

THE UNSTOPPABLE MAYOR

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Telos: Every time someone talks about the direct election of the Prime Minister, people use the very evocative expression "Mayor of Italy". So, is it true that a Mayor has, in the administration of his or her own city, more power than the Prime Minister has today?

Chiara Appendino: As we say here in Turin: *Esageruma nen* [Let's not go too far]. I don't think it's so much about power as about proximity to citizens. As every Mayor knows – and as I'll never tire of reiterating – the Mayor is the terminal that is the most exposed to citizens.

When a citizen has a problem, any problem, even if it's the competence of another institutional body, it falls on the municipality, that is the home of all. And that's how it should be. So, then we come to the question of powers. There's no doubt that Mayors have broad powers in relation to the competences of their role. Which are actually far more limited than you might think. There are essential issues, such as healthcare, for instance, that fall within the competence of the Regions. Or public security, which falls mainly within the competence of the State. But there's one other restriction that is more limiting than the others: the budget. You may have power over everything but if there's no money to carry out actions this power only exists on paper.

The breakdown in the party system has likely been the source of people's widespread anti-political sentiment. And yet this gap between citizens and politics is not nearly as wide when it comes to the Mayor. Are you still able to get your citizens passionate about politics?

I think that here the point is that the City Administration is "other" with respect to Politics, which only partially overlaps with it. Let me explain. Considering that any decision is a Political decision and that a city government programme hinges on politics, translating that policy into concrete decisions is thus the same as administrating. There you go, this is what citizens base their assessments on. A Mayor cannot – if I may use this word – afford the luxury of arguing about ideologies, issues relating to the national debate or prospects that are too broad. The citizens ask the Mayor to fix potholes, cut the grass, get the tram running. The rest comes later. Mayors have got to do all of this and, at the same time (actually, first) be able to provide their cities with a perspective that extends twenty years or more into the future.

Mayors are close to citizens because they are close to their problems and their daily lives.

At just over halfway through the term, one is able to realistically take stock of one's own work. When it comes to your electoral programme, what have you accomplished and what do you still have left to finish?

I prefer it if the citizens themselves take stock of the Mayor's work. With my executive committee and my majority, we have worked hard on issues the city has been waiting a long time for.

I'm thinking of urban renewal in the city's outskirts through the AxTO project, I'm thinking of the ATP Finals that will be held in Turin from 2021 to 2025.

I'm thinking of the clearing out of the MOI (the former Winter Olympic Village that had been taken over by squatters) that we had been waiting five years for, I'm thinking of the rebalancing of the budget of the Turin public transportation company GTT, I'm thinking of the environment and innovation to bring jobs and industry to our area. But I'd rather concentrate on the things we still have left to do, and there are a lot of them. Now that Turin has been recognised as a Complex Industrial Crisis Area by the Ministry for Economic Development, the application for which was submitted by Minister Luigi Di Maio, new opportunities are opening up in Turin in relation to its most pressing issue: the crisis of industry and jobs.

The new electric Fiat 500 will be manufactured in Turin and, also thanks to the City's efforts, the conditions will be created so that new businesses – especially geared towards innovation – will find fertile ground in our area. If more jobs are created, the city can get moving again. We've got no doubt about that.

This is your first experience administrating a city, and being Mayor certainly isn't easy. Which hurdles did you not expect to have to face and what, on the other hand, struck you in a positive way?

One hurdle was undoubtedly the financial statements that were passed down to us. Everybody knew funds were limited but the further ahead you go, the more difficulties you run into.

And look, the biggest issue isn't so much the financial statements per se as the fact that they threaten citizens' services, which we work very hard to continue to ensure. It's like being in a Ferrari and driving with the emergency brake on. One of the things that struck me positively though was something that was actually a confirmation: or rather, how much citizens, companies and

the majority of the realities making them up love their local area and how proactive they are. Every time the events covered in the newspapers make the situation look bleak, I open up my email, read about the projects and realities coming alive in Turin and start smiling again. Ready to move forward with even more energy than before.

Marco Sonsini

Editorial

"If more jobs are created, the city can get moving again." This is one of the most important statements in PRIMOPIANOSCALA's interview with Chiara Appendino, Mayor of Turin.

Her words have even more impact when you think that Turin has always been one of the most popular destinations for job seekers, mainly for people coming from southern Italy. Since just after the end of World War II, Turin has been a hub for a steady flow of migrants that, starting in the early fifties, peaked during the Italian economic miracle and continued throughout the seventies. A city of industry and Italy's motor city, Turin exerts a strong attraction, which is well exemplified in a nursery rhyme that was common among children from Puglia: *Torino, Torino, che bella città, si mangia, si beve e bene si sta!* ["Turin, Turin, how beautiful it is, you eat, you drink and there it's nice!"]

Now the employment rate in Turin is 9.2%, the highest in the Piedmont, a fact that is perfectly reflected in what the Mayor tells us: 'now that Turin has been recognised as a Complex Industrial Crisis Area by the Ministry for Economic Development, the application for which was submitted by Minister Luigi Di Maio, new opportunities are opening up in Turin in relation to its most pressing issue: the crisis of industry and jobs.' Her optimism, even when it comes to undoubtedly challenging issues, is her hallmark. Hers is not a blind optimism, though; it is based on an interpretation of objectively positive, realistic, constructive and intelligent facts. The Ministry intervention is one of those facts: it will use all the aid schemes available for productive investments, to renew the areas involved, to train human capital, to reconvert abandoned industrial areas, for environmental recovery, to make the sites energy efficient and to create infrastructure. So, if well spent, this aid could allow the City to get moving again, on the right foot. Appendino's administration has had one reoccurring theme, almost a moral imperative: to put back together, to unite, not to tear apart. For example, to attempt to bridge the gap between the two Turins: the centre and the outskirts. One concrete example is AxTO, the 45-million-euro plan for 235 interventions in the Turin outskirts that has been running for two years now and that is almost complete. She has a very practical approach: "Priority for small interventions that could concretely improve citizens' daily lives. Spread throughout the territory, from the outskirts to the centre, to bridge that gap in the city that over the years had become wider and wider." A touch of pride comes through as well regarding the most recent long battle in which her administration triumphed: Turin was named as the venue for the 2021-2025 ATP Finals, the most important professional tennis tournament after the four events in the Grand Slam, estimated to bring in 500 million euros. All of this will have concrete repercussions on growth and jobs. She reiterates the three pillars of her victorious campaign over and over again: "Environment and sustainability, or rather, we want to make this event sustainable from all points of view, from the energy used inside the arena to mobility, and so the flow of traffic. Then innovation: we want to offer new experiences based on new technologies, both for those who will be attending the event inside the Pala Alpitour and to those who will not. And then we have Turin at the centre of each discussion."

Finally, culture, another pillar of Appendino's programme.

It is indeed this pillar that has inspired the cover of the interview with Mayor Appendino, featuring the head of Akhenaton (Amenophis IV), the heretic pharaoh (New Kingdom, Amarna Age 1353-1334 A.D.). Next to this magnificent stone sculpture, we find the words of the father of Egyptology Jean- François Champollion: 'The road to Memphis and Thebes goes through Turin'. An extremely important acknowledgement of the absolute value of the extraordinary collections at the Egyptian Museum in Turin. If you've never been, make amends and visit it.

Mariella Palazzolo



Chiara Appendino has been the Mayor of Turin and of the Metropolitan City of Turin since 30 June 2016. Her involvement in politics began with her interest in Niki Vendola's party Sinistra, Ecologia, Libertà [Left, Ecology, Freedom]. In 2012 she joined the Five Star Movement: people say that on Christmas Eve in 2010 she was strolling around Porta Palazzo with her future husband when she stopped at the gazebo of the Five Star Movement, where an open meeting was being held. Everybody was silent; some activists had been huddled around a large book for about ten minutes: the financial statements of the City of Turin. "If you want, I'll give you a hand..." she said. That's how it all began, almost by chance. Then she offered the Movement her know-how. In fact, Mayor Appendino studied at Bocconi University, where she got a degree in corporate finance with a dissertation on cost management in a football company: the assessment of the players, in homage to her greatest passion: she played football until she was 25 years old, as a fullback. From September 2007 to January 2010 she worked as a controller for the Juventus Football Club, where she helped to prepare the financial statements for its only season in the B leagues; and starting on 1 January 2010 she worked as the head of administration, finance and control for her husband's firm. During the 2011 administrative elections in Turin, she was elected city councillor for the Five Star Movement with 623 preference votes.

On 8 November 2015 she officially announced her plans to run for Mayor of Turin at the 2016 administrative elections. During the first round, she obtained 30.92% of the votes, which got her into the run-off elections. On 19 June 2016 she was elected Mayor of Turin with 54.56% of the votes during the second round of the administrative elections, beating the outgoing mayor Piero Fassino (45.22% of the votes). The main issues on her programme,

which she worked on with 17 work groups, were urban planning, the restructuring of the municipal apparatus, the environment – specifically, sustainable mobility – culture, participation and transparency. Mayor Appendino's latest accomplishment was succeeding in getting Turin named as the venue for the 2021-2025 **ATP Finals**, the most important professional tennis tournament after the four events in the Grand Slam.

Chiara was born in Moncalieri 35 years ago, is married to Marco Lovatelli, a Turin entrepreneur, with whom she has a daughter, Sara. She is crazy about the board game Risk, which "*helps you understand and gives your mind a workout.*"

Marco Sonsini

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