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Small is Better!

A Vision for a Territorial Sustainable Development.

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1. What happened to the world that we knew?

The continuous technological innovations, the progressive increase of cultural levels, the free access to information, the dissemination of knowledge and the unstoppable transformation of our life styles, continue to provide us a framework, constantly updated, of the modifications that our world is undergoing with the entry "full swing" into the "digital age". These are shared and deep changes that, regardless of attempts to control or to simplify, concretely reflect ever more greatly their own effects on how ideally a city should function, its territory, and also on the ability to actually have on choices and visions for the future.

In the pages of this paper the author, through different lenses, address the theme of radical change of the already consolidated paradigms and, therefore, of the innovations that are transforming the way we understand our society, its technology, economics, and culture, defined through dimensions of time and the space.

The self-centered and "bottom-up" sustainable development; the principle of subsidiarity and the retrieval of fundamental human rights; the modification of production and consumption cycles and the the pulsation to a return towards a local economy and real economic capital; the process of widespread democratization and the people's right to self-determination; are all, concepts that have, in fact, reversed the terms of the question at hand and aimed at re-orienting the individuality of the choices towards a new kind of individual responsibility that becomes collective as a sum of "many small".

These terms and innovative concepts have become so profound that they cannot remain in the limbo of only theoretical studies of thinkers spread over the planet. First, because the expression of thought (and with it the new instances) is now free to distribute itself in a shared way and according to the laws of exponential growth dictated by the new media. This has led us to the birth of a "collective consciousness" of boundless dimensions and unimaginable up until now, which is precisely the basis of the specified changes. Secondly, because the new media disseminates

ideas, based on "hypervelocity" technologies open to everyone (especially to all the young people in an equal and equitable form) have resulted in a marked acceleration in the process, lowering a considerable percentage of the traditional sense of inertia while accelerating the processes of change in all peoples in the world. This inertia has distinguished the great transformations of the past. Thought (or more exactly freedom of expression) and its relative speed velocity of movement are, therefore, two of the key issues on which one should reflect upon in order to quickly reach the full maturity of this contemporary metamorphosis that we can define as "capillary thinking".

It isn't only the freedom of expression, therefore, that is profoundly transforming our civilization into the new global and digital version of the third millennium, but it is also the high speed of its diffusion and the distribution of such changes that, in capillary form, are shared by a multitude of individuals in order to achieve the establishment of a kind of "molecular" super-individual (composed of millions of molecules/individuals).

But what has changed? Who are the new protagonists of this real metamorphosis? What are the conditions under which these transformations are maturing? How long a time have we to mature and make these changes with full awareness? And finally, what can we expect, or in other words, what can we do to help build a future for ourselves?

2. What are the tangible signs of change?

There is a continuous thread that ties together a number of events belonging to the first ten years of this millennium; events taking place over a thirty-year process, originating at the end of the second half of the last century and culminating in 2003 with the first great "manifestation of the people" that stressed a shared rejection of the "global declaration of war" against Iraq of Saddam Hussein; then following the unusual American election campaign that in 2009 led to the White House and the first Afro-American President uncoupled from the well-known power lobbies, Barack Hussein Obama; then still the arrival this year 2011, of the "Youth Revolution" still in progress in North Africa and the Middle East, and now terminating in the ascent to the title of "most influential persons of the year" of some bloggers or founders of virtual groups.

So who are the protagonists of this revolution?: individuals able to access and communicate on the network, to share ideas and analyses, building visions and strategies. They are mostly younger people, the so-called "digital natives" (P. Ferri, 2011) those who have mastered both systems and technologies, but perhaps, a social phenomenon still too. Distant away to definitively define.

It's the affirmation of the "human swarm theory". A set of individuals who move in unison, fully aware of their strength, towards common and shared goals on the Internet. And not only this in these groups the "command" is at the disposition of all, and not towards some absent leader figure, simply because this authoritarian figure is not contemplated in this particular form of social aggregation (M. Dorigo 1999, S. Turillazzi 2003, and others). Ultimately here there is no designated "leader" in search of opportunities to grows own power, but rather all the individual components of the network are equally bearers of collective and shared interests, creating a super-individual who asks to make specific choices to increase his own quality of life, regardless of whom will then be designated to implement proposals (party, movement, group or individuals).

At the same time, this socio-cultural metamorphosis clearly appears as the latest confirmation of a distancing stance that has been generated between political classes, hobbled among national budgets and transnational logics hard to change, and then opposed, the real people, composed of human beings in need of concrete answers and related to the physical reality of "local logics", closer to the real needs. Distancing that can be reasonably considered as the beginning of two divergent paths that governments, on the one hand, and the world's peoples, on the other hand, took up some decades ago. Perhaps the first tangible sign of two socio-political geographies that have lost a mutual and fundamental context enabling a comparison. Ultimately we are witnesses today of the separation between "Reasons of State" and "Reason of the People." The choices of "our" governments in the last weeks, are contextually living "specimens" (F. Naselli, 2011).

It is a process of digital revolution, primarily, and also a process of cultural re-evolution intended, in one way or another, to change us forever. It is a process which is born from the "virtual" (ideas and thoughts) and becomes "physical" (aggregations and squares) through a "capillary" route of relationships, exchanges and opinions. The medium is the ICT, which thanks to the speed of its diffusion and to the inherent ability to build horizontal relationships, allows individuals to become a democratic "human swarm". Here is why it's necessary to consider the set of these events as the first of the greatest achievements reached by humanity in the new millennium; the extent of