

**« Eating city ». The strategic contribution to the invention
of a new model of development
(English Translation)**

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The exercise I have to cope with in front of you is quite challenging: working out a summary of what has been said throughout these past two days, taking into account the richness of the speakers' contributions this very morning and putting in perspective the teachings which were drawn in the light of my own considerations about the great transition to be undertaken to move towards lasting societies.

Why «eating city» can represent a strategic contribution to the invention of a new model of development, a new paradigm?

As it was pointed out this very morning by Maurizio Mariani, and later on by Adrian Civici about Albania, we know that a new model of development is necessary, but we do not know its outlines yet. We don't have a ready-made model of development to propose to Albania. Should we look at the democratic revolutions taking place before us in the Southern region of the Mediterranean sea, we know very well that the EU will not have any model of development to propose them from an economical standpoint. This model must be the result of a collective invention and I think that «eating city» is fully part of this. I will do my best to outline it starting from what I've heard during the past two days.

To start with, I will show why the territory, the city, the local milieu are key factors as far as the building of the 21st century economy is concerned. I will later show why the materials flow approach, coming in and out of the city, along with energy, natural resources, waste, allow a better understanding of the metabolism of territories, to find again an «economy of pragmatism», after so many years of drifting away towards mathematical abstractions.

Further more I will show the importance of connecting local and global, which is made possible by the agro-alimentary chains involving both proximity resources and resources coming from the other end of the world.

At last I will underline the reasons why the invention of lasting global production and consumption chains lays at the heart of what I call «oeconomy».

First of all, why don't we have today the right answers to the challenge which is set forth by the physical limits of our planet? That has to do with the radical inadequacy of our institutions and of our ways of thinking to the defiance of the 21st century. We want to think of tomorrow with yesterday ideas; we want to manage tomorrow with the institutions of the day before yesterday. This is why we are stuck.

The workshop discussions show this well. The food chain of cities is broken down among segmented actors, each one with its own logic, separated from that of others. This segmentation is to be found again at the level of local administrations. Mister Antonis Constantinou, director of the DG of agriculture for lasting development programmes, during his contribution has underlined the importance of dialogue among the different DGs of the Commission when it comes to define the future of the common agricultural policy. However I observe, both as user and partner of the EU, that such dialogue among DGs is somehow difficult.

This gap among institutions inherited from history and tomorrow challenges is to be found in the way of thinking as well. It's enough to remember that our way of thinking the economy, the hypothesis which found it are 250 years old and have been invented by a society utterly different from the society of today.

This inadequacy is to be found again in the tools which we use to manage reality. Throughout these three days of discussion everybody underlined the necessity to see the difference, as far as feeding is concerned, between what has to do with human labour and what refers to energy and natural resources. However, do we have in real life tools which enable us to make this distinction whenever we manage the food and feed chain of a city, or of public institutions? Of course not. We buy products and services paying in Euros, therefore human labour, energy and natural resources are put on the same level, managed with the same unit of account and the same method of payment, hence in reality we are incapable of making the distinction we wish for.

Are today strategies sufficient to allow what more and more people call «the great transition», the tremendous change to be undertaken throughout the coming decades in order to achieve lasting societies? Apparently not. As already pointed out in 1992, on the occasion of the Earth Summit, the necessity of this change had been underlined, but we keep on postponing it from decade to decade. All said and done, what has been achieved? We have created a new concept, that of «lasting development», empty enough so that everybody can use it. Meanwhile we are heading towards the wrong direction. Taking this into account, we have to work out more ambitious and newer strategies.

On which foundation can they be laid? First of all, and that has been by large depicted during these last three days, a new relationship between local and global, between action and thought has to be established. You will certainly remember a very popular catchword at the beginning of the nineties: «think globally, act locally». In my opinion this is a dangerous slogan. Why? Because in reality we cannot think about the complexity starting from global; this can only be addressed starting from a concrete reality, from a local society. Thinking the complexity, it's thinking down to earth, it's starting from concrete realities. This depicts already the role of cities and territories within the invention of a new model of development: it is a good method to think down to earth, to connect things one to another.

It goes without saying that not everything can be looked at from a local standpoint. It is necessary to build an argumentation between the reflection that stems from the

very detailed analysis of the collective reorganisation, for instance in schools, and the one which stems, as in the case of fishing, from the functioning of chains on a worldwide scale. This is what I find fascinating in the agro-alimentary chain. This continuous back and forth between the very concrete micro-local, the way meals are organised in schools, for instance, and the reflection on the whole of the agro-alimentary chain on a worldwide scale.

Likewise, a back and forth can be established between the peculiar reflection on the agro-alimentary chain and the general reflection on the role of lasting chains as regards the construction of a new model of development.

Your papers too have continuously gone back and forth between the description of concrete actions, innovating experiences at local level, as for instance the farmers' markets in Beirut, and the reflection that comes from action. We should not forget that action does never exist on its own. It is always guided – consciously or not - by our way of representing the world. I would even dare to say that the lesser this representation is explicit, the lesser it is thought about, and the more it is crucial for the daily action. Nothing is more dangerous than a sort of activism which refuses to question itself about the vision of the underlining world. The German philosopher Heidegger used to say: «the most difficult thing in life is to see your own spectacles because you see the world through them». I love this motto very much. It reminds us that it is very difficult, when caught in action, to get rid of the false evidences that we spread abroad. This is the interesting thing of this moment, as it was during the past three days, when some innovators get together to reflect on the meaning of their action.

This leads me to yet another idea: what is a strategy of systemic change? Why such a systemic change seems always so difficult? In my opinion, the answer to this enigma is simple. Each element of a systemic change is rather simple. Whether we refer to the farmers' markets in Beirut, to the educational training, through the reorganization, or the analysis of the fishing chain, each element of change, taken separately, is rather simple to be described or to be enacted. However, the problem of undertaking a strategy of change is about gathering a great number of elements which differ one from the other. The difficulty comes from there. This is why a systemic change is so difficult. As a matter of fact we know well, from a statistical viewpoint, that an event can be rare either because it is unusual on its own, or because it calls for the coincidence of several events, even though each one of them, taken alone, is not unusual.

In order to conceive a strategy of change, I shall suggest you a very simple key: to succeed in a systemic change, four kinds of actors must come together. What I find interesting about this meeting «eating city» is that these four types of actors are represented within this conference room. Who are they?

First of all we need innovators, people who invent, wherever they are, new solutions. The majority of you are innovators and numerous examples have been proposed during the workshops, be it the invention of new ways of negotiation between artisan fishermen and non governmental organisations focussing on

halieutic resources, or be it the reconciliation between rural and urban people, or be it the search for shortcuts for schools catering. All these innovations are terrific. Unfortunately, a sum of innovations is not sufficient to bring about a systemic change.

A sum of innovations is not sufficient, if it does not lead to modify the very way of thinking about things, the way of organising our thoughts and looking at the world. At this point a second category of actors, the theoreticians, comes into play. The reformulation of theory is necessary. From my personal standpoint, as high rank civil servant for twenty years, as well as manager of an international foundation for twenty five years, I am or I rather should be first of all a practician, an innovator. The reason why I have dedicated a relevant part of my time to build up theoretical reflections for the past fifteen years, it is because I have realized that it was, as of today, the main «missing link». Without adopting a new theoretical framework, a sum of innovations does not bring about any systemic change. Innovators struggle with ever renewing innovations, which at the end of the day leave us powerless.

The third kind of actors needed are the ones that I call «generalizators». That's where the shoe pinches. Let's look at large enterprises. They are organised to come back and forth between research and development, the creation of prototypes and mass-produced items. Thereby large enterprises are generalisators of innovations. However, when talking about social and intellectual innovation, there is no equivalent in any business enterprise. No actor has been really designed to allow a scale change, to pass from a peculiar innovation to its generalization. And yet we have seen, during these three days, two interesting perspectives, two possible methods of generalization. The first, typically, involves the role of a network, like «eating city». It's the international network: exchanging experiences, being capable of mutual stimulation, making it possible to show thousand of kilometres away from here that one innovation was put into practice; an international network fulfils this function of generalizator. Big catering enterprises represent another kind of actor capable of making one innovation circulate from one location to the other. I also have good hopes that the Assembly of citizens of the Mediterranean, that has participated in our conference, will be one day a medium capable of spreading the innovations which we have seen come into life in Italy, Lebanon or Spain, among the whole Mediterranean basin.

At this point, a last type of actor is crucial, and this is what I have called regulators. Yesterday, for instance, we discussed about the obstacles faced when putting in place the shortcuts between local producers and catering within schools. The issue of food safety regulations arouse very quickly. European regulations have proven to be a major obstacle, whereas traditional heritage resources are mobilised. Likewise others have suggested the tender rule to suppliers who propose the lowest prices. Innovations cannot be accomplished, without interconnecting the regulators, those who have the responsibility to issue guidelines, and therefore find themselves at the crossroad of contradictions of society. In this case, the same who plead in favour of shortcuts, may be those who expect that public authorities avoid all health risks in food!

Another major issue is to position our action with regard to the great changes to be undertaken, knowing, if I dare to express myself like this, which is the place of each one in the great battle. To understand this I suggest you another key, that of the four great changes to be undertaken during the 21st century.

From my experience within a private enterprise I have learnt to go straight to the core of things. When it comes to building up a strategy, making a list of 150 problems is pointless. The essential task is to identify some big changes we have to undertake together. Therefore I will number what these changes are, as they were generated from the international working experience, in order to locate your contributions in relationship with these changes. All throughout the 90s we have done an international work within the frame of The Alliance for a responsible, united, pluralist world. The idea was simple: it is only cooperating with the Chinese, the Indians, the Africans, the Europeans and the Americans that we will be able to agree on what has to be changed. It is from this adventure that the identification of an «agenda for the 21st century» was generated thus setting out the four great changes. What are they?

The first one is to build up a worldwide community. Everybody knows that world interdependences are irreversible, however, in front of such interdependences and in order to manage them, we are still at the level of sovereign States, the concept of which is now 350 years old. We manage an interdependent world with institutions which are 350 years old.

How can this contradiction be solved? In our view the only solution is to build up a worldwide community, in a patiently determined way, giving voice to the sentiment of a destiny community. In this case you will see that the contribution of eating city, of feeding, may be crucial. This consciousness is generated through different scales. At the local level, feeding represents the support of dialogue between rural and urban societies: do they consider themselves as two different planets or as complementary elements of the same universe? The same question is to be found at national scale. Antonis Constantinou reminded us – with regards to the European scale – how much rural and urban are interconnected in the various EU Countries. As regards Adrian Civici, he reminded us on the contrary how much the Albania of mountains and the Albania of planes and of cities were about to become different worlds. Should we now pass to the international scale, we have seen that the crossbreeding of feeding habits was a powerful way of discovering relationships among societies. We also saw how much it would be useful to use international migrations connected to agricultural seasonal activities or to food in order to braid links of different societies among each other. Finally, at worldwide scale, the traceability of different products which are part of our feeding allows us to discover our dependency, or rather our interdependency with what takes place thousands of kilometres away from us. Similarly, when Paul Balta reminds us at the same time of the diversity and the unity of the feeding practices around the Mediterranean basin – drinking and eating Mediterranean – he is showing us how the Assembly of citizens and Mediterranean citizens can rely on the feeding issue in order to ponder on the destiny community.

The second change is governance revolution. The ways of managing society, I have mentioned this before, are inadequate to the nature of issues to be solved. I would size up this inadequacy to three criteria: the capacity of taking relationships into account; the capacity of conjugating diversity and unity; the capacity of creating a «substantial democracy». For substantial democracy I don't mean to put a ballot paper inside a box, but to make somebody feel player and co-responsible for a common destiny.

Let's take the capacity of governance to take relationships into account. Food is a very good front door as far as this issue is concerned. I will make two examples. The first one, explained in the different workshops, is about the relationship among actors, the co-production of public assets. If we think that a correct feeding is a public asset, no actor taken separately is capable of producing this. The stake therefore is, talking about feeding the cities, to learn by practice to build in a «natural» way partnerships among actors. The second picture is the relationship among problems. Let's consider for instance how an ordinary city works. The institutions handling health, education, poverty, environment, immigration, act and think within very different universes, and have difficulty acting together. Likewise, as I have already mentioned, this happens for the different DGs of the EU Commission. However this is even truer at a national scale within the relations among Ministries. Recently I participated in a conference held in Geneva about worldwide government. The speakers represented different international institutions. They were questioned about the contradictions among different international entities, among UN agencies, among institutions created upon the Bretton Woods agreements, with the WTO. It was easy for those institutions representatives to argue that contradictions did not come from them, that there were contradictions internal to each and every State. For each and every State, in fact, the national representatives within the different international institutions are not the same, at the WTO, at the World Bank, at the IMF and UNESCO; they contradict each other and do not talk to each other. This is another picture of the difficulty our present governance faces in managing relations. Now, also in this case food represents an exciting topic, because it really involves everything, interfering with health, education, poverty, environment, immigration. In my opinion it is therefore an extremely interesting lever to pose the question of governance both at cities scale, as well as at the level of States or Europe.

The art of governance is also to reach a greater unity and a greater diversity at the same time. Paul Balta has just reminded us both of the extraordinary diversity of ecosystems, and of the different Mediterranean cooking traditions, which yet represent an incredible unity. I am convinced that food traditions do represent an interesting parable in the challenges of governance. This is also what best describes the already mentioned problem of the shortcuts: how to learn to conjugate food safety – with the uniformity risk deriving from it – and the will to promote the diversity associated with the diversity of cultures and ecosystems. Creating new ways of reconciling these two apparently contradictory imperatives will be a considerable contribution to governance.

In the end the work on feeding, on the eating city may be a good way to renovate

democracy. This starts, and we have seen several pictures of this, by the organisation of local debates about models of consumption starting from a debate about catering in schools or hospitals. Later on this discussion can be extended to the type of offer which is to be found at local supermarkets. In the case of fishing we have shown the establishing of vicious circles: the consumption of the best fishes for the sea ecosystems, the «blue fish» - mackerels, sardines, anchovies etc. – is presently hindered by the fact that they regarded as «the fish of the poor», to the point that supermarkets, fearing not to be able to sell them, gave up selling them. This is an interesting topic for a democratic local debate, a good way to create concrete areas of discussion about the world in which we live and the world we would like to build.

To third change to be undertaken concerns ethics, even though that might seem odd to you. However it is important to understand that one cannot manage an overcrowded and fragile planet without agreeing on a certain number of common principles. What could these principles be, so as to be accepted by societies having different cultures and religious traditions? Over the past fifteen years I have taken part in an international, intercultural and interreligious workshop and we came to the conclusion that responsibility and co-responsibility will be the core of 21st century ethics. Why? It's obvious when thinking about it, because responsibility is the counterpart of interdependence. Responsibility expresses the commitment that I have before others, the feeling of reciprocity which comes from the fact that we are not – each and everyone of us – on an island, but we are interdependent. Furthermore responsibility is the counterpart of freedom and power. This consideration about responsibility permeates all of your discussions: responsibility of consumers, of local administrators, enterprises and producers. I even think that eating city could move a great step forward extending its manifesto by adopting a Chart of common responsibilities. Last June I attended an international conference in Brasilia with children and teens coming from 47 different Countries. Together they worked out the Chart of youth responsibilities: «we are going to take care of our planet». Youngsters are deeply conscious of the responsibilities hanging over them because their parents were not able to conceive and put into practice the necessary changes. It will be their duty. They are telling us: «we are ready to play our part in this task», and, they add, «if it is not us, who else? If it is not now, when?» A lot of discussions held in the workshops showed the pedagogical importance of food culture in schools. It is indeed an exciting subject for an initiation towards a concrete responsibility regarding the evolution of production and consumption models. Co-responsibility about food is indeed an excellent starting point.

The forth change concerns the transition from the present development model to lasting societies. I do not use the wording «lasting development» on purpose. As a matter of fact this concept, which was very popular in the 80s, overlaps two contradictory terms and does not solve at all, if not magically, this contradiction. Our concern is to create lasting societies and make everybody's welfare consistent with the rareness of resources. In the past few years I have focussed a lot on this last change and on the necessity of a break regarding our way of conceiving and managing economy. You will find in your file a short abstract of these workshops, describing the fundamental levers of such transition. I would keep three of them into

account: money, food and feed supply chains and territories.

Let's start from money. One has to understand that as long as we use the same unit of account and the same way of payment for things that need to be economized – energy, natural resources – and those things that needn't to be economized, because they stand for the foundation of social cohesion – human labour – we will not go anywhere.

This morning we talked at large about the Mediterranean diet. As clearly explained by Paul Balta and Antonia Trichopoulou, the secret of this diet lays in the balance among its different ingredients. Conversely, should we reduce this diet to a mere quantity of calories, we would not understand it. This is exactly what we are doing with our present use of money! By using the same unit of account and the same method of payment for energy and natural resources on one hand, and human labour on the other hand, we are not in the position to act efficiently. We have to get out of this contradiction and opt for multidimensional currencies. This seems absurd or difficult to understand just because we have never tried it. When purchasing something, it would be much easier to use either credit cards or electronic chips to pay for energy units of account, on one hand, and human labour units of account on the other hand. This could already apply to schools, in favour of children and their parents. I am sure that we will get to this point, just because without such a distinction the contradictions between social cohesion and environmental preservation will remain unsolvable. These contradictions are not unsolvable because of the nature of things; today they are unsolvable because of the tools we use, which is different.

Second level: supply chains. The workshop on migration was very informative thereof. As far as migration is concerned, on one hand we have consumers who are asking for lower prices, on the other hand companies that rely on seasonal immigrants in order to survive. Furthermore there are individuals, seasonal workers, and States that strive to regulate these migrations. These entities acting independently one from the other, are they capable of building up lasting societies? The answer is no. We shall be compelled to look for other kinds of actors able to cope with the different aspects of this problem.

Should we ask by means of a survey which are the most powerful actors in today's society, who are the most influential ones, the answer will be that multinational companies are more powerful than States themselves. Also in this case, due to our habits and to intellectual laziness, the trend is to think that those strong powers are there forever. However let's ask this question the other way round: are these strong powers suitable for the 21st century society, are they capable to cope with tomorrow's challenges? The answer is no.

It will be necessary to look for other institutional set ups, other players. In my opinion, the two main 21st century actors, that I call the key players of oeconomy, will be on one hand the supply chain, and on the other the territories. However they will not stand out unless a thinking renewal about institutional set ups is enacted. Also in this case, what is being invented in the fishing or the banana fields, what is

being built before our eyes regarding the idea of lasting agro-alimentary chains, are new actor configurations. It will not be just a simple partnership, rather a lasting interconnection of players among themselves. We must devise new forms of contract with the different social actors. For the time being we are at the stage of labels – organic farming, regional products, responsible management of fishing and foresting etc. – However, these are but the premises of a broader and stronger definition of what is supposed to be a lasting food and feed supply chain. I am deeply convinced that - over the next twenty years - the rules of international world trade will be reconstructed around this context of lasting chains. It goes without saying that this will ask for a lot of work and transformation of the way of thinking. I do believe that «eating city» can play a key role in this field.

At last we come to the third level, the renewal of the territorial approach. I like the wording «eating city» a lot, because it compels us to think of the city as a collective living being rather than an unanimated object, a geographic surface surrounded by a political and administrative boundary. The city is not a sum of political authorities and of territorial collectivity. The city is endowed with a true metabolism. Unfortunately as of today we do not have the tools to represent and know this metabolism. I often say that the 21st century city in spite of the great amount of data it can rely on, is less conscious of its own functioning as compared to a Chinese village of 2000 years ago. Why? Simply because for a Chinese village being self-conscious and knowing its own metabolism was a matter of survival. Starting with the industrial revolution, the capability of cities and territories to manage their local resources stopped being a matter of survival, thanks to the capacity of the Western world to make use of resources at a worldwide level. With the 21st century this becomes again a matter of survival. Therefore it will be necessary to invent a new methodology regarding the territorial approach, for which food and feed chain – that represents 43% of the ecological imprint of cities – as it was reminded during one of the workshops, can be an extraordinary drive for change. By doing so we shall be capable of conceiving territories as the major social actors of the 21st century.

Delegates who took part to this event :

Participants	Organization	Country
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