

Naples "The City of Fire" at NYU

Gero Salamone (June 09, 2015)



The story of Naples at Casa Italiana Zerilli-Marimò, told by its first citizen, Luigi De Magistris. A metropolis filled with contradictions but rich in cultural contamination. And various are its similarities with New York...

These days the city of New York has seen the mayor of Naples, [Luigi De Magistris](#) [2], roam its streets, in the shade of its skyscrapers. He came to the Big Apple to take part in a series of encounters including the one that took place last Friday June 5th at NYU's Casa Italiana Zerilli-Marimò.

After a brief stop next door, at the Vanni Library, a cultural space managed by the [Centro Primo Levi](#) [3], he arrives at the townhouse Baroness Zerilli-Marimò insisted upon, a place of encounters and culture, extremely important for the Italian New York encountering the American world.



An event that was part of the "[Eppur si muove](#)" [4] series, because Naples, despite its difficulties, is a city in movement, not just a city with a long history rich in art and culture. Naples is a lively city that changes and wants to change, other than a slice of Italy still managing to evoke emotions amongst the visitors, happy to loose themselves in the suggestive streets of the spanish quarter or in the romantic sunset over the city's gulf.

A room filled with people welcomes him - and on the floor above others followed the event on a screen from the library. Some of the participants are originally from the Parthenopean city, others were likely drawn by the figure of De Magistris, who has always defined himself as a unique mayor, far from the stereotypical politician.

The small, dimly lit stage and the opening to the sound of [Pino Daniele](#) [5]'s "Napule è", transformed the formality in a delightful chat between the first citizen of Naples, Professor Stefano Albertini (NYU) and the journalist Letizia Airos (i-Italy), during which various topics related to the mayor's personal and professional life were discussed.

A life, that of De Magistris, marked by his anti-establishment attitude, both in his previous role as a public minister, conducting various touchy investigations, and in his position as a politician: first in the europarlament in Brussels and now as the mayor of Naples.

A man who decided, as he specified, to be with the people by breaking the levees of a political life that is too closed off inside the houses of power. A mayor of the streets, as he defines himself, who understood politics as a service to the collectivity that needs to act from the bottom in the form of a participatory democracy.

The city of Naples described by De Magistis was discussed as an international place of enchanting beauty, visited each year by thousands of tourists from all over the world, and which can be compared to New York. Both cities are characterized by various small streets, experienced everyday by a diverse mixture of people.

An increasingly New York-like Naples and an increasingly Neapolitan New York, the two cities are connected by an insoluble bridge, that could ideally cross the Atlantic Ocean.

The mayor insisted on the importance of his encounter with the Italian community on various occasions (Little Italy, the Bronx, the Chamber of Commerce, the Calandra Institute), on the prospectives tied to these institutional encounters and particularly to his long conversation with Mayor Bill De Blasio.

Naples and New York, so far geographically, but paradoxically also so close, tied by a new understanding of diversity, no longer seen as a problem but as a resource within two metropolises now open to the world.

The evening ended with questions from the audience confirming an exceptional interest in the city. "Naples isn't the city of fires. It's the city of Fire" said the Mayor. A city with a fire burning inside, of love, passion, and the desire for redemption. A fire that has crossed the ocean. Naples is moving ("Eppur si muove").

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