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Past: an Exploration of
Temporal Tension
Enactments in a
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THE BECOMING OF THE PAST: AN EXPLORATION OF TEMPORAL TENSION ENACTMENTS IN A HISTORICAL CAFÉ

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Abstract

The uses of the past are the subject of a stream of research at the intersection of organization studies and business history, which highlights the importance of the past as a “tool” for organizations, but also acknowledges its potential being an “arena of struggle” among organizational actors. However, most contributions in this literature study the uses of the past quite statically, at a given moment in time. Adopting a temporality perspective - i.e. considering the past as constantly (re)negotiated in the present and in relation with the future -, and employing a retrospective study based on historical sources, this paper aims at understanding how the past becomes past and how it informs future outcomes. The empirical case used to explore this research question is the Caffè Pedrocchi, an historical café in Padua (Italy), which the founder’s heir left as a bequest to the Municipality, explicitly positing a past-future tension in the use of its past. We found out that in the history of the café there was no such thing as “the” past to be projected for the future, but four main forms that the same café’s past took (legacy, burden, constraint, enabler), varying along two dimensions: the past’s positive/negative value, and the active/passive role assigned to it. Also, every form of the past came with at least two possible future outcomes: continuous future (the maintenance of the status quo) and discontinuous future, occurring whenever some actor intervened influentially, also creating a new form of the past. By disentangling the role of the past beyond being just a tool or an arena of struggle, we provide a processual view on how the past shifts its forms according to the actors’ interventions and future outcomes.

Keywords: uses of the past, past-future tensions, historical café

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1 Introduction

“I oblige solemnly and eternally the Municipality of Padua to preserve perpetually the property and the use of the Building as it is now, trying to promote and develop all those improvements which will be brought by the progress of times, putting the Building at their level, and not overlooking anything so as it may maintain the primacy in its category in Italy”¹

With this statement, in 1891 Domenico Cappellato Pedrocchi, heir of the founder of Caffè Pedrocchi, a renowned café in Padua, Italy, was leaving the café to the Municipality of Padua with a challenging task: to preserve it “as it is now” and to improve it according to “the progress of times”. From then on, the future management of the café would hence have to confront itself with its past by one way or another, being called to face an explicit temporal tension: a past-future tension, as an explicit call to be, simultaneously, past-oriented and future-oriented, as well as continuously so over time.

By means of a retrospective study based on the analysis of archival sources and qualitative data, we looked at how various actors dealt with this temporal tension in using the past at Caffè Pedrocchi from 1891 to nowadays.

Drawing from uses of the past literature (Wadhvani, Suddaby, Mordhorst & Popp, 2018), but also referring to studies on temporality (Hussenot & Missioner, 2016; Hernes and Schultz, 2020); we extend the historical depth of the inquiry on whether and how the role of the past changes over time, in relation to the organizations’ subsequent contemporary functions.

The historical approach provides a wider scope of variation and helps us to question the simple dichotomy in the uses of the past literature between the past as a “tool” and the past as an “arena of struggle” by identifying a second dimension in the *active or passive role* that the past can exert inside of the organization itself. Rather than uses, we defined such roles as *forms* that the past can take in relationship with different actors and their future perspectives. It is in fact their action and interaction that makes possible to shift from a form to another in a non-deterministic process characterised by continuities and discontinuities. This, hence, allows us to reflect on how the past becomes past, and how it informs future outcomes.

2 Uses of the past and temporality

Research in management and organization studies has recently welcomed history and historical approaches. A particularly flourishing stream of literature that follows this integrative

¹ Authors’ translation from the legacy of Domenico Cappellato Pedrocchi, 1891, in AGCPD, *Contratti a repertorio*, b. 191, fasc. IV, 1891, 20 July.

perspective is the one of the “uses of the past”, which aims at understanding how organizational actors employ the past for managerial purposes in the present (Wadhwani, Suddaby, Mordhorst & Popp, 2018). The first and the majority of the studies in this realm conceive the past as a strategic tool that can be used by organizations in various ways and for different objectives.

First, during moments of strategic change, the construction of persuasive historical narratives (i.e. “rhetorical history”) can prove to be useful to manage key stakeholders of the firm (Suddaby, Foster & Quinn-Trank, 2010:157; Dalpiaz & di Stefano, 2017; Maclean, Harvey, Sillence and Golant, 2018). Therefore, the past becomes a firm’s resource able to confer it a strategic competitive advantage (Foster, Coraiola, Suddaby, Kroezen Chandler, 2017; Cailluet, Gorge Ozcaglar-Toulouse, 2018). This happens not only when managers leverage on their own’s past - e.g. by continuing the company’s historical strategy of decentralization also in time of digitalization, as explained by Brunnige (2009) - but also when organization’s narratives are constructed by strategically relating to the firm’s external past - e.g. connecting to Canada’s history in the case of Tim Hortons’ brand identity, as studied by Foster, Suddaby, Minkus and Wiebe (2011).

Second, the past is also an important resource to build and reinforce organizational identity. For example, Hatch and Schultz (2017)’s study on the use of Carlsberg’s motto “Semper Ardens” highlights the micro-processes through which an organization can recover and employ authentically its past in its own identity; or Basque and Langley’s one (2018) shows how the founder’s figure is invoked and mobilized to construct nowadays organizational identity claims.

However, further developments of the uses of the past literature also raise the downsides of dealing with the past in organizations. Indeed, the past is a complex resource, which presents some challenges in its management, as well (Cailluet, Gorge & Özçağlar-Toulouse, 2018). Similarly to a “public good” (Cailluet et al., 2018) and being part of “collective memory” (Foster et al., 2011), the past can also be shaped by other stakeholders, sometimes slipping away from managers’ control (Cailluet et al., 2018) and turning into a source of competitive disadvantage (Foster et al., 2011). Therefore, it is “both an asset and an arena of struggle” (Cailluet et al., 2018), that must be constantly negotiated with multiple audiences, pre-existing narratives and ongoing social practices (Lubinski, 2018), whose understanding cannot overlook the context where historical rhetoric is situated.

Although acknowledging the malleability of historical narratives (Wadhwani et al., 2018), according to which “history” is made according to nowadays actors’ interpretation and reading of the past, we argue that, overall, most of the studies on the uses of the past in organizations is somewhat static, being concentrated on the attitude towards the past in organizing (e.g. as a tool, as a struggle) at a given moment in time. Paradoxically, most of this research lacks an empirical temporal

dimension, an investigation on how such organizational uses of the past change over time and how they have an influence towards the organization's future.

A notable exception to this is Schultz and Hernes (2013)'s work on LEGO group's identity, in which the authors adopt an inherently temporal perspective. According to their framework, organizational actors evoke the past through memory forms and this enables them to formulate the claims for the organization's future identity.

The temporality approach allows to conceive the organization as always in becoming (Hernes, 2014), where past and future are continually defined and re-defined in actual events (Hussenot & Missioner, 2016) through "temporal work" (Kaplan and Orlikowsky, 2013; Danner-Schroder, 2020). Therefore, the past (as well as the future) is "neither given nor stable, but require[s] constant attention and negotiation in the ongoing present" (Schultz and Hernes, 2013). According to this vision, the past is a collection of experiences, occasions or periods that are available for actors' recall (Hernes & Schultz, 2020). Although the past may receive some closure, it can always be reinterpreted in the present (Hernes, 2014) through "materials of the present" that "shape how past and future events are addressed by actors" (Mead, 1932; Hernes & Schultz, 2020: 6). Even if the literature on temporality recognizes this possibility, according to Hernes and Schultz (2020), the nature of the pasts and futures (especially, the distant ones) is still to be investigated in depth. These authors (*ibid.*) develop this point by theoretically working on the concept of "events", structure of events, and trajectories among them. Accordingly, Danner-Schroder (2020) adopts the event-based approach (also drawn from Hussenot and Missioner, 2016) to study the relationship between past, present and future after the Great East Japan Earthquake. She finds that the event was used in two different ways by actors (to focus on it, to background it) and that actors had different temporal orientation towards the past and the future.

Drawing from this interesting line of reasoning, but more explicitly focusing on the past (i.e. not a single event), we aim at extending our understanding of the nature of the uses of the past in organizations by adopting a temporal lens with historical depth.

This allows us to take into consideration the relationship between past and future within the study of the uses of the past, a topic that has yet to be explored, but that can bring new knowledge to this stream of research by adding to the interpretative view of history and the malleability of historical narratives.

Therefore, in this paper, we aim at extending the historical depth of the inquiry on whether and how the use of the past changes over time considering the ongoing enactment of past-future tensions over time. The retrospective analysis of the case of Caffè Pedrocchi, a cultural heritage organization founded in 1831 with an ongoing function, offers an optimal stage to study how the past

was used (or not) in relation to the subsequent contemporary functions and various actors' realization of different future outcomes. Therefore, we ask: *how does the past become past, and how does it inform future outcomes?*

3 The foundation of Caffè Pedrocchi: a progressive celebration of the past

In the 18th century coffee consumption spread in opposition to alcoholic beverages. In this period the European society apparently abandoned desires of chaos and inebriation to leave the place to reflection and sobriety. Coffee embodied this new trend and became the drink of the new emerging class: the bourgeoisie (Morris, 2018; Weinberg and Bealer, 2004; Grigg, 2002; Schivelbush, 1992). Riding this moment, clever entrepreneurs established coffee shops as comfortable places not only to drink coffee but also to meet people, do business, discuss about politics and new ideas. Despite some delay as compared to Venice, also Padua, a lively university city under its domination, welcomed this trend, as confirmed by the presence of a guild of coffee-sellers which counted 77 members in 1787 (Baù, 2013). One of them was Francesco Pedrocchi, who opened in 1772 a lively coffee shop in front of the University. After his death in 1799, his son Antonio inherited the already famous coffee and acquired the real estates in the nearby area that was in a state of degradation at that time, in order to rebuild and widen the coffee shop. During the excavation works, the ruins of a roman temple emerged. This attested the former centrality of that site and reinforced the willingness to regenerate the area. Antonio Pedrocchi assigned the construction works to Giuseppe Jappelli, a Padua rising public engineer, who challenged the Austrian authority by designing a magnificent Neoclassical building with a specific democratic function: a café for intellectual meetings and business exchanges, accessible to everyone, even without consumption.

The Café's ground floor inaugurated the 9th of June 1831. It was composed of three rooms in Neoclassical style (Mazza, 1984) - whose furniture' colours (black or white, red, green) were both related to Masonic symbols and to patriotic recalls -, and of an Exchange room intended to host businesses (Puppi, 1980). The green room, the only one with a fireplace, used to welcome anyone without the necessity of purchase.

The building was widened in 1837 with the construction of a Neogothic appendix, the "Pedrocchino", a space for patisserie retail, and the "Ristoratore", a restaurant. In 1842 the project was concluded with the inauguration of the "Ridotto" on the Piano Nobile, composed of eight room finely decorated according to different ages of human history.

Caffè Pedrocchi had soon success as a meeting place of literates, artists, students and businessmen, “the place where ideas used to be born” (Puppi, 1980), open every day, all day long – and for this reason it was called the “café without doors”.

It had a pivotal role in the diffusion of patriotic ideas as confirmed by the publication, from 1846 to 1848, of a weekly paper called, indeed, “Caffè Pedrocchi”, firstly aimed at information diffusion, and later becoming the voice of the temporary Government during the 1848 Revolution (Baù, 2013). The coffee shop was also protagonist in the revolts of 1848, in particular on the 8th of February when a student was killed by an Austrian soldier whose shotgun sign has remained on the White Room’s wall.

The construction of Caffè Pedrocchi was “the great fact of Padua’s 19th Century” also because it created a permanent point of reference in the city center (Toffanin, 1984), contributing to its re-qualification.

At his passing in 1852, Antonio Pedrocchi left the café to his adoptive son, Domenico Cappellato Pedrocchi, who published a booklet documenting the café’s historical memories on the first quinquenary of the factory (1881). Being without any heir, but still much caring about the Café, Domenico Cappellato left the building as a bequest to “Padua and its citizens” in 1891. He passed the property of the café into public hands, with detailed guidelines about its management, including the obligation for the Municipality to both preserve and innovate the café, according to the progress of times (see the opening quotation).

This is where our empirical story starts: how did the café enact this explicit call for a temporal tension between past and future over time? How, on its basis, did it use the past? Specifically: which past(s) were enacted and conducive to which future outcome(s)? Which actors had an agency in this process? By following these empirical guiding questions, we wish to address the broader theoretical issue of *how the past becomes past in organizations, and how it informs future outcomes*.

Figure 1 - Caffè Pedrocchi at its origins (from Pedrocchi, D.C., 1881) and today (author’s picture)



4 Methodology

4.1 Research design

Many empirical papers in the literature both on uses of the past and on temporality adopt qualitative and grounded theory methods (e.g. Anteby & Molnár, 2012; Hatch & Schultz, 2017; Schultz and Hernes, 2020) to better distinguish processes and practices in organizations' operations of time enactment and history recovering. As for responding to a call to employ more historical methods in this kind of studies (Wadhvani et al., 2018), but at the same time not overlooking the positive contribution of qualitative and process-oriented methods, our approach to this paper stays at the intersection among 'corporate history' (Rowlinson, Hassard, & Decker, 2014), ethnographic 'microhistory' (Clark, 2004) and the 'analytically structured history' (Rowlinson et al., 2014) approaches.

At the outer layer, the choice of the case study corresponds to a corporate history since it narrates the history of a corporate entity from its founding to the present. However, the question we aim at replying to through this organization's history actually regards the use of the past in relation to the enactment of tensions between past and future over time. Hence, the case of Caffè Pedrocchi becomes a micro-history through which we analyse socially embedded dynamics (Rowlinson et al., 2014; Wadhvani et al., 2018), involving not only the organization itself but also the actors around it and the social context. To this purpose, an 'analytically structured history' approach (Rowlinson et al., 2014) to the presentation of our findings helped us in creating a periodization from the sources and in applying to our narrative an 'analytic schema' (Whipp & Clark, 1986) to reply to our research question.

We followed this "triangular" approach to study our case and interpret our sources. As for the discussion, adopting a micro-historical perspective, we tried to identify different possible relationships between the peculiarity of the case and theoretical generalizations, focusing on the 'exceptional normal' characteristics of the case (Grendi, 1977; Ermakoff, 2014; Favero, 2018). We focused on the source level by looking at the possibility the available evidence offered to observe or not different features, and their ability to speak or not to the researcher. Then, we considered the case level, by reasoning on the absence of theoretically expected features or on the unexpected presence of new elements in it. This has allowed us to deepen our discussions and to look at the case and the sources more comprehensively.

4.2 Sources and data

Our retrospective study on Caffè Pedrocchi covering all its almost 200 years old history draws from both historical sources and qualitative data.

Primary sources are being collected in the Padua Municipal Archive and in the Archeological, Art and Landscape Superintendence of Venice and its Lagoon. They comprehend: acts of the Municipal Council regarding Caffè Pedrocchi or relative issues (1891-2021), meetings minutes and correspondence among the Ministry of Education, the Superintendence, Padua Mayor and Padua Prefecture relating to the restoration of the Caffè Pedrocchi (1930s-1950s), Domenico Cappellato Pedrocchi's bequest and relative documents of acceptance of the Municipality (1981), rent contracts of the coffee house and of the Piano Nobile rooms stipulated between the Municipality and various managers or businesses (1900s-2014).

Secondary sources include literary productions about the café, the history of the city, tourist magazines, paintings, engravings and pictures (1831-2013), and newspaper articles. We draw in particular from *Il Mattino di Padova*, a local newspaper reporting over 5000 articles with the keyword “Caffè Pedrocchi” from 2003 to 2019 in its digital archive, but we also found articles with the same keyword from local (e.g. *Gazzetta di Venezia*, *Il Gazzettino*, *La Nuova di Venezia e Mestre*) and national newspapers (e.g. *La Stampa*, *Corriere della Sera*) from 1868 to 2019.

Qualitative data include interviews with Caffè Pedrocchi's current Director and Communication Manager (one semi-structured interview lasting 1 hour and 15 minutes already took place in the Café in May 2018). Non-participatory observations on the field and on the Café's website, Facebook and Instagram page have been conducted, too.

Historical sources and qualitative data aim at complementing each other in order to offer a chronology and a narrative of the events concerning the café as complete as possible and to reconstruct the different actors' perspectives. Table 1 outlines all the consulted archival resources (and relative used acronyms).

Table 1 - Archival sources

Archive	Acronym	Archival fund	Acronym	Consulted Documents	Year
Archivio Generale del Comune di Padova	AGCPD	<i>Contratti a repertorio</i>	CR	Cappellato Pedrocchi's testament	1891
Archivio Generale del Comune di Padova	AGCPD	<i>Regolamenti cessati</i>	RC	Rent contracts	1909 - 1992
Archivio Generale del Comune di Padova	BCPD ; AGCPD	Deliberazioni del Podestà già di competenza del Consiglio Comunale di Padova	DPCCPD	Deliberazioni del Podestà già di competenza del Consiglio Comunale di Padova ²	1937-1945

² From 1926 to 1945, following the abolition of elective local councils and mayors with the Royal Decree 1910 of 3 September 1926, the competences of the Municipal Council were assigned to a Podestà directly appointed by the central government

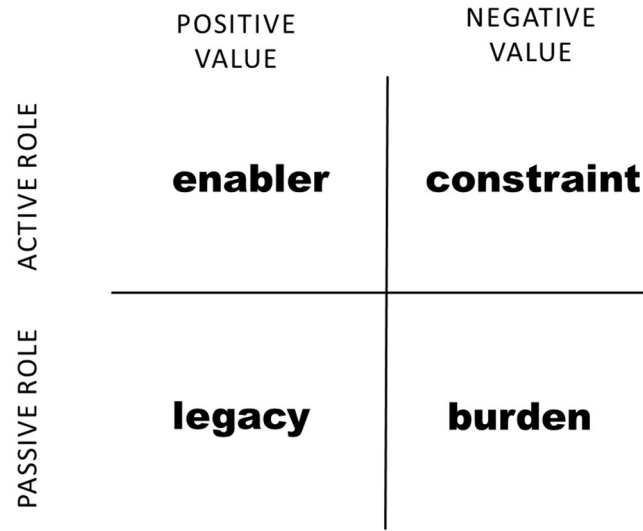
Archivio Generale del Comune di Padova		Atti del Consiglio Comunale	<i>ACCPD</i>	Delibere del Consiglio Comunale	1946 – 2014
Archivio Generale del Comune di Padova	AGCPD	Delibere della Giunta Comunale	DGC	Delibere della Giunta Comunale	1945-1950 (continued)
Biblioteca Civica di Padova	BCPD	Atti del Consiglio Comunale	<i>ACCPD</i>	Delibere del Consiglio Comunale	1890-1925
Biblioteca Civica di Padova	BCPD	Atti del Consiglio Comunale	<i>ACCPD</i>	Capitolato d'affittanza	1909
Biblioteca Civica di Padova	BCPD	Atti del Consiglio Comunale	<i>ACCPD</i>	Deliberazioni del Podestà già di competenza del Consiglio Comunale di Padova ²	1926-1936
Archivio Soprintendenza Archeologia, Belle Arti e Paesaggio per il Comune di Venezia e laguna	ASV	Caffè Pedrocchi	CP	Acts of the Superintendence; correspondence; newspapers article regarding the Superintendence; pictures	1935- 1956
Archivio Soprintendenza Archeologia, Belle Arti e Paesaggio per il Comune di Venezia e laguna	ASV	Caffè Pedrocchi, Fascicolo rimozione della predella	CP	correspondence; newspapers article regarding the Superintendence;	1950- 1953

4.3 Data Analysis

On this database, we first conducted a descriptive analysis to build a timeline and a thick historical narrative of the case from our multiple sources.

We must preface that we consider here as the relevant past of the café its history from 1831 to the 1891 bequest, as this defined the ongoing situation that Cappellato required to be preserved. This means that we chose to focus our analysis on the history of the Café from 1891 to nowadays by looking at how the temporal tension made explicit in Cappellato's bequest has been enacted over time from that moment on. We soon realized that in the history of Caffè Pedrocchi there was no such thing as “the” past of the café to be projected for the future, but at least four main forms that this same past took. As a matter of fact, when performing the exploratory analysis to look for evidence of the past as an “enabler” and as a “constraint” (influenced by Dacin et al., 2019's framework), we soon were induced by the data to extend and refine these categories by identifying in fact four variations along two dimensions: the positive or negative value assigned to the past, and the active or passive role assigned to it. The combination of these two dimensions allowed us to identify four different forms taken by the past in different phases (Figure 2): the past as a *legacy* (positive value and passive role), a *burden* (negative and passive), a *constraint* (negative and active) and an *enabler* (positive and active). This started rendering a picture of how the past is perceived and enacted over time.

Figure 2 – Different forms of the past (identified by authors)



Once set this interpretative schema, we then performed a deeper analysis to specifically address our empirical questions, thus coding through all sources and data for: performed action, actor(s) involved, different forms of the past and different future outcomes. Once all these elements emerged and were mapped;

a) we identified four temporal phases in which a specific form of the past was prevalent on the others (where “prevalent” means the form of the past imposed by the most powerful actor, or the form of the past which was more evident in the actions performed by actors, roughly corresponding to: the *belle époque* (1891-1914); the crisis (1915-1979); the restoration works (1980-2013); the new revival (2014-today). Table 2 shows a schematic chronology of the main facts in the history of Caffè Pedrocchi from its foundation till nowadays, and our periodization.

b) we retrieved the temporal connections between them and therein grounded a process model considering not only the forms of the past but also the future outcomes deriving from their shifts.

Table 2 - Timeline of main changes in the ownership and administration of Caffè Pedrocchi

Year	Event	Phases (identified by authors)
1831	Antonio Pedrocchi (1776-1852) opens the <i>Caffè Pedrocchi</i> .	The origin of the case: The foundation of Caffè Pedrocchi (a progressive celebration of the past)
1839	Opening of the <i>Offelleria</i> (pastry shop) in the newly built Pedrocchino.	
1842	Official inauguration of the <i>Upper Rooms</i> (Ridotto) for the 4 th Congress of Italian Scientists.	
1846	The <i>restaurant</i> is rented out by Antonio Pedrocchi.	
1848	Revolutionary uprising in Padua and shootings inside of the <i>Café</i> .	
1850	Gas lighting inserted in the interiors of the <i>Café</i> .	

1852	Domenico Cappellato Pedrocchi (1824-1891) inherits the Caffè Pedrocchi.	
1856	The <i>Upper Rooms</i> are leased to the Società del Casino Pedrocchi .	
1857	The <i>Café</i> is leased to the brothers Francesco and Domenico Giacomelli .	
1866	Renovation of the interiors of the <i>Café</i> .	
1889	Part of the <i>Café</i> floor is covered with wooden parquet.	
1890	The lease of the <i>Café</i> is taken over by Andrea and Giovanni Melchior .	
1891	Cappellato Pedrocchi bequeaths the building to the Padua Municipality	Past-future tension is made explicit
1893	Restoration works on the ground floor last until 1897 .	Phase 1: The belle époque (1891-1914) - the past as legacy
1899	Renovation of the facades of the <i>Café</i> .	
1906	Restoration works in the <i>Upper Rooms</i> (by Società del Casino Pedrocchi).	
1909	New rental specifications: the Café is leased to Giovanni Contro .	
1910	Renovation works of the <i>Café</i> last until 1914 .	
1915	Outbreak of First World War	Phase 2: the crisis (1915-1979) – the past as burden
1920	The <i>Café</i> is leased to the brothers Paolo and Ugo Grigolato .	
1924	Project for the enlargement of the <i>Pedrocchino</i> changing the façade of the building.	
1934	The S.A. Esercizio Stabilimento Pedrocchi (ESP) takes over the lease of the <i>Café</i> .	
1935	Bankruptcy of the S.A. ESP: new lease to Giovanni Luigi Quarti from 1936 .	
1936	Works in the <i>Café</i> to restore the previous settings.	
1938	The Società del Casino Pedrocchi is transformed into a Circolo Littorio ³ .	
1939	Quarti's bankruptcy: new lease to Laura Mosca (married with Alfredo Greggio).	
1944	During the Nazi Occupation a fire destroys the interiors and furniture of the <i>Café</i> .	
1945	The <i>Upper Rooms</i> are sequestered by the Allied Occupation Forces until 1947 .	
1946	Restoration works in the <i>Café</i> are started by Mosca.	
1947	The Circolo Filarmonico Artistico takes over the lease of the <i>Upper Rooms</i> .	
1949	Extensive renovation of the <i>Café</i> starts despite of the Superintendence opposition.	
1950	Teobaldo Mariotti takes over the lease of the <i>Café</i> .	
1953	New lease of the <i>Café</i> to Ambrogio Ferrario . Restoration of the interiors of the <i>Café</i> .	
1971	Litigation with the Circolo Filarmonico Artistico until 1977 for restitution.	
1975	Lease of the <i>Café</i> to Gestione Caffè Storici Srl .	
1977	Collapse of the roof in the <i>Upper Rooms</i> .	
1980	Works are started in succession to restore the rooms of the <i>Café</i> until 1984 .	Phase 3: the restoration (1980s-2013) – the past as constraint
1984	Change of ownership for the Gestione Caffè Storici Srl.	
1993	Revocation of the lease to Gestione Caffè Storici Srl.	
1994	New lease to La Cascina Srl with Pedrocchi 2001 Srl	
1996	Start of works in the <i>Café</i> to restore the original setting, until 1998 .	
2001	Pedrocchi 2001 Srl takes over the lease from La Cascina Srl.	
2004	The <i>Upper Rooms</i> are leased to Padua Risorgimento Museum .	
2011	Celebration of the 150 th anniversary of Italian Unification and 180 th Anniversary at the Café.	Phase 4: the new revival (2014-today) - the past as enabler
2014	F&deGroup Srl wins the bid for the new lease of the Café.	
2021	Celebration of 190 th anniversary of the Café	

³ Fascist institution

5 Findings - Different forms of the past shifting over time

5.1 Phase 1: The belle époque (1891-1914) - the past as legacy

In 1891 Domenico Cappellato Pedrocchi left his adoptive father's coffee house as bequest to Padua citizens, that was, formally, to Padua's Municipality. The testament had specific guidelines for the Municipality to manage the whole bequest. First of all, Cappellato provided it with precise obligations regarding the Café, which at those time was the core of the city life. The main one was to preserve perpetually the property of the Building as it was in that moment and promote and develop improvements according to the progress of times as for maintaining its prominent importance in Italy (see opening quotation for the literary reference). Moreover, he left considerable capital to be devolved to local charity institutes and wanted the future profits of the coffee house to be yearly used to preserve and improve the Café, and bestowed to charity as well. Finally, he addressed a sum of his bequest to build a celebrative monument to the Italian patriot Giuseppe Mazzini and the funeral monuments of Antonio Pedrocchi and Giuseppe Jappelli in Padua's cemetery. Cappellato's last will was warmly accepted by the Municipal Council (BCPD, *ACCPD*, 1891, August 27, pp. 301-302) which recognized in it not only the affection the testator had for his adoptive father's coffee factory, but also the philanthropic and patriotic character devoted to the city of Padua:

“This man [...] died in peace on the 18th July, surrounded only by few friends attending his house, and, *dying, we may say, he started to live*. His testament reflects all the qualities of his soul. The love for the city, the sentiment of charity, the love for the working class, the gratitude to his benefactor, the admiration to the makers of Unit and Independence of his homeland, the memory of its relatives and friends, his testament comprehends all of them, its pages tell his life and they will be for him the most beautiful and eternal monument”. (BCPD, *ACCPD*, 1891, August 27, pp. 288-289; emphasis added).

This was the spirit with which the dispositions of the testament were implemented in the following years. As a matter of fact, the Municipality showed particular respect and reverence towards Cappellato instructions. Above continuing to commemorate him at the Council's meetings, councilors worked for the construction of the monuments to Mazzini, to Antonio Pedrocchi and Giuseppe Jappelli - who were also remembered in two medallions that the Municipality decide to affix in the East front of the coffee house -, the building of working-class dwellings, the distribution of subsidies to charity institutes deriving from the Café's revenues (e.g. BCPD, *ACCPD*, 1893, November 28, pp. 288-289; BCPD, *ACCPD*, 1896, June 22, pp. 298-307).

Between the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th Century the café was still lively and perfectly located into the Belle Epoque (Baù, 2013) thanks to a vivid “professors’ table”,

students' confraternities, high level debates and services, a strong reputation also among foreigners. However, in this period the Building started to need some restorations and improvements. The interventions (e.g. insertion of toilettes in 1894, renovation of the floors and the facades in 1899, some maintenance in the Piano Nobile rooms) aimed at preserving the high quality of the building; all the adaptations to those times' necessity were done with a literary interpretation of Cappellato's will (BCPD, ACCPD, 1899, April 13, pp. 180-189).

The respect towards the testament is also translated in the rent's contract between the Municipality and the Café Manager signed in 1909, which reflects an approach of scrupulous conservation of the inherited building (Puppi, 1980; Possamai, 2000), for example, by imposing the tenant to maintain the rooms as they have been delivered, not changing curtains, objects, furniture, or, if necessary, to substitute them with others with the same style, colour and quality (BCPD, ACCPD, 1909, December 1922, Capitolato, artt. 9, 10). Not only, the contract also required the tenant to preserve some traditional practices related to the Café, for example the opening day and night, and the provision of daily newspaper of local and international importance (BCPD, ACCPD, 1909, December 1922, Capitolato, artt. 11, 19).

All these sources point to the fact that, in this first phase, right after the death of Cappellato Pedrocchi, the past of the café was celebrated with reverence and seen as a crystallized moment to be devoted to. The main actor in this phase taking actions for the Café is the Municipality, to which the building had been entrusted. The form of the past can be interpreted as *positive* (positive attitude of the Municipality towards the Café's past), but *passive* (celebrative and commemorating attitude of the Municipality). No explicit evidence of some form of projected future outcome is present, other than the projection of the past grandeur of the Café into the future, too. In other words, the past was enacted as a *legacy* to be developed in the present, and this interpretation was commonly felt by the Municipality, the general public and the tenants as well.

All in all, this period's reverential commemorations and adaptative interventions responding to a view of the past as a *legacy* contributed to keep in balance the temporal tension between past and future deriving from the – at those times still recent – Cappellato's will. This supported a continuity in the success of the café, which was still lively and well maintained, at least till the first disruptive moment of the outbreak of the First World War.

5.2 Phase 2: the crisis (1915-1979) – the past as burden

The beginning of the war (1915) marked the start of an era of crisis for the Café. Its structural degradation became more serious than in the previous years and the Municipality instituted a Commission for its vigilance. However, times had changed and there was a sort of “overwhelming fear” in living them (Baù, 2013). In 1916 the Café closed its doors for the first time (Pavanello, 1984).

After the war, some maladministration (Puppi, 1980) and a general loss of the habit of attending cafés provoked a severe decrease in Caffè Pedrocchi's appeal (Toffanin, 1984). Furthermore, in the 1920s the renewal of Padua's central area and the Town Hall's widening implied a first serious manumission of the factory's structure. Its most evident sign was the addition of a new part in the neogothic facade of the Pedrocchino in 1924 (Franco, 1984; Dal Piaz, 1984). The objective was to widen the Offelleria (Patisserie) for the tenant to have a "sensible advantage from the doubling of the selling area" and for the Municipality to "impose, once finished the works, an adequate increase of the rent" (BCPD, *ACCPD*, 1924, March 21, p. 74).

The action was emblematic because in 1923 the Soprintendenza dei Monumenti of Venice notified the "important interest" of Caffè Pedrocchi to the mayor of Padua (Dal Piaz, 1984)⁴. It was the first of many official recommendations which seem not to have been listened to.

The happening of this event clearly highlights that the history and the same shape of the Café is indissolubly linked to the geography of Padua's city centre: at its origins, the construction of the building determined the outlining of the city centre, while the interventions of the 1920s caused its unbinding from the site for which it was originally built (Franco, 1984).

Almost in silence, and maybe without realizing it, with the excuse of harmonising the Caffè Pedrocchi with the new, modern city centre, the Municipality betrayed Cappellato's legacy for the first time, overlooking the part of the key sentence which indicated to preserve perpetually the "property" of the factory. This was further confirmed by the trade-in - in fact, a "partial alienation" (Dal Piaz, 1984) - of some areas for the same end (BCPD, *ACCPD*, 1923, January 19, pp.19-20).

Not only, the silent modifications of the outside of the Café corresponded to changes in its interiors: the furniture of the Offelleria got changed and a new room for the snooker was created in the basements of the Café in order to modernize and improve the Café appeal (BCPD, *ACCPD*, 1926, March 10, p. 71-73).

In 1931, on the occasion of the centenary of the Café, the Municipality of Padua charged the professors Cimengotto and Ronchi with the publication of a commemorative booklet about the Café. The booklet tells various stories related to the founder, Antonio Pedrocchi, and some old anecdotes in a nostalgic way, as it was symptomatic of the crisis that the Café was living:

"the mind that governs the binding of the pages is [...] addressed to a past intended as a close universe, of men and things, lost, and to be contemplated as beautiful and beloved,

⁴ The Soprintendenza ai Monumenti was established in 1907 as the territorial organization for the safeguard of historical monument, depending from the Italian Ministry of Public Education until 1974 (then from the Ministry of Cultural and Environmental Heritage). From here onwards: Superintendence. The Superintendence of Venice had jurisdiction on Padua.

indeed because it is lost by the deviation of a present which seems to have lost the planning hope for the future” (Puppi, 1980, p. 80).

The crisis of the Café was further confirmed by the failure of the tenant in 1935; this started to convince the Municipality that improvements should have been done in order to “lead back the Café to the ancient splendour” and “re-make Pedrocchi that polite and serious environment which was the favourite point of encounter of the elite of the city, professors of the university, businessmen...” (BCPD, *ACCPD*, 1935, September 20, p. 196-197).

Instead, in those years, what still seemed to be active was the “Società del Casino Pedrocchi” - the elite association that had been assigned the use with continuity of the upper rooms (the "Ridotto") since 1855. Despite some modifying interventions due to its purpose of entertainment (Franco, 1984), the society’s use of the Piano Nobile rooms contributed to their good maintenance (Puppi, 1980). The association continued its activity also during the rise of fascism, despite the staining of walls, the insertion of fascist symbols, and fascist squads’ incursions (in 1926) (Baù, 2013), which violently damaged the building. The Società del Casino Pedrocchi remained a point of resistance to fascism till 1938, when it was forcefully dissolved and turned into a seat of the Istituto Nazionale Fascista di Cultura (National Fascist Institute of Culture) with the name of “Circolo Littorio” (Baù, 2013)⁵.

About the Second World War years the documentation is scarce, but we know that the café was held by Laura Mosca Greggio (*AGCPD, DPCCPD*, 1939, December 9, p. 219-221). Her management (1939-1948) is responsible of the loss of much furniture, further exacerbated by Nazi occupation. The Upper Rooms had a similar destiny due to Allies’ requisitions soon after the end of the war (Puppi, 1980).

After the Second World War the situation became worse than after the First one: a deep economic collapse was combined with the social abandonment of the café (Baù, 2013). At the time of Greggio’s eviction due to bankruptcy in 1948 (*AGCPD, DGC*, 1948, April, 9 p. 333) the Café had to close down and the Municipality organized an auction to sell its furnishings and objects, which had actually been in its property following the 1891 legacy (dal Piaz, 1984).

⁵ During the war years and the Nazi occupation, the University of Padua (located in front of the Café) became the centre of the clandestine armed resistance and the seat of the National Liberation Committee, which was headed by the same university president, Concetto Marchesi (Canfora, 2019).

Figure 2 - Before and after the enlargement of Pedrocchino neo-gothic façade (from Dal Piaz, 1984)

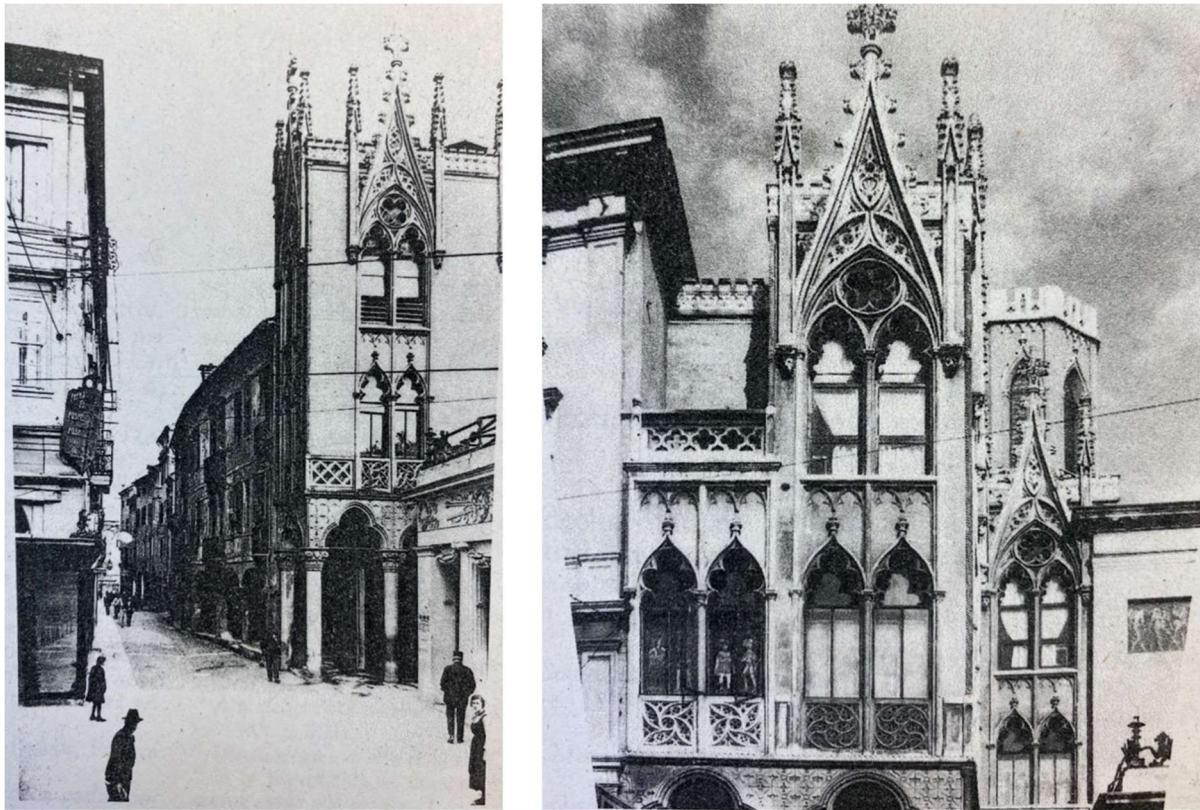


Figure 3 - Pedrocchi's stained walls during Fascism (from Baù, 2013)



As it happened after the First World War, the crisis and the closure of the Café was seen as an occasion to relaunch the Café by modernising it and making it more suitable to the new tastes of the

clientele. As a matter of fact, some city councillors expressed their worry about the aspect of the café and the consequential difficulty of management in modern times:

“If we go back to the causes for which Caffè Pedrocchi had been closed they are indeed because of those character that we had wanted to preserve. I think that also Pedrocchi himself in his last will recognizes that with the time and the determination of particular conditions, one may adopt different criteria. Pedrocchi has already anticipated this possibility to follow and adopt diverse criteria.” (AGCPD, *DPCCPD*, 1948, December 6, p. 480-481)

If in the 1920s and 1930s the renovations erased the past almost unintentionally and in silence, the interventions of the years 1948-1950 reflected an explicit stand of the Municipality - the owner of the building - against the past and in strong contrast with the part of Cappellato's legacy indicating “to conserve the use of the factory as it is now”. The “improvements” mentioned by Pedrocchi's legatees were intended as heavy actions on the structure and the site of the factory, reputed necessary in order to reach a “progress” represented by the vision of a modern, economically successful, café.

A rich and multiple-voices debate preceded these interventions. However, despite the recommendations of the painter Giorgio Peri, the -rejected- project of the architect Carlo Scarpa, the Tourist Board's requests to convene a specific commission of experts, and the orders of the Superintendence, the Municipality - through the architect in charge of the project, Angelo Pisani - started the works which would be later defined “disastrous” (Puppi, 1980) and “devastating” (Dal Piaz, 1984).

The structural renovations consisted in the creation of doors in substitution to windows and a gallery of concrete and glass, the dismantlement of the Exchange Room, the insertion of a counter in the Red Room with a conveyor belt, the demolition of the smoking room and the addition of a fountain (Dal Piaz, 1984). Internally, the original geographic maps were substituted by mirrors, and the original furnishing was removed. Furthermore, the demolition of the Pedrocchino and the manumission of the Ristoratore to build, in the adjacent alley, a shops gallery, as well as the construction of a platform in Pedrocchi's square, modified again and beyond repair the relationship of the café with its urban “island” (Puppi, 1980; Dal Piaz, 1984).

This period is characterized by a strong conflict between the Municipality and the Superintendence, which tried to restrain the Municipality's arbitrary actions, invoking the historical and monumental character of the Café to be preserved. An agreement seemed to be reached on 28th September 1950, when the mayor and some councillors took part to a meeting in Rome with the Ministry of Education and Superintendence representatives (ASV, CP, 1950, September 28). The Superintendence obtained the repositioning of the Green Room, the modification of the White Room

according to Jappelli's concept and the positioning of a moving wood platform in front of the Café for the summer (*ibid.*), less impacting than the existing permanent structure.

The Green Room was restored just before the inauguration of new café on the 4th November 1950. According to the director of Superintendence, Michelangelo Muraro, its restoration of represented "what best remained from the ancient furnishing", the best they could do given the terrible situation after Pisani's intervention (ASV, CP 1950, October 24). Instead, the demolition of the platform was not as 'easy' as the restoration of the Green Room: a thick correspondence between the Municipality, the Superintendence and the Ministry witnesses the continuous attempts of the former to postpone its removal to support the tenant's economic interests and the resolute points of the latter ones in favour of restoring the aesthetic of the Jappelli's Building (ASV, CP, RP, 1950, September 28 – 1953 February 17).

The critical discussion about the "bar without history" (Ghirotti, *La Stampa*, 18th-19th October, 1950) continued: a profound friction was created between the Padua administration and Padua and Italy's cultural sensibility (Baù, 2013). In 1953 the Superintendence obtained the removal of the new counters and their substitution with Jappelli's one as well as the reintroduction of the geographic maps (ASV, CP 1954, April 1). Local newspapers hosted thick debates too:

"The historical Pedrocchi dragged itself youngly the baggage of its tradition since far 1831. Only the war, requisitions and occupations created the risky break in much course of history. [...] In 1945 a new story began also for the old and beloved monument. Unfortunately, the business was scarily passive, students did not crowd any more the elegant and clean Jappelli's stairs, and the discussions did not shake the marble tables anymore [...] More than hundred years ago, leaving the Café to his heirs, Antonio Pedrocchi recommended to keep it in the progress of times. And in front of such abandonment, the diligent municipal administrators intended that update most of all in the architectural sense: as if the anemia of Pedrocchi were an external sickness, instead one of the soul and the times [...]. How is it possible that a private tenant and a municipal administration, owner, violate the law and commit such urbanistic and artistic crime? [...] The triumph of modernity at any cost [...] Our country once was used to call Jappelli to build a Café, now it has nothing except for millionaire bartenders, revolutionary administrations, and some so called architects for destroying art, good taste and tradition. [...] Pedrocchi's disastrous situation depends only on the fact that the Municipality insisted on making it a source of income. This is the mistake: since Pedrocchi is first of all a monument; to Padua it is more than a museum: a museum of memories, if there can be one! And it must continue to live as it has always

done. To use it, to insert it in the current times, the only proposal is ‘associate’ it - and not submit it - to modern life.”

(Letter of Michelangelo Muraro, the director of Superintendence, on *Il Gazzettino*, 13th December, 1949)

“We faced the serious problem [i.e. the relaunch of the café in crisis] tenaciously [...] taking into consideration two objectives: the necessity of making the café a vivid and functioning organism and the opportunity that the amounts to be invested could give an equal income. Therefore, all the building has been restored, embellished and rejuvenated. [...] This complex work brought to inevitable innovations: the new four doors in the Red Room, the windows, the furniture, the lights. It is true that those modifications were not appreciated by the lovers of ancient things and old lines of the building. We are sorry, but still, we need to take a decision if we want a café among the first in the world, so attracting, alive and valued.”

(the Mayor’s discourse at the inauguration of the new Caffè Pedrocchi, reported by *Il Gazzettino*, 5th November 1950).

However, the partially lost architectural identity matched soon with a slow decline of the café’s cultural identity (Baù, 2013). In the successive years, many authors reported that the new restoration did not meet people’s appreciation (*Il Gazzettino*, 13th January, 1954; Prosdocimi, 1966).

The following decades were characterized by small interventions aimed, again, at modernizing the café making it more appealing to potential clients: a jukebox, neon enlightenment, plastic tables, a television (Baù, 2013). Its main clients, were, anyway, elderly people. Furthermore, the Municipality seemed not to pay attention to the maintenance of the already degraded structure.

After a period in which the past is seen, positively and passively, as a *legacy*, we find here a moment of discontinuity given by the World Wars period. First, the Great War, then Fascism, the Second World War and finally the Nazi and Allied occupation of the Café provoked a deep crisis, which was both structural (the building underwent serious damages both outdoor and indoor) and social (people were not any more used to attend cafés as in the previous century). As a reply to this crisis, the Municipality started to impose a vision of modernisation through arbitrary interventions to the original building’s structure and its interiors in order to re-launch it as a modern bar. Its dominant attitude towards the past remained passive, but also adopted a negative connotation: the past of the Café was seen as something to get rid of; nothing of what the café was before (except for its reputation) could have value for its success in modern times. As a matter of fact, the Municipality’s (and, in accordance, also the tenants’) envisaged future outcome for the Café was making of it a lucrative modern bar responding to those times’ fashion and transformed people’s habits.

This passive and negative role of the past often clashed with the one of another actor, which started to play a role since the 1920: the Superintendence, whose attitude was more oriented towards the conservation of the past rather than towards its future development. Notwithstanding some interventions witnessing its envisaged future outcome of reinstating the Café's original past (e.g. the restoration of the Green Room according to Jappelli's style), its actions remained weaker than the Municipality's ones, which in this phase was the most impacting actor. Hence, their opinion on the Café ended being quite pessimistic and nostalgic: a past that was lost and could not be recovered any more.

This period's predominant passive and negative vision of the past makes us refer to it as a *burden*, something to be forgotten and erased to leave space for the future. Given this prevailing vision towards the future and oblivion of the past, the tension between past and future lost its balance. And this was not fortunate for the Café: even when modernized, it did not attain the forecasted success and kept for long time an atmosphere of decline.

5.3 Phase 3: the restoration (1980-2013) – the past as constraint

During the 1970s the Café and its Piano Nobile underwent some damages (e.g. water infiltrations) which started to be seriously taken into account in the 1980s, thanks to the contribution of some external actors: a Bank Foundation and a philanthropic elite club (AGCPD, *ACCPD*, 1979, November 19, p. 4822; AGCPD, *ACCPD*, 1982, November 22, p. 6291). The state of degradation of the building was often under attack (Puppi, 1980; Marchesini, *La Stampa*, 14th February 1981; Mazza, 1984), as well as its use: in the 1980s some rumours about the creation of a fast food or a canteen raised stir among the public opinion (Bianchin, 7th December 1984). In such an environment, the mayor Settimo Gottardo decided for some restorations in collaboration with a sponsor (Lavazza⁶). This allowed the Ridotto to open again after almost 20 years in 1984 (Milani, 1984). In the occasion of this re-opening, as well as to celebrate its 150 years, an exhibition about the Caffè Pedrocchi was settled in Palazzo della Ragione in Padua and cultural events were organized in the upper rooms of the Ridotto (Milani, 10th December 1984). The Councillor for Cultural Heritage - Sarteà - declared: "It will be a live Pedrocchi [...]. We must not embalm Culture, we have to risk" (Milani, 1984). The intent, as it happened many other times during the more recent history of the Pedrocchi, was to "bring Pedrocchi back to its ancient splendour" (ibid). Indeed, after their restoration, the Piano Nobile rooms started to get more alive thanks to the organization of events and congresses (AGCPD, *ACCPD*, 1985, December 9, p. 3575; AGCPD, *ACCPD*, 1986, March 17, p. 1177). However, this could not be said for the Café's on the ground floor, whose management encountered various difficulties still in the

⁶ Italian brand of coffee

1980s and the 1990s due to recurrent failures and controversies with the Municipality (Francica, 12th October 1993; *La Repubblica*, 13th January 1993). Maybe sensitized by these events, the Municipality started to care more explicitly of “the historical value of the Café within the city life” (as the city councillor Laura Boldrin said in *La Stampa*, 13th August 1993). This brought it to dedicate more attention to the execution of the necessary interventions on the building structure (AGCPD, *ACCPD*, 1989, March 20, p. 897; AGCPD, *ACCPD*, 1989, July 20, p. 3197) and, finally, to the launch of a new restoration campaign in 1997-1998, explicitly aiming at “repairing the damages made in the 1950s” (Possamai, 2000: 82). In that occasion, the Café closed for 3 years to let the architects Umberto Riva and Marisa Macchietto restore the building. Refusing the previous anachronism, they re-set furnishings, reinstated the windows and the floor according to Jappelli’s documents (Possamai, 2000). The spaces for shops in the alley returned to the Café (Baù, 2013). “However, Caffè Pedrocchi was not, and could not be, the one it was in the past” (Baù, 2013).

When the restoration was decided, in 1994, La Cascina srl won the tender to manage Caffè Pedrocchi for 15 years (Milanesi, *Il Mattino di Padova*, 20th August 2008). The contract provided for the financing of the restoration by the Municipality and the payment of an annual rent. Being the Café closed due to those interventions till 1998, the administration of La Cascina actually started in that year and lasted till 2013. The Municipality imposed the opening of the Café 6 days a week, forbade the use of fixed advertisements in its rooms and gave the tenant the complete responsibility of any loss and damage of the leased property, the furniture and the equipment (*ibid.*). The idea of the manager leading the Café was to maintain ancient traditions alive, as it was the case with the availability of national and international newspapers, the gratuitousness of the Green Room and the recovery of the ancient recipe of Pedrocchi’s eggnog (*Il Mattino di Padova*, 1st October 2003).

A curious case is the one of the eggnog. The eggnog had become a marking sign of the café thanks to its mention by Stendhal in *The Charterhouse of Parma*. Given the date of publication of the work (1830), the author probably made reference to a visit to Francesco’s coffee shop in front of the Bo Palace (Puppi, 1980). Anyway, Stendhal’s Eggnog was used to recall the past and the tradition of the Café and it was one of the most renown products offered in the menu, - and still it is nowadays’ administration.

The same cannot be said for another symbolic product of the café, the “caffè Pedrocchi”, an espresso served with mint cream in a big cup. This coffee does not have any link with Pedrocchi’s origin, and it has been invented by some bartenders in the 2000s (from informal conversations). However, day by day it has become the most important marking sign of the café, which is also renown internationally thanks to travel guides. Hence, the atmosphere of the past perceived in the café and

its brand reputation has enabled the success of “invented traditions” (Hobsbawm, 1983), which otherwise would not have any meaning.

The recall to an invented or fake past is also observable in the release of a line of “historical silverware” to be sold to tourists in the café (Il Mattino di Padova, 2003).

The initiatives of La Cascina’s management were not only addressed to tourists, but also to people living in Padua. As a matter of fact, a multiplicity of events was hosted and organized in the historical rooms at the ground floor and in Sala Rossini in the Piano Nobile: books’ presentations, scientific conferences, political conventions, award ceremonies, fashion shows, gala evenings, enogastronomic events, Carnival events, art or photography exhibitions, business meetings. In particular, the two main kinds of events which this re-launch is based on were tango shows and jazz concerts (interview to Federico Menetto, Caffè Pedrocchi’s director, Il Mattino di Padova, 20th June 2004).

A particular attention was also dedicated to university students and young people. Discounts for under 30 (Il Mattino di Padova, 9th December 2010), a party for graduates (Il Mattino di Padova, 2003), aperitifs with buffet in the weekend and dj-sets were some of the initiatives that started to be constantly organized to recall an audience which was not used to attend the café. The idea was to create a social atmosphere of “eating, drinking, flirting” (Il Mattino di Padova, 9th April 2004).

Hence, the main aim was “to make the café a place for the city to live and to be proud of”, abandoning the feeling characterizing its recent past of “everyone’s café which however belongs to anyone” (from Federico Menetto, Caffè Pedrocchi’s director, Il Mattino di Padova, 20th June 2004).

One of the most important news in this period was the inauguration of the Risorgimento Museum in the restored Piano Nobile and Ristoratore rooms in 2004. The opening of the museum represented a definitive re-qualification of café’s upper rooms, whose function is remembering and safeguarding Padua’s and Italy’s collective memory about the way to the unification of the nation. The museum’s set-up aims at “valorizing in a modern way an heritage which is fundamental for the understanding of contemporary times” (from the words of Giorgio Lombardi’s words, the curator, Il Mattino di Padova, 7th February 2004). However, as well as a difficult genesis (*ibid.*), the Museum had also a contested life. As a matter of fact, according to some opinions, the use of the Piano Nobile as a museum would not be in line with Pedrocchi’s philosophy (Il Mattino di Padova, 16th November 2010). In addition to that, the legacy considers the three floors as a *unicum*, hence to be managed by only one entity (from the words of Luisa Boldrin, assessor, Il Mattino di Padova, 31th March 2011). This has raised some tensions between the Musei Civici (the organization managing the city museums) and Pedrocchi 2001 srl, about the latter's operative management of the museum (Il Mattino di Padova, 6th October 2010, Il Mattino di Padova 31th March 2011), which seemed sometimes to be more a burden than an actual advantage for the Café. As a consequence, the Municipality has planned

since 2011 to move out the Museum and to turn the upper rooms into a restaurant or a guest house, which would be a more profitable activity for the managers - and hence, for the Municipality too (Il Mattino di Padova, 31th March 2011).

Despite some critical positions (“The Café is a bruise on the soul” by Adina Agugiaro, Il Mattino di Padova, 5th December 2004) and some complaints about the service (Il Mattino di Padova, 11th November 2003), the new management of Caffè Pedrocchi seemed to be successful in reaching its aim: the café was more alive - thanks to the organization of many events - less aseptic and less exclusive (Pierobon, Il Mattino di Padova, 17th December 2004). In 2005 a new Bistrò opened for lunch and some months later both its cuisine and its wine list received some awards (Zanetti, 7th October 2005).

However, the Superintendence, the Municipality and the same management were aware that the relaunch project was only partial (Comello, Il Mattino di Padova, 16th November 2004). As a matter of fact, the restorations started at the end of the '90s still needed to be completed by renovating the basements and the apartments on the second floor. The debate about the future of Caffè Pedrocchi was still open (Il Mattino di Padova, 20th June 2004; Il Mattino di Padova, 7th December 2005).

Furthermore, the debate on Caffè Pedrocchi became instrumental to political aims in time of elections. In August 2008, during the usual weeks of café's summer vacations, the municipal offices on the second floor were cleared and moved away without notice. This fact, added to the insufficiency of the rent and the precariousness of the employees working conditions, raised a series of criticisms coming from the opposition's political party. They culminated with some polemics about the agreement's conditions between the Municipality and Pedrocchi's management. In delicate political periods the management of the Café is in fact watched through “a magnifying glass” (Milanesi, Il Mattino di Padova, 20th August 2008), as the Caffè Pedrocchi is a crucial point of observation to judge the city's administration (“Hands off Pedrocchi, hands off Padua!”, Milanesi, Il Mattino di Padova, 19th August 2008).

As aforementioned, notwithstanding the recent restorations, the Café's building often underwent damages or collapses, which sometimes caused a temporary closing of some rooms and required costly investments both by the Municipality and the managing administration (Malfitano, Il Mattino di Padova, 13th January 2009; Comello, Il Mattino di Padova 13th January 2009, 2009; Voi, Il Mattino di Padova, 7th June 2012).

Although enabling the construction and re-construction of a solid brand, the historical structure of the Café represents a constraint which the management can only be aware of and adapt to. A kitchen only 8sqm wide and the multiple restrictions imposed by the Superintendence on the use of the rooms and of the walls are some other examples of this limitations. Furthermore, the same

reputation of “café without doors” forces the café to be always open or otherwise to create some contrasts with the public opinion in times of vacations (e.g. “Pedrocchi closed in August, insane”, *Mattino di Padova*, 22nd July 2011).

A last interesting moment before the change of management relates to 2011, the year of a double anniversary: the 180th anniversary of Caffè Pedrocchi (9th June 1831) and the 150th one of Italian Unification (17th March 1861, which however did not include the Venetian region, which was annexed in 1866). In this occasion, the director of the Café - in collaboration with the Municipality and a sponsor - organized a rich series of events to “make closer to Pedrocchi a wider audience through history and commemoration of the Risorgimento period of which it was a protagonist” (*Il Mattino di Padova*, 5th February 2011). Among them, theatre productions about Antonio Pedrocchi and Giuseppe Jappelli, animated visits to the Café, eno-gastronomic events, conferences were organized.

However, the anniversary soon became as well a pretext to debate about the future of the café as well as to criticise the administration that was going to conclude its course (*Il Mattino di Padova*, 31st March 2011; *Il Mattino di Padova*, 19th November 2011)

In this period, the management of the café worked under tight scrutiny by the Superintendence in charge of guaranteeing the preservation of the cultural heritage. This came with controls and restrictions in the use of the spaces and the furniture, enforced through rigorous conditions and expensive fines in case of violation. Similarly, at the same time, the public opinion and politics acted as ‘moral’ controllers on the management of the café.

Indeed, despite the contrasting Municipality’s conduct in the post-war period, Padua’s citizens has never lost the sight on their beloved Caffè Pedrocchi. In the 1980 and 1990s public opinion’s and some eminent citizens’ critiques about the Café’s worsening state of damage and social decline played an important role that finally revealed a discontinuity in the prevailing form of past. This special attention towards the Café and, also, the changed ideas of the new municipal administrations, brought the Superintendence to impose its conservationist vision about the Café to all the actors gravitating around it. The past started to be seen as a resource, a value for the city to take care of, hence, assumed an active attitude. However, the Superintendence envisaged future outcome of “return to the past” by repairing the damages done in the ‘50s (a sort of “museification” of the café) may have constrained to see the past rather negatively: as a brake to innovation potential, as something that “must be done” but maybe without any positive effect. This vision is shared by the new Municipality, worried by finding funds for these necessary interventions, and the management, unable to act freely because always pending on the state of conservation of the building and the obligations imposed by Superintendence. For these reasons, we refer to this form of the past as a *constraint*.

As in the previous phase, the tensions between past and future did not find a balance. But differently from the form of the *burden*, here the prevailing vision looks at the past. Again, this did not bring much success to the Café, always struggling with conservations' needs and the imposition of Superintendence's obligations.

5.4 Phase 4: the new revival (2014-today) - the past as enabler

As aforementioned, after the 2011 anniversaries, Padua started thinking again about the relaunch of the café. The Municipality committed to a new philosophy for the recovery of the past: a former mayor succeeded in replacing some original sofas in the Red Room, the Councillor for Culture committed himself to re-install other furniture and to provide funds to restore the rooms and the roof (Il Mattino di Padova, 28th July 2012; Voi, Il Mattino di Padova, 10th April 2013), old curtains were cleaned after many years and ancient candle holders were reactivated (Voi, Il Mattino di Padova, 7th December, 2013). The objective was to relaunch Pedrocchi focusing on hospitality and functionality (as Luisa Boldrin said, Il Mattino di Padova, 2013).

The 2013 call for tender for the new Caffè Pedrocchi's 15-years management was in line with this idea. Indeed, rigorous conditions (and, consequently, expensive fines in case of their violation) were to be imposed on the new administration. Among them, the café's continuative opening, the operative management of the Risorgimento Museum, the undertaking of ordinary maintenance, and the possibility - almost the obligation – to use all the rented spaces, previously in state of abandon.

The tender was awarded to F&deGroup - a Milanese company dealing with restaurant outsourcing in Italy - which succeeded in winning the auction by offering to the owner 12,11% of the annual profit. The competitors gave up because of the historical-artistic constraints imposed by the structure and its relative high management costs (Paduano, Il Mattino di Padova, 11th April 2013a). Instead, since its appointment, F&deGroup declared to have studied in detail the problems and to have elaborated an "organic plan" for the "new" Café Pedrocchi, and to be keen to collaborate with Municipality and Superintendence (Paduano, Il Mattino di Padova, 11th April 2013b).

The idea of the new managers was to make the café great again as an excellence in Italy's North-East by "best combining Pedrocchi's historical components with a touch of modernity" (Marcello Forti - F&deGroup CEO, from Paduano, Il Mattino di Padova, 8th May 2014). Managers were aware of Cappellato's legacy. In fact, they turned the legacy's part about the café's destiny into their motivational sentence, inspiring themselves to it:

"there is a very nice sentence... We put in the back office a part of the legacy as a motivational sentence... it says that the café must be managed respecting its history and its tradition but with all the actions necessary in order that it remains in step with the times" (from one of the authors' interview with Manolo Rigoni, current director of the Café).

The actions implemented by the new managers confirm that this is how they make sense of Cappellato's legacy: by balancing the safeguard of the past and modern tastes and necessities. Therefore, their interventions on the Café's structure and the day-by-day unfolding of their administration are uses of the past that reflect this philosophy.

There are six main initiatives taken by F&deGroup in which this line of thought is clearly evident. Their introduction was preceded by a study and a re-interpretation of history which make of them somehow an example of "practical historians".

The first initiative is the construction of a patisserie with tables and counter service in the Sala Ottagonale. A retail patisserie was present during Antonio Pedrocchi's administration since 1837 when he opened the Pedrocchino with its *offelleria*. However, it was definitely removed in 1950 following Pisani's restoration. F&deGroup restored this idea by creating a patisserie in the former Exchange Room which actually has become a "modern bar", where it is possible to drink an espresso at a cost in line with the city's average prices and sitting in some modern tables.

A second element is the focus on restoration. Recalling Pedrocchi as "the best restaurateur in Italy" (Stendhal, *The Charterhouse of Parma*, 1830), F&deGroup enriched the high-quality offer of the café by introducing a "gourmet *snackeria*" for lunch and a restaurant *à la carte* for dinner by an important chef. It organizes a brunch on Sunday and, for the first time, the Christmas Lunch and the New Year's Eve dinner (Il Mattino di Padova, 2014). It also aims at valorising the aperitif time, in accordance with the city traditional habit. In particular, for a period, during the "Pedrocchi Hour" (from 18 to 21) they resorted to a forgotten ritual: with a bell ring the chef announced a new different proposal from his *cuisine* every evening (Paduano, Il Mattino di Padova, 12th June 2014). Furthermore, the paper menu of the café resembles the old newspaper once published in the café. In addition to the list of the courses, it also contains the events calendar.

Third, opening hours have been extended in the night. Re-interpreting the saying "café without doors", the "new" café is open from Sunday to Thursday from 8 to midnight, and on Fridays and Saturdays till 1 am.

Fourth, Caffè Pedrocchi aims at "inventing and storytelling traditional products" in the name and in the brand reputation of Padua symbolic café: the patisserie's laboratory elaborates a Pedrocchi Cake whose taste remembers Pedrocchi Mint Coffee; the same mint coffee is served frozen for the summer period. They have also invented a new distinctive green aperitif (P31) with absinthe aroma recalling the 19th Century use of that drink in the café. Furthermore, many products (liquorice, coffee, biscuits, cups, pralines...) are branded Caffè Pedrocchi and sold mainly to tourists. According to the nowadays director, "everything branded Caffè Pedrocchi becomes a marketing tool, [...] so you want to buy a cup as gadget just because it has its name on it". The Café's historical identity seems to be

exploited for a successful use of the past as a marketing tool, enabling the creation of a stronger brand identity. Interestingly, the customs and the culinary products “re-discovered” by the last administration and by the previous one (e.g. the eggnog) refer mainly to the Italian tradition, instead of recalling the Habsburgic Monarchy’s one: the past connected to the Austrian domination⁷ seems to have been “forgotten” probably due to the importance that the Risorgimento have in the history of the Café.

Fifth, new activities were organised to attract a new young clientele and in particular students. Caffè Pedrocchi was born as the “student’s café”, being located in front of the university. However, during the post-war decades, the alienation of these young clients was consolidated into a “legend”, according to which entering Pedrocchi before graduation brings bad luck. F&deGroup wanted to debunk this myth (Paduano, Il Mattino di Padova, 24th April 2013) and to restore the 19th Century atmosphere when the Green Room was always full of students. In order to reach this aim, they set up a plurality of initiatives for students such as offering free spritz to students who passed an exam or even a free lunch for the ones who took the best mark; or installing Wi-Fi in the Green Room. In accordance with the idea of “rejuvenation” of the clientele and, hence, of the café, the new management introduced a more friendly service, less detached but still professional, which aimed at making the rooms and the atmosphere warmer and more welcoming.

A sixth element was the relaunch of the historical rooms. After the creation of the “modern bar”, the management focused also on a revitalisation of the historical rooms. Two hostesses welcome clients telling them the history of the café and offering them a booklet with the organized events; a piano is available for use and in the Green Room some works by young artists are exposed (Paduano, Il Mattino di Padova, 13th November 2015).

The idea behind these initiatives is constructing an organizational reputation through the use of a past which hence becomes the *enabler* of a new, more modern, management. This is confirmed by Manolo Rigoni’s, -nowadays director -: “We aim at widening the already strong reputation of the Café from a monument where to pass by to a place where to stop with a motivation”; “we realised that the café has turned alive thanks to tourists, and once it happened, also Padua citizens’ has come back to it”.

However, this does not mean that the management of the Café did not find any difficulty constraining its course. As a matter of fact, in the first period its initiatives were well seen by public opinion and gave good results in terms of reputation and profit. Later on, however, some “pushes” towards modernity and “progress of time” were judged negatively by the public opinion, the Municipality or the Superintendence. For example, fake flowers and a “ultramodern” crystal table in

⁷ Padua remained under the Habsburg Domination till 1866.

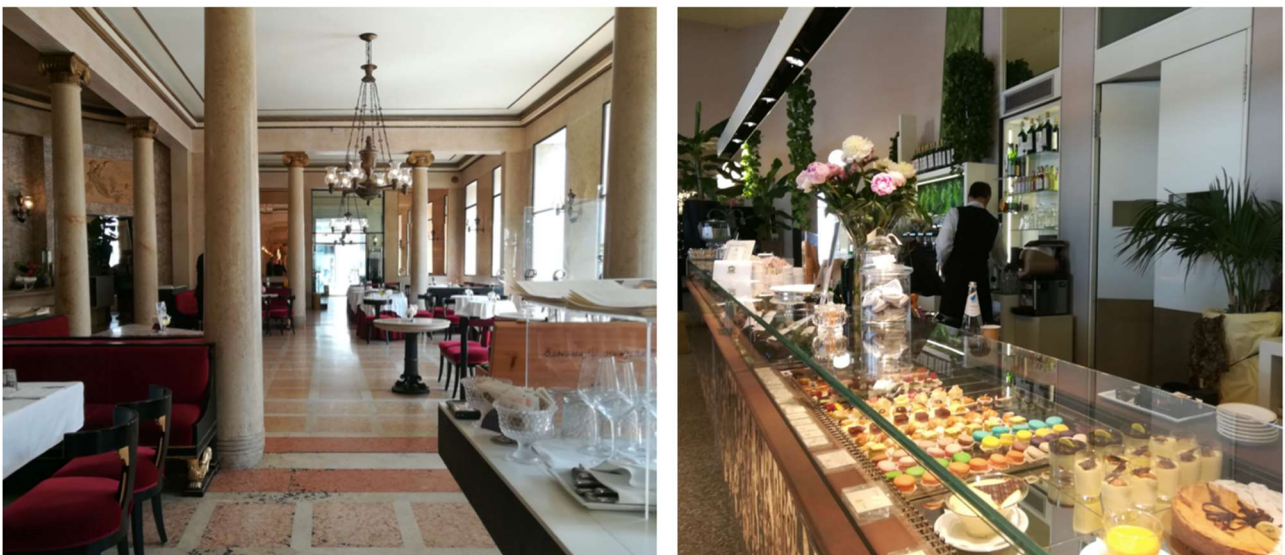
the Red Room were not appreciated (Paduano, *Il Mattino di Padova*, 30th September 2014), the temporary impossibility of table service in the historical rooms was criticized many times (e.g. Paduano, *Il Mattino di Padova*, 28th May 2015; Paduano, *Il Mattino di Padova*, 19th August), and the use of too loud music till late in the night was sanctioned (Livieri, *Il Mattino di Padova*, 13th September 2016).

At times, the tensions between the administration, on one side, and the Municipality and the Superintendence on the other became serious and received also a national attention (Ferro, *La Repubblica*, 14th January 2018).

Some first polemics happened in May/June 2015, when a Vintage Market was organized in the historical rooms: it was judged as “a serious error” and a “lack of respect towards Cappellato’s legacy” (Paduano, *Il Mattino di Padova*, 1st June 2015). However, as it occurred other times, the case seems to have been architected by the opposition against the city government in time of elections.

In 2017, due to continuing contestations with Superintendence about the use of the rooms and the terrace, F&deGroup threatened the Municipality to abandon the management of the Café. However, the Municipality acted as a mediator and extended the terms of the concession by enlarging the use of the terrace and by imposing training courses by the Superintendence for the employees (Malfitano, *Il Mattino di Padova*, 24th November 2017).

Figure 4 - Historical Rooms and 'Modern Bar' today (authors' pictures)



In April 2017, a photographic denunciation of the structure’s state of degrade by the local newspaper, *Il Mattino di Padova*, raised again a public debate about the destiny of the monument. The management was not responsible of it, but was anyway affected by the consequent situation.

Notwithstanding the reconciliations, in 2018 a series of critical event upset the management of the Café and its relationship with the other city actors. The use of the Café for a New Year’s Eve party raised harsh criticism due to irresponsible behaviours, use of forbidden sparkles and the theft

of two (fake) leonine paws from the counter. The management was also criticized for unfair competition with other discos of the city and for the use of the rooms for other parties.

The public opinion seems to be broken between those believing the Pedrocchi a monument to be safeguarded and preserved and those believing it has to be lived and used (e.g. Agugiaro, *Il Mattino di Padova*, 22nd January 2018; Destro, *Il Mattino di Padova*, 3rd February 2018). Anyway, the management succeeded in defending itself and in re-negotiating its use of the past with the Municipality.

After this event, a new era of collaboration between the management, the Municipality and the Superintendence seemed to be starting in the perspective of a new “balanced” use of the past. As a matter of fact, a more rigorous return to the past is pursued by both actors in the historical rooms thanks to the support of the historical reconstruction of the architect Vittorio Dal Piaz, with the objective of reaching a “Minimal Style for Pedrocchi” (Preziusi, *Il Mattino di Padova*, 10th May 2018).

Figure 5 - A Vintage Market in the café arises polemics (from Il Mattino di Padova, 1st June 2015)



The new compromise between the owner and the managers of the café-monument seems to be put into practice in a new project for the imminent future of the Café. In coherence with a tourist and cultural development plan for Padua city, the Municipality is aiming at re-qualifying the factory’s second floor apartments by means of the construction of a luxury Boutique Hotel with design furnishings. The project is outlined in collaboration with F&deGroup, which will invest in the spaces’ renovations and will be the future manager of the hotel.

“Ultimately, it [i.e. the project for the Boutique hotel] is the restitution of those spaces’ ancient residential function: it [i.e. that part of the building] was the apartment in which indeed Antonio Pedrocchi did live”. (from the words of Andrea Colasio, Padua Councillor for Culture, in Malfitano, *Il Mattino di Padova*, 20th October 2018).

“Pedrocchi will come back as it was described by Risorgimento Chronicles: a “temple of coffee and an *albergo*⁸ dedicated to pleasure” (Malfitano, Il Mattino di Padova, 20th October 2018).

A new narrative of the return to the past is emerging in order to *enable* a positive judgement on the new project. Anyway, this is a loose interpretation of the café’s past which actually has never been a luxury hotel as intended today.

For the moment, the project has been stopped due to Covid-19 situation, which forced the Café to close many times. On the 9th of June 2021, Caffè Pedrocchi celebrated its re-opening after the lockdown with a special occasion, its 190th anniversary. The celebrations confirmed the tendency to respect the history of the Café (further highlighted by the free distribution of a postal card with the famous sentence of Cappellato’s testament), but also to look towards the future (with the occasion, they presented some new products for the menu: a new exclusive coffee blend and a new red aperitif).

As confirmed by the adoption of the famous Cappellato’s will sentence as the management’s motto, the tension past-future returned, here, again, in balance, and this seemed to bring success to the nowadays Caffè Pedrocchi.

Figure 6 - Postal Card offered in the occasion of 190th Anniversary (from the authors)



The concession to the new management, F&deGroup, represented a further moment of discontinuity with the previous phase. As a matter of fact, probably, after the recent restorations, the Superintendence stabilized its conservationist role as well as the Municipality did with the imposition of the strict rent contract. Given this situation, and by acting as “practical historians” and managers, F&deGroup managed to impose a new form of the past: a past seen not only positively, but also pro-actively. In particular, re-interpreting some past elements into today’s codes and context, the current management adopted a vision of compromise, between the respect towards a past to be enhanced and

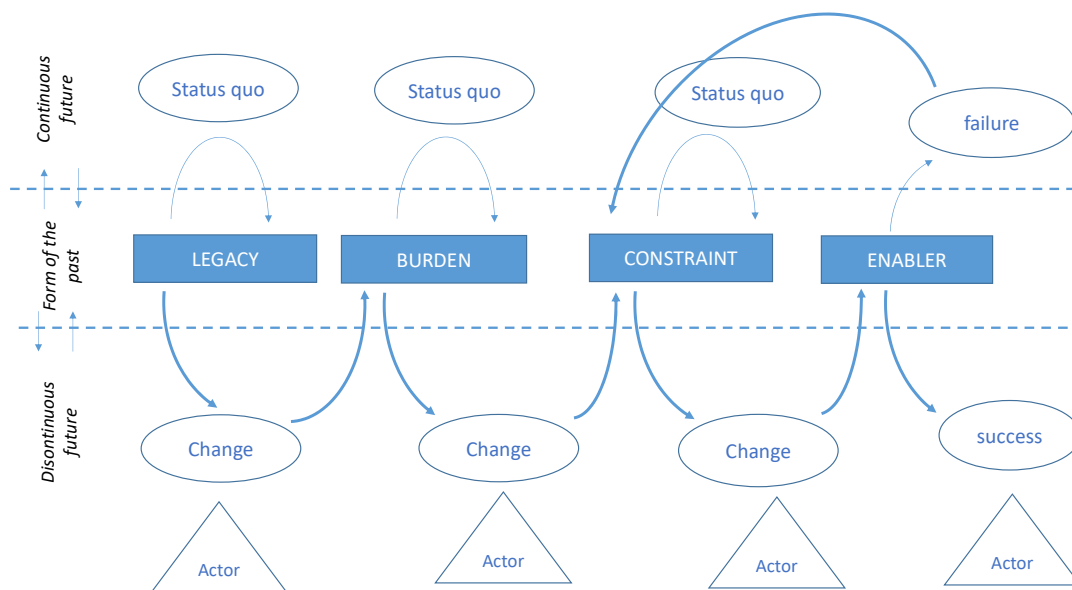
⁸ Albergo is an Italian word which commonly means hotel, but also means residence, accommodation.

the interest of pursuing its intended future outcome (i.e. the success of the business, making it a lucrative historical Café), in a way in which the Municipality and Superintendence could - more or less happily – agree with. For this reason, we consider this form of the past as an *enabler* of new actions towards the future.

6 Discussion – Different future outcomes for every form of the past and the role of influent actors

Our study looked at how a cultural organization with ongoing functions (specifically, a historical café) used the past by enacting a past-future temporal tension intrinsic to its organizing. What emerges is a non-linear process model of the becoming of the past (Figure 7), where the past is not static over time but changes its form according to the actions of influential actors and the realization of continuous or discontinuous future.

Figure 7 - A process model of the becoming of the past



Our first main finding is that, in the history of Caffè Pedrocchi, there was no such thing as “the” past of the café to be projected for the future, but at least four main forms that this same past took. We identified in fact four variations along two dimensions: the positive or negative value assigned to the past, and the active or passive role assigned to it. The combination of these two dimensions allowed us to identify four different forms taken by the past in different phases: the past as a *legacy* (positive value and passive role), a *burden* (negative and passive), a *constraint* (negative and active) and an *enabler* (positive and active). This started rendering a picture of how the past is perceived over time towards actors’ realization of future outcomes.

Our second main finding is that every form of the past came with at least two possible future outcomes – one conducive to a preservation of the status quo, one conducive to change (continuous or discontinuous futures). Whenever some actor intervened in an influential way a discontinuous future outcome occurred and a new form of the past was created.

Our third main finding is that, when a temporal tension is intrinsic in organizing, the success (or the failure) of the organization is given by how actors conceive the past and the future as being in balance within this tension (or not).

As showed by our retrospective study of Caffè Pedrocchi, the mythical past of the café in Cappellato's vision could have persisted being seen passively and positively as a *legacy* (continuous future outcome). The tension between the past and the future was balanced and the Café could have further carried on the success of the café since its foundation. But the wars subverted all order and, on this background, the Municipality (influential actor) introduced a radical modernizing agenda (discontinuous future outcome), making the former legacy a *burden* (different form of the same past, assuming a negative value) and bringing to an outbalance of the past-future tension towards the future. The past as a *burden* could have remained as such to the point of even being neglected, making Pedrocchi a lucrative modern bar (continuous future outcome). However, this brought to a failure, and public opinion and the new municipal administration (influential actors) imposed an idea of return to the past (discontinuous future outcome), shared by the Superintendence (influential actor as well). The conservative restorations in the 1990s regulated the use and outlooks of the café, turning the former *burden* into a *constraint* (different form of the past, assuming an active role). The past-future tension was still unbalanced, but here towards the past. This situation could have persisted, “museifying” the café (continuous future outcome); however it brought to a failure as well, till when a new manager (influential actor) re-interpreted the past and future tension of café (discontinuous future outcome), and made it balanced (and successful) again. The past became an *enabler* for potential innovation in the tradition (different form of the past, re-assuming a positive value), given the manager's intended future outcome to make it a lucrative historical café

The success or failure of the form of the past as an enabler of innovation will be ultimately sanctioned by the audience (residents, tourists, students – influential actors), because at any time, should the re-interpreted past-future tension be contested by the audience, the past could turn back into a constraint.

7 Conclusion

Building on the insights from this case, we argue that, for organizations dealing with past-future tensions, the organizational past is not a static resource and does not have a stable form. In other words, the past-future temporal tension is also an ever changing one.

We observed that an organization's past is continuously informing future outcomes, and, depending on whether those outcomes are in discontinuity (or continuity) with their past, the past might change (or remain), taking and retaking different forms. The pace and direction of the becoming of the past between legacy, burden, constraint and enabler are not a mere product of the passing of time, but depend on the agency of influential actors from time to time. But, according to this agentic and temporal view, we may also conceive the past as formed in the present, looking at actors' intended future outcomes.

These findings contribute to the literature on time and organizations in three main ways.

First, by further disentangling the classification of the possible roles of the past in organizations, we highlight the complexity of its forms as an active or passive element of support or resistance to organizational strategies. Therefore, we add to the naïve idea of the past as an asset in itself, by showing that its value can emerge only as the result of an active engagement of the actors in a work of historical interpretation and reinterpretation. In this perspective, we also highlight the idea of practical history, through which we aim at identifying initiatives that deal with the past proposing interpretations of existing evidence that mount it together into a narrative that results useful to the future aims of the actors. Despite some lack of rigour, in this kind of initiatives there is a conscious effort to support with historical evidences the narrative that is proposed as an authentical way to revive (and relive) the past.

Second, the appreciation of the continuous becoming of the forms that the past takes adds historical depth and perspective to a debate that in part remains empirically static, mainly because of the chronological limits of the exclusive use of present day case studies to theorize these topics. Also, the historical depth allows to analyse not only how past was perceived in the past, but also how actors moved towards their "near future" (that now we can study retrospectively, being for us already "past").

Third, we provide support to a non-linear and non-deterministic conceptualisation of the transition from a form of the past to another, which depends on the (inter)action of different agents leading to continuity or discontinuity in the future outcomes.

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