

CO-GOVERNANCE: MUTUAL RESPONSIBILITY IN CITIES TODAY

International conference

2019 January 17-20 - Castel Gandolfo, Rome, Italy

PACT FOR A NEW GOVERNANCE

The questions that globalization causes in the political, economic, technological and social spheres impact ever more harshly on the life of cities.

The fear that multiple changes have generated has led to social depression and narrow mindedness, escalating conflicts and inequalities and has seriously undermined social cohesion.

The "cities" to which we refer are understood as places where there is co-existence and a sense of belonging in many forms, from mega-cities to rural villages. They are home to more than half of the world's population, a proportion destined to grow further. And they therefore experience all the challenges of humankind, from social imbalances to ethnic conflicts, from environmental problems to democratic aphasia.

Urban governance is a complex task. Present day decisions determine the next generations' future. This is why cities have a strategic political and cultural importance and since they have always represented the place of utopia and the newness of human coexistence, they can become settings for experimentation so as to transform fear, social breakdown and conflict into opportunities that generate answers, both locally and globally.

The "change of age" requires a new commitment that involves conscience, thought and action, on a personal and collective level.

A different vision of democratic processes can emerge from the local level with the decisive recognition of the value of participation, where participation means first of all feeling part of a shared history, because we all belong to the one human family.

"We are convinced that cities can become workshops in which daily interactions among people enable them to pursue peace and justice; where virtuous circles can be triggered by anyone and spread, building up constructive habits of citizenship. Cities can enable true encounters in the context of cultural diversity leading to a greater capacity for hospitality. Democracy can acquire a new quality through cooperation between politicians, technical experts, competent officials, the knowledge possessed by citizens and the numerous stakeholders.

www.co-governance.org - cogovernance2019@gmail.com

If this approach is consolidated in a great variety of effective practices, it can become a system and project itself on a global level".

The signatories of this Pact, coming from cities in various continents, and involved in different roles and commitments, have decided to become front line workers alongside those who are key players in other paths.

The first choice is to adopt the tool and philosophy of the network, a social structure defined by the nodes that support it and the quality of the human relationships that connect it.

In this context, networks are the most effective processes for aggregating diversity and, consequently, for responding with a broader vision to complex reality. Dialogue between different subjects can rebuild the fabric of the city, because it increases social capital, improves public choices and makes them more effective.

Networks, in fact, produce effects superior to the simple sum of their parts and yield the happiness of many, because they do not flatten out differences but strengthen the identity of all. By gathering and multiplying skills and talents, networks create the future in times when everything is compressed into the present.

The networks we are talking about are never closed circuits, but seek out connections with other networks, thus overcoming elitist policy closures and mitigating social asymmetries.

Moreover, they avoid becoming unproductive selfish organizations because they choose to approach and engage with people often on the margins of democratic dynamics due to economic, relational or cultural poverty.

To restore full political subjectivity to cities, the logic of networks must be implemented on at least three levels:

Networks of citizens: people who live in the city while having different roles and tasks, but inspired by the same sense of responsibility;

Networks of people working in particular sectors: forming groups in professional and economic spheres, the voluntary sector, faith communities, academia and universities, communications, etc.

networks among cities: because the unity of the human family does not come from a top down decision, but from an intelligent, active and patient building of a network of networks.

This leads to the key question that challenges political action primarily on the level of the method: how to decide? And how can decisions be translated into practice? It is a question asked of anyone who activates a network for political action.

Some priorities emerged from the conference.

Citizens who choose to operate in networks: www.co-governance.org - cogovernance2019@gmail.com

Opposing corruption, which has become a system through individual behaviours, by acting responsibly and with integrity on a personal, family and work level;

Seeking opportunities for continuous training to learn about contexts, strengthen motivations and acquire skills;

Demanding clear information, appreciating the multiplicity of languages (including new technologies) to tackle complex problems; transparency in decision-making processes; clarity on political agendas;

Looking towards the overall "design" of the city and cultivating it after having perceived it, safeguarding it even in adverse conditions through strategies for resilience;

Demanding a loyal relationship with institutions, while these must deserve the participation of citizens by making available elements of real power.

Collective stakeholders who choose to operate in networks:

Going through the city, giving voice to its wounds; offering a map of its potential and making it known, with complete information;

Helping to focus on the profound spirit of the city's history (genius loci) promoting it through their own skills;

Constantly being in dialogue with the institutions, harmonizing particular interests with the common good, without asking for favours, asking that participation find a stable home in new statutes, community agreements, and consultations.

Together with people engaged in the institutions they adopt some fundamental principles: transparency and integrity, task sharing and inclusion, accountability and evaluation.

In the significant but well defined territory of the cities, they address with competence and an overall vision, the urgent needs of the environment and social and urban planning, of the digital revolution and the crisis of representation, to find answers that can be applied on a large scale.

Cities that choose to work in networks:

They choose to share energies to "think locally and act globally" through various means such as town-twinning, which can create fragments of universal fraternity;

They aim to make citizenship work first of all by creating platforms that are accessible to all and easy to use;

they cooperate overcoming particular interests and prejudices that undermine trust, which is an indispensable foundation for building a network, aware that the difficulties on the path can become opportunities for bolder and broader strategies and creative collaboration;

www.co-governance.org - cogovernance2019@gmail.com

They aim to share programs and information, human and material resources, but also failures and problematic experiences, to help each other and open new prospects and ways of collaborating.

They wish to be recognized as significant stakeholders within international and transnational organizations and institutions, so as to integrate government representation with the voices of peoples".

In light of these network commitments, the city government expands into a multi-dimensional co-governance process, acquiring democratic quality, decision-making capacity, effective outcomes and prospects for the future.

Three powerful guidelines shed light on the path that opens up before the signatories of this Pact:

To interpret the meaning of politics as a democratic, participatory and deliberative experience, which is not confrontational and calls everyone to commitment.

To nurture participatory processes at every level, where dialogue which is fundamental to human interaction, finds forms, languages and facilitating tools.

To dialogue with all in search of an inclusive and fraternal culture, on the one hand rich in the diversity of peoples and on the other woven by those shared values that make the journey towards the unity of the human family possible.

www.co-governance.org - cogovernance2019@gmail.com