

Over the past three years we have worked in Italy to actively promote the CSC model; we promoted an awareness campaign in different territories and we have also supported some local groups of patients with the purpose to push for an action which will be able, one day, to see this practice recognized as a valid instrument for the regulation of production, distribution and use of cannabis, now in the hands of mafias. We started from medical use to reconcile on the one hand the huge problems of supplying it and to let people to properly be able to keep following their cure (despite the Turco law of 2007 that introduced the use of cannabis as a proper medicine) and on the other hand the strong representation of patients' associations in our network, motivated to find a response to their needs, for the most part denied to them. There have been different kind of difficulties and obstacles encountered by the patients, not just for the obstruction of a State mostly interested into stopping their requests - given also that sick people are becoming more and more aware of the therapeutic benefits of the plant and consequently the frequency of such requests is increasing - but also for the fragility of these groups, originated from the very condition of being a "patient". It's very difficult in this conditions to keep a steady intention and to be consistent. In addition, the new regulations of some Regions on medical cannabis are making the model we built up less available: it would be more difficult that a state of necessity would be recognized.

During a recent meeting of the local groups, it has become clear that none of them has been able to move the first steps and to publicly come out, although some of them are working informally. It is by now clear that patients are hardly going to make it on their own, but on the other hand it is very difficult to find forms of external support to their cause, which is lost in the labyrinth of our malfunctioning public health system, taken for granted in our country and passively accepted by the public opinion.

The recent discussions about medical marijuana, promoted by the growing number of sick people that would benefit from it and subsequently endorsed by the political parties proposing some laws regarding it, adding to this the several events and tv programs recently screened on national tv channels, have produced an agreement between the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Defense in order to grow the cannabis in the country, into the Military Chemical Pharmaceutical Institute of Florence, instead of importing it from Netherlands, as it has been so far, and to distribute it to authorized patients by mean of territorial and hospital laboratories. Other than the high costs of the imported cannabis, almost always paid in advance by those patients that could afford it, the complex bureaucracy of the whole process, is usually made even more complex by the same institutions that should facilitate it. This will make it possible to control the whole process in a very strict manner and the terms of the operation are going to be exposed by 31st of October 2014 by defining things such like the quantity to be produced, the ailments to be treated , the procedures to get the cannabis and of course the prices. We don't know yet if the cost will be entirely dumped on the shoulder of the patients as it has been so far with the exception of few regions or if the government will subsidize it but we already know that the process will take around 18 months, starting to count from September. This is the reason why it could be important to start the CSC birth process before this date will became operative, also taking into consideration that it will take some time to properly promote it other than defining the practices to be carried on, this way CSCs could became a commonly accepted thing, just before than the government will be able to legislate in order to explicitly exclude the creation of such groups of peoples. After all, patients represent a small minority of the 20% of the population that use cannabis secretly, threatened by repression and by an apparatus of social control and administrative penalties which is among the worst in the world.

Politicians and main stream media have worked to compare negatively the medical marijuana, good, healing and of course produced by pharmaceutical companies, with the marijuana used for recreational purposes, in contrast dangerous and sold in the streets. This really looks like a scam. What at first glance might seem a progress, would actually represent the ultimate failure of any form of claim from the bottom, because it would affirm a exclusive model for the elite and not

accessible to everyone, and the consolidation of strong economic interests would cut out all forms of resistance. In this way, it would be very easy to get rid of the question of the right to treatment for those few patients unable to pay according to the officially recognized ailments, and the mafias could continue to work for everyone else, including those who use cannabis for recreational purposes. It's not surprising that in this context, some groups of patients which are not part of our network and are even supported by a political party, have decided to follow the speculative model: Racale, a small town in Puglia, who claims to have created the first CSC in Italy, has recently created a Limited Liability Company with the clear intention of getting into the business of cannabis, while continuing to claim to fight for the rights of the patients! For these reasons, it would be necessary now more than ever to diffuse the resistance, and the real CSC would represent an attempt to not be crushed by the monopolies. At the moment, within our network we are debating the CSC concept also regarding to the best ways to support it. If on the one hand insisting on the medical use, confirming the support to the patients, is perceived by some as inconclusive judging by past experience, on the other hand to focus on a model that includes all users is considered "premature" in the light of the strong cultural resistance present among users in the first place. The DPA, the executive body of drug policies in our country, has for years influenced public opinion using old or controversial studies about the dangers of marijuana, demanding the production of misleading data to private companies in contrast with statistical results offered by the National Research Center, the main scientific body in Italy, on the national consumption of substances.

Although the responsible for these misdeeds, Dr. Serpelloni, was removed from his position by the new Government, nothing seems to have changed as to take his place is his close collaborator, the prohibitionist Patrizia De Rose. So the deception seems to continue, the drug users continue to hide thinking to make an "immoral" act, threatened by repression and social control, and the mafia continue to work and produce drugs undisturbed, with the total complicity and connivance of the politics.

Another project built from the bottom is the "Free Weed Board" association, a new member of our network whose aims are to promote a Popular Poll based on a law proposal made by a famous anti-prohibitionist lawyer. The proposal claims to de-penalize the homemade marijuana plants and the harsh penalties so far imposed for small quantities detention of substances. The law proposal is also aiming to wipe the usually harsh administrative penalties for all the drugs in order to promote a new approach on harm reduction programs and rehab programs. The law proposal directly mention the opportunity for all the citizens to associate in order to grow collectively a reasonable amount of plants for personal use. We are trying to understand if, as a network, we can find some common points on the path we are building from the bottom; we think that the way of the law proposals is difficult to match perfectly the model we have in mind, but on the other hand we believe that we have to reach some form of regulation even if we believe we're still a bit far from it.

We do not know where we will arrive following the path we have taken as an anti-prohibitionist network but we strongly believe that the right to grow one's own plants is the way to let a personal choice to become a commonly acquired right. In the first place, we will do everything we can to have the ban on the cultivation for personal use lifted. We will not surrender and we will continue in the difficult task of getting back a right that has been denied due to various interests.