

Acknowledgements and Farewell

The time has come to close this first edition of the DIAnet International School. It has been a very innovative experience in the framework of traditional didactic activities of our university. The organisation – as regards both the scientific part (lectures, co-taught seminars, project work activities, excursions) and the logistics – has not been easy since we had to solve many problems in a very short time, and I apologise to all participants, teachers and students for any inconvenience that has occurred during the preparation and the commence of the activity. Ups and downs are to be expected when new roads are opened.

These ten days of intensive work have been very tiring for everyone: participants, teachers, facilitators and staff. Multidisciplinarity and interdisciplinarity require great attention and openness to go beyond the limits of our discipline with the humility to be involved in the achievement of new goals and perspectives. I hope that the result can compensate for the stressful activity and that this experience was positive for all of you in the development of your training and inclusion in research or in civil society activities. Hopefully the participants will go home with something more in their luggage. Furthermore, I hope that they will be able to develop a network of personal relationships initiated in this occasion. This is certainly one of the aims of this International School.

The good response to the call for admission to the first edition of the DIAnet International School shows that the initiative has aroused wide interest in all the countries concerned. Clearly, the time is ripe to propose new paths in the organisation of studies and to seek answers to the uncertainties that characterise the postmodern society.

You might ask: why an international school with a strong emphasis on interdisciplinary approach?

Universities are now facing a challenge: they have to respond to the demands of a globalised civil society, dominated by the idea of the market, without having to give up the solid model of the Humboldtian University, the principles of which were:

- Unity of research and teaching;
- Freedom of teaching;
- Academic self-governance.

One remarkable notion is that in the Humboldtian University all sciences are equally important for *Bildung*: a leading principle of the university was the integration of the natural, social sciences and humanities as Wilhelm von Humboldt suggested. The slogan *Bildung durch Wissenschaft* (“education through learning and research”) expresses the idea that science will educate the young generation to understand both the world and their duties in it.

In our time the emphasis is on competition, economic growth, short-term returns, innovation, science and technology. “It is vital to understand that such mechanisms can ultimately undermine the outcomes that are a university’s principal benefit to society” (Boulton, G. and Lucas, C. *What are Universities for?* Conference of the League of European Research Universities – LERU, 2008).

We also have to measure up against the new frontiers of education that open in the Internet age (see: Katz, R. et al. *The Tower and the Cloud. Higher Education in the Age of the Cloud Computing*, 2008) – but is online learning really a good opportunity to expand the reach of universities?

As was well pointed out at the Communia 2010 Conference (*University and Cyberspace. Reshaping Knowledge Institutions for the Networked Age*) by Juan Carlos De Martin and Charles Nesson in their paper “The post-humboldtian University”, the keywords of the crisis are:

- Weakening of the states
- Knowledge also outside Universities
- Mass education (democracy)

What do we expect then from the University of the Third Millennium?

Crisis, challenge and amazing opportunities. We are debating between the old and the new and looking for a way forward. The keyword can only be “accountability”. And the expected tasks:

- More interdisciplinary research;
- More open and transparent science;
- Close collaboration with different stakeholders outside universities;
- Larger scale of problems worth solving.

The DIAnet International School is an ambitious project.

As we read in the presentation: “If we use a new type of interdisciplinary methods and approaches – driven by humanities –, changes of biodiversity, sediment mobility, soils, climate, precipitation, discharge patterns and water quality can be studied in combination with changes in governance, or in the social, economic and legal situation, which will enable us to develop policies for sustainable development of the Danube river basin.”

A second edition of the DIAnet International School dedicated to the *Natural Heritage* will take place in 2014 and a third one will focus on *Cultural Heritage* in 2015. It is possible and it will indeed be a welcome result if young researchers participate in all three schools and become active members of the Danube:Future project.

Many people have helped to build and operate the School. First of all I wish to mention Prof. Verena Winiwarter (Alpen-Adria-Universität Klagenfurt) and Dr. Gertrud Haidvogel (University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences (BOKU), Vienna) who have brought their expertise in Interdisciplinarity and their enthusiasm in coordinating and monitoring all activities.

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And now is the high time to say goodbye to everyone, thanks for the participation, and a safe journey home.

Gorizia, 22nd April 2013

2013 DIAnet International School – Closing Ceremony

Prof. Claudio Zaccaria
Director of 2013 DIAnet International School