisational structure, because you don't ... what was created for thirty years ago is no longer, let's say, may no longer fit our times.” (Lagnier, 2019)

On the contrary, there was not any path-dependency, relatively to Aosta Valley, with previous festivals with the same characteristics. Indeed, before the beginning of the Saison Culturelle many interviewees pointed out that there were just single shows or short festivals like the Charaban. The success of the first editions, with numerous events with an exceptional attendance,

like that for the classical music concerts, constituted a reference for the organisation of the following editions. The feeling, mentioned by some interviewees, was that the quality of the offer, the variety of the genres and the presentation of plays in French were a high value public good, deserving an important financial investment.

Considering another point of view, the fact that the Saison Culturelle has not changed over the time in terms of quantity and variety of shows, might have had an impact on the audience. For example, many of the interviewees state that the regional administration is struggling to engage the younger generations in participating in the activities promoted by the Saison Culturelle. If on one side there is this scenario, characterised by the difficulty to involve the youth, on the other side there is the group represented by the loyal audience that every year, since the beginning of the Saison, buys the seasonal pass. This second group is attracted by a repetitive and consolidated framework, including both the organisation and the format of the festival. A little evolution of the Saison Culturelle might also be found in the fact that the group composed by the loyal audience is the one that buys seasonal passes, while young people rarely buy it and, instead, they buy single tickets for selected shows. From what emerges from some interviews, it is clear that the regional administration does not impose on the Saison Culturelle organisation the obligation to make profit, but at the same time this cultural event has to show proof that it serves as a tool to increase cultural participation. Ergo, the office of the regional administration in charge of organizing the Saison Culturelle sees the maintaining of the format as a positive aspect as it can count on this big group of spectators composed by the loyal audience. The only critical issue concerning this approach to the audience behaviour is that at a certain point there will be a problem in terms of generational turnover. If the regional administration does not apply strategies that might help involving more the young generations, it will lose its loyal audience.

7.2.8. Cultural tourism

Tourism was not and is not the main concern of the promoters and managers of the Saison. Just one of the interviewees, the current councillor of the tourism and culture department, mentions cultural tourism as one of the positive effects of the Saison that is worth to further support and develop.

“Today with the reorganisation of the Department, and therefore with the union of tourism, culture and agriculture, after years of investments to dedicate culture to the local community, today the challenge is [...] to also attract tourists in Aosta Valley for the cultural events that Aosta Valley offers” (L. Viérin, 2019)

Indeed, Aosta Valley is undergoing a radical transformation of the tourism, from a situation

characterized by the prevalence of just few sectors, mainly the winter sports, to a more varied offer, where culture plays an important role. In addition, an increasing number of tourists spend their holiday using the town of Aosta, and its immediate outskirts, as a basis to discover the rest of the territory. So, for them it is quite easy to access the shows of the Festival. For the moment, no specific offer for tourists is included in the Saison and the will of the councillor who mentioned this new possibility, is a proposition that has to be studied and implemented in the festival. Nevertheless, if the idea to widen the program of the festival to involve the tourists will be further developed, the problem of the language should be taken into account. On the other hand, Aosta Valley confines with other French-speaking countries, namely France and Switzerland, and because of that the majority of foreign tourists comes from these areas. This means that tourists can understand the Francophone part of the Saison. Same goes for the Italian tourists that can see the shows in Italian.

8. Some reflections about the research's strengths and weaknesses

This part of the thesis will try to take stock of the strengths and the weaknesses of the research while pointing out some elements which are useful to evaluate the reliability and validity of the entire process of the investigation and analysis (Bryman, 2012).

First of all, the strengths. The thesis is undoubtedly an original attempt to approach a largely debated issue in Aosta Valley, namely the funding of cultural activities, and particularly those reflecting a fondness towards French arts and culture. The methodology of investigation, a qualitative research using semi-structured interviews, allowed to go straight to the point, involving people who were directly involved in the realisation of the Saison Culturelle, the main festival featuring shows in French language. The great interest around the topic constitutes an additional element of strength. Indeed, the findings of the research can be used by several regional stakeholders, mainly politicians, in order to acquire information when deciding about funding of the future editions of the Saison Culturelle.

Nevertheless, some weaknesses can be mentioned. The most relevant is the fact that, while conducting the interviews, many meaningful topics emerged that were not included in the preliminary planning of the research, and not considered by the research questions. An example is the importance of the Charaban as a vehicle to safeguard and promote Francoprovençal culture, in parallel to the French one. Actually, it would be interesting to understand, also for this festival, what are the mechanisms of funding and to what extent this kind of shows can be appreciated as a public, or semi-public, good.

Finally, some considerations about the reliability and validity of the research, carried on

through a qualitative approach. Considering the different methods presented by Bryman (2012), it is interesting to apply the model proposed by Guba and Lincoln (Bryman, 2012), more precisely the concept of trustworthiness. Within this concept, the criteria that can be used to evaluate the research is that of credibility. Actually, the study was conducted respecting the canons of good practices and an account of the findings will be submitted to the interviewees. But, also the criteria of transferability might apply to the evaluation of this qualitative research, because the findings could be oriented not only towards the Saison Culturelle but also towards a wider cultural context, including the Francoprovençal traditions and their expressions in arts and culture.

9. Conclusions

The Saison Culturelle is the most important cultural festival of Aosta Valley, representing also a staple for the promotion of French speaking arts and culture. The numbers demonstrate this outstanding position in the arts and culture panorama of Aosta Valley. Since 1984, 35 editions of the festival have proposed hundreds of artists from different genres. The public expenditure for its organisation has accumulated; over the years, an impressive amount of public funds has been spent on the Saison Culturelle. The average number of spectators, every season is around 25 000 people, compared to a small population of just 130 000 inhabitants. No other event or festival in the Aosta Valley can boast these results.

Moreover, with a diversified audience of spectators each year, the Saison proposes a wide range of shows, films and conferences which satisfy cultural and artistic tastes very diversified. The events are paid but the price policy is thought to allow almost anyone to attend their favourite shows. The Saison has mostly maintained its original format introducing a greater attention to the commercial trends, without losing niche cultural proposals.

This research has been the first structured investigation and reflection about the Saison Culturelle since its beginning. Using a qualitative method of analysis, several research questions have been approached, gathering data both through meaningful documentation and from semi-structured interviews. These latter have been very important because, thanks to the collaboration of an informal network of contacts, it was possible to gather some of the most important actors and stakeholders concerned by this long-lasting festival. Their contribution to the research is extremely important as they provided, discussing about the Saison, a worthwhile overview of the evolution of arts and culture in Aosta Valley over the last 30 years. Their comments allowed to enlighten some important aspects of culture and traditions in the region, mainly the role of French and Francoprovençal languages.

The research enabled to answer the first and most important question of the thesis, that is to

what extent the Saison Culturelle still represents today Aosta Valley culture and traditions. What the research has found is that there is a complex relationship between them, ending in a converging contribution to Aosta Valley identity. The Saison Culturelle is the only festival in this region where all the components of Aosta Valley cultural expressions are performed together, not only French and Italian, but also Patois. The panorama of shows of the recent years, despite the budget reduction, has not decreased and the variety of shows and events clearly matches with the tastes of a diversified audience. This might be an indicator that the Saison is a good representation of today Aosta Valley's culture. Concerning the tradition, the reflexion becomes slightly more complicated because the will of the Saison to propose quality and renowned artists and shows not always goes with a popular culture which needs to reinforce itself also using a sort of defence, according to Gonzales (2008) model. The preservation of folklore is more easily attained by other events, like the Charaban, which aim is mainly representing a society which wants to recall constantly its identity.

Having said that, the analysis provided the study with some answers also for one of the sub questions, more precisely that which concerns the increase of cultural participation. The Saison Culturelle is undoubtedly an efficient instrument to increase cultural participation and the number of attendees over the years demonstrates this. Even if the formula is quite outdated, at least according to some experts, the large majority of the shows gather a loyal audience, where seasonal subscribers are also quite relevant. Actually, some corrections to the offer might be necessary, especially in order to better involve young generations. This can be achieved operating a change in the structure of the Festival, for example involving artists that can be appreciated by young audiences and by changing the format of the shows, possibly adding more interactions with the artists. For the young generations it will be interesting also to compare the Saison to an event that mixes global and local values and themes, in order to demonstrate in which way the traditional culture is connected and synergic with a global one. In addition, as emerged from some interviews, the theatre Splendor, renovated on purpose for the Saison Culturelle, is suitable for some types of events but not for others, as it was designed some years ago and it had a troubled life, with its construction deadline postponed many times. The location of the events of the Saison Culturelle should be diversified as its cultural offer is diversified, perhaps using the amazing alpine scenario of Aosta Valley mountains as an outdoor location for some types of performances.

Considering another research sub question, namely the aspect of the Saison Culturelle being a semi-public good, the investigation has demonstrated that yes, it is, and the members of the organisation, both the politicians and the officials are motivated to structure something that was valuable for a large public as possible. Their attention about the Saison Culturelle being a semi-

public good is confirmed by the concerns they have about the implication of teenagers, students and more in general young audience. The motivation to produce a semi-public good seems to be increased in the recent years, with the awareness of the organisers about having the duty to propose arts and culture at an affordable price in a period of crisis. The only negative aspect that is worth to point out is that there has been a decrease in accessibility, having eliminated the matinées that were a good solution to allow schools to attend the Saison's shows. A last element confirming the will of Aosta Valley public administration to create a semi-public good, is the decision not to cut proportionally the expenses for the Saison compared to the general public budget reduction. Indeed, even the Aosta Valley regional budget has sharply decreased since 2012, the diminution of the investment for the Saison Culturelle have not been proportional. This is an important effort, especially when the public administration has to cut the budgets for health and other basic services, as transportation.

The findings of the research are also relevant for the sub question concerning the evolution of the Saison as a semi-public good, showing that, while remaining doubtless a semi-public good, its nature has changed over the time. If at the beginning, at the end of the 80s', the Saison was nearly the unique occasion to access quality artistic and cultural contents in Aosta Valley, today with the paid TV and the streaming services on the Internet, they are easily accessible by an extremely large majority of the population. However, it is not just a question of knowing and enjoying privately the pleasure of arts and shows. The Saison is a semi-public good also because it offers the possibility to experience culture as a social value, taking part of shows and events with other people who share the same passion. In this sense the Festival is not substitutable by other forms of arts and culture consumption.

As it was argued in the previous parts of the thesis, the Saison has evolved as semi-public good also in another sense, that of the distinction between patronage and market substitution. If at the beginning the Aosta Valley public administration acted as a patron, having the budget to afford the cultural expenses without major concerns, today the investment for the Saison is more thought in terms of efficiency, meaning that part of the public funding must be compensated by a return in terms of number of spectators. In this sense, the public is acting like a private organisation.

In addition, the thesis has contributed to the investigation of other meaningful topics such as Francophonie, cultural heritage, identity, community values, cultural minority. The study demonstrated that all of them are strictly intertwined within the Aosta Valley's social and cultural panorama. The Saison Culturelle, from its side, is a perfect representation of this complexity, including in its program shows, conferences and events which leave room for the variety of cultural and artistic expressions.

In conclusion, the research has been an opportunity for many interviewees to reflect about something that today is almost given for granted, a festival that is a staple within Aosta Valley cultural strategies. The number and quality of the data and information gathered thanks to the support of the Aosta Valley regional cultural department, the number and quality of the personal contributions given through the interviews, constitute a first analysis and reflection that can contribute to future evolutions of the Saison Culturelle, indicating also, thanks to the ideas expressed by many interviewees, new lines of development, always maintaining the will to make of this arts and culture festival a valued public good. In addition, the research has given a recognition to the grassroot movement of the Centres Culturels that, in the '70s' were at the origins of the Saison Culturelle. This strong impulse, motivated by the safeguard and value of the Aosta Valley social and political identity, has generated an artistic festival that has become one of the most relevant semi-public good produced by the cultural regional policy.

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List of personal contribution that are not interviews

Chenuil, M. (2019, April 30). Former official in charge of the Francophone part of the Saison.

List of the Interviews

Blanchod, L. (2019, April 4). Former music teacher and dean of the Istituto Musicale of Aosta.

Bongiovanni, P. (2019, April 7). Former responsible of the office in charge of the management of the schools in Aosta Valley and, nowadays, working as a dean.

Corniolo, G. (2019, April 6). Former manager of the regional administration and active part of the EAC.

Desaymonet, R. (2019, April 5). Former official in charge of the Saison Culturelle, now part of another regional department.

- Domaine, E. (2019, April 4). Regional official in charge of the Saison Culturelle since the beginning.
- Farcoz, J. (2019, April 9). Actual counsellor and vice-president of the regional administration and former assessore (councillor) for the culture.
- Faval, R. (2019, April 6). First assessore (councillor) in charge for the Saison Culturelle.
- Godecharles, I. (2019, April 4). Regional official in charge of the Francophone aspects of the Saison Culturelle.
- Lagnier, E. (2019, April 8). Music expert.
- Ugliano, A. (2019, April 4). First organizer of the Saison Culturelle and theatre expert.
- Viérin, D. (2019, April 5). Former assessore (councillor) and former president of the Aosta Valley region.
- Viérin, L. (2019, April 6). Actual and former assessore (councillor) for the culture and former president of the Aosta Valley region.

Appendix A

Edition Saison Culturelle	Total Costs	CRT Contribution
1985/1986	€309.653,71	
1986/1987	€425.338,66	
1987/1988	€566.649,06	
1988/1989	€682.862,16	
1989/1990	€711.727,32	
1990/1991	€722.815,69	
1991/1992	€985.911,81	
1992/1993	€819.989,11	
1993/1994	€769.234,16	
1994/1995	€780.206,81	
1995/1996	€522.391,13	
1996/1997	€1.005.571,93	€154.937,07
1997/1998	€1.051.467,30	€154.937,07
1998/1999	€1.154.629,89	€206.582,76
1999/2000	€1.084.559,49	€206.582,76
2000/2001	€1.110.382,34	€258.228,45
2001/2002	€1.084.559,49	€258.228,45
2002/2003	€1.030.000,00	€258.228,45
2003/2004	€1.092.843,33	€258.228,45
2004/2005	€1.061.160,61	€260.000,00
2005/2006	€1.149.509,69	€280.000,00
2006/2007	€1.307.478,43	€300.000,00
2007/2008	€1.332.758,83	€300.000,00
2008/2009	€1.587.060,76	€300.000,00
2009/2010	€1.568.817,36	€290.000,00
2010/2011	€1.487.846,52	€290.000,00
2011/2012	€1.430.558,70	€290.000,00
2012/2013	€1.187.593,90	€270.000,00
2013/2014	€719.616,29	€250.000,00
2014/2015	€780.845,53	€210.000,00
2015/2016	€735.948,43	€190.000,00

2016/2017	€798.913,29	€190.000,00
2017/2018	€957.744,15	€190.000,00

The data considered for this table are retrieved from the regional administration of Aosta Valley. The data refer to the total expenses for each edition of the Saisons Culturelles, and to the total amount of contribution given by the CRT foundation.

Appendix B

Interview Guide

Date:

Start time of the interview:

End time of the interview:

Questions

Theme 1: Introductory Information

- What is your name, age, nationality?
- What is/was your role in the organization of the Saison Culturelle?
- How long did you keep that role?

Theme 2: Saison Culturelle general information

- What are the aims of the Saison Culturelle and why it is important event for Aosta Valley?
- What is the audience of the Saison Culturelle?

Theme 3: Saison Culturelle: Tradition and quality

- How are Aosta Valley tradition and culture presented and promoted in and through the Saison Culturelle?
- What are the criteria for the selection of the artists?
- What is the role of tradition and identity of Aosta Valley in this decision-making process?

Theme 4: Saison Culturelle and regional administration mission

- What are the consequences (advantages and disadvantages) for the Saison Culturelle for being intertwined with the regional administration cultural policies?
- Do you think that the Saison Culturelle is an efficient instrument to increase cultural participation? Why?
- Do you think that the Saison Culturelle is aimed to be a public good or instead it is becoming a market product? Why?

Theme 5: Saison Culturelle: Before and Now

- What were the main ideas behind the first editions of the event?
- How did these ideas develop or change during the years?

Theme 6: Concluding questions

- Is there something else that you think is relevant to add regarding the subject?

RESERVE QUESTIONS

Theme 2: Saison Culturelle general information

- Could you describe what is the Saison Culturelle? (RESERVE)
- Could you describe what the Saison Culturelle represents for you? (RESERVE)
- What is the target of the Saison Culturelle for the coming years? (RESERVE)

Theme 3: Saison Culturelle: Tradition and quality

- In your opinion, what is the relationship between local culture and traditions and the Saison Culturelle? (RESERVE)
- Has this relationship evolved during the years? If yes, how? (RESERVE)

Theme 4: Saison Culturelle and regional administration mission

- What is the role of the regional administration in the Saison Culturelle? (RESERVE)
- Why does the regional administration estimate it is an important cultural project? (RESERVE)

Theme 5: Saison Culturelle: Before and Now

- How did the Saison Culturelle evolve throughout the years? (RESERVE)
- What are the substantial differences between the past editions of the Saison and the present ones? (RESERVE)

Appendix C

Example coded interview

Dino Viérin

Mattia Cortese: Ok, perfetto. Allora iniziamo l'intervista. Ti pongo delle domande di carattere generale su di te. Quindi, qual è il tuo nome, qual è la tua nazionalità?

Dino Viérin: Dino Viérin, sulla nazionalità avrei tutta una serie di considerazioni da fare, nel senso che io come cittadinanza ho due cittadinanze. La cittadinanza italiana e poi per *alliance* la cittadinanza francese. Sulla nazionalità, va beh diciamo francofona (1) (*laughing*).

MC: (*laughing*) ... Ok, qual è stato il tuo ruolo nell'organizzazione della Saison Culturelle?

DV: Ma, nell'organizzazione della Saison Culturelle, per due anni dall'88 al '90, ho avuto un ruolo principale, nel senso che allora ero Assessore alla pubblica istruzione e alla cultura e quindi ero il referente politico che aveva, quale funzione, quale funzionalità quella di presentare il programma della Saison Culturelle (7). Poi negli anni che vanno dal '93 al 2002 evidentemente, in quanto Presidente della giunta, ho svolto un ruolo che è più di, non dico supervisione, ma a questo punto di approvazione nelle sedute della giunta del programma della Saison (7). Delle varie Saisons Culturelles che era proposto dai responsabili della pubblica istruzione e della cultura.

MC: Ora invece passiamo a delle domande un po' più a carattere generale sulla Saison. Secondo te quali sono gli obiettivi della Saison e perché è un evento importante per la Valle d'Aosta?

DV: Ma, gli obiettivi della Saison erano, e penso che siano tutt'ora, molteplici. L'obiettivo principale era, considerando la situazione della Valle d'Aosta, è una piccola regione di montagna, 130 000 abitanti (3), l'obiettivo principale, se vogliamo metterlo sul piano delle pari opportunità, era offrire anche ai valdostani una proposta culturale che fosse una proposta varia, nel senso più generi, più proposte (12), una proposta che tenesse conto dei fenomeni culturali, non solo italiani, ma anche europei, internazionali (11) e anche, a questo punto, delle espressioni culturali valdostane (10). Questo era proprio per fare in modo che ci fosse questa offerta culturale, tra l'altro un'offerta culturale, come dicevo, ad ampio spettro, però a dei prezzi che fossero accessibili e che quindi tutti potessero usufruirne, potessero beneficiarne (13) e poi era anche un mezzo per sostenere concretatamente, al di là di questo sostegno alla cultura in senso lato, ma anche per sostenere le espressioni culturali valdostane, quelle locali.

MC: Certo. A proposito del pubblico. Come descriveresti il pubblico della Saison Culturelle, in termini di diverse tipologie?

DV: Ma, è vero... È un tout-public, nel senso ecco... Però evidentemente, tenendo conto anche dei vari generi, no? Perché hai la stagione cinematografica, quella teatrale, poi ci sono le conferenze, poi ci sono quella musicale e poi, diciamo, quella locale. Allora lì il pubblico... Innanzitutto ci sono gli appassionati e quindi quelli che effettivamente seguono, quelli che hanno un interesse particolare, ecco, sul piano culturale. Però oltre a questi ci sono anche quelli che si avvicinano alla cultura, no? E quindi a questo punto hanno un approccio meno diciamo... non vorrei utilizzare il termine professionale, il termine ... ecco... meno alto, no? Hanno un approccio a questo punto posso dire amatoriale e poi ci sono quelli che vanno dietro alle mode, ci sono i curiosi, proprio tenendo conto della varietà dei generi che sono proposti. Sta di fatto che... penso che i numeri che si sono constatati nelle varie Saisons Culturelles, che sono state proposte, testimoniano che questi

obiettivi e il fatto di voler aprirsi comunque a un pubblico vario sono degli obiettivi che hanno ottenuto dei risultati importanti. (4)

MC: Pensi che ci sia un problema di ricambio generazionale con il pubblico, oppure...

DV: Ma sì, cioè, io penso che uno dei successi della Saison Culturelle, dal punto di vista delle sue proposte, sia proprio un equilibrio tra quelle che possono essere le proposte culturali classiche e, a questo punto, anche tenuto conto di quelli che sono i nuovi movimenti culturali e le nuove proposte. A me sembra che questo sia stato comunque sempre preso in considerazione, perché, al di là delle mie esperienze che credo risalgono oramai all'altro secolo, però ogni anno andando a leggere il cartellone di questa Saison Culturelle si vede che accanto ai grandi classici, alle grandi proposte, però vedo anche che ci sono delle proposte che tengono conto anche dei cambiamenti che ci sono stati in campo culturale e anche, non solo, delle nuove espressioni, ma anche dei nuovi gusti culturali del pubblico, in modo particolare di quello giovanile, che è quello più attento a queste espressioni. (4)

MC: Certo. Secondo te l'obiettivo della Saison Culturelle per i prossimi anni è sempre comunque... diciamo di creare un evento che promuova la cultura, sia valdostana e non valdostana e di far sì che... di qualità però sempre... e di far sì che sempre più persone usufruiscano di questa cosa.

DV: Sì, Secondo me la Saison deve mantenere alcuni punti fermi, perché prima facevo riferimento ai numeri, no? Certo è che se si va dietro ai grandi numeri, a volte bisognerebbe prospettare e presentare degli eventi, che però durano *l'espace d'un matin* (*Editor's note: François de Malherbe, Consolation to M. du Périer*) dal punto di vista culturale, mentre invece, a mio modo di vedere, l'obiettivo è poi quello proprio culturale in senso alto, cioè fare in modo che anche i valdostani possano beneficiare di queste proposte culturali e quindi possano, a questo punto, poter accedere a quelli che sono i vantaggi di proposte culturali. (5) Tra l'altro anche con una..., parlavamo prima degli obiettivi in generale, e questo è anche un elemento di, non dico simbiosi, ma a questo punto di complementarietà con quella che è l'offerta formativa dei nostri giovani, cioè a questo punto evidentemente... e qui i classici hanno la loro importanza, il fatto di studiare a scuola dei testi di grandi autori e poi avere la possibilità in loco di vederli rappresentati, ecco questo... però condivido quello che dicevi prima, nel senso che comunque l'obiettivo principale deve essere sempre quello di privilegiare l'aspetto culturale in senso lato e la qualità dell'offerta culturale. (4)

MC: Certo. Adesso invece passiamo a delle domande riguardo alla tradizione valdostana, chiaramente, e alla qualità degli spettacoli. Secondo te come vengono presentate e promosse le tradizioni e la cultura nella Saison Culturelle e attraverso la Saison Culturelle?

DV: Ma lì, beh in senso lato, se vogliamo parlare di tradizioni, di cultura, ecco, allargando un po' il discorso, il fatto che questa Saison Culturelle abbia comunque una connotazione bilingue va già, ecco, a rispecchiare quella che è l'identità di questa comunità, (1) per altro ecco non bisogna sottovalutare che all'interno di questa comunità, proprio tenendo conto della sua storia, c'è una forte tradizione per quanto concerne anche quello che è il patois, quello che adesso i linguisti chiamano il francoprovenzale, che forse qui in Valle d'Aosta trova ancora uno dei pochi luoghi in cui ha una sua connotazione specifica che va a questo punto, sia dalla sua presenza all'interno del sistema formativo, vedasi il *Concours Cerlogne* (2) (*Editor's note: In collaboration with the Centre d'Etudes Francoprovençales "René Willien" of Saint-Nicolas, the Bureau pour l'Ethnologie et la Linguistique of the Department of Education and Culture, organizes the Concours de Patois "Abbé Cerlogne". Since the first edition in 1963, the competition has involved every year many pupils of*

the kindergartens, primary and secondary schools of the Region and also schools of Savoy, Valais, the French-Provençal valleys of Piedmont and the alloglot communities of Faeto and Celle di San Vito in the province of Foggia. The event aims to involve young people in the search for documents in patois belonging to the oral tradition, on issues of alpine civilization, as well as to stimulate interest in the dialect in the new generations), **dove si... sia a questo punto anche con questa École populaire de patois** (2) (Editor's note: The École populaire de patois is a tool for the promotion and dissemination of francoprovençal. Founded in 1995, its purpose is to offer courses in francoprovençal for both oral and written expression), **con tutta una serie... con compagnie teatrali amatoriali e con, a questo punto, anche, diciamo anche, una compagnia lo Charaban** (Editor's note: The Charaban is an amateur theatre company that plays in francoprovenzale. It was born in Aosta in 1958 and is still active today. From the first shows she has passed today to make the "sold out" for a whole week of replicas at the Teatro Giacosa in Aosta. The company presents itself to the public only once a year, almost always at the end of November, and this for the many fans has become an essential appointment, to the point that you are willing to queue at the box office from the day before. All the comedies performed have told the family life, the customs, the politics, the various forms of social life of Valle d'Aosta), **che una volta all'anno per una settimana... qui siamo nel campo teatrale, la Saison Culturelle non ingloba questi aspetti, perché l'amministrazione regionale sostiene questa espressione culturale in altre forme finanziando lo Charaban** e finanziando questa stagione specifica che è del Printemps Théâtral (Editor's note: The event, born in 1980, has been organized in recent years within the framework of the Saison Culturelle by the Fédération Valdôténa de Têatro Populéro) che sono comunque inseriti all'interno di questo calendario. Dal punto di vista, invece, specifico Saison evidentemente qui c'è uno spazio che è sempre stato riservato alle altre espressioni culturali, no? **Abbiamo dei cantautori, abbiamo dei gruppi musicali, ci sono a questo punto anche degli autori e quindi la presentazione delle loro opere, ecco, questo contribuisce a dare e questo è anche l'elemento importante.** (12) **il fatto di inserire comunque queste espressioni all'interno di una programmazione a respiro internazionali** (11), vale a dire che c'è una pari opportunità...

MC: Certo.

DV: ... ecco, tra quelle che sono le grandi espressioni culturali e quella che è l'espressione culturale di questa piccola comunità.

MC: Certo... se, chiaramente, lo sai. Quali sono i criteri di selezione degli artisti?

DV: **Ma su i criteri di selezione, anche perché poi qui, essendo questa Saison Culturelle finanziata da un ente pubblico, dall'Amministrazione regionale si è voluto, a questo punto, mantenere un'autonomia dal punto di vista delle scelte o delle proposte** (7)...

MC: Certo.

DV: ... ecco, e quindi ci sono dei responsabili artistici dei vari settori, che hanno il compito di proporre quelle che sono le ... quello che sarà poi il calendario, ecco, della Saison e l'altro... innanzitutto il rispetto, ecco, della proposta in quanto culturale, no? **E quindi che non ci sia una proposta culturale di connotazione politica** (7). In secondo luogo, a questo punto, l'ampio spettro, ecco, e quindi a questo punto l'altro criterio è quello di fare in modo che ci sia una rappresentazione di quelle che sono le forme artistiche, le forme culturali, ecco, in modo che ci possa essere anche lì da parte del pubblico la visione di quello che è lo spettro completo...

MC: Certo.

DV: ... del mondo culturale.

MC: Secondo te la tradizione e la cultura valdostana sono prediletti in questa scelta oppure, diciamo, hanno lo stesso valore? O sono misurati in egual modo? Diciamo, lo spettacolo che non è valdostano o non è di una compagnia valdostana o viene preferito promuovere artisti...

DV: Ma, dipende, nel senso che, se ho capito bene, ci sono due *volets*, le espressioni culturali valdostane hanno evidentemente uno spazio loro.

MC: Ok.

DV: Allora, in quella sede e in quel contesto, evidentemente il criterio è limitato a quella natura le altre espressioni culturali non rientrano nella programmazione di carattere generale. Allora, normalmente sono tre, ci sono... c'è la parte francofona, e quando dico francofona faccio riferimento... uso il termine proprio volutamente perché non sono delle proposte francesi, ma anche di altri paesi, possono essere Québec, può essere la Svizzera, il Belgio, tanto per citarne alcuni. (1) Poi ci sono quelle italiane e poi ci possono essere, evidentemente, se questo ha una sua valenza, anche delle proposte che si riferiscono a altre regioni, ecco, quindi ad altri contesti che hanno più, anche loro, una connotazione locale, però possono trovare poi, anche loro, posto nel tabellone, ecco, della Saison. (12)

MC: Ok. Riguardo invece alla Saison Culturelle e alle politiche culturali dell'Amministrazione regionale. Secondo te qual è il ruolo dell'Amministrazione regionale nella Saison Culturelle? A parte, appunto, questo ruolo di...

DV: Va beh, ma...

MC: ... organizzazione del tutto?

DV: Ma, quello è il ruolo principale, cioè il ruolo principale è, adesso usiamo..., di essere il mecenate. (7)

MC: Certo.

DV: Di essere il mecenate perché sappiamo benissimo che tutto questo ha un costo e, al di là del costo, se poi non è il mecenate che promuove questo, evidentemente ci può essere uno sbarramento all'accesso rappresentato dal prezzo. (13)

MC: Certo.

DV: Perché noi siamo una periferia (3) e quindi, evidentemente, anche le grandi compagnie nei loro tour, beh, devono fare i conti con i loro budgets...

MC: Certo.

DV: ... e quindi, ecco, sotto questo punto di vista ritengo che questo sia l'aspetto principale. Poi c'è però un altro aspetto che è quello che abbiamo detto di promuovere, di promozione e quindi, evidentemente, si promuovono delle forme e delle espressioni culturali e poi il sostegno, dicevamo prima, ecco, il sostegno ad alcune forme che sono quelle invece più autoctone...

MC: Certo.

DV: ... sono quelle nostre che, evidentemente, anche lì in termini di pubblico, non so, lo vediamo... Lo *Charaban* sì, ogni anno una settimana a *guichets fermés*, le altre compagnie quindi non sono attori professionisti. Tra l'altro, su questo peraltro, bisogna dire che la regione interviene nel campo teatrale anche con una legge che promuove le diverse compagnie (*Editor's note: Regional Law no. 45 of 19 December 1997 - Provisions in favour of local theatre activities*) e quindi anche qui queste compagnie, ecco, quando parlo di espressioni locali, ecco, prima avevo fatto riferimento e sembra che sia solo ed esclusivamente legato al patois, no? Ci sono anche altre compagnie teatrali in italiano che però hanno qui una presenza che è locale...

MC: Certo.

DV: ... e allora, ecco, che per loro essere inseriti nella Saison Culturelle è proprio un modo per riconoscere innanzitutto la loro attività, sostenerla, promuoverla, incoraggiare, anche...

MC: La partecipazione.

DV: Sì.

MC: Secondo te ci sono... quali sono le conseguenze per l'appunto per la Saison Culturelle di questa stretta connessione con l'Amministrazione regionale?

DV: Eh lì, lì le conseguenze ci possono essere perché se noi immaginiamo, a questo punto, evidentemente, se uno osserva solo (*laughing*) gli elementi, ti dice: "Benissimo, Saison Culturelle finanziata interamente dall'ente pubblico a questo punto abbiamo una cultura di regime".

MC: Certo.

DV: Allora lì sta alla capacità tra i criteri di non, a questo punto, rinchiudersi in una logica, in un'ottica che sia quella di regime, ma essere aperti, la libertà e quindi questo è uno degli elementi che deve continuare a connotare, a caratterizzare la Saison Culturelle (7) e sotto questo punto di vista, evidentemente ecco, gli spettacoli di attualità moderni, soprattutto di satira, possono essere un elemento importante che toglie...

MC: Quest'idea...

DV: ... quest'idea o questo pericolo, ecco, che sia una rappresentazione che sia finalizzata esclusivamente a un determinato principio che ha una connotazione politica e non culturale.

MC: Certo. Quindi...

DV: Anche perché, chiedo scusa, perché la cultura è libertà, ecco.

MC: Assolutamente.

DV: E se viene meno quell'elemento...

MC: Non c'è più... Quindi, diciamo che secondo te, per l'appunto, la differenza se la Saison Culturelle fosse organizzata da un privato e, appunto, invece che dal pubblico sarebbe che con il privato non si avrebbero prezzi democratici e magari di trovare degli artisti più commerciali, tra virgolette, per chiaramente...

DV: Sì, questo sì, questo indubbiamente, ecco. Innanzitutto, dobbiamo dirlo anche questo, tornando al discorso iniziale, se c'è stato l'intervento pubblico è perché si è preso atto che l'iniziativa privata, l'intervento privato era molto limitato ed era quasi esclusivamente concentrato su quelli che sono i grandi concerti delle grandi stars (8), no? I cantanti...

MC: Certo.

DV: Lì evidentemente allora c'è una... perché lì quella proposta se è inserita in un tour tocca non solo il pubblico valdostano, ma tocca il pubblico anche di altre regioni. Però effettivamente lì il rischio è che siano delle proposte esclusivamente di natura commerciale che a questo punto non ci sia tutta questa varietà e completezza di proposte e, in terzo luogo, se lì... se è un privato non è, uso di nuovo il termine, potrebbe anche essere un privato (*laughing*), ...

MC: (*laughing*)

DV: ... un mecenate, però in quest'ottica che noi stiamo considerando il privato non ha quella connotazione e quindi, evidentemente, ci potrebbe anche, come dicevamo prima, una... uno sbarramento rappresentato, anche, dal costo di queste proposte e **quindi verrebbe meno uno di quegli obiettivi che era di offrire queste proposte culturali ad un pubblico il più vasto possibile senza che ci siano delle limitazioni di carattere economico per la sua fruizione.** (13)

MC: E secondo te la Saison Culturelle è riuscita a raggiungere questo obiettivo? Per l'appunto, di creare un pubblico vasto, di cercare di includere il più possibile.

DV: Sì, secondo me sì. Secondo me sì, innanzitutto perché, adesso se confrontiamo i prezzi di una, adesso senza voler...

MC: Sì sì chiaro.

DV: ... introdurre elementi di giudizio di tipo qualitativo, però qui la qualità è buona, però se guardiamo i prezzi, no? Nelle città un abbonamento a una Saison Culturelle... qui l'abbonamento a tutti gli spettacoli ha un prezzo irrisorio se poi si divide per il numero degli spettacoli.

MC: Certo.

DV: Però si possono fare degli abbonamenti anche tematici e quindi sotto questo aspetto penso che questo abbia contribuito, perché evidentemente torniamo alla tipologia degli spettatori. Quelli che sono *passionnés*, che sono interessati non c'è ombra di dubbio. Però nel corso degli anni questo numero è aumentato perché quelli che la prima volta si sono avvicinati a questa proposta e quelli che poi, un po' per curiosità o quant'altro... e adesso è abbastanza consolidato questo pubblico.

MC: Certo. E secondo te... Pensi che la Saison Culturelle sia destinata a rimanere un bene pubblico o a diventare un prodotto di mercato?

DV: Io, ma questa evidentemente...

MC: Sì, sì.

DV: ... dipende anche dal tipo di approccio che ognuno di noi ha, ecco, rispetto a questi temi, è un po' come la questione quando parliamo dei servizi che devono continuare ad essere pubblici o andiamo a privatizzare la sanità, istruzione o quant'altro.

MC: Certo.

DV: Io personalmente ritengo che, pur tenendo in considerazione alcune logiche di mercato, per esempio io sono il primo a dire che a volte forse i prezzi sono po' troppo bassi (*laughing*) no? Nel senso che oggi come oggi si potrebbe a questo punto spendere qualche euro in più per la cultura, ma non dico l'ente pubblico...

MC: Sì, sì il privato...

DV: ... ma il privato...

MC: ... il cittadino...

DV: ... il cittadino...

MC: Certo.

DV: ... e vediamo... però non può poi essere semplicemente basato su una logica di mercato, perché altrimenti ci possono essere quegli inconvenienti di cui parlavamo prima quindi, secondo me, dovrebbe comunque continuare ad essere, se non, vogliamo, essere completamente pubblico, perché c'è una partecipazione del non so, della Fondazione CRT (*Editor's note: The CRT Foundation is a private non-profit organization whose activity has its roots in the philanthropic work carried out since 1827 by the Cassa di Risparmio di Torino. It took shape in the early 1990s with the privatisation of Banca CRT and is based in Turin. It intervenes in the key sectors of the development of Piedmont and Valle d'Aosta, which leads operationally to three macro-areas: Art and Culture, Research and Education, Welfare and Territory*) che finanzia una parte, però siamo sempre nell'ambito... però dovrebbe comunque continuare a essere a regia pubblica, perché è solo con la regia pubblica che possiamo andare a toccare quegli aspetti, quelle proposte che, è vero a volte possono essere di un pubblico più limitato, perché, evidentemente, è un pubblico che... adesso, lo volevo dire prima, lo dico adesso, un pubblico più acculturato no? (8) E quindi... Però la speranza è che questo, se poi è collegato con il sistema formativo scolastico, allora forse riusciamo a conseguire proprio l'obiettivo. (6)

MC: Quindi diciamo che comunque questa, non della Valle d'Aosta, ma proprio mondiale, tendenza verso la riduzione alla spesa per la cultura, diciamo che non avrà un impatto così grosso per la Saison Culturelle?

DV: Non avrà... Io mi auguro di no...

MC: (*laughing*)

DV: (*laughing*) ... ecco, perché questo... spero che i responsabili politici, ecco, non si lascino prendere un po' troppo da filosofie o logiche econometriche e economicistiche, ma che tengano conto anche che alcune cose, evidentemente, non hanno un ritorno in termini monetari immediati, però in termini a questo punto di formazione, in termini di cultura in senso lato rappresentano comunque, e questo è l'altro aspetto, rappresentano un investimento. (7) Queste non sono delle spese correnti anche se gran parte poi dell'erogazione va alle compagnie, quindi gli statistici mettono poi "spese per il personale" ...

MC: Certo (*laughing*).

DV: ... queste non sono delle spese, sono un investimento, assolutamente...

MC: Certo.

DV: ... e come tale...

MC: Ok. Invece considerando la Saison Culturelle del passato e quella del presente. Quali erano le idee e i principi alla base delle prime edizioni dell'evento?

DV: Ma, io sono arrivato quando già era stata... e quindi penso che questo meglio di me possa poi dare... possa rispondere a questa domanda Renato Faval...

MC: Sì certo.

DV: ... che era lui il responsabile quando hanno per la prima volta, ecco... Ma non so, ecco adesso io... La domanda è se ci sono delle differenze...

MC: Sì se ci sono delle differenze nel corso degli anni, se hai notato qualche evoluzione, magari, non solo negativa chiaramente.

DV: No, no, ma io ti ripeto ho trovato sì un'evoluzione, ma nel senso di cui parlavamo prima, nel senso che la Saison Culturelle si è adattata ai cambiamenti culturali che si sono verificati nel corso di questi anni. **Io, o comunque, considero che i *pilliers* sono rimasti, ecco, quelli, che però sono stati declinati in modo dinamico, sono stati declinati, anche, in modo aperto e quindi sotto questo punto di vista da un lato penso ci sia una continuità** (9) e d'altro lato ci sia un rinnovamento, ma che, ecco, è collegato proprio a questa necessità e a questa esigenza di dare anche, perché poi è anche un problema d'immagine (*laughing*) ...

MC: Certo (*laughing*).

DV: ... e lì ci saranno gli esperti, è un problema di comunicazione ...

MC: Certo.

DV: ... e quindi evidentemente la Saison, almeno a me, non sembra che abbia un'immagine di vecchio, polveroso, di stantio, di cose che si ripetono e quindi questo io lo interpreto positivamente, dicendo, **c'è stata questa capacità di rinnovamento e di presentare soprattutto del *nouveau public*, che sono i giovani, ecco, delle proposte che hanno trovato un loro gradimento.** (4)

MC: Certo. Un'ultima domanda finale, se c'è qualcos'altro che ritieni rilevante da aggiungere riguardo alla Saison Culturelle o, se no, abbiamo concluso.

DV: No, io penso che anche se in modo un po' così circolare, però abbiamo toccato penso tutti i vari aspetti, tutti i vari temi, almeno quelli che a mio modo di vedere hanno caratterizzato e caratterizzano questo tabellone, questa Saison Culturelle valdostana (*laughing*).

MC: Perfetto. Allora ti ringrazio moltissimo.

DV: Grazie a te Mattia.

Appendix D

Coding scheme

	Lino Blanchod	Patrizia Bongiovanni	Guido Corniolo	Raphaël Desaymonet	Elmo Domaine	Joël Farcoz	Renato Faval	Isabelle Godecharles	Emanuela Lagnier	Anna Ugliano	Dino Viérin	Laurent Viérin
<u>Theme I: Culture, People and Identity of Aosta Valley and the Saison Culturelle</u>												
“Francophonie” (1)												
“Patois/Francoprovençal” (2)												
Geography and Communities of Aosta Valley (3)												

Traditions and culture of Aosta Valley (10)												
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Theme II: The cultural economics aspects of the Saison Culturelle

Cultural Participation (4)												
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Quality of the Offer (5)												
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Internationality (11)												
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Artistic Diversity (12)												
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Accessibility of Cultural Offer (13)												
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Theme III: The relationship between Saison Culturelle and the regional administration of Aosta Valley

Contribution to Education (6)												
Public involvement (positive or negative) (7)												
Public good (8)												
“Path-dependency” (9)												