

Is culture “the new black” or the “last ideology”?

Europe is, nowadays a little weird concept, that assumes, day after day, everchanging Non-Euclidean shapes: Brexit, NGOs, boundaries and immigration are at the top of the Agendas of a Union that would have preferred pursuing objectives such as the “smart, sustainable and inclusive growth”.

In this widespread confusion it seems that Culture should be the new philosopher’s stone or, adopting a more common language it seems that Culture should be the new black.

There are no serious public interventions that do not underline, at least once, the role of culture for the development of a town, of a country or of the European Union in its whole.

Indeed, according to our policymakers, culture is:

- a) The key for a new “multicultural” Europe;
- b) An important economic sector that could prompt the development of backbone territories;
- c) The next new-thing of financial market and, finally,
- d) The real answer to both the immigration challenge and the brain drain phenomenon.

There are no doubts that culture could play an important role in all these processes but a more realistic framework is needed.

More precisely, what emerges by the conjunct reading of the articles of this number of Tafter Journal is that pluralism is a necessary condition for a cultural-based territorial development.

But pluralism requires a concrete shift in our markets and in our democracies.

This is not a mere theoretical reflection: at the very base of pluralism there are phenomena such as active citizenship or private entrepreneurship while in most of European Countries, traditional vision asks for a centralized, public-managed culture. This is real in Western Balkans as well as in Italy, or France.

The future that active citizens, artists and cultural private entrepreneurs are trying to design is quite different: a world where citizens act and think according to what we were used to call the “cultural prosumers framework” some years ago: but even in this future there is a prejudice that we’re called to acknowledge.

At the basis of this “dream”, indeed, there is the conviction that citizens want (and need) more culture in their lives and that culture could improve the quality of life within our societies.

Nevertheless, both the articles of this number underline a counter-intuitive evidence: on the one hand, the

media-polis described by Buoncompagni requires that citizens, and more in detail, active communicators in the media-polis, should recognize the role they play in the social debate, adopting a tone and a lexicon coherent with a “linguistic hospitality, a fundamental ethical disposition that involves ensuring that, when we write and speak, we maintain that “right distance”.

On the other hand, referring to the art market, Mikic reports that “about the restrictions that influence the development of the art market [...]a particular group of art scene representatives in the Western Balkan Art Market Survey (2012) did not want to participate in it and express their views on this aspect of cultural policy, stating their “antimarket orientation”, that they “do not act commercially”, that are “fighters against the market “,” do not belong to the market” etc”.

What this number do underline, therefore, is that we cannot take for granted that phenomena such as active citizenship, art market pluralism, and more generally, cultural and creative development, are exactly what our societies really want, today.

This is not a “provocative approach” but a key-point that in public debate is not really well-expressed. If Cultural practitioners, policymakers and academician do not take into account that there is a possibility that citizens do not want a pluralistic culture, the risk we take is that culture, more than “the new black”, could become the new “ideology”.

Indeed, as cultural operators, the only chance we have to improve our society is abandoning a paternalistic approach and meet the challenge of a culture that is a “particular good” in the free market of “attention”.

Art Market, archaeology, poetry and music should try to get off their high horse, starting to convince citizens of their usefulness and of the goodness of their expressions.

Policymakers should design development patterns that do really take into account that the only pluralism possible in our political and economic framework is in a free-market vision. They should really acting in order to stimulate the private intervention and reduce the vagueness about the role culture could play in our society because culture is an immaterial good but not an abstract good.

It is a path that still requires further efforts to be concretely undertaken, but it is the only way we have to succeed.



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