

**SouthMed CV**  
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If one considers Culture as an important tool for local development or for external relations, one should face the fact that today the choices of the related policies must be urgently cleared.

Although differences occur, according to contexts, this problematic is global, and not restricted to the zone we are concerned with today. It also applies to the internal relations within the south and the north of Europe.

Cultural policies are facing a crossroad and have to make a choice.

Basically, we face two options:

- The current Option One (which you would allow me to call "The Cloud", a misty place very high in the sky where we cannot see who decides what) is backed by traditional Cultural policies inherited from the nations, which, in a very top-down effect, aim at circulating cultural products or elements of national pride, generally conceived, produced, engineered and marketed by larger professional contents industries in some dedicated areas, mostly urban, and largely instrumentalised by global business or national politics. This movement is more and more centralised, controlled and financed by global entrepreneurs, investment funds, political groups, mass medias, massive institutional events.

It converges more and more towards a "Modèle unique de Pensée" (et de Création), which goes well together with "le Marché Unique", and tends to deny the creative potential of everyone (against all international agreements such as the Universal Declaration of the Human Rights, and all related Unesco Conventions)

As significant side effects, it seems to generate a growing artists self-censorship in order to fit with the model and the market, it augments the fragmentation of the Society in centers and peripheries, in racial and religious antagonisms, and it is quite certainly at the origin of violent conflicts. Popular art forms become rigid, repeat themselves in a loop, which is the undisputable sign that the human right to experimentation is at risk, or restricted to a small elite.

And, to get back to the subject of the day, this logic tends to consider only a very specific form of mobility, the no-return trip from the peripheries to the production centers.

The first to pay the price are the new generations of artists, the up-coming ideas and desires, the peripheral areas, the minorities.

Even before any philosophical consideration, it could be seen as the expression of a bad management on long term, and it probably costs billions to our economies.

This Option One cannot be the model that the rest of the world should adopt. Its effects are largely in opposition, with the Option Two.

- The Option Two (let me call it "the First Step") is constituted by 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 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 developments, 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 Cultural 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.

Specifically in the case of the Euro-Arab-Middle Eastern region, which is 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 copied-pasted from the West prove today to be largely unable to answer the needs of these new generations of artists and cultural activists. In this region, 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 resources, not to speak about humiliation.

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

The SouthMed CV program has achieved immensely on this level, and its followings are deeply needed if we, Europeans, want to keep fruitful and peaceful neighbouring relationships with the Arab world and the Middle East, hoping to counterbalance the terrible effects of the current new geopolitical tendencies.

Since the European Institutions do not pay tribute to a national sovereignty issue, they should place Arts and Culture at the heart of Local Development, and Local Development at the heart of their International Policy.

As a conclusion, let me refer again to Article 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights: "All human beings are equal in dignity and in rights".

In my understanding, to be equal in dignity means that there cannot be any dominating Culture.

I thank you for your attention,

*Ferdinand Richard, 10 April Brussels*