

THE PLAYFUL PARADIGM - CITY OF UDINE

Cities offer unique opportunities for addressing challenges of urbanization, population ageing and climate change, provided **inclusive, enabling and enjoyable places** for promoting sustainability, health and resilience are **co-created**. To achieve these goals, Udine has implemented a paradigm which leverages on **participation and gaming** for triggering responsible change and promoting healthy and sustainable lifestyles, physical, cognitive activity, sustainable consumption. **Make the healthy choice the enjoyable choice** has been our inspiring **place-making principle**. The holistic nature of games makes them excellent media for promoting inclusion and belonging, enabling individuals, overcoming inequities, **pulling down walls, building bridges**.

At international level the practice is linked to guidelines of networks/movements Udine is a member of: WHO Healthy Cities Movement, Healthy Ageing and Age-Friendly Cities Network, EU Covenant on Demographic Change, Council of European Municipalities and Regions, Local Agenda 21, EU Covenant of Mayors and Mayors Adapt. At the national level, the practice is linked to the Italian Network of Playful Cities which Udine is the President of, but also to the Milan Urban Food Policy Pact and the Gaining Health project (National Ministry of Health). At regional level municipal and regional government are collaborating through a multilevel governance approach in the field of health promotion, healthy games and energy awareness enhancement. The city contributed to drafting the Regional Energy Plan (2015), which identifies objectives and measures for the strengthening of the regional energy system. Currently Udine is defining its local action plan to adapt to Climate Change and in 2015 signed the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

The good practice we propose stems from the experience developed using 'games' as a flexible and **innovative co-creating place-making paradigm**, which integrates top down policies, spontaneous actions and triggers collateral initiatives akin to what happens in *co-generative welfare*, to address the needs of an **actively ageing, energy aware**, equitable and democratic Society. Evidence shows that it is easier to learn and establish relations while playing, because cultural differences, physical, cognitive deficiencies, or mere *unawareness*, can be easily compensated by emotional reactions.

The Playful participatory paradigm can increase the capabilities of urban areas to answer to local challenges, promoting intergenerational solidarity, fair behaviors and a smart integrated urban development, fostering learning attitudes and enabling citizens regardless of age, ethnic origin, income, gender orientation, ability.

The results achieved have contributed to the improvement of the urban *places* both in terms of living conditions and awareness about health, energy and sustainability. Comprehensive programmes have been developed and co-created within the community, by using 'playing' as the main paradigm. Some examples:

World Games Day: over 50 associations, small enterprises revolving around playing in all its different facets

Move your minds: university, public library, municipal Toy Library, non-profit, for-profit organizations offer brain training, music therapy, laughter yoga, anti-ageing games, creative thinking for combating cognitive decline as well as solitude, isolation.

'You don't stop laughing because you grow old. You grow old because you stop laughing.' Seminar: workshops to improve the quality of life of older people, addressed to health/social professionals.

Pi Day: begins a little before 16.00 hrs on March 14 (guess why? $\pi=3,14 159\dots$) and brings together associations, individuals, schools to foster Mathematics and Scientific Literacy among public.

Energy at school: a school programme aimed at informing children on healthy energy habits;

Energy in play Fair: dozens stakeholders involved to raise awareness on energy efficiency and reducing CO₂ emissions.

Food waste and sustainable behaviours programme: actions to promote healthy eating habits with healthy snacks in schools;

The practice is based on the middle-out approach, hence it can be readily tailored to the peculiarities of just about any context. It can therefore be applied to other city contexts since the approach is very easy and natural to understand and the municipal administration does not need too much money to invest on it. Play, as we intend it, is based on a *do-it-yourself* and *do-it-with-others* principles whereby we can create a playing-learning situation with poor and home materials and "players" are engaged in creating room for creativity.

Each city could also select different themes to deal with according to the needs and aspirations of its community. The methodology and approach used for Udine can be replicated in every place since playing is a universal principle, naturally practiced and very flexible as a tool for communicating, having fun, learning and respecting rules, knowing each other, sharing experience.