

## Culture-based social innovation. Procida Italian Capital of Culture 2022. The triumph of Utopia

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The co-production of culture in a marginal territory represents a paradigm that from Southern Italy can become a model to be exported to Europe and beyond. The Procida cultural development project is based on the direct involvement of the local community and has been recognized as a good practice within the peer learning program Cultural Heritage in Action of the project: European Framework for Action on Cultural Heritage promoted by the European Commission.

The assignment of the title of Italian Capital of Culture to a village like Procida represents an epochal turning point in Italian cultural policies, until now mainly aimed at strengthening the great attractors. The island was rewarded not for the plurality of events proposed but for the transversality of the project which recognizes a structural value to culture - rather than tourism - in local growth processes, as the slogan of the project "Culture does not isolate" states.

The Procida appointment can therefore be seen as "the triumph of utopia" after more than five centuries: the winner is a project based on living cultural heritage rather than on a more practical capitalization of capacities for tourism: the community acts and it becomes itself a cultural heritage to rediscover an identity and a link with one's own land. The project that Europe liked so

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much and which therefore makes it exportable even beyond national borders, is based on the organization of events that seal the island's role as a source of inspiration, a real place together with a space for the imagination and social inclusion activities, promoting the relationship between culture and innovation and strengthening alliances between public and private subjects.

The most innovative aspect of the project consists in the conception of the island territory as a laboratory in continuous evolution, which looks to the community and its peculiarities as a starting point and a point of arrival and within which some practices of social innovation, based on culture , are experimented to respond to specific needs of the territory, also activating alternative growth directives to the strictly cultural ones, oriented to the development of the ecosystem for Cultural and Creative Industries, to allow young people to be protagonists again in a project that, also through actions of regeneration, give new centrality to a common heritage in disuse.

The Procida project is therefore based on the affirmation of two main paradigms: the role of culture within communities as a tool for the challenges of sustainable development and social innovation based on culture, a strategic model for which Italy and, in particular, the South is distinguished from other European nations. The dossier "Culture does not isolate", translated into 25 languages, has stimulated a reflection on the need to find a new interpretation of an often stereotyped narrative of small inland areas and proposes a new approach that could be adopted by most of the small European communities. In this process Procida offers itself as a test bed to reflect on the possibility of transforming fragility into strengths, especially in small ecosystems. New agriculture and microeconomics, local cooperatives for the management of common goods, resettlement practices, new forms of welfare, appropriate technology transfer, enhancement of local

resources, slow and informed tourism, are just some of the many instances that make it possible to guide the enhancement of local resources towards a new constructive and productive vision of spaces and societies. It is a question of overcoming the traditional view that the development of these territories is based on the capitalization and enhancement of the historical values, traditions and local heritage, essentially with tourism promotion objectives, because today this model risks hindering new development paths.

