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GLOBALIZATION OF NETWORKS TOWARDS THE EMPIRE OF KNOWLEDGE

An interview with Roberto Panzarani, Professor of Innovation Management

by Massimiliano Cannata, Technology Innovation, Training and Security Culture Reporter



"Global" is not the title of a book (will release Palinese publisher) but the beginning of a new challenge for Roberto Panzarani, just back from a trip to Brazil. Ten years ago has been published the essay "Viaggio delle Idee" (Journey of Ideas - Franco Angeli translated into Portuguese and disseminated throughout Brazil), a prophetic essay in which the researcher draws attention on the complex dualism between ICT and social-politics contest already unable to give more space to the intellectual capital as the real engine of neo-capitalism

In spite of the past, in this context it is crucial the combination between persons and tools, including our ability to manage the change and progress of scientific and technological research.

Professor, the innovation does not stop but yet there are rigid and unchangeable constants such as our persistent inadequacy in the understanding of innovation processes at all levels. "Global" analyses this cognitive deficit, what are the conclusions?

The reflection on the development paths of management of innovation has been and continues to be the North Star of my activities of teaching and organizational studies. In this work I focus on two important factors of innovation: technology and globalization. In the last trilogy (sense of community, business collaboration, Humanity editor's note) I was focused on technological factors that were changing the face of companies' business and the same rules of the economy. Now, in the middle of the discussion I placed the second factor, the globalization.

Globalization has showed signs of weakness in these years, do not you think?

There isn't single answer. It should be noted that we have gone through various globalizations. From "homo Naledi", nomadic by definition, to the discover of the "new world", industrial and post-industrial. Today we talk of the networks globalized, thanks to the diffusion of technologies and devices.

What are the consequences of this dynamics that impact on socio – economic changes?

Simple: we are not faced with an incremental innovation but with a disruptive innovation, which obliges us to continuously update. In the previous "globalizations" the times of innovation diffusion were slow, now within a few months the change invades our daily lives, as well as the markets recording the continuous invasion of increasingly aggressive competitors who come from distant worlds. In this context the our neural synapses are urged constantly to revise and understand the reality. This operation is not easy and exposes a paradox...

Which?

The Indian anthropologist Appadurai explains it very well: "We live in a world characterized by an increasing gap between the globalization of knowledge and understanding of globalization, at the same time the knowledge of the world is increasingly important for anyone while the opportunities to acquire this knowledge are shrinking". The thing, however, more difficult to accept is that the phenomenon denounced by Appadurai is not happening only in developing countries but also in the countries of the old continent, real enigma of globalization.

Are you describing a profile of the European crisis?

Yes, one of the profiles, maybe the most disturbing. While in the phase of the Columbian Exchange, the knowledge was at the center of "discover" and conquest, at this historic moment the Europe behaviour was not many knowledgeable. It will be difficult to recover, as it will be for Italy. A fact for all: 45% of the students have abandoned our University in 2013, it was the highest number of the Continent. In these conditions, it becomes impossible to activate a governance of globalization. The most capable countries to invest in knowledge and assets will be the winners of the match.

There is no reason to be happy. Under these conditions the colonizing Europe may be dominated by other regions of the world. An unexpected but possible scenario. What do you think about that?

As claimed by Alec Ross in "Il nostro Futuro" ("Our Future" release Feltrinelli publisher) a big part of the business is moving to Silicon Valley, which has become rich like the ancient Rome because collects "tributes from all its provinces". Platforms like Uber and Airbnb have flipped the system balances. The same thing for the economic ads that by now we can find on Google advertisements. In a nutshell, globalization has transformed in the empire of knowledge and will need more and more of expertise to be managed and controlled.

Well, we have described the shadows and contradictions. Is there any light in this change?

Fortunately, we can see processes of self-organization and continuous adaptation in different contexts. The world is more and more little and interconnected in these regions "far from the balance". To use a thermodynamic metaphor, it experiences organizational forms, collaborative moments and phases of exchanges and discussion on the threshold of uncertainty between the cosmos and chaos. In these topics, we are reinventing the company and the same business foundations.

An important section of your research concerns the specific cases of social innovation. What is it about?

This is the most authentic and vital part of the essay, is the part of globalization with which we measure ourselves. I think about Chile that has decided to attract young people to create new high-tech companies or about the government of Argentina that invests in know how and intelligence. We should follow the virtuous example of these countries without fear and prejudices due to old logics.

It will not be easy to fill this gap of culture and vision. Don't you believe that we have failed too many times?

We have not other choice. "Global" describes the changing world through stories that give a different "colour" of the globalization that is not an abstract phenomenon. It is life itself that goes beyond the traditional fences, turning to open networks, real and virtual. People are desirous to "create" a better world, in which human development and economic progress will eventually converge.



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