

\* Counsellor  
Permanent Delegation  
of Portugal to the OECD

To talk about the environmental dimension of the Venice review we should start by describing what it is called the Third Italy Model. This is a model based on SME on rural areas, where the traditional family farms became family small industries and now small services enterprises (capanoni) creating a sprawl model of development (citta diffusa). This model creates what we can call a non-rational economic demand of a permanent infrastructure extension (water supply, sewage treatment, energy supply, transport networks).

With this reality, there is a lack of awareness from all the different actors to the real value of environment and environmental services. With the sprawling of activities we have a real problem in terms of diffused pollution, unknown water abstraction and water discharges, with an uncertainty on water resources quantity and quality. The problem is how can the Venice authorities engage so many different actors (thousands of SME, the different levels of administrations and the populations) to fulfil the Polluter Pays Principle or the User Pays Principle, so that real costs and benefits can be taking into consideration in the decision making processes?

Continuing to talk about water but starting with the discussion on climate change, let me pay tribute to the huge works that you are conducting in terms of the barrier system (Mose project). When OECD was in Venice in 94, for the Environmental Performance Review, we also discussed this project, and let me underline your very good performance when we see that you have already accomplish almost 60% of the total works. And independently from the civil engineering point of view, I must confess that this a very good project of adaptation to a new reality, as it allows the continuity of the regular activities inside the Lagoon instead of closing the sensitive area to any activity. With all the past of heavy pollution coming from industries, the agriculture runoff and the Venice sewage discharges, the intensive movement due to the Venice Harbour was another factor to put more stress in this sensitive area. The recovery at all levels of the Lagoon quality is part of this new program of action.

But the Venice region, with this level of development, has an ethical responsibility versus the Climate Change issue.

We were talking about actions on climate change but on the adaptation dimension. Venice should also act on the mitigation dimension. Coming back to the Third Italy Model, this Polycentric system demands a special and complex connections networks, with intermodal strategies using road, train, air and sea systems of transportation. And we all know the big efforts that the Authorities are implementing, but that are not sufficient for now. Another example can be shown with your initiatives on renewables like on the Fusina Station on Hydrogen and the solar and wind use. The question is again on the way you can involve all the different actors on the construction of a coherent common policy that more than the use of renewables, you can also have a new “cluster” of renewables providing another new direction for the regional development strategies.

As a conclusion, and starting with this sprawled model, it needs a consolidation in terms of reducing the land consumption trying to densify the economic value creation. This strategy can be a win-win approach perhaps with more than two dimensions. The concentration of activities can reduce the efforts on the infrastructure extension, cutting the costs of many of the environmental services and improving the efficiency of those services. The need for travelling should also decrease and the scale effect could also be very positive in terms of all the social and economical services that the administration must provide to the communities. Even the need of enforcement of the Laws would be more efficient as the Inspectorates activities could be more rational.

The challenge for the Venice Authorities is how to reinforce the planning system on Land Use and for instance on Water Management, and how to guarantee a correct implementation. But more important, it is to create synergies in the different levels of planning to achieve the full integration of the planning processes on land use, water management and permitting of economic activities.