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Speech at Sheila Jasanoff's seminary. Giannino Bassetti Foundation, Milan, may 5, 2008

Intro

First of all I would like to thank the Bassetti Foundation for these two seminars with Prof. Jasanoff and eminent STS scholars, very precious opportunities for all the initiatives, as the Milan science-café that I here represent, that want to entrench science in the cultural background of a more sound civic intelligence and participation. And this because ST-Studies represent the essential theoretical background where to frame and act them in a coherent and effective way.

Innovation is a cognitive behavioral process

Innovation, which is a physiological need of each living creature as society is, not only has to be favoured and governed, but also, and more important, has to be understood and interpreted in its political, social and ethical dimensions. The acknowledgement of the interdependence of these intertwined processes, bring to recognise the innovative direction as a cognitive behavioral process of the entire society, where each individual struggles to find its own trajectories.

A 'cartesian dichotomy'

As a metaphor, we could say that each epoch is challenged by its own risk of a cartesian dichotomy between a social corpus and the intelligence which governs it; and each epoch is called to resolve this duality, also by means of new collective imaginaries and narratives, new processes of dialogue and communication forms, all these ingredients taking part in the emergence of an intelligence *within* the social corpus.

In a period of crisis of some previous strong-thoughts, let's say, strong architectural visions of society, confrontation, trust and cohesion have to be found more in the dimensions of a free and open dialogue where lightness ties with precision, doubts and uncertainty with responsible action.

Network connectivity paradigm and new forms of value production

In this context the paradigm of the network connectivity plays a crucial role, a paradigm enabled particularly by the explosion of the new media technologies, which open a myriad of niches and germs of knowledge. Instruments which are stretched between the risk to be misused by non-particularly democratic aims, and, on the other side, the possibility to become the catalyst for a new solution of this cartesian dichotomy, towards a more rich and sound civic intelligence. So-called social production, new ways to reach reputation and trust, the growing weight of the 'tail production' versus the mainstream one, are only some phenomena of creation of new forms of value. Besides a spirit of reciprocity and gift, the challenge is to find for them new business-models too.

The science-cafes experiments

In an economy of knowledge, knowledge is surely important for competitiveness but also as an entertainment and as an environmental background to live better.

A more visible presence of researchers and effective dialogue with society, could not only increase the impact of science on the overall culture, but also benefit the prestige of researchers, their responsibility and the trust in them.

May be, showing the craft side, even the artistic side of researcher's work, could have beneficial effects on their creativity too!

Moreover, if there is a change in the methods of production of science and its valorial drivers towards more privatistic and economic motivations, in individuals a basic need to communicate knowledge persists.

Science cafés are moments of dialogue between researchers and the public characterised by informality and openness. I would like to report just some of the answers to the question: “*why them? what are their motivations?*”: in France they say “*c’est quelque chose de tellement naturel et humain*”, in the United States “*it’s so difficult to have an intelligent conversation in Los Angeles*” whereas in Japan people use SMS to pose questions because of a reverential awe of the ‘experts’. Also in these very simple examples we can recognize the peculiarities of each country!

Territories, expo2015

But big collective narratives and imaginaries, need to be embodied not only in the head of people but also in evolving ideas of the living territory and in big project perspectives.

In Milan is raising a new idea of an extended metropolitan area, characterised by a movement from the statical patterns of industrial production to more dynamical fluxes integrated at the global level. In this transforming territorial framework and identity, the presence of science as a driver of economic development has to be reinvented and reallocated.

The target of the expo2015 could be a very important opportunity not only as a matter of business but also as a way to pose to civic evidence and debate: - the importance of science in the crucial questions of food and human nutrition, - the importance of science in connecting our idea of territory with the living territories of the world - and the importance of science in tying our changing population to the populations of the world.

End

These are some of the challenges for the Italian democracy which, as we recognised in the last political events, experience a rapid redefinition of the places and processes of representativeness.

In my opinion an evolving identity can only grow in the ground of dialogue and participation, and emerge from a culture that stimulate and reconcile freethought, innovative ideas and people’s wisdom.