

Creativity and culture motors of development

Premise

Approximately 50% of the world population lives in urban agglomerations (the megalopolis of the South of the world, the metropolises, the global cities of the North) all marked by deep socioeconomic transformations, characterized by extreme changes, with whole areas reshaped by settlements and functions that modify the old industrial and productive, cultural and social fabric. Styles of life, of production, and consumption that produced the socioeconomic conditions, the imaginary, the identity of districts and whole cities fall into pieces, governed by complex dynamics that try to absorb the effects of globalization, migratory flows, increasing economic and social inequalities.

This while the global financial crisis undermines a lot of certainties among families and consumers, but also among economists and *policy makers*.

Even in the international organizations we often hear about degrowth, sustainable development, need to recycle, to consume local products (from so many people that a little ago supported the free market, while the ideas and the objections of the anti-globalisation movement seems to find support in the international institutions that they used to oppose.)

At the same time, and always more, great cities are the kingdom of a social creativity that awaits only to be used for improving the economic and social condition, of living and inhabiting. Those are kingdoms of the possible, laboratories where to conceive and to implement innovative practices and solutions to the problems of the community.

But how and to what kind, to which idea of creativity – that can be used as motor of development in the great urban areas – do we have to refer to, what are the conditions to realize positive effects and consequences in socioeconomic terms?

To face the “creativity matter”, first of all we need to keep in mind on one hand, that a definition that can return the complex and multidimensional character of it does not exist. Common sense defines creative something able to introduce innovative elements in a process or in a product, while in psychology more than 60 different definitions of creativity are used (C.W.Taylor, 1988). On the other hand we do not have to forget that the positive connotations of the concept of “creativity” are such to annihilate possible criticisms (who opposes creativity is conservative, sad, old) but that the usage of the term it often connected only to rhetorical strategies, that employ terms such as “new”, “sustainable” “development”, in such a broad way they end up to loose meaning completely.

The working hypothesis on which we intend to proceed refers pragmatically to attempts and projects by Administrators and policy makers in perspective that, leveraging on a development model centred on the binomial creativity and patrimony, keeps in mind cultures, the environmental and material resources of the urban Communities, sustaining, stimulating, activating the vocation to connect the past to present and future. This in the conviction that, at the base of the deterioration of environmental conditions, the spreading of social and ethnic tensions, the ineffectiveness of the actions of the local administrations, there is often the incapacity of “making culture”, because the same communities lose their memory and their identity. They are incapable to create knowledge, to innovate, to have a vision of the future, to practise a diffused criticism of the existing situation.

And this, inevitably leads to the weakening of social cohesion, to the impoverishment of the material and immaterial heritage of the Communities.

Creativity, material and immaterial heritage as strategic motor of a project of development shaped on individuality, identity. In this respect, Art. 2 of the Convention adopted by the UNESCO in October 2003 defines the “immaterial cultural heritage” as “the practices, the representations, the expressions, the knowledge, the know-how – and also the tools, the objects, the artefacts and the cultural spaces associated to them – that the communities, the groups and in some cases the individuals recognize as part of their cultural assets”. Underlining, at the same time, as such heritage “transmitted from generation to generation, is constantly recreated by the communities and by the groups as a response to their environment, to their interaction with nature and their history and their sense of identity and of continuity, promoting in such way creativity and respect for diversity”

We have to keep in mind, at the same time, that already in 1972 the UNESCO adopted the Convention on “heritage”, in an attempt to create a system of protection of the material assets of the cultural and natural heritage, defines as “cultural heritage” monuments, complexes, sites, and distinguishes between a cultural heritage and a natural one.

Apart from an analysis of successful experiences, of good practices from which to deduce reproducible elements and practices, we should ask to ourselves what are the strategies to adopt to realize a “favourable environment” to activate a positive circle of creativity and innovation that guarantees the amplest participation of groups and communities on the themes of recovery and development of material and immaterial heritages.

What is the role that decision makers, formative agencies, organisations, civil society as a whole can have as catalysts of such processes?

Innumerable are the studies and the experiences on the cities as centres of creative industries and those on the cities as places that favour the development of the collective individual creativity of social actors.

As Landry affirms “to make cities is an art, without a recipe, a discipline with a high rate of adaptability and innovation, that it is characterized by the complex fluidity of knowledge involved and the continuous updating of objectives and tools essential to its exercise. That associates new paradigms to the traditional tools of territorial planning, signalling as the appeal to creativity must be sustained by an ethics that helps the cities to become places of real solidarity and functional and daily sharing between individuals and groups.”

Some of the principles identified by Landry can be used as guide principles:

- Following the character of local cultures and their peculiarities while remaining open to external influences. Balancing local and global
- Learning from what the others have done well, but not to passively copy it.

The third World Cities Management Workshop “Creativity and culture motors of development” will be held in Naples on the 2nd and 3rd of July 2010 at Castel dell’Ovo.

Soon the detailed programme of the two days will be available online in the section “Universal Forum of Cultures” in the Municipality of Naples website.