Alma Welfare Community Project: Strategies to build a smart community

Anna Catalano, Letizia Cardines, Ilaria Mancini

Associazione Culturale Metropolis Europa, Rome, Italy
ass.metropolieuropa@gmail.com

Abstract. Alma Welfare Community, part of the General Social Plan of the 4th District in Rome, is one of the most innovative and significant ones of the new Welfare model realized on the territory. The idea of developing a welfare community in this District, moving from the synergies existing among different social actors, responds to the aim of promoting social welfare and citizens security through the construction of the community focused on a most wide participation/integration involving directly citizens of different social worlds in a mindful dimension.

Keywords: Community, learning, practices, identity, intergenerational relationships

1 Introduction

Alma Welfare Community is a project assigned through a public call for grants, to the Cultural Association Metropolis Europa that has, since its beginning, designed and realized social/cultural and educational projects addressed to citizens of all ages and to people involved in different ways in projects promoting social welfare and prevention of disadvantage at an individual, interindividual and communitarian level. It was so assigned with a perspective on integration and social inclusion with a particular reference to fragile people living in particular and/or disadvantaged territories, organizing and structuring proposals aimed at supporting processes of participation and citizenship.

The Project was at the beginning realized within Social Centers for elderly citizens in the 4th District, considering them not only centers supplying services but activators of learning, knowledge, participation, connection and focal points of the different local networks (ASL-Local Health Authority, EDA-Lifelong Learning, cultural services and so on). To support and accompany Social Centers for elderly people in their evolution from "third age places" to "community care places", giving value to intergenerational relationships and active citizenship policies.

During the following years it was specifically developed in "San Basilio", an area which presents several problems related to the specific identity of a suburban area in a huge metropolis involving all different social worlds. The methodology adopted proposes horizontal and participated intervention strategies allowing paths to social inclusion with particular reference to most fragile people.

2　A new approach to welfare

The design of a welfare community construction is focused on sharing "practices" by the various social actors involved. Practice in this case is meant as the concrete and shared realization of an activity founded on a joint repertory (which is at the same time codified and flexible) of tools and meanings, on a shared aim and a reciprocal engagement [3]. A construction/expansion of an open and mobile community where different social worlds meet (promotions of intergenerational exchange and policies of active citizenship). A new concept of welfare that focuses on the concept of relationality as an index of the quality of life. The territory becomes a particularly significant place within which forms of participation and solidarity can be developed reinforcing the collective and territorial identity. The design fundamental dimension concerns the construction of a Community of practice [3]: workshops and activities addressed to individuals and to the community. A multilingual creative path, both individual and communitarian, considering the sharing and the exchanges of experiences as authentically generative interaction. The use of New Technologies represents an additional communicative and narrative resource which is also used in order to share different practices.

A methodological approach that strategically aims to the central role of each person: activities are based on self-representation. The experience of self-representation [1] proposes to learn and practice a multiplicity of integrated languages to express oneself and to realize and share meanings together with other participants. The participants are active co-designers (sharing proposals, forms of participation, activities' organization) and not simple beneficiaries (participatory design), being also co-participants of practices of reflexive analysis of the experience done [4]. Different social worlds interact also out of their usual context, experimenting migratory movements to share the experience of a new participated way of inhabiting different spaces, different places (Social Centers, School, Cultural Centers, Theaters, outdoor locations). An approach based on a strong, open, inclusive and situated methodological structure [2] in which everything is always evolving: every aspect is in fact re-modulated and transformed together with the social actors involved in the experience, rediscovering individual and collective competencies.

3　References

1. Canevacci M.: Hybrid-natives. Verso l'auto-rappresentazione come transito, attraversamento, sincretismo multi-vocale e pluri-testuale in Cimmino, L. e Santambrogio, A. (a cura di), Antropologia e interpretazione: il contributo di Clifford Geertz alle scienze sociali, Perugia, Morlacchi, pp. 189--210, (2004)
2. Mantovani G.: I metodi qualitativi in psicologia. Strumenti per una ricerca situata, in Mantovani G., Spagnolli A. (a cura di), Metodi qualitativi in psicologia, Bologna, il Mulino, pp. 15--46, (2003)
3. Wenger E.C.: Communities of practice: Learning, Meaning, and Identity, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, (1998)
4. Zucchermaglio C., Saglietti, M.: La restituzione come pratica formativa situata?, in Alastra V., Kaneklin C., Scaratti G. (a cura di), La formazione situata. Repertori di pratica, Milano, Angeli, pp. 211--221, (2012).