

## **Few words about “Europe and the challenge of democracy: what kind of agenda for us?”**

The meaning of the visit to Bolzano/Bozen and Trento won't be to show you how clever or rich we are but to understand that after many years of war it is possible for each society to build its own idea of democracy and social life. Many obstacles need to be over passed before getting to the standard we have in our mind. First of all because a society is something complex and it's not given for granted that we all think at the same model of society to be established, or we believe in the same values, or we're seeking the same models of economy, culture, relations... As a consequence, we need to feed relations with other actors within our society and outside, to exchange ideas and models and experiences.

### **First obstacle: looking at “our conflict” as it was the only one.**

But to share opinions is not the only meaning for coming here and see what “localism” or “federalism” or “inter-cultural dialogue” could represent in our experiences. If we go deeper into the experience of Trentino and Alto Adige/Sud Tirol we can recognise that many signs of conflict are still present nowadays. We are not in war anymore but we are far to say: “this is the society I have in my mind”. We still are working on it, we still are called to build it day after day. As citizens, we are actively committed to avoid our existing conflicts turning into violence: between minorities, between migrants and inhabitants, between rich and poor, among social groups. What element does protect ourselves to fall into a violent spiral when nationalism slyly enters our cultural and political life? How our culture, that for many years has organised itself into two equal communities balancing rights and privileges, will react to the contamination with third cultures arriving from everywhere in ceaseless waves? Many times the temptation to build a “close” society was felt by different political groups or decision makers and even joined the public opinion thanks to a mass-media system that we cannot manage and control. But is the situation really out of control?

### **Second obstacle: looking at “the conflict” as we were powerless.**

Both in the Balkan and in Italy (and all over Europe if we think at French suburb riots, Nazi-skin in Germany and any kind of nationalism, xenophobia and racism spreading everywhere) there is a strong need to establish a fairer society based on democracy and common and shared principles and values. We need to establish places (real or virtual) where people can exchange ideas and instruments to defend the construction of the future from being jeopardised by nationalism of any sort. The mutual recognition as “workers” will enable us to set up programmes and priorities that we couldn't build alone and to respond to a challenge that we couldn't take up alone. “Communicating differences” become the main task for those who want to build democracy and stability in a more secure word.

### **Third obstacle: looking at “conflicts” as they were unsolvable.**

Europe is that reality confirming that a conflict, as far as deep and bloody it could be, can always be transformed into something different. Maybe we still cannot call it “peace” but the “road to”, we can do it. Social transformation can happen for many reasons. It is better if we chose them, it is better if we manage, orient, conduct this change toward the idea that we have in mind and with the instruments we have in our hands. As far as it is possible, it will be better to have - at least - an idea of where we would like to go. The new frontiers of the global citizenships have found many places where to share different agenda or where to establish a common one: from the World Social Forum to NGOs networks, from the internet to many Civil Society meetings all around the world. Let's take our part into this process!

### **Aim of the meeting with the students from the Master in “conflict mediators and peace operators”**

In this framework of global action, we would like to offer you the chance to share your personal experience and conflict-understanding to a wider range of people. Not all the students are coming from Trentino Alto Adige. They have different backgrounds and ages. They certainly have different opinions about Italy, Europe and the Balkan. From our differences we would like to draw out a possible vision, strategy and agenda for our groups. It's not relevant how far we will go in our partnership: we could only exchange opinions or we could establish a very detailed agenda together or... many solutions in the middle. It's up to us, let's take the chance.

### **Outputs of the meeting**

We have foreseen only one output by the moment: setting the priorities of the International Weeks in Srebrenica this summer. Any other output will be welcomed but it's up to the working groups that will be formed during the morning.

### **Working methods**

We'll walk through three images that will be presented to you during the plenary: “my city”, “our city” and “our cities”. This symbolic path should bring us to the construction of our agenda. Discussion will take place in working groups made by ten people each. Each working group will be facilitated by two facilitators. Language facilitation is foreseen as well. At the end of the workshop there will follow a plenary in which each group will present its conclusions and proposals.

Waiting to meet you all in Bolzano/Bozen I wish you a good journey to Italy and a pleasant stay in Trentino Alto Adige.

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