Innovate, communicate and work together

KNOWLEDGE AND COOPERATION, THE FOUNDATIONS OF THE THIRD MISSION

Professor Paul Coyle, Director of the Entrepreneurial Mindset Network in London:

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We interviewed Professor Paul Coyle, Director of the Entrepreneurial Mindset Network in London, in the cloister of the Catholic University. We asked him to anticipate and deepen some of the topics that he would discuss later in the course of his meeting with the Rector Franco Anelli for the day dedicated to the Third Mission of the Universities.

Professor Coyle, let’s talk about Third Mission: what is its importance from the point of view of the university world?

“The third mission concerns the external involvement of the University, its meeting with society. I think that today shows how the Catholic University of Milan is taking its role very seriously within the city and the region. And I think it’s a very interesting thing.”

So the University that is not a closed world but opens up to the outside world. What can the University give to external productive economic realities?

“Obviously, the first thing the University can offer is the preparation of the students. But that’s not all: the University engages in research - which has its foundations in the real needs of society - in business, in local communities, in all those factors on which the local economy moves and develops. If you have good cooperation between University and city, exceptional things can happen. The boundaries are broken, because we talk about the same thing, and we can work together. The university can bring to the world the depth of knowledge, its traditions and it can help people to understand truth. Today, we need people who know how to recognise the truth, who know what knowledge is, and also help us to identify the things we must not neglect. I believe that the University carries within itself this idea, this understanding of things, and it does so through a variety of disciplines, an aspect that becomes a foundation for society.”

And what can the University take from the outside world?

“The contributions that citizens can give to the University are many: people can come to the University and share their vision of things, their idea of what needs to be done, and can help us understand how the world works and how it is transforming. We need to make sure that the people who deal with business come to the University, spend time inside it, talk to the students, meet the teachers and share their skills.”

Is there a difference in approach with the outside world between Anglo-Saxon and Italian universities?

“The best approach is the one that fits the place, the people, the traditions, the history, the resources that work in that location. It’s important what’s right for this place, it would be wrong to think.

Ok, let’s look at the US as an ideal model, let’s try to copy it,” I think this is not possible, we need to look to our local traditions and at the same time think about the future.”

Soon he will speak to the academic community and the city of Milan.

What goals would you like to reach your intervention?

“I came to Milan to address as many people as possible, and I expect to speak to professors, students, entrepreneurs, local politicians, business men and women, so it will be a very diverse audience. With my intervention I will try to address my arguments to all the people present, not just to a select few. I hope to be able to reach everyone because the third mission concerns not only the University but all the actors operating in the ecosystem.”

What is the future of the Third University Mission? What do you hope will happen in the next few years?

“My personal vision is that the interest and importance of the Third Mission will not fade. I have worked with Universities in Australia, China, USA, Europe, South Africa: people gather around the world to talk about this topic. I believe that universities have a very important role and must devote themselves to the economic, social and cultural issues of their cities and their countries.

Furthermore, at the University we have a huge responsibility to talk about such fundamental issues, such as climate change or other issues relevant to society. What will we do? We cannot simply say ‘Ok, I think we are only at the beginning, we will have to keep talking about it, more and more’.”