

17. may your chains sit lightly upon you.

... the whole point of rights is that
they are ours to begin with⁴⁷ ...

The various declinations of the de-institutionalisation principles, such as the housing first approach, of the concept of flexicurity and of the inclusive right based approach gain some new lights and open new perspectives by fixing the prerequisites for a cultural change to start from within the inner world.

A brief definition of these terms is necessary.

The de-institutionalisation movement⁴⁸ raised from the 60s onward the policy of “community release”: a process of replacing long-stay institutions with less-isolated, more supportive and tailored services.

It had two main aims: releasing the admission and re-admission rate and the short term stays to reduce the population size of mental institutions and orphanages. And reforming the whole institutional process to eliminate reinforcements of dependency, hopelessness and helplessness, including former patients, users and orphans as active part of local communities.

The housing-first⁴⁹ is known as an approach for reinsertion policies for people experiencing homelessness; it is an application of the de-institutionalisation approach by asserting that the primary need is to obtain a stable housing before addressing any other issue.

⁴⁷ Ref.: Dan Kieran, *I fought the law*, 2007

⁴⁸ Ref.: Goffman, *Asylums*, 1961; Burti, *Italian psychiatric reform 20 plus years after*, 2001; Mosher, *Italy's revolutionary mental health law: an assessment*, American Journal of psychiatry 1982

⁴⁹ Ref.: *Housing first principles*, Downtown Emergency Service Centre, July 2007; *Housing first, a key element for Eu homelessness strategies*, FEANTSA, February 2013

Flexicurity⁵⁰ is a welfare state model with a pro-active labour market policy well experienced in Denmark and Scandinavian countries. The idea is that flexibility and social-security are complementary, and not opposite, focusing on their reciprocal match. On one side the demand of more flexible solution on the market corresponds to the parallel increment of social security measures for workers, striking the right balance between flexible job arrangements and secure transitions between jobs, giving both employers and employees a more flexible environment for changing jobs. Security means ‘employment security’: it provides people with the training they need to keep skills up-to-date and to develop talent as well as providing them with adequate unemployment benefits if they were to lose their job for a period of time.

The right-based approach⁵¹ aims to achieve a positive transformation of power relations among the various participating actors between “right holders” and “duty bearers”, meaning the institutions that has the legislative and/or ethic obligation to fulfill the rights.

As our ancestors knew, these four approaches make sense if they are connected together. In a way they are propaedeutic to each other, more or less as in a Borromean rings⁵². Anytime they are taking apart, or their methodological approach is not recognised, they lose their properties and become a stimulation for the maintenance of the status-quo. In such cases, it is not even worth to spend time with those speakers.

This effect might happen because the different approaches are not

⁵⁰ Ref.: Jørgensen, *Danish labour market policy since 1994 the new ‘Columbus’ egg’ of labour market regulation?*, 2000; *Euro plus pact*, 2011

⁵¹ Ref.: Gneiting, *Setting higher goals: rights and development*, 2009; United Nations, *Universal declaration of human rights*, retrieved 2011

⁵² In mathematics, the Borromean rings consist of three topological circles which are linked in a way that removing any ring results in two unlinked rings. In other words, no two of the three rings are linked with each other, but nonetheless all three are linked. This is the Brunnian link: although each pair of rings is unlinked, the whole link cannot be unlinked.

magical, as they are linked by a presupposed knowledge and by a serious methodological backgrounds. They are another thing in common: they don't solve the problem without a cultural change involving the context. Einstein showed as the context includes the care-worker and its disposability to change its inner world.

What we see is that when a person-in-need fails to succeed in a diminishing opportunity-pack, the failure is not assumed on the proponent shoulder. It is projected on the person-in-need, who has to carry on his/her own needs plus the failure of the institutions which was unable to offer a proper support or any other offer different than the self-maintenance of a previous status of need.

The net result is closer to a sentence toward a repetition of the same modality with a progressively decreasing result in term of care and wellness, rather than to a taken-in-charge or a treatment. It is a down-spinning escalation in the perspectives and in the quality of life.

It is like treating a bipolar disorder betting on the egomania of grandeur. Tricky, indeed.

The sad picture is to see the repetition of such approach, and even more sad is to see how the third sector risks to go along with it by chasing the need of “saving” services and activities at any cost.

I love grammar since I was in school, because it is simple. I learnt that simple things usually tell the truth. When we read or hear that the third sector want to save services at any costs, the cause and benefit complements are missing in the speech.

The point is what the services are alike, and who will benefit from them. By claiming justifications such as “we cannot leave our beneficiaries in time of crisis” while lowering the standards, the third sector risks to amazingly support the austerity system by avoiding the chance for people to face the truth.

The risk is to wash away their dignity: the not-amendable right and possibility for people to choose, to revolt their position, recall their rights and say “no”.

Some years ago I read a stencil on a wall of Florence: “remember to lick the hand which feeds you”. Without any specific reason, I thought it had something to tell, and I took a picture. The stencil quoted an impressive speech from Samuel Adams, which could apply still today:

«...if ye love wealth better than liberty, the tranquillity of servitude more than the animated counsels of freedom, go from us in peace. We ask not your counsels or arms. Crouch down and lick the hands which feed you. May your chains sit lightly upon you, and may posterity forget that you were our countrymen...»⁵³.

If any care-worker is confident enough to read these lines in front of a mirror without blushing for embarrassment, then probably the job has been done honestly.

Maybe sometime it is healthy to put hands in the mud once one has left its tiny little office.

The risk of not considering the rights and dignity of individuals-in-need to say “no”, it is not only sad and unhistorical, it is a perversion.

Perversion is not simply defined by what one does, but in the formal grammar of the way the pervert claims a direct access with an absolute from which being instrumental.

Doing something and claim it was forced under the hand of someone else, this is how the speech of perversion sounds. “I didn't want to, it is all because of austerity; it is austerity that forced my hands”. Such a statement literally sounds as the grammar of perversion, as it has been defined.

It happens to hear that lowering the standards and justify it with the impossibility to leave beneficiaries alone, it is not a trusted approach, but that there is an absolute need to keep the services open at any cost especially in such an economical needs for the crisis and the austerity.

Saying that one is doing something for the crisis sounds almost

⁵³ Ref.: Samuel Adams (1782-1803) was an old revolutionary and one of the US founding fathers; this quote is taken from the speech at the Philadelphia State House, 1776

supportive, at least to its inner grammar.

Under the economical lens, the net results are perceived as inefficient, polarising the analysis in term of ineffectiveness of the available resources, or opposite in term of insufficient resources.

What brings together the two points of view, meaning the economical and the NGO perspectives, is their analysis: they both refers to “useless” and “inefficient” as hard categories. Assuming them as a referent issue leads to fix the results as depending on the good will of the single individuals. No space for multilevelled analysis. Nor for reciprocity. Nor dialogue. The context remains outside and the institutions are never questioned.

They leave the context outside. If it doesn't depend on institutions and on any given socio-economic structure, than responsibility is out of their topics. Responsibility belongs only to individuals-in-need that the care worker is supposed to take care of. It happens that this is covered-up by some sort of politically correct speech. These talks are intended to be touchy, so to leave a clear conscience to the upper part of the world, which considered itself as never implied, nor ever co-responsible. Kvatch mit Sauce⁵⁴.

It is hard to figure out how the sense of responsibility could pass without the speaker assuming its own responsibility.

Which is to say, irresponsibility at the core of the structure itself.

Nice.

⁵⁴ Kvatch is german-yddish term meaning something so deeply untrue to be defined as a bullshit. In the early 90s in Berlin, it happened to hear the idiomatic expression “kvatch mit sauze” (kvatch with sauce); I loved this expression. Ref.: R. Friedmann, *The Fessler-Friedmann Dictionary of English as a Second Language*, 1996.