

CHARTER FOR A NEW MUNICIPIUM

Towards a fair and non-hierarchical bottom-up globalization

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Globalization and local development

Global market uses different countries and regions' territory as an economic unitary space; within this space, local resources are goods to be transformed into market products whose consumption is to be promoted without any interest in the environmental and social sustainability of production processes.

Territories and their "unique qualities" – environmental, cultural, social capital differences – are "put to work" in this global process, that too often exhausts them through local resources and processes destroying differences.

Any alternative to this kind of globalization must start from a political project built around the valorization of local resources and differences, promoting processes of conscious and responsible autonomy, and refusal of exogenous command.

This perspective in local development, identified with civic networks' and the growth of fair government for local society, must not become narrow-mindedly local; on the contrary, new networks as alternative to long-range-global ones must be built, grounded in local differences and uniqueness, for non-hierarchical and non-instrumental cooperation.

Building these local societies' fair networks can be defined a "bottom-up globalization", which is also a world strategic network. The World Social Forum, through the participation of Local Social Forums and Local Governments, has started building this new form of globalization.

The new role of local administrations for a bottom-up globalization

In order to make sustainable futures become reality, local governments must assume direct functions in economic choices; these functions are to be grounded in local societies' empowerment and valorization of the environmental, territorial and cultural heritage owned by any place.

Empowerment of local societies through new democratic practices is a central concept: the reinforcement of local societies and their decision-making systems is the only way, on one hand, to resist the homologation and domination of economic globalization and, on the other, to open up to and promote fair networks.

The "new municipium" is the outcome of a process aimed to transform local municipalities from bureaucratic administration offices towards self-government social workshops.

The growth of autonomous self-employment forms, micro-enterprises, voluntary, social, environmental, and ethical activities, makes possible new self-government forms and objectives, in which the role of the dweller/producer becomes central in taking care of local places. The importance of this new actor emerges in the change from the Fordist society, characterized by a dwellers/producers divide, to a post-Fordist society where these two roles merge into a unitary and spread responsibility for local production and life

quality.

The new municipium pays more attention to regional identities, and founds development projects on the valorization of local heritage, against exogenous dispossession and destruction of this heritage; it promotes the rebuilding of common spaces for local societies, as places for decision-making about the community's future.

The new municipium first target should be a new relationship between elected and voters, nowadays dispossessed of any decision-making by the overriding power of economic reasons.

The creation of new democratic forms for complex and multicultural local societies can constitute the true "antidote" to economic globalization and to fear, insecurity, and impotence produced by militarization of global empire networks.

New forms of direct democracy

The new municipium becomes true in introducing alongside elective democracy institutes *new decision-making institutes* designed to include the largest number of actors representing the local social and economic context, in building shared future scenarios and rules.

The production of *scenarios for a common future*, in plain and everyday language, is the condition enabling participation – extended to actors usually without a say in institutional decisions - to define common interest transforming conflict into mutuality relationships.

The new municipium integrates into decision-making processes – in plans, designs and policies – structured participation paths, including the Aalborg charter and Agenda 21 engagements, thus making them into ordinary instruments for territorial, environmental and economic government.

Enlarged decision-making processes aim to produce scenarios for future and "local constitutions" inspired by the social complexity to be found in medieval European municipal statutes, adapted to the empowerment of the different voices of today's society.

Decision-making institutes for new citizenship include at least:

- a representative of each main economic category (artisans, farmers, shop-keepers, industry, tourism, etc.)
- a representative of cultural, social, environmental associations;
- a representative of civic committees and forums;
- a representative of neighborhoods councils.

The new municipium re-defines actors entitled to take part in this new institutes giving attention to the equilibrium among political, economical and civic society's actors.

Going beyond the notion of long-term representatives - only elected every four or five years – and calling for direct participation of diverse local actors to local government changes the definition of public policies objectives and expected outcomes, in favor of more pluralistic and less powerful social needs.

The new municipium takes the political initiative towards regional and central governments and institutions in favor of enlarged participation procedures for defining local project budgets. This enlarged participation can help acquire a deeper knowledge of places and their issues, usually denied in technical and bureaucratic problem-setting mediations. The various under-represented points of view in constructing local development policies - despite their importance in sustaining local development, caring for the territory and producing urban-life quality - include: women, older people, migrants, children, and rural world. The case of children's participation practices in urban policies setting, initiated in recent years by many local administrations, are a good example of effective results in improving urban life quality by giving a voice to under-represented actors.

Consulting, negotiating, decision-making and managing structures which innovate the municipality (or the municipalities' networks) and its elected bodies are intermediate forms between representative (through vote) and direct (popular assembly, referendum, etc.) democracy. These new structures, unlike direct democratic institutes, intervene in all the different life-phases of plans, policies and projects; their territorial shape reflects local socio-cultural aggregations, without pre-defined bureaucratic limits.

New multicultural territories

The new municipium produces new social scenarios by recognizing deeply rooted living and working practices of inhabitants originally from different countries and places. This process produces new community relationships at a social and individual level between different people and cultures. The public space in particular is where many new and culturally different living practices are shared.

The new municipium promotes policies to help immigrants' integration following these principles: replacing sectoral policies with an integrated approach to reception and 'living together' management; differentiating policies following different migration timings and territorial patterns of immigrants' settlements; empowering the social housing and insertion policies in urban and rural villages; developing urban problem areas with strong social conflicts and environmental decay through self-sustainable and community-based integrated action policies; supporting programs for setting up intercultural and interethnic decision-making partnerships.

New welfare indicators

Discussion on this theme has made considerable progress.

The new municipium proposes evaluation criteria, for policies and projects, inspired by simplification and cultural innovation of technical and bureaucratic measures, usually more complicated, implemented more slowly and less effective.

The first evaluation criterion is about the degree and form of *social participation* in decision-making in relation to the aim of *empowering* local societies.

The second criterion involves a sharp reduction of the role of the Gross National Product as the only welfare measure, and its integration with other indicators of environmental, urban, territorial, and social quality, as well as the recognition of social and cultural diversities.

The third criterion represents the level and forms of local heritage development as the basis for sustainable wealth production.

The fourth evaluation criterion concerns ecological footprints of sustainability, with special reference to water, wastes, food, and agriculture cycles; reduced mobility and the spread of qualified services; the degree of autonomy in the local territorial system in producing, communicating, making culture, ways of life, etc.

The fifth concerns the quality of relationships and mutual exchange networks between local societies.

And so on...

New self-sustainable local economic systems

The new municipium, a key actor for the governance of the territorial heritage valorization, drives the self-centered economic development helping weak actors to emerge, deciding *what, how, how much, where* to produce in order to create "territorial added value", fostering the growth of more autonomous local societies.

Insecurity created by "development", by the fragility of high technologies, high skyscrapers, genetically modified lives and seeds, emphasizes the new need for diffuse knowledge control in reproducing living worlds, in community trust, and in the choice of context-suitable technologies.

The new municipium's promotion of local economies aims to valorize the common territorial and environmental heritage (including environmental and local society's reproduction cycles), developing technologies and production systems suited to the place and its resources. With relationships based on fair trading, this can generate safe communities without cities becoming 'armor-plated', or competition for the quality of products degenerating into war.

Forms of local territorial heritage valorization

Territorial heritage is indivisible. To safeguard some nature (parks) and history (monuments, historical cities) reserves and allowing any destructive transformation elsewhere means in any case the decay of the local heritage.

The new municipium assumes an extensive definition of heritage, identified with the peoples and places, including their environment, landscape, urban characters and values, knowledge, cultures, arts and crafts, in uniqueness of living between past and future. The valorization of heritage becomes possible in merging future energies with the memory of places.

The new municipium promotes *a new representation of the territorial heritage*, to build consciousness of identity values, of lasting wealth production possibilities, and to foster projects, plans and policies for a new social economy, based on the collective valorization of the same heritage.

The new municipium helps and denotes economic, social and cultural actors of the urban and rural local world, willing to take part in designing the growth of the territorial heritage; The rural world becomes central in this territorial heritage valorization process: the new farmers do not produce just market wares, but also public goods and services, paid by the municipality, for the care of environment, landscape, and urban quality.

Fair exchange and trading networks

The new municipium promotes new exchanges of cultures, typical productions, technical and political knowledge, with a view to going beyond wild economic competition in favor of new north-north, south-north, and south-south forms of cooperation.

The western municipium exports the awareness of the crisis of its own industrial development model, and the seeds of experimental alternatives to this crisis; the municipium of "poor countries" (those under *no-development*) can teach self-organization in *surviving to development*.

Fair exchange networks constitute a tiny but solid support for the "Lilliputian" strategy against economic globalization.