

MEETING REALIZED IN VENICE TO CELEBRATE THE FRANCO BASAGLIA VISIONARY AND PRACTICAL LEGACY

April 2025

On 11 April 2025, the International meeting *Basaglia e la libertà - L'impatto nel mondo* took place in Venice (Italy), at the Querini Stampalia Foundation. [Organized by the Archivio Basaglia](#) and the *Istituto Veneto di Scienze, Lettere ed Arti* with the support of the *Presidenza del Consiglio dei Ministri*, of the Italian Government, the meeting marked the conclusions of the centenary celebrations of the visionary and practical legacy of Franco Basaglia, the man who revolutionized institutional methods of psychiatric care in Italy and around the world.

The meeting, which was open to the public and attended by over 100 participants, brought together representatives of projects and experiences inspired by the knowledge and practices associated with the work of Franco Basaglia.

In particular, the following professionals took part in the event:

- Hugo Cohen (Argentina). Psychiatrist and former Head of the Department of Mental Health of the Province of Rio Negro where he led the ground-breaking closure of the provincial asylum. He later served as Subregional Advisor for South America at the Pan American Health Organization.
- Jaime David Mirabal (Dominican Republic). Psychiatrist, former Vice President of the Dominican Republic Government and Minister of the Environment and Natural Resources. He promoted the psychiatry reform in his country and established innovative services in the Province of Salcedo.
- Fernanda Nicacio (Brazil). Occupational therapist and professor at the University of São Paulo. A leading figure in Brazil's *Lucha antimanicomial* (anti-asylum struggle), she was involved in the historic closure of the asylum in the city of Santos.
- Pedro Gabriel Delgado (Brazil). Psychiatrist and professor at the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro. He served as the National Coordinator of Mental Health, Alcohol and Drugs at Brazil's Ministry of Health for the years and one of the leaders of psychiatric reform in Brazil.
- Victor Aparicio Basauri (Spain). Psychiatrist and editor of the Journal *Quadernos de Psiquiatria Comunitaria*. He led the psychiatric service Reform in Asturias and later served as Regional Advisor for mental health at the Panamerican Health Organization.
- Sashi Sashidaran (United Kingdom). Psychiatrist and professor at the University of Glasgow, he was the Director of



the North Birmingham Mental Health Trust and the leader of the radical reform of psychiatric services in the city of Birmingham.

- Anne Lovell (France). Anthropologist and Research Director at INSERM in Paris, at the CERMES (Centre de Recherche Médecine, Sciences, Santé, Santé mentale et Société). Author of numerous essays on the anthropology of health and psychiatry.
- Luciano Carrino (Italy). Psychiatrist and President of the KIP International School (Knowledge, Innovation and Policies); collaborator of Basaglia in Trieste and later Responsible for human development programs supported by the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.
- Giovanna Del Giudice (Italy). Psychiatrist. President of the *Associazione Conferenza per la Salute Mentale nel Mondo Franco Basaglia*. She was a collaborator of Basaglia in Trieste, and later Director of the Departments of Mental Health in Caserta and Cagliari.
- Benedetto Saraceno (Italy): Psychiatrist, trained in Trieste under the direction of Basaglia and Rotelli. Former Dean of the Department of Mental Health and Substance abuse at the World Health Organization in Geneva.

In August 1971, Franco Basaglia was appointed as Director of the Provincial Psychiatric Hospital of Trieste, and through a 30-year process of transformation involving institutions, local authorities, and associations, the Italian city of Trieste established a network of community-based services, sheltered apartments, and cooperatives that employed psychiatric patients. The Trieste Psychiatric Hospital was closed and replaced by 24-hour community-based services. In 1978 Italy introduced the law reforming psychiatric care, known as Law 180, which initiated a national process to eliminate psychiatric hospitalizations and, by the end of the 1990s, had led to the closure of all asylums in the country. At the same time, new community services were introduced, enabling people with mental disabilities to conduct their lives in a normal social context. This law, the first of its kind in the world, radically transformed the approach to mental health care and assistance.

In 2001, the World Health Organization, in its World Health Report on Mental Health, recognized Basaglia's work as a fundamental model for the development of mental health systems throughout the world, establishing his pivotal role in twentieth-century psychiatry. In 2010 the World Health Organization designated the Mental Health Department of Trieste as a WHO Collaborating Centre for Research and Training in Mental Health. Trieste, as a gateway to the Balkan countries, became the concrete example of an alternative territorial system, visited by doctors and intellectuals from all over the world.

Since its inception, the Trieste experience has developed through active collaborations with psychiatrists, public authorities, university professors, students and mental health technicians from many countries, aiming to replicate the methods adopted in Italy within their own contexts. This was also achieved by including the



"...The important thing is that we have proved that the impossible is possible. Ten, fifteen, twenty years ago it was unthinkable that an asylum could be dismantled. Maybe asylums will be closed again, even more strictly than before. I do not know, but anyway we have shown that a person with mental illness can be supported in a different way, and that demonstration is of crucial importance. I do not believe that just because something becomes generalized it means the battle has been won. The important thing is that now we know what we can do..."

Franco Basaglia. *Brazilian Lectures*, 1979



implementation of the new guidelines promoted by the WHO at the international level, aligned with these practices.

The meeting of Venice represented an important opportunity to reflect on the experiences carried out both in Italy and abroad, inspired by the principles and the concrete work undertaken by Franco Basaglia to radically transform traditional psychiatric institutions. These collaborations will continue, sustained by the respective participants and through their ongoing networking efforts, the practices will be adapted to respond to new emerging challenges and international contexts.

The *Archivio Basaglia* brings together the working materials, part of the library, and the writings of Franco Basaglia and Franca Ongaro Basaglia. It is a social and cultural project rooted in historical memory, aiming to disseminate their ideas and develop new cultural perspectives.

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