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Business styles and sustainable development

Mr. Vendraminelli, has just brought you here, on the behalf of the Associazione Industriali di Padova, the Association of Entrepreneurs of Padua and, important to mention it, of the Giovani Imprenditori Padovani, the Young Entrepreneurs, this new attitude, which derives from a new understanding of "production" in which the environment is, I am quoting, a business *stake holder*, just like the other protagonists of the firm – that is to say, shareholders, employees, customers, and suppliers. This is an important concept which originates from a new awareness of business, to which I would like to add the surrounding society which, through its consent to production, provides the required grounds for a successful economy.

The Consortium of the Industrial Area of Padua, that we are going to call ZIP, probably being the largest unitary active industrial area in Italy, covers 10,500,000 square meters, presently occupied by 1,300 businesses, directly employing over 25,000 people. Every day other 50,000 people come here for business purposes and today this area is a strong pole of logistics serving a territory with a 150-kilometer radius, the second Interport inland in Europe after Munich.

This industrial area owes its fortune to its great variety of manufactures and, being located very close to the town, a special care has been dedicated to the relationship between residential and industrial areas from the very beginning of its development.

To this purpose, a green belt was planned and created, for a total of 1 million square meters toward Padua, while further 600,000 square meters were devoted to tree-growing toward the other adjacent municipalities. However, this is still not enough, and our Consortium is now facing the challenge of preserving a favorable, increasing balance between development, income production and housing.

The philosophy of our policy of business settlement is what Alvar Aalto said, over 50 years ago: "we must cross a forest every day to reach our work place", thus defining the relationship between the town and the site of production, between life and work.

In practice, all this is translated, first of all, into ZIP's plans for high-trunk trees planting, useful for reducing the production of carbon dioxide and, at the same time, creating acoustic and dust barriers. This is an important and constant commitment which has been endorsed and supported by the indications of the Kyoto conference in terms of greenhouse-effect reduction. Moreover, in these very days, we are taking part, together with the Veneto Region (officially represented here) and other co-participants, to a pilot project of forestation at national level, which is going to involve over 1,000 hectares of forestation – a significant portion of the Veneto Region.

Essential to this project is the establishment of a permanent information center on environmental policies, addressed to both individual citizens and firms. The offices of the information center – including also a meeting hall – will be located in an existing rural building, within the new green area: this will witness the preservation of our heritage from the past and, at the same time, its link with a possible and sustainable future.

This is the frame of our crucial co-operation with the Associazione Industriali di Padua, obviously involving also important local institutions, such as the Municipal and Provincial Authorities as well as the Chamber of Commerce. Our goal is to plan and develop an environmental manifesto promoting the participation of firms to a sustainable concept of production which is also the basis for a future ISO 14000 and EMAS certification.

This is not an easy way to go through – it is not easy to lead so many different firms and types of production toward commonly shared objectives of environmental sustainability.

The contents of this manifesto, therefore, will be increasingly useful for both the environment and its endorsers. The procedure selected in developing the manifesto includes a work group which bases its operations on a comparative analysis of the pre-ISO 14000

5th International Conference on Ethics and Environmental Policies
BUSINESS STYLES AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT
Kyiv, April 2-6, 2003

actions and those business needs which may be steadily accepted and agreed upon by entrepreneurs. This group work operates through constant feedback approaches which will allow for a post-manifesto monitoring of the highlighted and expected advantages, on the one side, and the addition of new objectives of environmental sustainability, on the other.

Side operations include the widespreading of the manifesto by means of professional associations, ZIP's mailing list and scheduled events for the announcement of the goals achieved, as well as a special web site devoted to promoting and encouraging objectives, actions, and results.

In order to change the cultural concept of production and make it daily routine, the new idea must be included in the usual way of thinking of all the parties involved in the territory management – manufacturers, territory managers, local institutions, citizens.

The issue is to reinforce, together with the advantages deriving from compatible productions, the social consent and approval generated by such production approaches so that all this becomes a true *lifestyle* peculiar to the culture of territory.

The whole process of development of the manifesto, its widespreading for acceptance, the meetings intended to reach as many involved parties as possible, is a commitment that will significantly change the policies of a consortium like ZIP, with the relating costs, also in economic terms. And they won't be negligible.

Looking for funding partners for the projects is necessary for guaranteeing a continuance of the job in time. It is not an occasional intervention soon consuming its value, but instead, the development of a permanent group work, with regular environmental screenings and monitoring protocols.

The challenge ZIP is willing to accept is to show, in co-operation with manufacturers, a new way to create a business which is compatible with its territory, is capable of reducing overall environmental impacts and allows for a steady economic growth in such an important area, by means of energy-saving policies. This means that not only future industrial areas will be planned in a "virtuous" way, but also that existing industrial areas must be improved.

In order to make you understand how big this challenge is, we can say that, in a region like Veneto, there are thousands of small-to-medium-size production areas intertwined with the city web, which need to make sure of their future permanence so close to town.

This means changing the types of production in order to generate a growth, both in terms of employment and of income, and to prevent the economical, urban and environmental degradation.

It is planning a future in which all resources – even the public ones – play a new role in promoting this environmentally sustainable production change and where a new way of managing the territory makes its way and becomes necessary. ZIP is planning 4 new industrial areas throughout Italy with environmentally compatible features, but firms will hardly be immediately certified in compliance with ISO 14000 if there are no incentives to the production activities that are going to rise there.

So we are back to the idea that, even in a development which is theoretically free from other obligations, there is the need to activate forms of contribution to promote an environmentally sustainable production.

By going back to the idea of territory as a global value that makes the change -- which in turn strengthens the values and the way of thinking – possible, the ZIP offers its contribution and turns to the deciders' co-operation

Our recent actions have been sort of "facilities" for the established firms and have created a profit for the consortium, according to the market sensitivity. The environmental balance has been approached also by reducing the distances to be covered by people (and consequently reducing exhaust pollution) while strengthening those services included in the scope of the I & CT.

Between the year 1995 and 2000, the Industrial Area of Padua -- first and largest unitary area in Italy to do it -- was thoroughly optically cabled and those firms who wish to use wide-band services, can connect to the activated backbones directly.

Innovations have been carried out in remote-heating in order to better exploit the existing sources of heat production and employ them to feed the big calorie and frigorie users; another objective is an industrial water system, making the water supply to firms safe and convenient, also by using sources of non-drinkable water which already exist in that area. This will allow to save the drinkable water resources and to include also rainwater into the purification and use cycle.

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The goal of all this, together with the environmental manifesto, is to construct a new model for the establishment and growth of firms, which the town takes part in and is aware of, where production takes on a new, positive meaning and is not merely a necessity.

It is a challenge we want to win and the contribution we will gain from the understanding achieved in this conference is so valuable for us, because it generates a thinking and discussion network and friends to walk with along this path.