

Session: Europe in crisis – challenges to local and regional democracy

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EUROPE IN CRISIS – CHALLENGES TO LOCAL AND REGIONAL DEMOCRACY

What is good for disadvantaged people is good for all the people

or, how to turn a bunch of buzzwords into keywords for action

or translate rhetoric into action

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Mr President Herwig Van Staa, Distinguished Delegates,

It is a privilege to address this very prestigious Assembly, which promotes since 1949 Human Rights, Democracy and the State of Law in Europe, just a few moments after we witnessed the historical moment of the signature of the charter by the XX member.

The economic crisis is having a very strong impact on the everyday life of our citizens and on the activities of local authorities. Just to give you an example I will mention the fact that in 2012 as a Municipality we launched 46 tenders for public works, while in 2013 only 1. This is due to the fact that the “fiscal compact” and “spending review” currently enforced in Italy prevent local authorities from accessing any form of loan from banks. This, of course, will further increase the job redundancies and eventually the number of people out of work. Another dramatic figure is that nearly 40% of our young people (15-24) is unemployed.

My presentation, because of lack of time, will necessarily be quite rhapsodic. I thank you in advance for your patience and attention and I will be pleased to answer your questions.

- **Key Messages:**

- Local Authorities should carry out moral and ethical **value-laden policies** and act not just as those who are “in control” or “the controller”. Local authorities should be **participant** in as many bottom-up initiatives as possible.
- European networking is essential: Udine is involved in several national, European and international networks: WHO Healthy Cities, Covenant of Mayors, URBACT, Age-Friendly Cities, Learning Cities, Playful Cities.

- Rather than view ourselves as the **Cities of Europe** we should all work towards a **Europe of Cities**.
- We also need to:
 - **support innovations,**
 - **promote healthy and sustainable lifestyles,**
 - **carry out process- and programme-oriented policies,**
 - take into account **prevention**, since most severe diseases are related to lifestyles, rather than cure; this is difficult because in a time of recession we tend just to counteract emergencies,
 - **foster experimentation, trial and error, numerous small scale interventions,**
 - **be encouraging and valorize positive results instead of overthinking negative aspects before acting,**
 - **support self organization and empowerment.**

A few **numbers** concerning UDINE on the way from Venice to Vienna, we have a UEFA football team Udinese, Udine is close to the place where Mr. Gini was born, from whom the **Gini coefficient** - used to measure inequity using Lorentz curve – comes.

Udine has undergone a demographic change: people live longer and have fewer children, has grown bigger as a city, and more spread out.

Some figures to outline the city profile:

- pop. 100.000, (greater Udine 180.000), 56 km², over 65 are 25%, 46yrs average age, life expectancy 79-84, healthy life expectancy however is < 65, 49.000 families (45% monocomponent, 40% over 65, 78% women), carbon footprint 700,000 t/year of CO₂, 15% immigrants: 130 nationalities, Rumania 2.700, Albania 2.200, Ghana 1.200, Ukraine 1.100, 0.6 per 103 centenaries, dependency index (>64&<15/15-64) 59%, but old age index (>64/0-14) has stabilized to 210,5 in the past 25 years, death rate 2.1%
- The occupation rate for 55-64 has increased from 28% in 2008 to 38% in 2012 (activity index 35 → 42), but overall people out of work or looking for jobs have increased by 4% to 7,5%
- Over 40% unemployed among the under 30
- Udine, Economic capital of Friuli: house-related industrial activities (house building, furniture, chairs, kitchens, fireplaces, household appliances, food & wine, organic) steel industry (turnkey continuous casting plants, plants for prefabricated concrete components)
- GDP *pro capite* 25.9 (-2.1% in 2012)
- Over 100 Asylum seekers arrived in August and September more than the number of the whole of last year, mainly from Afghanistan and Pakistan

Udine is involved in EUROPEAN PROJECTS:

- Romanet: **URBACT** – excellent programme – provided mindtools, Local Action Plan, Local Support Group, transnational action
 - We addressed the issue of informal settlements utilizing a progressive socially-including strategy, by accompanying families in better housing without the need of any forced evacuation. We did not seek an immediate 100% solution to the problem, but preferred a more shared incremental approach. But we did reduce to 0 the number of youngsters not attending schools and achieved a 100% vaccination programme. Contrary to the view of many Italian political leaders of the past governments, there is no dramatic Roma Emergency in Italy because Roma people represent only 0.5% of the total population in our country. The problem of social inclusion can be addressed with a focused incremental strategy building on existing social networks.
- CEC5: it is a programme promoting decarbonisation in building and defining environment-friendly Minimal Building Criteria for energy efficiency
- Signed Covenant of Majors, setting energy and climate change objectives by 2020, our baseline is 2006: 720,000 t CO₂ emissions.
 - Our priorities are:
 - Increase district heating
 - Set building regulations and improve the energy performance of buildings
 - Foster renewables: solar heating, geothermal, turbines
 - Promote sustainable lifestyles
 - Improve waste management system: we have reached 65% recycled waste management – but reduced by 80% large waste disposal, that was an indication of crisis
- Udine is an active member of the WHO Healthy Cities Programme, aimed at promoting healthy and sustainable lifestyles as well as healthy and supporting environments for citizens.
 - One of the main core themes is:
 - **healthy & active aging: Udine is the leading city of a European subnetwork on this issue** and promotes at the local level actions like gentle fitness, contrasting dementia, walking-for-health groups, urban gardens, healthy food, socialization opportunities.

Myself: I am a Mathematician, Professor of Automata Theory, Rector of Udine University during the years 2001-2008, elected Mayor in 2008. Thinking to my current occupation, I can say politics is a mission: we as policy makers must take up collective responsibilities, disseminate **scientific literacy and especially numerical into politics**, but **be where the wheel hits the road**.

I am also Vice President of the WHO Italian Healthy Cities Network, President of the Italian Association of Municipal Toy Libraries: the idea originated when I wanted to build a hands-on science museum but, since the

recession hit, I set up a mathematical and science toy library instead, hiring artisans who were fired by glasses factories which were delocalizing to China.

- A comment on the wording of the title of this session:
 - **crisis** – choice (from krino – separate, decide) – is inappropriate, better
 - **stasis** (civil war in Clitenes, the birth of Democracy)
 - recession, **economic paralysis** & downturn
- Quite rightly **Globalization** has taken place in this millennium, potentially paving the way for a **more equitable planet**, providing more opportunities for developing countries. But has this really taken place? The competition race for cheaper labor force, has led to marginal or apparent improvement of the quality of life in developing countries, e.g. 22/10/2013 Harbin closed down (because of 1mg of PM2.5 per m³, vs 20-300 WHO recommendations), and has brought recession to many parts of Europe.
- Huge job losses in the manufacturing and commercial sector have reduced opportunities for young even educated people and have led to the ‘brain drain’, the phenomenon of human capital flight.
- **LESSONS LEARNT from the crisis:** we have disregarded two faces of the same coin: **sustainability** (both as regards the financial and the natural ecosystem) and **health**, intended as overall well-being. Promoting both of them helps also to create new job opportunities.
 - In a time of crisis we tend to tackle only emergencies, i.e. cure, but these are in fact more expensive, although having impact on a limited number of people, while prevention policies address the majority of populations and are more effective, also because most diseases are non-transmissible but lifestyle induced .
- **Value-laden nature of policy interventions:** moral and ethical aspects should always be part of the policy- and decision-making processes in order to increase efficacy
 - In-depth **consultation and mediation are necessary to engage stakeholders**
 - **Active citizenship and community empowerment** should be promoted.
- **GENERAL STRATEGY**
 - **Thinking out of the box,**
 - Learn to understand and cope with **Complexity**:
 - Complex systems are often smarter than their individual elements: “No ant knows how an anthill works, but all ants profit from the hill”
 - Urbanization offers similar advantages
 - The same is true for the Internet: it is an emergent system that functions so well because **it works equally well for everybody**. No single user is able to control the whole. It must not change to bring advantage to a minority – the rulers. (Jochen Bittner, *The Angst of data protection*, protection vs collection)

- New forms of thinking/assessing: “reflexive social learning rather than a modernist idea of reason” will help to understand the context.
- New forms of acting: programme-oriented, systematic approaches rather than event-oriented, on-the-spot interventions are necessary.
- But change occurs that is unintended, unexpected, and unforeseen and hence our ability to predict, plan, and control is impaired.
- Stability, linearity and regularity are continuously challenged.
- Mathematical principles could be helpfully applied to politics:
 - In politics what matters is the first derivative, or even the second derivative
 - Avoid aggregate data and averages which hide inequities
- Develop Tools for decision support, health maps
- Scientific illiteracy leads to improvisation
- Introduce **Gentle nudges**
- Multiple affiliation – resist silo approach

- **THE OVERALL CONTEXT**

- Political disaffection, dissatisfaction, outright and open dislike, distaste, distrust, unreliability
- Failure to detect differences in the political agenda
- **VERY SERIOUS** risks for Democracy
 - Racism, xenophobia
 - “strong man” syndrome, leads to Fascism
 - Demagoguery
 - Populism
 - Negativism, there is a resistance to innovation that leads to reactionary behaviors
 - Social media and the myth of participation vs delegation
 - Superficiality (150 characters of Twitter)
- **EQUITY**, “The spirit level” principle: **even the privileged are worse off in a less equitable society**
- **The recession has a multiplicative effect on inequities; society is becoming more and more inequitable.**
 - SOCIAL INCLUSION has to be promoted.
 - Weaker segments sectors of society need to be supported.

- Pareto's law, Gini's coefficient, Lorenz curve (cumulative share of people from lowest to highest income vs cumulative share of income earned).
 - We have, in effect, **not a progressive tax rate system** but a **regressive tax rate system**.
 - **Principle: What is good for disadvantaged people is good for all the people**
- VOLUNTARY WORKERS from Non Profit Organizations have to be supported: very strong movement in Udine.
- **Conflicts in SOCIETY are growing**
 - Dissatisfaction, frustration, unhappiness
 - Innovation brings anxiety, stress
 - Solitude and isolation
 - Self-centricity
 - Intolerance
 - Working and social environment becomes more and more frustrating
- QUALITY OF LIFE is decreasing not only materially but even more psychologically, unhappiness, no one is really caring for mental health – more emphasis on **culture and education**
 - ROMA are exemplary (URBACT ROMAnet)
 - Lack of education, working opportunities, housing, subjected to prejudice, stereotypes, stigma (social disapproval, badge of shame, scapegoats)
 - Very little self-esteem, self-efficacy, very modest aspirations
 - **Health inequity**, life expectancy 25 years lower than the rest of the population
 - Wrong approach: 2009 an Emergency was called 140.000 (0.2%) – 0.5% in Udine, 60% <14 and <60% Italians
 - URBACT action impact Lacio from action, LAP - LSG
 - No more illiterate young, full vaccination programme,
 - No deportation, gently accompanied to better housing, support initiatives
- DIRECTIONS FOR ACTION
 - Enforce green building regulations (energy aware building but also **ventilation** aware)
 - Promote regulations which induce innovative job opportunities having to do with healthy and sustainable lifestyles
 - Young people's use of pop-up spaces, meanwhiles, fab-lab, co-working spaces
 - Older People: active life (walking groups, contrast dementia, gentle fitness)

- Redundancy – social welfare network: *Public and community-based employment services*
- OVERALL STRATEGIES
 - A city as a living laboratory
 - WHO Healthy Cities, 2020 Covenant of Mayors, new jobs new opportunities – strategic vehicles for action
 - Promoting healthy and sustainable lifestyles
 - Transnational, city networking, **Cities of Europe - Europe of Cities**
 - Numerical approach, quantitative in the good sense (Flaiano's humour, statistics means that if you eat two steaks per day and I don't have any, than both of us eat 1 steak per day)
- FINAL MESSAGES
 - Resilience, problem solving capacity
 - Education
 - Mediation
 - Multiple affiliation resist silo effect
 - Less hierarchical but not anarchical – Heterarchical
 - Flatten structure but flexible and dynamic in a horizontal direction
 - Sharing, not only networking
 - Mindfulness when caring for the 'res publica'