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ENCATC WORKING GROUP

Evaluation of International and European

Transnational Cultural Projects

Keynote speech.

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“Cultural enterprises sustainability in a fast multilateral world; contents, new players, new tools”

I am not an academic.

I have been a cultural producer since more than thirty years, and in the past ten years, I have been (and still am) in charge of evaluating cultural/artistic projects or mobilities throughout the world, weither with Unesco/International Fund for Cultural Diversity, or Asia Europe Foundation or the Roberto Cimetta Fund, and my following reflexions are the reflect of a field operator considering what is behind all these projects.

Things are moving a bit faster than the way they used to, and on a very randomly mood.

... or maybe this is a feeling due to my age, or due to our unadapted analisys of the so-called modern world.

A) First, let's focus on five major evolutions:

- 1) Content industries

According to several economists, content industries (Culture, multi-media, communication, entertainment, and the fast growing education-on-line sector) may become the first economical asset in the world in the next 50 years, following the decline of fossile energies. Some petrol states have already begun to launch initiatives in this prospect, for example the whole complex of high tech industries around the Louvre Abu Dhabi.

Global investement funds are already investing huge sums in this sector.

For example, as published in its own website, Providence Equity Fund (which is only one of them) plans to invest in the two next years 60 billions dollars in global media, education and culture. As a matter of comparison, the french Ministry of Culture (one of the best financed in Europe) announced a 2018 budget reaching almost 1 billion euros, more or less 60 times less.

These global players are already attempting to ruling the game in which we play.

But one could also consider that, on the contrary of what is usually said, there will be more and more funds dedicated to "Culture", and, paradoxaly, agile and hyper-active networks of lighter content industries, very familiar with peer-to-peer relationship, will re-inforce their new markets since these ones are not considered interesting enough financially by the global empires. They will still keep their leadership on R&D, on innovation, on creativity, but they have to organise quickly their independance towards the big ones. In this regard, skilled negotiators from the Cultural sector will be highly requested.

At the difference of heavy industries, these smaller multi-lateral instant horizontal networks will facilitate inter-cultural dialogue.

- 2) The nature of mass-consumation (of which mass-tourism is one of the most visible aspects in the Mediterranean area), and its requirement to constantly be at its maximum efficiancy, drives it to separate the different categories of individuals, up to a critical breach in

social cohesion. The generation gap is directly generated by consumption marketing, city planning is directly linked to gentrification, women still have a lot of difficulties to have their human rights respected, working classes and elites become fierce enemies, etc... Mass-consumption is not only a threat to environment, it is also a direct threat to intercultural dialogue. More than ever, Culture as a platform for this dialogue is an utmost priority.

The notion of ethic capitalism (which in a way touches the relationship between religions and secularism) remains marginal when confronted to profits maximisation. In the actual context of global negotiations on economy, ethic capitalism still remains an intellectual speculation, and the absence of ethic in economy fuels directly the most violent disputes.

Culture causes are sensible in most of the on-going hard conflicts on Earth.

But soft conflicts fuel self-censorship, which is not only produced by politics, but also by economy.

Who today is the guardian of ethic, of freedom of expression, of freedom of creation?

Self-censorship is not only the case in dictatorial regimes, it is also growing in rich democratic areas.

- 3) The influence of cultural (and cultural) zones is replacing gradually the national borders, for the best and the worst. Trapped in a very old-fashioned "bloc-against-bloc" strategy dating from other centuries, the traditional competition between nations is being replaced by the instrumentalisation of cultural differences, (very often disguised under the term "cultural diplomacy"), by this famous "shock of civilisations" which is more and more successful, although it is nothing else than a new make-up on the face of nationalism. In all parts of the world, after the apparent decline of colonial powers, some new regional or religious heavy-weights (muslims extremists but also evangelists extremists, in Brasil, Central America, Africa, etc...) try to occupy the empty chair, become more aggressive, more radical, gain more influence, although the constant and never-ending pressure of US, Russia, EU and China is still there, under new forms. Do these regional powers consider intercultural dialogue as an essential tool for peace ? Even, do they consider peace as predominant to their expansion ?

At the same time, as a strange paradox, we can acknowledge the re-nationalisation of Culture, which becomes again a non-negotiable part of national sovereignty, and, above all, manipulating and transforming individual rights (including cultural rights) to make them a collective norm, a collective flag, imposing to artists what is culturally correct and what is not, re-introducing some uncovered obligation of cultural "patriotism".

- 4) Instant multipolar peer-to-peer

As anyone has noticed, the excellent definition of networking, given by the regretted Dragan Klaić in the early 2000: "networking is the communication which does not go through the center", is taking today all its sense.

(cf. Dragan Klaić's visionary article published on the 28th of august 2004 in De Vrije Nederland on new forms of european cultural platforms in foreign countries).

It goes without saying that today, cultural managers and artists have mostly replaced their ways of vertical processes of submission, permission and orders by an on-going process of permanent, multilateral, borderless consultations and negotiations with their peers, which escape more and more central powers and official art forms.

Interestingly enough, this is also the case for local public decision makers, including in the culture field. Although this way of doing generates also new kinds of problems (for example the fast erosion of the memory, in a permanent "re-invention of the hot water"), this movement cannot be stopped and is barely controllable, as we all know through the medias. Cultural and artistic projects are not conceived any more as they used to be, for example the

- The option Two is what I call "the First Step", this complex, organic, very accessible, flexible set of smaller tools, places, experimentation spaces, niche markets, which are like oxygen for the new generations of creative people.

This is where things are cooking.

Very alive through a global by peer-to-peer multilateral network, it cannot be ruled by any policy. By nature, it is difficult to control, very often it contests dominant models.

But this sort of natural supply-and-demand circle, expression of curiosity, experimentation, freedom of creation, is strong and fragile at the same time, and requires support.

It is exactly the place where newcomers can meet, can discover each other. But as we all know, virtuality always augments the desire of physical encounters, first contacts naturally call for longer and more concrete development, demand better knowledge of "the other".

It is exactly where what we call mobility is playing a vital role, as a development agent in the middle of these multiple peripheries.

It is also contributing quite well to the application of international agreements concerning Human Rights, in particular Cultral Rights, or Cultural Diversity.

Even if each of these "First Step" actions seems too small to be communicated, their accumulation becomes naturally a fantastic lever for change, a powerful global message, and, we have seen in the recent past that it could even lead to revolutions in quite a few countries.

Specifically in the case of developing countries, which are almost as rich as Europe in terms of creativity, and where demography is even enhancing the pressure of new generations, the Cultural Policy models which have been copyed-pasted from the western Cultural Policies prove today to be largely unable to answer the needs of these new generations of artists and cultural activists.

In these regions, restricting Culture to heritage or tourism would create huge frustrations, is already fueling a massive brain drain (one-way mobility), and is a large waste of intellectual ressources, not to speak about humiliation.

Therefore, it seems to me urgent to help structuring local Creativity, to make it autonomous, visible and proud, to facilitate its circulation and market. These regions wait desperately for a multiplication and a stabilisation of cultural civil society initiatives, and this where we are awaited.

Beyond this question stands the biggest one, a subject for another larger discussion: reforming global governance !!!

C) Impact on evaluations criteriae:

Therefore, I would recommand a re-consideration of evaluation criteriae, and as a draft proposition, considering what I said earlier, and leaving the artistic producer's mysterious and magic skills beyond this discussion, since the mystery of Art cannot be engineered.

I could list what should be for me the 9 top ones criteriae. Of course, all of this is a question of relative gradation...:

- 1) Consortium of partners, at least 2 partners in each of minimum 2 countries (networking)
- 2) Impact plan on 3 and 5 years. Must be numbered (sustainability)
- 3) Balance between self- and public financement (independance)

- 4) Clear indicators showing respect of international agreements such as Convention 2005 on Cultural Diversity, Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Conseil de l'Europe recommandations, etc... (ethics)
- 5) Local social and cultural expectations reviewed and addressed (mapping)
- 6) Knowledge of local artistic and cultural market development (marketing)
- 7) "Non-cultural" parts of the effect (socialising)
- 8) Pre- and post-self evaluation, self-monitoring process. It does not mean that external evaluation should disappear.
- 9) Ability to negotiation, inside and outside the Cultural sector

It goes without saying that the notion of permanently revisited criteriae should be introduced as early as cultural management trainings are concerned, as a core part of strategic studies, since they should be justified not only by a political but also by a scientific approach.

As a conclusion, I am fully aware that this speech is pronounced on a wagon that is going full speed in a random way.

These reflexions could make sense today, and appear obsolete tomorrow.

And as an old french saying warns us: "the advisers are not the financiers".

Cultural and artistic international cooperation needs some flexibility, fast action and long-term resilience.

Keep courage.

I thank you for your attention.

Ferdinand Richard