

The importance of being innovative

The 21st century will be remembered as the century of creativity and innovation: from performing arts to manufacturing, from education to trade finance, all economic sectors – both conventional and unconventional – need to be creative and innovative in order to succeed in the current global market.

Often considered synonymous, the terms creativity and innovation are actually two very different concepts. Creativity is indeed a phenomenon of hybrid nature, which consists of the generation starting from scratch of products, processes or pathways related to intuitive mechanisms not easily replicated by mere imitation; innovation is instead an incremental phenomenon, which contributes decisively to the increase in the quality and value of a certain productive activity pursuing a path already taken and adding to the technical and economic profiles.

Not taking such a semantic difference into account, it is possible to identify the capability of developing new ideas in order to fill social gaps as the common shared value of creativity and innovation. In the contemporary context the progressive affirmation, at national and international level of these two major drivers of development, has made no further postponed the development and implementation of strategies to convey in a single path of growth economic and social benefits resulting from their joint use.

In this respect, this issue of Tafter Journal provides a reflection on the notion of innovation from two different points of view. The article by Chiara Guerritore about participative methods of designing local cultural policies, brings to light the evolving process of cultural planning through the concrete case of the Password project which has been implemented by the Cultural Department of the Municipality of Trento during 2012. Thanks to a “bottom-up” approach, the citizens have played a strategic role in the radical review of the local cultural plan, taking part in twelve public meetings – dedicated to five main topics, as performing arts, museum networks, education, urban marketing and so on – and giving voice to their needs and expectations. By focusing on the meeting and on the comparison of different perspectives, the Password project also has been able to strengthen social cohesion and sense of belonging to local community.

In their paper on social innovation and the arts, Mariangela Lavanga and Sarah Schützle analyse the notion of social innovation, highlighting the possible links between this kind of innovation and the cultural sector. Though social innovation has become on one side a buzzword and on the other side the new “mantra” of the EU flagship initiatives in the field of social cohesion, there are still few examples of cross-fertilization processes between cultural organisations and social innovation practices. The combination of these two elements offers endless possibilities to find unexpected solutions to a huge variety of issues, as can be gauged from the case of Waag Society – Institute for Art, Science and Technology documented in the paper.

In this sense we can say that establishing transversal links between creativity and innovation, it is possible to offer the double chance to find effective ways to work in ground-breaking projects and to share solutions for cultural development and society, promoting a way of acting and work that goes beyond sectors’ boundaries.



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