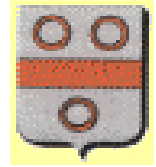




Contribution from PERGINE VALDARNO



Statement by:

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Water through the ages **WATER IN TUSCANY:** The History of its Management.

Centuries ago, the great poet Francesco Petrarca who was born in Figline Valdarno and who lived in Arezzo mentioned in his poem the following words: "Clear, fresh and sweet waters, where the beautiful ...". In this way he dedicated his poem to his beloved woman Laura. This is the first great lyrics in which the good water is mentioned. This good was considered unlimited and therefore it was neglected for centuries. Fortunately nowadays, after some interventions by the Onu, by the European Parliament and by the national Governments, it is considered a good to be safeguarded and which has to be dealt with cautiously, a good to be preserved for ours and for the future generations.

It is according to these principles that the Tuscan Region faced the matter of dealing with water, which is abundant among the hills, near water-courses and along the river Arno. In the absence of an adequate legislation, water was dealt with in the most disparate ways. Exception made for the Municipalities chief of Province and Region, in all the other 287 Tuscan Municipalities, 169 of which small communities under 5000 inhabitants, water was dealt with in "economy", it means directly by the Municipality itself, with its personnel and its own depuration systems, water distributions systems, aqueducts, adduction systems, by asking the citizens a "political" price, aimed to cover in the best case, hardly the 50% of the supported costs. Besides investments in the water system were missing. Only few municipalities worked on aqueducts and depuration systems. The most of the sinking water used to flow into the rivers. In this way the politics, which we could define "out of the choir", applied by the Municipality of Pergine Valdarno has to be pointed out. The politics of our Municipality aimed to keep aqueducts and adduction systems in excellent conditions. Moreover, before the passage of the water management to a company I will mention later, took place, our Municipality built 6 small depuration installations for its 3000 inhabitants, some depuration installations with a bio rotating plate, which have been a subject of study and objects other Municipalities, lacking of depuration systems, came to visit.

However, generally speaking, in different Municipalities the pollution of the water-bearing stratum, lack of water from the drainage system until 30% were a matter of fact. Besides the basins and the water-courses appeared to be degraded from the environment point of view.

The Tuscan Region made a political choice as regards the water management, connected with the creation of "mixed" companies in which the public partner owns the political control and the private one brings the entrepreneur way of thinking, aimed to reduce waste and to optimise the working system. Of course we need some years to get to the practical achievement of such a management model.

Since 1994 the law n. 36 defined "Galli law" has been in force in Italy. It gets its name from its promoter, who introduced it to the Parliament. It is a reference law as regards the water management. The National law was adopted by the Tuscan Region with the regional law n.25 of 1996 and opened the way to the application of the over mentioned law in Tuscany. This was the first region in Italy who applied the National law, to deal with all the integrated water system, from getting the water, to the distribution of the drinking water, from the sewer system to the depuration of the sinking waters.

With its law carrying the National legislation, the Tuscan Region set up the (AATO) Optimistic, Territorial Ambit, inside which all the water cycle is managed.

The Municipalities transferred their functions and service management to this public Institution. It is organised with an assembly composed of all the mayors, a President and an administration council. It is supported through a balance to which all the involved municipalities contribute with a specific amount of money. This institution deals with the water management. It entrusts the water service through conventions, it approves an ambit programme of several years. This programme plans all the investments on water systems and the organisation of the service. Moreover the AATO controls the management activities of the service, determines the consumers' tariffs.

The Tuscan Region has been the first National example for the water management. We understand this from the fact that the Optimistic Territorial Ambit, on a national scale, were hardly 8 in 1999, 6 of which regarding Tuscan authorities and 2 authorities in Lazio. Still nowadays the Ambit authorities are limited to the Centre and the North, rather than they are almost absent in the South of Italy.

Inside each Ambit (which is for Pergine the Ambit of high Valdarno), the relative unique manager has been appointed, with a common procedure, applied inside all the different areas. The unique private manager is appointed through competitive auction.

The first AATO starting with this experience in Italy has been ours, AATO n.4 which entrusted the management of the integrated water system on the 1st of June 1996. After a competitive auction, the service was entrusted to a "mixed" company, a joint-stock company: "Nuove Acque" s.p.a. This company is shared by private partners such as the Frech company "Lyonnais des Eaux, two banks (MPS and Banca Etruria) as well as other smaller private share holders. Are partners of this company also all the 39 Municipalities involved in the Ambit 4. In this way we have an actual manager subject subjected to the social law, which cannot make loss but which has the duty to make profits.

Herewith some final conclusions:

The previous model was cheaper for the citizen. Some Municipalities quite supplied water for free. However investments were missing. The income from the tariff applied towards the citizens was inferior to the costs and this created a public debt. In particular we would state that the importance of the good "water", as everybody's good, to be protected in any way, wasn't understood by the public opinion.

The new public and private management, the Joint-stock company, has caused an increase in fares, aimed to the total recovery of the investment costs regarding aqueducts. However this made the citizen understand the importance of a good we were a lot of time wasting.

At present in Tuscany a discussion is going on about the role of the public side and about the political control the public partner has to practice on the private one. The main trend is to reinforce the control achieved by the public side as regards the services for the citizen and the management of the tariffs which mustn't be the same for everybody but they must be formulated by taking into account the users' social conditions.