

Pino and the GGI

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In 2003 Marcello Ciafaloni came to my office telling me that he had received a call from Pino Marchesini, new President of the National Theory Group of the INFN, about the possibility of establishing in Florence an Institute of Theoretical Physics, of the type of the KITP in Santa Barbara, in collaboration with our University (UNIFI). Marcello asked me to keep contact with Pino and make the necessary steps with the University.. This idea did not come out from nothing. In 1996, Marcello Ciafaloni and Giorgio Longhi, in view of the fact that the Physics Department was supposed to move from the historical site in Arcetri, to the new buildings in Sesto Fiorentino, contacted the Universities of Pisa and Siena for a common project of an Institute of Theoretical Physics on the KITP style, Unfortunately this attempt failed, but Pino knew, through Marcello (they were good friends) about this idea and he taught about the possibility of realising it using the advantages of his new charge.

I agreed with the idea of this Institute as a partnership between the INFN and our University, Pino and I moved immediately getting a preliminary green light from the Rettore of UNIFI and Roberto Petronzio (member of the Executive Committee of the INFN), and from the National Theory Committee of INFN,

Personally I consider the agreement of the National Theory Group as a masterpiece of Pino, In fact, at the beginning of the seventies, a National Institute of Theoretical Physics was proposed, but the proposal was refused practically from the whole community of Italian theoretical physicists. I expressed my doubts to Pino, but he reassured me with his typical quietness saying that he would have taken care of this point. as, in fact, he did!

In January 2004 Pino promoted a small meeting in Genova with Carlo Becchi (former President of the INFN Theory Group), Riccardo Barbieri, Enrico Onofri and myself. The agreement was unanimous with some worries about the long run. but as the facts showed in the following, this worries were not founded.

The next step that Pino proposed, was to invite an International Launch Committee in order to obtain an independent evaluation the project. The Launch Committee was composed by: David Gross, Giuseppe Marchesini, Alfred Mueller, Giorgio Parisi and Gabriele Veneziano (chair). The answer of the Committee was positive.

What Pino had in mind about the organisation of the GGI was a light structure with two Committees, the Advisory Committee with the task of supervising the various initiatives and a Scientific Committee that would analyse the various proposal for the workshops and perform a selection to be confirmed by the Advisory Committee, Furthermore, he thought about a Coordinator of the new Institute and a deputy Coordinator that would direct the local activities, as the running of the workshops etc. The deputy Coordinator was supposed to be a Professor of UNIFI to be chosen by the Director of the Department of Physics with the approval of the Director of INFN in Florence. The President of the National Theory Group of the INFN would be the Coordinator. Therefore Pino was the first Coordinator and myself the deputy Coordinator.

Pino and I proposed this project respectively to the President of the INFN and to the Rettore of UNIFI. The approval came in May 2004 by UNIFI and in July 2004 by the INFN. The agreement between the two parties was signed in November 2004. The GGI (Galileo Galilei Institute) was born!

The natural location of the GGI was the historical site in Arcetri, in the old Department. This implied a deep restyling, Pino obtained a substantial financial contribution for that aim from the INFN, whereas I got the remaining money from UNIFI that provided to the restyling through its Technical Office. The works started in October 2005 and ended on May 2, 2006.

On the other end, it was decided to have an inaugural Conference on September 2005 with the first workshop: "New Directions Beyond the Standard Model in Field and String Theory" on May 2, 2006.

With the first workshop, the GGI organisation started to function in a very nice way, with Pino taking care of the funds for the annual running of about three workshop per year, whereas I was taking care that, at the local level, things would continue to move in a regular way.

On May 17 2016 it was organised a Conference for the GGI 10th anniversary: "New Frontiers of Theoretical Physics" and, of course, Pino was supposed to participate. But, very sadly he passed away a few days before, on April 20.

My collaboration with Pino last for more than 10 years without any disagreement. Pino was always very calm in exposing his ideas but very firm in his opinions. His ideas were coming out from a brilliant logical mind. and were generally correct.

Having participated to these facts from the very beginning, I am completely sure that the GGI, which is now a structure known world-wide, would not exist if not for Pino original vision and all the efforts he did. We all should be very grateful to him for this precious legacy