"From Objects to Things" in the World of Aldus Manutius (1494-1515): Renaissance Publishing, and Institutional Dynamics in Markets

Abstract

The case study, between historical institutionalism and sociology of translation, faces the evolution of the press and the emergence of publishing in Venice between 1490 and 1515: (i) around the appearance of "modern book" as a cultural artefact (as unit of analysis); (ii) considering the entrepreneurial experience of Aldus Manutius (as empirical context); (iii) observing and analysing the interweaving of different institutional logics (the cultural dynamics of Italian Humanism), the emergence of new institutional boundaries (around the revolution of movable type and the figure of "merchant-entrepreneur" in Venice), supported by forms of institutional work (the "modern book" by Aldus as an agent of market change).

Adopting a market system dynamics perspective ("a market may be defined as an organizational field"), and introducing "the role of material objects in motivating and shaping institutional change", the framework proposes a nonhuman-centric approach to examine the roles objects play in market change processes.

Keywords: *market dynamics, institutional work, sociology of translation, materiality of book, Renaissance printing*

Introduction and theoretical context

> «To my knowledge, Consumer Culture Theory has not been applied to the book industry, apart from comics, and it has certainly not been applied to an interpretation of Renaissance publishing [...]. Nevertheless, some insights from modern studies of consumer culture can prove helpful when applied to the birth and growth of the printing and publishing industry. As the first genuine mass-distributed product in human history, the printed book was swift to define both general and specialist markets» (Neil Harris, in Kirwan and Mullins 2015, p. 146).

In the passage quoted, Neil Harris, a distinguished professor of Bibliography and Library Studies, is surprised to find that a persuasive research perspective to investigate the cultural dimension of consumer processes had not yet occupied some aspects of bibliography and history studies of books. The Renaissance book was the first to be "mass produced" in human history, and would shape the next five centuries of Western history; publishing, as a form of cultural proto-

entrepreneurship, has contributed to shaping the socio-economic dimension of that vast movement known as Italian humanism.

In 1465, the introduction of printing with movable type in Italy was conventionally associated with two German typographers staying at a Benedictine monastery in Subiaco (Richardson 1999, Pettegree 2011, Suarez and Wouldhuysen 2013). When it was introduced in Venice in 1469, at the hands of a German, the new invention was already rapidly spreading across the rest of Germany, in other parts of Italy (between 1467 and 1471) and in France (between 1470 and 1473). Around 1480, that technology did not seem to have any special secrets: those who followed the example of Johann Gutenberg were limited to «creating a surrogate manuscript, but at a lower cost and much quicker» (Graheli, in Plebani 2016: p. 151). Yet, between 1490 and 1515, in Venice more than anywhere else, it was possible to understand the revolutionary potential of the invention of movable type: in just a few years, Aldus Manutius, a modest grammarian and pedagogue, became the most famous book printer and publisher.

By combining the intuition of Neil Harris and the evolution of bibliographic studies, the birth of modern publishing can be investigated using the method in which, in Renaissance Venice, the evolution of the book was shaped as an artefact. What emerges is an interesting work program not only for librarians, historians, and philologists, problematizing (Alvesson and Sandberg 2011): a) the evolution of the concept of the book materiality; b) the attention to the social conditions of book production in the Renaissance publishing; c) the question of how specialist knowledge can be "translated into practice" by producing processes of change in terms of institutional dynamics on a specific technology.

As Humpreys (2010) argued, research in marketing has tended: to approach «the question [of market change] by studying particular product categories or companies» (p. 1); considering the consumer need or technological innovation as an "exogenous variable", «[…] often emphasizing marketers [and consumers] as the main agents of marketplace dynamics» (Dolbec and Fischer (2015 p. 1447). This work, with a pluralist approach, introduces "the role of material objects in motivating and shaping institutional change" (Nicolini, Mengis and Swan 2012, p. 612), a nonhuman-centric framework to examine the roles objects play in market change as a political and social process (Tadajewski 2010).

The research strategy adopted integrates the traditions of *Science and Technology Studies* (Law 1986, 1991; Latour 2005), *Social Construction of Technologies* (Bijkers, Hughes and Pinch 1987) and the *sociology of markets* (Callon 1998): the first base «for integrating materiality into institutional analysis might be the sociology of technology» (Hampel, Lawrence and Tracey 2017, p. 577). As an initial approximation, as John Law suggests, the research problem is mainly attributable to: «how do objects, artefacts and technical practices come to be stabilised? And why do they take the shape or form that they do?» (1986, p. 112). With regard to Aldus' role in the history of the book and publishing, this work aims to contribute to the research threads on the processes of "market change and development" (Mclaran *et al.* 2009; Araujo, Finch and Kjellberg 2010) and

"market system dynamics" (Marketing Theory 2017). Organisational institutionalism frames this investigation thread (Grenwood *et al.* 2008): a market can be defined as «an organisational field encompassing a set of institutions and actors, governed by *institutional logics*, supported by *institutional work*, and characterised by *institutional boundaries*» (Dolbec and Fischer 2015, p. 1449).

Furthermore, the study of institutional change and the role objects play in market change processes draw «significantly on the sociology of practice that has been an important part of the broader practice turn in the social sciences» (Hampel, Lawrence and Tracey 2017, p. 560; Nicolini 2012; Gherardi 2012; in marketing studies: Araujo, Finch and Kjellberg 2010; Warde 2014): (i) «a family of orientations that take orderly materially mediated doing and saying ('practices') and their aggregations as central for the understanding of organisational and social phenomena» (Nicolini and Monteiro 2016, p. 110); (ii) and where such phenomena «acquire an enduring character thanks to both intersubjectives relationships among humans and of heterogeneous interactions between humans and non-humans (e.g. objects)» (Monteiro and Nicolini 2014, p. 64).

The juxtaposition between institutional work (Lawrence and Suddaby 2006) and sociology of markets (Callon 1998; Fligstein 2001) allows us to connect the "translation" of technologies, the cultural dimension of business processes, and dynamics in market change: (i) Aldus' world was "re-designed" around the new meaning attributed collectively to movable print technology (Suchman 2005; Orlikowski 2008); (ii) the modern book as a cultural artefact (Knorr-Cetina 1997; Barad 2003; Olsen 2013) is an "agent of change" (Star and Griesemer 1989; Eisenstein 1982); (iii) and the printing revolution, the emergence of publishing and the evolution of book trade during the Renaissance can be explored in terms of "institutional dynamics in markets" (Scaraboto and Fischer 2013; Dolbec and Fischer 2015; Figueiredo and Scaraboto 2016; Marketing Theory 2017).

The following sections outline the empirical context of the research and introduce the interpretative dimensions of the case study, with focus on material encoding and the analysis process. The results provide a three-tiered scheme to interpret the contribution of objects in triggering institutional change processes. The conceptual framework allows us to outline the emergence of multiple institutional logics, institutional working practices able to fuel the dynamics to create a market, as well as any possible future developments of the research program.

1. Evidence from printing and publishing Renaissance Venice

Abstracts [1] and [2] summarise a few of the dimensions that distinguish the history of book printing and trade in Venice: the use of library privileges (Fulin 1882; Castellani 1888; Brown 1891) and the publisher's emergence as merchant-entrepreneur (Lowry 1979/2000).

[1] «The book privilege was not entirely innovative. Its novelty lay in the object to which the privilege was applied, and especially in their earliest form, book privileges were similar to patents for new inventions. […] The first known printing privilege granted by a European government was that conceded by Venice to Johannes de Spira in 1469, making it legal for him and him alone to pursue the art of printing in the city for five years. Moreover, the privilege prohibited the importation into the state of books that had been printed elsewhere. This privilege *pro arte introducenda* was similar to many privileges conceded earlier in the Venetian Republic, and if that model had continued to be followed for this new market sector, the development of printing would have been severely impeded. Because the privilege was personal, however, it was annulled by the sudden death of Johannes de Spira» (Nuovo 2013, p. 200).
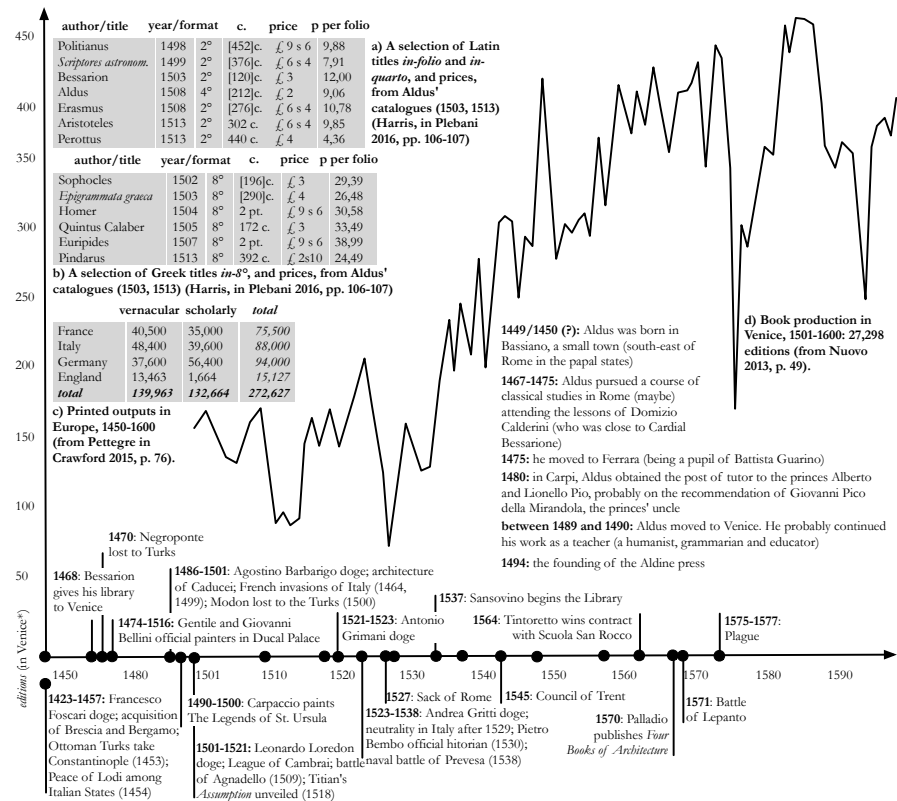
[2] «The creation and dissemination of sales catalogues, the creation of book series and the development of the publishing insignia led to the emergence of a truly recognisable brand, and above all, a high socio-cultural profile. Relations with the humanist community, in the validation and approval of the philological work of the workshop, as well as in the publication of its work with illustrious and potential patrons, represented the cornerstone in the construction of the Aldo Romano publishing house. We can say that, thanks to the intuition that he gathered in this invisible network of people and ideas, Aldus Manutius began the concept of modern publishing» (Graheli, in Plebani 2016, p. 172).

The privilege institute was already widely circulated in several Italian states for various other goods: in its version of safeguarding book production and trade, it was not so much the subject of intellectual property as the regulation and control of the market (Nuovo 2013). In Venice, this tool was adopted from the outset of publishing in the city and spread with very structured standards between 1517 and 1545 (Nuovo 2013). In a period of inventions and discoveries, in a rapidly evolving political and economic society (Eisenstein 1982; Richardson 1999; Pettegree 2011; Walsby and Kemp 2011; Suarez and Wouldhuysen 2013; Walsby, Constantinidou 2013), this episode can be interpreted as a signal of the definitive maturation of a new "book tradition": with the culture of the juridical text, deeply rooted in central and northern Italy since the twelfth century, an even more secular education system was developed that was increasingly focused on rhetoric and law, as well as on the role of professions and business (Witt 2012).

The second passage covers the figure of Aldus Manutius (Bassiano, papal states, c.1450-Venice 1515). It is not entirely clear why a mature tutor of a small Italian Renaissance court decided to move to Venice to radically change work (biographical notes, figure 1: Lowry 1979; Dionisotti 1995; Infelise 2016; Plebani 2016). Around 1490 (Davies 1995; Lowry 2000; Pettegree 2011), the city was already the main centre for printed books. Figure 1 provides a picture of the production of printed books between 1450 and 1600: it shows the trend of the editions made in Venice; table c) shows the total number of products printed in Europe. At the end of 1400, around 150 Venetian printing presses produced one seventh of European production at that time, an incredible value of approximately

twenty books per inhabitant, almost double the production of Paris (Lowry 1979/2000). In addition to Johannes de Spira (abstract [1]), other prestigious printers such as French Nicholas Jenson and Andrea Torresani, who later became Aldus' associate, worked in Venice at the time. Despite the somewhat shaky historical period (timeline, figure 1), Venice remained an exceptionally cosmopolitan and welcoming environment at the height of its entrepreneurial and commercial fervour and its political and diplomatic power.

Figure 1 – Timeline, book production, Latin and Greek titles from Aldus' catalogue

a) A selection of Latin titles *in-folio* and *in-quarto*, and prices, from Aldus' catalogues (1503, 1513) (Harris, in Plebani 2016, pp. 106-107)

author/title	year/format		c.	price	p per folio
Politianus	1498	2°	[452]c.	£ 9 s 6	9,88
Scriptores astronom.	1499	2°	[376]c.	£ 6 s 4	7,91
Bessarion	1503	2°	[120]c.	£ 3	12,00
Aldus	1508	4°	[212]c.	£ 2	9,06
Erasmus	1508	2°	[276]c.	£ 6 s 4	10,78
Aristoteles	1513	2°	302 c.	£ 6 s 4	9,85
Perottus	1513	2°	440 c.	£ 4	4,36

b) A selection of Greek titles *in-8°*, and prices, from Aldus' catalogues (1503, 1513) (Harris, in Plebani 2016, pp. 106-107)

author/title	year/format		c.	price	p per folio
Sophocles	1502	8°	[196]c.	£ 3	29,39
Epigrammata graeca	1503	8°	[290]c.	£ 4	26,48
Homer	1504	8°	2 pt.	£ 9 s 6	30,58
Quintus Calaber	1505	8°	172 c.	£ 3	33,49
Euripides	1507	8°	2 pt.	£ 9 s 6	38,99
Pindarus	1513	8°	392 c.	£ 2s10	24,49

c) Printed outputs in Europe, 1450-1600 (from Pettegre in Crawford 2015, p. 76).

	vernacular	scholarly	*total*
France	40,500	35,000	*75,500*
Italy	48,400	39,600	*88,000*
Germany	37,600	56,400	*94,000*
England	13,463	1,664	*15,127*
total	*139,963*	*132,664*	*272,627*

d) Book production in Venice, 1501-1600: 27,298 editions (from Nuovo 2013, p. 49).

1449/1450 (?): Aldus was born in Bassiano, a small town (south-east of Rome in the papal states)

1467-1475: Aldus pursued a course of classical studies in Rome (maybe) attending the lessons of Domizio Calderini (who was close to Cardial Bessarione)

1475: he moved to Ferrara (being a pupil of Battista Guarino)

1480: in Carpi, Aldus obtained the post of tutor to the princes Alberto and Lionello Pio, probably on the recommendation of Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, the princes' uncle

between 1489 and 1490: Aldus moved to Venice. He probably continued his work as a teacher (a humanist, grammarian and educator)

1494: the founding of the Aldine press

1470: Negroponte lost to Turks

1468: Bessarion gives his library to Venice

1486-1501: Agostino Barbarigo doge; architecture of Caducei; French invasions of Italy (1464, 1499); Modon lost to the Turks (1500)

1474-1516: Gentile and Giovanni Bellini official painters in Ducal Palace

1521-1523: Antonio Grimani doge

1537: Sansovino begins the Library

1564: Tintoretto wins contract with Scuola San Rocco

1575-1577: Plague

1423-1457: Francesco Foscari doge; acquisition of Brescia and Bergamo; Ottoman Turks take Constantinople (1453); Peace of Lodi among Italian States (1454)

1490-1500: Carpaccio paints The Legends of St. Ursula

1501-1521: Leonardo Loredon doge; League of Cambrai; battle of Agnadello (1509); Titian's *Assumption* unveiled (1518)

1527: Sack of Rome

1523-1538: Andrea Gritti doge; neutrality in Italy after 1529; Pietro Bembo official hitorian (1530); naval battle of Prevesa (1538)

1545: Council of Trent

1570: Palladio publishes *Four Books of Architecture*

1571: Battle of Lepanto

Aldus faced various difficulties in finding capital and technical specialists for his original cultural project: "to produce editions of hitherto unpublished Greek texts, edited with great accuracy and freed from the medieval commentaries which had filled the margins of the Latin translations published in the fifteenth centuries" (Beltramini and Gasparotto 2016, p. 81). Around 1494, he was able to involve (Lowry 1979): an old student (Alberto Pio, future lord of Carpi), a doge nephew (Pierfrancesco Barbarigo), a successful publisher (Andrea Torresano, whose daughter he would marry), probably the best character designer (Francesco Griffo).

In the Venetian years, he did not cease to surround himself by intellectuals and scholars who were fundamental to his project (e.g. Barbaro, Bembo, Musuro, Erasmo).

The Venetian entrepreneurial experiences, from Johannes de Spira to Nicolas Jenson and Aldus Manutius (Davies 1995; Dionisotti 1995; Lowry 1979, Infelise 2016) tell of different types of "objects" with different roles and status, «a complex fabric of intimate relations that link and associate people and things» (Olsen 2013, p. 138): print run issues of books, magazines, shop inventories and trade catalogues (Dondi and Harris 2013); distribution dynamics, organisation of trade networks, retail techniques, branch system management (Nuovo 2013); practices and standards for the protection of book trade using trademarks and privileges (Castellani 1888; Brown 1891). Furthermore, the Venetian context (Fulin 1882; Brown 1891) provides a peculiar evolution of printing technology that appears to be based on the "transformation of cultural practices" by actors involved in the "new" production system (e.g. artisan printers, financial backers, commercial dealers, scholars, readers).

2. Methods

The case study, between historical institutionalism (Suddaby, Foster and Mills 2014; Tadajewski 2011) and sociology of translation (or *Actor-Network Theory*, ANT: Latour 2005), deals with an investigation space in which "the publishing business crosses the boundary in the history of humanistic culture and literature [...]" (Dionisotti 1995, p. 37; Richardson 1999).

Suddaby, Foster and Mills (2014) define historical institutionalism as «the socio-historical process by which habituated actions and meanings become reified as objective social structures» (p. 111). To investigate the emergence of modern publishing in Renaissance Venice in terms of institutional dynamics in markets, the "materiality of the book" is the unit of analysis. As Harris recalled: «which defines Aldus achievement is *design*, or what he did to books, or indeed to communication, since it is only a mild exaggeration to say that every time one turns on a computer, Aldus is starting out at us. But the Aldine revolution in design again has to be placed in the context of an Italian Renaissance that was a huge visual metamorphosis [a cultural and intellectual history]» (in Infelise 2016, p. 355).

Data collection. Research is based on primary and secondary materials (concerning instruments and object of investigation, respectively, and considering the disciplines of "bibliography" and "history of book" as modes of investigation: Belk 2006): (i) a selection of copious literature produced by different disciplines (book history, bibliography, Renaissance history and art history, philology and textual critic studies); (ii) and the enormous amount of archival material and documentary sources on Aldus' history.

Table 1 – Aldus' books from the exhibition in Venice (2016)

Aldus' books (*):				
Ob. no 4	COSTANTINO LASCARIS	*Erotemata [graece]*	1495, 4°	Windsor, The Provost and Fellows of Eton College
Ob. no 8	ERASMUS of ROTTERDAM	*Erasmi Roterodami Adagiorum chiliades tres*	1508, 2°	Tours, Bibliothèque municipale
Ob. no 9		*[Poetae Christiani veteres], vol. 2*	1501, 4°	Windsor, The Provost and Fellows of Eton College
Ob. no 10	OVID	*Heroides, Amores, Ars amatoria, Remedia amoris*	1515, 8°	New York, Scott Clemons collection
Ob. no 12	ARISTOTLE	*Organon [graece]*	1495, 2°	San Lorenzo de El Escorial (Madrid), Real Biblioteca de San Lorenzo de El Escorial
Ob. no 14	MARCO MUSURO	*[Autograph manuscript copy of the dedication for the Aldine edition of Aristophanes]*	1498	Manchester, The University of Manchester, The John Rylands Library, Aldine Collection
Ob. no 15	ARISTOPHANES	*Comoediae novem [graece]*	1498, 2°	Norfolk, The Earl of Leicester and Trustees of Holkham Estate
Ob. no 17	THUCYDIDES	*Historiae [graece]*	1502, 2°	London, private collection
Ob. no 18	ALDUS MANUTIUS	*Institutionum grmmaticarum libri quatuor*	1508, 4°	Florence, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana
Ob. no 28	FRANCESCO COLONNA	*Hypnerotomachia Poliphili*	1499, 2°	Windsor, The Provost and Fellows of Eton College
Ob. no 57	THEOCRITUS	*Idyllia*	1495/96, 2°	Windsor, The Provost and Fellows of Eton College
Ob. no 58	VIRGIL	*Vergilius*	1501, 8°	London, The British Library
Ob. no 68	PETRARCH	*Le cose volgari*	1501, 8°	London, The British Library
Ob. no 71	PIETRO BEMBO	*Gli Asolani di messer Pietro Bembo*	1505, 4°	London, The British Library
Ob. no 83	PIETRO BEMBO	*De Aetna*	1496, 4°	Cambridge, The Syndics of Cambridge Library
Ob. no 85	ALDUS MANUTIUS	*Contract Concerning the Loan of Originals for the Printing of the* Epistole di Santa Caterina	1499, Venice, 17 April	Venice, Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana
Ob. no 87	EURIPIDES	*Tragedie, vol. 2*	1503, 8°	New York, Pierpomt Morgan Library
Ob. no 89	CICERO	*Rethorica ad Herennium*	1514, 4°	Verona, Biblioteca Civica

(*) from Beltramini, Gasparotto 2016

Table 2 – The role of objects in markets institutional dynamics

	Theoretical approach	Main function of the objects	Examples from Renaissance publishing
Tertiary objects of market creation	• **Infrastructure theory** (provide the basic "mundane" infrastructural change)	• "the work oriented infrastructure" • "the service infrastructure"	• the book privilege systems • education/scholarship and academic systems (Italian humanism) • paper manifacture
Secondary objects of market creation	• **Boundary Objects** (facilitate work across different types of institutional boundaries)	• "containing and fostering learning across boundaries" • "sense making around and interpretatively flexible artifact"	• printing-office • inventories/catalogues/bookshops • commercial networks • marks and branches
Primary objects of market creation	• **Epistemic Objects** • **Activity Objects** (trigger/sustain/motivate the institutional dynamics)	• "how working in something that may never exist acts as a source of motivation" • "how the nature of the objects induces different ways of working" • "the emergent nature of the object of work" • "community without unity"	• "public/private" libraries • Greek and Latin grammaries/school texts • "editio princeps"/enchiridion • manuscripts • collections/collecting

elaboration from Nicoli et al. 2012

From an empirical point of view, the work revolves around a specific "list of objects" to reconstruct the "book world" created by Aldus, the interconnections between actors who have contributed to an editorial and cultural business: the catalogue of the exhibition "*Aldo Manuzio. Renaissance in Venice*" (Gallerie dell'Accademia, Venice, 19 March-19 June 2016). Table 1 proposes a selection of Aldine editions used in the analysis, with the numbering of the object used in the catalogue, author, title, year, format ("folio", "octavo", etc.) and current collection (see *References*: web and digital sources).

Research design and "sociology of text" as method. The expression "from objects to things" evokes a concept of "ancient" materiality (*thing*) compared to something etymologically more recent (*object*) (Latour and Weibel 2005). As Bodei recalls: «'thing' [...] is the conceptual equivalent of the Greek *pragma*, Latin *res* [...], words that have nothing to do with the physical object as such [...] but which all contain an ineliminable link not only with people, but also with the collective dimension of debate and deliberation» (p. 16). As Bruno Latour suggests, "objects" become "things" when individuals, society and history invest affections, concepts and symbols (models, techniques, traditions) to those things via "cultural processes", thus attributing a political value to "things" ("to make things public": Latour, Weibel 2005).

In this work, these considerations are transposed in terms of "materiality of the book" and an "archaeology of things" through which Olsen (2013) introduces the sociology of translation and the need for "continuous interchange and mixing between humans and non-humans" (Law 1991; Latour 2005): «through our interchange with things, our habits and actions become standardised and predicable, producing what we like to think as (social) structures and institutions» (Olsen 2013: p. 140; in consumer research: Belk 1988; Warde 2014).

These methodological indications are quite operative in the evolution of book history studies that Howsam (2006) places at the confluence of «three major academic disciplines – history, literacy studies, and bibliography – that focus respectively upon *the book as a cultural transaction, a literary text, and a material artefact*» (p. 4). In the research tradition of the new Anglo-American bibliography (McKenzie 1986; Tanselle 1998) and in Donald McKenzie's layout of sociology of text: "[bibliography] is the only discipline which has consistently studied the composition, formal design, and transmission of texts by writers, printers, and publishers; their distribution through different communities by wholesalers, retailers, and teachers; their collection and classification by librarians; their meaning for, and – I must add – their creative regeneration by, readers. However we define it, *no part of that series of human and institutional interactions is alien to bibliography* as we have, traditionally, practised it" (p. 12, *italic added*).

Coding and Analysis. In management and organisation studies, the practice-based perspective is instrumental in introducing the materiality of objects as a unit of analysis (Carlile *et al.* 2013). Schatzki (2002) considers "a practice" as «a temporally evolving, open-ended set of doings and saying linked by practical understandings, rules, teleo-affective structures, and general understandings» (p.

87). Different theories have dealt with the role of artefacts in the interpretation of social phenomena (Nicolini 2012): the perspectives of boundary objects (Star and Griesemer 1989) and epistemic objects (Knorr-Cetina 1997); the cultural historical activity theory and the perspective of objects as infrastructure (Nicolini 2012). Nicolini, Mengis and Swan (2012) identify common themes: «collaboration and sociality are practical accomplishments; social action is mediated by material and symbolic artefacts; social phenomena such as groups, communities, and institutions are the results of organising work; social structures are both mediums for, and outcomes of, human activities; action and environment are mutually and recursively constituted; and human actors are driven both by rational consideration and emotions, desires, and passion» (p. 614).

Table 2 summarises the link between the encoding process of the research material, the role of the objects in institutional change processes and the relative theoretical perspectives adopted, thus revising the proposal of Nicolini, Mengis and Swan (2012). The three-tiered conceptual framework allows us to approach the "Aldus' book world" with the logic McKenzie expresses with a refined play of words: through the bibliographic study, it is possible to appreciate how a book is more than "wrote" but literally "wrought" by the same social system in which it is released and which contributes to its creation or modification.

3. Findings

Between 1495 and 1515, Aldus' work entered the history of publishing thanks to about one hundred and thirty editions, thirty first editions of Greek philosophers and literary writers, some great works in Latin and in vernacular (Febvre and Martin 1958; Eisenstein 1982). The Aldus' books represented not only the "result" or the "direct object(ive)" of the cultural project but also the main means through which the institutional change was structured (Monteiro, Nicolini 2014). Thus, at the first level, findings examine "what Aldus really do" as book-maker (as publisher and merchant-entrepreneur in Venice: table 3). Next, the framework (table 2: Nicolini, Mengis and Swan 2012) considers what types of objects contributes to enact institutional change in the market (four theoretical categories of objects: boundary devices, epistemic things, objects of activities, and infrastructure) and how translational work is carried out (a "hierarchy" of objects at three levels, to understand the material nature of institutional dynamics).

The world of Aldus' books. Early fame of the "book maker" and the construction of the legend of Aldus are not unfounded: (i) in terms of design due to the aesthetic beauty of the object, the readability of the text, the enormous versatility of use (table 3, Points 1-3); (ii) the books were accompanied by his catalogues at sales venues, a significant innovation of his studio (table 3, point 4e); (iii) he also created the index, book series and volume division (table 3, points 4a, 4b, 4d); (iv) finally, he laid the foundation for a new fruition of the book and for a

new consumer (table 3, point 5), especially with famous pocketbooks, enchiridia (table 3, points 6).

"Structure, clarity and harmony" (Beltramini and Gasparotto 2016) led Aldus' choices when selecting specific characters for Greek texts. Francesco Griffo managed to engrave and merge the Greek characters that Aldus took as a model from the handwriting of skilful scribe, Emanuele Rusota. Bembo's essay published in 1496 (*De Aetna*, table 1, no. 83) might have remained anonymous if it had not been the first book printed with that previously unseen font (Lowry 2000). The first book of the Aldine editions (a grammar book by Byzantine philosopher Constantine Lascaris: table 1, ob. no 4), in early 1495, marked the beginning of the project of creating texts for the study of Greek language and philosophy.

Table 3 – Aldus and the making of the myth: or what Aldus really did

Aldus and the making of the myth (**): what Aldus really did			
1. Was Aldus the first printer to employ:		**4. Was Aldus the first to publish:**	
a. the modernly-shaped comma	• *Yes, with a slight qualification*	a. a work in multiple volumes?	• *Yes, plausibly*
b. the semi-colon?	• *Yes, officially in De Aeta*	b. a series?	• *Yes, by general consensus*
c. a paragraph indent?	• *Yes, with some hedging*	c. a book with printed pagination?	• *Yes*
d. a modern Roman type?	• *No, but nevertheless*	d. a paged index?	• *Yes*
2. Was Aldus the first printer to use:		e. a catalogue?	• *In a sense, Yes*
a. quotation marks?	• *Yes, with an element of qualification*	**5. Was Aldus the first [printer]:**	
b. an apostrophe in a modern language?	• *Yes*	a. to arrange the text on a page in cul-de-lamp and other fancy shapes?	• *Yes*
c. accented characters?	• *Yes, obviously excluding Greek, which furnished the model*	b. to have a separate run on large paper?	• *Yes*
d. a differently-shaped sheet?	• *Yes, mostly*	c. to have a separate run on blue paper?	• *Yes*
3. Was Aldus the first to print:		d. to produce a bilingual o polyglot text?	• *No, not really*
a. books in octavo format?	• *No, but with a tiny bit of Yes*	e. to compare manuscripts and provide a critical apparatus?	• *Yes, in an embryonic fashion*
b. in Greek?	• *No*	f. to have his own binder, which introduced significant innovation in style and structure?	• *Probably Not, but possibly Yes*
c. in an Italic?	• *Yes, totally so*		
d. an errata slip?	• *Yes, seemingly*		
e. an instruction to the binder?	• *Yes, maybe*	**6. Did Aldus pioneer a proto-paperback revolution:**	
f. the Bible in Greek	• *No*	a. by publishing Latin, Greek and Italian classics in a cheap, pocket-size format?	• *No, quite the opposite*
g. to publish an indecent picture?	• *Yes*		

(**) from Harris N., "Aldus and the Making of the Myth (Or What Did Aldus Really Do)", in Infelise 2016

In 1501, Aldus published his first book in the octavo format, the works of Virgil (table 1, no. 58). Underlining his essence of humanist, grammarian, and educator, he explained the typographic and grammatical choices in the preface:

[3] «Aldus to scholars. There are perhaps some who will be surprised to find we have printed the accusative endings in -*is* with the diphthong *ei* but we have chosen

to do this deliberately. The practice is both more scholarly and more closely imitative of writing in antiquity […]» (Beltramini and Gasparotto 2016, p. 80).

Regarding the attention to representations and images, the Aldus' grammar book (table 1, ob. no 18), an edition that was created when he was already one of the most influential intellectuals of the Serenissima, features innovative tree diagrams to illustrate the declension of verbs. Published in 1499, Poliphilo (table 1, no. 28) is distinguished by a modern and complex interrelation between text and images (Colonna 1499/2004). A legendary book, considered by many as the most beautiful illustrated book of the Renaissance, Poliphilo seems to be alien to Aldus' original project, a visionary product rather than one intended for educational and cultural purposes (Beltramini and Gasparotto 2016). Indeed, the technique and content of "the strife of love in a dream" (the literal translation of Hypnerotomachia Poliphili) mirrored the basic metaphor of the work:

[4] «the hero, Poliphilo, falls asleep and dreams of finding his beloved Polia. In a quest full of dangers and "labours", he flees from monsters and fierce beasts, sees marvellous architecture, takes part in occult rituals and is forced to choose between three doors with inscriptions in Greek, Hebrew and Latin, respectively. […] Polia (from the Greek: "many things") may be classical antiquity, art or knowledge itself. Poliphilo undertakes a journey of initiation on the path to the gradual achievement of wisdom» (Beltramini and Gasparotto 2016, p. 217).

With the impressive work on the edition of Aristotle's works (1495-1498: table 1, ob. no 12), Aldus founded his reputation as a printer and publisher, and contributed to the refinement of Greek studies throughout the peninsula. For example, Aristofane's *editio princeps* (table 1, ob. no. 15) brought to light nine of the eleven surviving comedies, designing that edition as a particular learning tool for Greek theatre (Davies 1995). The first edition of Thucydides (table 1, ob. no. 17), one of the fundamental texts of European historiography, was characterised for the great care with which the Venetian craftsmen were able to imitate the sophisticated Greek-Byzantine techniques of book binding. With the fall of Constantinople (1453), political aspirations and diplomatic roles made Venice an obligatory passageway for «the books brought by Byzantine intellectuals fleeing from the advancing Ottoman armies, [offering] for the first time on a large scale, new models of Greek material culture that were soon copied by local craftsmen according to the requests of a selected clientele [in Venice]» (p. 198).

Infrastructure theory. In general, «material infrastructure represents the basic socio-material infrastructure without which [market change] and other types of work would be possible» (Nicolini, Mengis and Swan 2012, p. 625). The Venetian system (abstract [1]) introduced literary privileges, but it was the industrial and commercial privileges that would extend such logic to the production and distribution of books (Nuovo 2013). This process legitimated different forms of competition than the production of manuscripts, recognising new professional skills and expertise around the emerging figure of the merchant-entrepreneur:

[5] «the system of privileges drew no distinctions between the various categories of petitioners (printers, publishers, authors, curators, owners of manuscripts, etc.), because its purpose was not to recognise individual rights but to regulate commerce, to construct an ideal environment for the development of printing, with consequent advantages for the state". […] Bookmen were among the most creative and innovative of merchants. The very idea of novelty, which involved, for example, an emphasis on bringing new works onto the market, soon became part of their productive strategy. Their working tools included the gathering of information on production and cultural consumption in various locations, evaluation of the stability of a text (a process that might lead to the commissioning of a new work), and various accounting practices» (Nuovo 2013, p. 5).

A second dimension of the phenomenon is attributable to the service infrastructure: "the mechanisms governing canon in humanist thought and the teaching of the humanities are mysterious and rarely perceived" (Harris, p. 353). The (religious and secular) educational system and the evolution of humanist canon can be interpreted as "arrangements […] further removed, taken for granted, and learned as part of membership […], and for this reason, in normal conditions, the infrastructure tends to become invisible" (Nicolini, Mengis and Swan. 2012, p. 623). In fact, through his books:

[6] «what Aldus therefore did, more than anyone else in the Renaissance, was to place the Classical canon, in particular the study of ancient Greek from an early age, at the centre of Western educational practice, where it remained for nigh on five centuries» (Harris, in Infelise 2016, p. 353).

As a humanist and grammarian, Aldus regarded his business as "a transmission element of a great tradition" (Lowry 1979). Indeed, translating the attention to grammar and the original texts into Greek and Latin as a business model seems to fit into the maturation of that cultural movement, the preconditions of which are at the origins of Italian secular humanism of the twelfth century. Ronald Witt relocates this movement both geographically (around Padua in northern Italy rather than in Avignon, France) and temporally (about a century and a half earlier than Petrarch's traditional role), redefining it in terms of the relationship between the traditional documentary and "book culture" (mostly literary) and the "new legal culture" (mostly for professions and business) (Witt 2012). Piecing together the traces up to the late Middle Ages is a good basis for understanding how this movement was redesigned (Witt 2012): the relationship between public and private spheres; the organisation of education and intellectual life; the way in which western Europe was preparing to accept the invention of printing around the relationship between grammar and rhetoric.

Probably only in Renaissance Venice could the merchant-entrepreneur and the culture of the secular humanist merge into the figure of "Aldus-publisher", finding a concrete manifestation in a kind of organisational hybrid: the

commercial/financial and cultural/scientific dimensions of the business intertwined, while recombining and translating the social components of the worlds of Aldus and Andrea Torresano. Andrea learned the craft as a young man at Nicholas Jenson's workshop, bought the equipment and continued his own printing business, with that "practical sense" and as the "real businessman" he later became famous for in Venice (Lowry 1979/2000). Aldus was a "man with a dream" (Lowry 1979/2000), who came to the typing craftsmanship at a late age, seemingly without skills and habits of business logic, in a city that was essentially a kind of «unique and immense shopping mall in which every desire for luxury and glory was fulfilled» (Harris in Plebani 2016, p. 89).

What emerged was a "two-headed company" with a clever organisation of production, with differentiated strategies, but within a perfectly coherent and dynamic business model: printing was shared, but each production line was separated ("by fonts and distinct paper stocks [...]"), with Torresano taking care of the distribution and sale of Aldine products through the new store with the Anchor branding, and continuing the business of the old shop with his own historical brand. Having passed the economic management to his father-in-law, and having achieved a certain degree of solidity through the network of financial partners (the agreement with Barbarigo dates to March 1495) and with absolute freedom in the company's cultural and scientific conduct, Aldus focused on his role as "publisher".

Boundary objects/Epistemic & Activity objects. In the two subsequent levels of analysis, the boundary objects "could be artefacts or, more often, representations of artefacts or portrayals of how artefacts are used (e.g., recipes, norms, and routine)". If the function of secondary objects "is that of bridging different types of boundaries" (Nicolini, Mengis and Swan 2012), primary objects (table 1) "have the capacity to explain what motivates and fuels [market change] in the first place" (*ibidem*, p. 625) (e.g., both the why and how of the market chenge process).

Although the presence of courts and universities was essential for book trade (Suarez and Wouldhuysen 2013), the cities that dominated Renaissance publishing (Venice, Paris, Lyon, Basel, and Antwerp) were above all the cornerstones of a vast distribution network of goods (along with paper and binding, distribution was the main cost factor of the book: Harris, in Plebani 2016). Furthermore, the complexity of the publishing business pushed merchant-entrepreneurs to adopt the most advanced management tools of the time:

> [7] «The book trade needed refined accounting systems, such as double-entry bookkeeping. Although no comprehensive record of the accounting techniques used by the Italian bookmen survives, their contribution to the spread of double-entry bookkeeping seems of particular importance, also because they printed the first manuals of practical mathematics, called *libri di abbaco* (abacus books)« (Nuovo 2013, p. 6).

Inventories and bookshops (along with stationary and binding shops) were essential business practices and spaces for the circulation of expensive academic, liturgical, classical, and scientific books. Among the sellers who gathered at Piazza San Marco, perhaps the most important permanent book exhibition, there was a small publisher and bookseller, Francesco de Madiis. The fortuitous discovery of his shop's *Zornale* (which from 1484 to 1488 provides a record of each day's sales: Brown 1891; Dondi and Harris 2013; Nuovo 2013) was a precious document from the Rialto store: with records on titles, prices, editors and typographers, formats and materials, there are 6,950 sales registered in the *Zornale* for 11,100 titles and 25,000 copies (Harris, in Plebani 2016).

Comparing documents like the *Zornale* and Aldus' catalogues, there are interesting considerations on the spread and prices of books. Among the examples written by Aldus, the 1498 list can be reduced to about fifteen titles: publishers like his father-in-law had a portfolio of hundreds of titles (Lowry 1979), but in those years Aldus was mainly devoted to Greek learning tools and had just completed the printing of Aristotle's volumes. Tables a) and b) in Figure 1 show information on some books from the catalogues of 1503 and 1513, which gave rise to the «great novelty of *enchiridia*, [the famous] 8-inch pocketbooks» (Harris, in Plebani 2016, p. 106; Fulin 1882; Brown 1891).

Aldus' catalogues were both materially and conceptually distinguished from the lists of his colleagues, so much so as to show a conscious form of readership segmentation and real price strategies. The prices were expressed in Serenissima gold ducats, which was exceptionally stable for the quality of its minting: one ducat was worth 6 lire and 4 coins or 124 lire (one lira was worth 20 coins). For example, the Erasmus of 1508 shown in Table a) (figure 1) was made up of 276 cards for a price offered by Aldus of 6 lire and 4 coins or 124 coins (one ducat): this meant that it cost almost 11 coins per sheet. The In-8 books in table b) are double or triple the cost per sheet. However, the "myth of the low cost democratic pocketbook" is, however, a false one (table 3, point 6): in the cultural and intellectual context of the time, Aldus contributed to the ideal of cultural growth by introducing "innovative tools and methods" of management (Infelise 2016; Plebani 2016).

In addition, the prices offered in the catalogues were usually included in a manuscript to allow booksellers the freedom to set prices taking into account transport costs (Harris, in Plebani 2016). For this reason, it was quite common for Aldus' customers to contact the Venice store directly to avoid price fluctuations (Aldine editions that came to Paris through local vendors could reach stratospheric values) (Lowry 2000). Once more, the price in the catalogues referred to the set of loose leaves: the binding, made by specialists at the request of the buyer, could have cost equal to the purchase of the printed sheets.

In Venice, Aldus did not have any direct competitors and the international audience of his faithful readers was willing to spend money on books that provided wide margins of earnings; moreover, pricing policies took into account the role of "diversification of risk" carried out by the business branch that Torresano

managed. The two businesses were strategically complementary in print runs, inventory management, and price stability (Harris, in Plebani 2016): copies of the Aldus' Greek editions had quite large runs; his warehouses slowly emptied for more challenging titles compared to teaching tools; the former had a high and constant price over time, compared to the Latin in-folio or in-quarto titles, which were more affordable but still dear. To understand the economic dimension of the phenomenon: a professor with a professorship from northern Italy at the end of the fifteenth century could earn one hundred ducats per year; one of the wealthiest women of the time, such as Isabella d'Este, a loyal customer of Aldus, had a personal appanage of 8-9,000 ducats per year (Harris, in Plebani 2016).

Dedications, prefaces, and posts (Infelise and Plebani 2015) were also a peculiar communication tool with which Aldus was portrayed «as a man with a great mission, [affirming] his figure as a protagonist equal to that of the author. In this projection is the invention of the modern publisher» (Harris, in Plebani 2016, p. 91). Passage [8] shows a famous preface written by Aldus (1495-1497):

> [8] «So welcome this booklet: but not free of charge. Give me some money too, so that I can arrange all the best texts of the Greek world; and truly, if you give to me, I will give to you too, because without much money I cannot print. Believe anyone who is put to the test, and thus risking himself [...]; but certainly, without money you cannot get any of what you ardently desire and for which we, relentlessly and with much affection and expense, afflict ourselves» (quoted in Harris, Plebani 2016, p. 80).

Three additional elements allow us to understand the contribution of "the idea of the book object" to the birth of publishing (Davies 1995; Dionisotti 1995; Zeidberg 1998): the brand, collecting, and the obsession with manuscripts.

Manuscripts of original texts were the raw material used to ensure the textual reliability of new editions: Aldus was tireless in his search for sources from all over the continent: for example, for *Le Cose Volgari* by Petrarca (table 1, ob. no. 68), it appears that he had access to autographic copies of the work (Lowry 2000). His *editiones principes* were often the only editions available on the market, while manuscripts were only available to private collections or libraries that were inaccessible to the public.

The copy of the "Adagia" 1508 (table 1, ob. no 8) allows us to link three of the most important figures of Aldus' project: two intellectuals such as Erasmus of Rotterdam (1466-1536) and the noble Venetian and humanist Pietro Bembo (1470-1547); the first owner of the volume was French diplomat and philosopher Jean Grolier (perhaps 1479/1489-1565), considered among the first and most important collectors of Aldine editions. The new edition of the work, created in direct collaboration between Aldus and Erasmus who were guests of Andrea Torresano for nine months, definitively consecrated the young philosopher as an international literary character (Lowry 2000):

The very high production standards imposed by Aldus, early international collecting and the admiration of competitors fuelled counterfeiting (Lowry 1979): Lyon, for example, was one of the few markets in which craftsmen and printers could boast of circulating false high-quality Aldine editions. In two documents (Manutius 1502, 1503), Aldus addressed the readers directly explaining how to distinguish authentic Aldine editions. Aware of the originality and potential of his work, Aldus introduced his famous brand (1501) (passages [2] and [9]), attached to the motto "*festina lente*" (1503) to protect and enhance his publishing project (Nuovo 2013; Infelise 2016).

Discussion and conclusion

By consecrating his life to the "rebirth" and "restoration" of classical antiquity, Aldus indeed contributed to redesigning the relationship between: (i) literary and publishing business (Dionisotti 1995); (ii) the cultural life of his era and the socio-economic context (Lowry 1979); (iii) the book manufacturer/designer and the deep intellectual and ideal drive on which western culture is still based to this day (Nuovo 2003). In terms of market creation (Araujo, Finch and Kjellberg 2010), Lowry summarises the nature of the revolution imposed by Aldus through his books:

[10] «[Aldus] certainly did not create the mass-market, as was once believed […]. But he understood the mass-market and its methods thoroughly, and applied them to making the ordinary buyer feel something more than ordinary. What mattered was the state of mind that his books produced, that drive to 'liberate information' and 'satisfy any hunger for knowledge' which makes software companies invoke the name of Aldus to this very day. The number, cheapness or quality of the books matters less than the enthusiasm they provoked, and that enthusiasm could only be reproduced by the next stage in the dissolution of the walls, and the liberation of the knowledge they contain» (in Zeidberg 1998, p. 46).

Materiality, institutional logics, and institutional work. In this work, the collective action that focuses on the analysis efforts of neo-institutionalist perspectives has involved the formation of new organisational fields in terms of institutional dynamics of the market (Giesler and Fischer 2017): change processes

require the effort of different actors, human (the work of individual or collective institutional business persons) and non-human (institutional architectures/ infrastructures, boundary objects, cultural artefacts). If the literature on market change development has recently paid a lot of attention to the consumer agency (Scaraboto and Fischer 2013; Martin and Schouten 2014; Dolbec and Fisher 2015), marketing studies and consumer research rarely face the same topic in terms of materiality of objects (Belk 1988; Maclaran *et al.* 2009; Araujo, Finch and Kjellberg 2010).

This research suggests that, within the most recent forms of neo-institutionalism (Nicolini, Mengis and Swan 2012), different practice-based theoretical approaches, combined with each other, can propose an analysis pattern focused on the role of objects in triggering change processes (Gherardi 2012; Carlile *et al.* 2013). The objects and relationships in which they are inserted, because of intertwining relationships with social actors in an organisational field, play a decisive and primary role in triggering collective practices (in the form of *institutional work*) and in stabilising (*legitimacy*) the content and meaning of institutions (*institutional logics*), thus redefining the boundaries between different organisational fields (Dolbec and Fischer 2015).

According to Dolbec and Fischer's (2015) definition of market as organizational field, the emergence of modern publishing in Renaissance Venice is performed by the appearance of "modern book" and based on:
-   the presence of a dual *institutional logic*, the cultural movement of Italian secular humanism and the extension of the production and commercial logic to printing books, which in Venice found a way to merge into collective practices and socialisation processes around the merchant-entrepreneur figure and, specifically, the publishing project of Aldus;
-   forms of *institutional work* triggered by the innovative adoption of movable type, a "translation" process of technology created through shared practices and meanings on the materiality of Aldus' books.

Market as a social system, co-created and focused on changing. In general, within the institutional logic that manifested in peculiar forms in Venice, Aldus' book assumed its modern form, transforming itself from an object to a political project capable of developing cultural change for the next five centuries.

The peculiarity of the birth of modern publishing is connected to the transposition of the original organisational field ("typography" which imitated "manuscripts"), literally redesigned by collectively constructing the meaning of technology (printing with movable type). In general, different categories of actors and different categories of objects, practices, and spaces produce a collective redefinition of the boundaries of an existing organisational field or a completely new one (Giesler 2012; Ertimur and Coskuner-Balli 2015; Martin and Schouten 2014; Warde 2014). Secondly, institutional dynamics redefine the very ontology of the markets as necessarily cultural (co-constructed) phenomena, linked to the entwinement of institutional logics and different social dimensions. This dimension justifies the adoption of specific research strategies such as, in this case, the

approach of ANT and historical institutionalism (Giesler and Fischer 2017). Finally, in this work, the focus on change and development (Martin and Schouten 2014; Scaraboto and Fischer 2013; Figueiredo and Scaraboto 2016) leads back to the materiality of the objects around which "shift" of the modern book has taken shape, as well as having been designed by the cultural action imposed by Aldus' "social world".

Concluding remarks. The perspective taken aims to trace an analysis path in order to understand how the study of books and their history has much in common with several phenomena related to the "transition of objects" (which become "things"): the suggested bibliography study method of taking the empirical route of materiality allows us to understand the social practices and institutional dynamics of consumer processes and market change in a single and coherent epistemological and theoretical framework.

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