

**2nd Panel – Cultural diplomacy.
Empowering civil society
and local community.
A transnational approach.**

***Promoting diversity as a tool for urban
cultural dynamism: Milan's experience***

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Over the last few years, growing migrant communities urged European local administrations to design and implement more effective policies for inclusion, dialogue and civil society empowerment. The City of Milan faced such a challenge by developing an innovative cultural platform, whose success lies in the enthusiastic response and participation provided by migrant communities themselves.

Since 2011 Milan has enhanced the value of its cultural diversity, conceived as a source of cultural, social and economic development and innovation. The Municipality, through its Cultural Networks office, bet on the migrants' cultural and creative activism as well as on the willingness of the diverse communities to cooperate with each other. The Municipality invited migrants to establish their own cultural associations and launched the *Forum della Città Mondo* (World City Forum), an umbrella organization designed to provide these new-born associations with guidance, networking opportunities and project management skills to impact on Milan's vibrant cultural scene.

Moreover, the Municipality, with its overall goal of linking ancient and modern cultural expressions, hosts the Forum's headquarters in its brand-new Museum of Cultures (MuDeC), house of the municipal ethnographic collections. At MuDeC several cultural activities designed and implemented by migrants' associations take place every month, including conferences, courses, workshops and intercultural meetings.

The response of the migrant communities could hardly be stronger. The World City Forum, counting now over 500 participating organizations and 5 thematic groups (Women

and Culture; Food, Urban Gardens and Expo Side Events; Participation and Active Citizenship; Museum of Cultures; Communication and Cultural Events), has thus implemented numerous activities over the last 4 years, dealing with a variety of themes.

Indisputably one of the key players in the city's cultural life, on May 1st 2015 the Forum opened the city's main international event, the Universal Exposition, with a parade by representatives from all its communities. The Forum contributes regularly to Milan's cultural events such as *BookCity Milano*, an annual literary festival, *Tramedautore*, international theatre festival, and *Expo in the City*, the program of Expo Milan 2015's side events taking place in the city center.

The enhanced cultural dynamism Milan is experiencing thanks to the Forum shows the great potential of the promotion of cultural diversity and represent a best practice which is likely to influence local authorities keen to foster dialogue and integration.



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media. Lorenzo is also involved in a dual doctorate at EHESS in Paris and LUISS in Rome, where he worked as teaching assistant in Techniques of International Negotiation and in Mediterranean Studies. Lorenzo's thesis, "Scope and challenges of the youth activism conveyed by art and culture", benefits from his experience as founder and chairman of Il Tamarindo, an Italian NGO devoted to intercultural dialogue, cultural diversity, creative economy and youth empowerment. Lorenzo has been the head of several projects implemented by Il Tamarindo, such as its multilingual cultural magazine, international seminars, concerts and exhibitions, artistic and entrepreneurial competitions. Lorenzo studied International Relations at the University of

Bologna, Sciences Po Paris, Istituto per gli Studi di Politica Internazionale in Milan and LUISS. He gained his first professional experiences at the European Commission in Brussels, the UNESCO Culture Sector in Paris, the Italian Embassy in Tehran and Istituto Affari Internazionali in Rome.

The Museum “Mediterranean Patterns” in Gibellina as a process of redefinition of artistic languages

Francesca Corrao, Fondazione Orestyadi

Introducing the Museum “Mediterranean Patterns” leads us to recall its founder, Ludovico Corrao. As a fine young intellectual he was already sensitively responsive to the beauty of art and started collecting the greater part of the exhibits displayed here. From antique Sicilian furniture, to classical and contemporary works up to and including the objects of Mediterranean arts and crafts. His experience in political life and travels led Corrao to further his vision of Sicily as a bridge of trade and exemplary model of dialogue, as evidenced by the precious collection of the Museum.

Corrao was a tireless Mayor who gave all of himself to make of Gibellina a modern city of art, sensitive to the processes of social and cultural renewal. At the time of Gibellina’s reconstruction, the project and its development model represented concrete evidence of civic engagement, studied and appreciated at international level. In 1993, following a proposal by Corrao, the town council approved the charter of the Orestyadi Foundation as permanent workshop for the artistic memory of the city. Definition of the Museum guidelines saw the convergence of projects conceived by Corrao together with experts invited to give their contributions. Corrao was emblematic in his ability and insight shown in carrying out the work through a process of cooptation and adaptation to the conditions of the time. Corrao promoted international Congresses to study the Parks and the urban structures of old and new cities. These events stimulated new projects drawn up by the architects Ungfers, Pirrone and Venezia as a remedy to the former ill-conceived ones. Gibellina became a

laboratory working on transformations that involved the towns of the Belice Valley and various others, such as Mazzara del Vallo. The piazza system was created by Franco Purini and Laura Thermes, and leading artists were summoned to bring beauty to the town. Alberto Burri, for example, was called upon to preserve the memory of the old town working on its ruins, and created the “Cretto”; Pietro Consagra designed the “Star”, the gateway to the Belice Valley, Quaroni created the Church and numerous monuments were raised by a great many artists.

Corrao was fond of both the traditional and modern culture of the Mediterranean area, and therefore promoted international seminars and conferences together with the group of scholars led by Prof. Antonino Buttitta of the Faculty of Humanities and with the professors Michele Argentino of the Industrial Design Institute of Palermo Faculty of Architecture; together we have strengthened and structured what was originally a slender scheme, the desire to show the common cultural roots of all the peoples of the Mediterranean. Among the many initiatives we may recall the recital of Arab Poets in Sicily (1987) which I organized as a scholar of Arabic poetry together with the Sirian poet Adonis; the Conference on Costume promoted by Prof. Janne Vibæk Pasqualino of the Laboratory of Anthropology of Palermo University and the expert Antonella Corrao (1995); the symposium coordinated by Enzo Fiammetta - who was shortly after to become the director of the Museum - on "Materials for a museum of Sicilian-Arab culture" (1996).

In 1996, the Minister of Culture, Prof. Antonio Paolucci, inaugurated the Museum “Mediterranean Patterns”, a breeding ground of ideas which houses works, experimental workshops and exhibition projects promoted with enthusiasm - unflagging among us at the Foundation Orestyadi - in many centres of the Mediterranean, where they were always greeted with interest and keen attention.

Over the years, artists, authors of the ateliers, and the Italian and foreign intellectuals with their contributions have carried through a process of redefinition of artistic languages. Among them I would remember the Moroccan poet Muhammad Bennis and the painter Muhammad Melehi, the Tunisian painter Mja