



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*