

Good evening Ladies and Gentlemen

I'm honoured to be here and I want to thank you for this opportunity. I'd also like to add that I am proud of give a voice to a future Italy.

The opportunities offered by social innovation and social enterprise for young people like me are even more evident in these difficult times. It represents a solution for the global crisis of the social systems, and especially for Italy.

We, the cultural association "Gioco, Immagine e Parole" together with a group of actors and professional theatrical workers, are trying to respond to the crisis in our way. We are creating a cultural production centre, to help children and young people from deprived areas, getting them off the street, and promote positive values, and new opportunities.

San Giovanni, Barra and Ponticelli are those areas in the outskirts of Naples. After the crisis in the '80s and the following process of deindustrialization, these areas have been subjected to social decline: an increase in unemployment and the growth of criminal activities.

The social theatre was born in order to spread a culture of legality trough the theatre: giving the opportunity to the same victims of Camorra to tell their stories.

Telling these stories is extremely necessary in a society that too often tries to forget or simply closes its eyes when confronted with these tragic events.

The theatre group offers an opportunity for social redemption, for instance the stories of two young boys: Francesco and Salvatore.

Francesco di Leva, son of a baker, joined our association when he was 16. His future was already decided, he would have to become a baker too and quit school. After he came to Gioco he escaped his ties, started working to finance his studies. Together with us he developed a passion for theatre to the point that he walked on the red carpet of the cinema festival in Venice as the best non-protagonist actor in the film "Una vita tranquilla" with Tony Servillo.

Also Salvatore, whose past has been hard and marked by a tragic event as his father was shot by the Camorra, has found his passion in theatre. Now he is active, more than ever, trying to build up a new life for him and his family.

In our association we go beyond the “what” – the activities we are holding – but we focus on the “how”. The “how” addresses the needs, the feelings and the creativity of people. It is capable of changing people’s life. We feel responsible for the people we work with. We are an agent of change improving the lives of individuals, the families and the community as a whole.

We have the ambition to develop this project internationally.

Unfortunately the biggest obstacle for us is the bureaucracy that, nowadays, strangles the development of our activities.

For instance, we are redeveloping a space in an abandoned school that has been entrusted to us by the principal. When the school moved elsewhere, the local community regained the building. Now it’s been already one year that we are trying to establish contact with the local administration to get a definite confirmation of the entrustment.

This is an appeal to cities like Naples, to recognise that unused spaces can develop opportunities and a field for innovation for society and the administration itself.

Nowadays, the city of Naples does not have the money to renovate these disused spaces. Our project doesn’t only have a strong social effect, but also activates an economic-employment loop that our city desperately needs.

Pointed to this direction is the project “gioeconomics” that we are creating with a British, Italian and Dutch team, winner of “Naples 2.0: International Social Innovation Competition” organized by Euclid Network, UniCredit Foundation and Project Ahead. Thanks to it, our organization is gaining the knowledge and skills that also the Social Business Initiative is highlighting. We expanded the network and activated other resources in order to transform the association into a sustainable enterprise capable to play an important role in the local economy and to create social value.

In Italy, and especially in the south, this process seems more important than ever, when young people don’t have hope in a better social and economic

future. Their dependency on their families limits their own development and consequentially, their participation in the social and economic life of the country.

Now, my generation is the one that has to come up with new ideas to get out of the crisis with more equality and opportunities for everyone. The crisis requires an innovation of the structure on which a new economy will be based on. This conference shows that Europe is abandoning the old models and facing the future.

But most importantly marks it the beginning of a re-thinking in society. My generation needs to understand that our personal well-being is depended on the well being of the community we live in. Therefore, we need to be advocates for change, we have to be the change and work hard for a better future of all of us. Just give us the opportunity.

I'd like to end with a note by the Italian philosopher Norberto Bobbio, which has always been the manifesto of our activity:

“you are not alone,
Whatever you could do or think it's not just about you,
But everyone else,
The close and the far ones,
The really far ones,
The people you can't see,
Also people who are not yet,
Whose future will also depend on the world we will have left them”

Thank you!