Smart and Sustainable Cities and Territories for an Effective Ecological Transition

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The exponential growth and diffusion of technological innovation is also structurally altering the processes of anthropization. Many activities and products are dematerializing. Spaces, forms, and relationships of the industrial city, tied to the relationship between work and settlements, are increasingly weak, if not completely disappeared. There are various reasons for this dynamic. Among the first is the opportunity to carry out work, teaching, etc. "remotely," both during standard opening and/or service hours and outside of them. This means

a potential disruption of the synchrony between time and space that has always defined territories and cities, particularly the factory city and then the service city.

Thus, the traditional home-work model is changing, partially disappearing, and the possibility of modifying travel flows, strengthening local activities, and considering more effective development/transformation of settlements and spatial management is opening up. That is, building inclusive, socially and environmentally sustainable communities: this is the objective of the EU Smart City (2009), which calls for using communication and energy flows to achieve this goal. This goal is the profound meaning of the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: an even more urgent issue considering the exponential growth of the effects of the climate crisis.

There are many unknowns and implications for all this—from the sense of the city, polis, then urbs, then industrial city—to the very concept of societas, comunitas, civitas, from which the citizen, the cum-cives, was born. Certainly, however, if we do not confront these "emergencies," in the dual sense of the emergence of a new phenomenon and an urgency, they will have free rein and will not disappear simply because we do not want to see them.

Through a cultured use of technology, as Del Nord called for in the early 1990s—namely, teleactivity, renewable energy, and community participation—it is possible to forge a new development path, unprecedented in its kind, that is, to initiate the ecological transition of smart and sustainable territories and cities. This means using Artificial Intelligence and Twin City scenarios to serve anthropic processes, and not vice versa.

The city must be rethought in terms of creating or increasing environmental and social resilience. A place where citizens share the idea of civitas, meet and work. The polis, which then becomes urbs, exists only if there is a societas (Cacciari, 1991). If this disappears, the city becomes merely a space summarizing many individualities, falsely convinced of being omnipotent thanks to the smartphone, unaware that they are becoming buyers in an individualized market that is progressively disposing of each individual's own creativity and autonomy, which is increasingly fragile and dependent.

The local community is the Session's other interlocutor, the other face of the phenomenon. As demonstrated during the pandemic-related lockdowns, many activities were carried out remotely. Millions of workers worked from home, restoring social and economic momentum, even in remote, inland, and so-called "minor" areas and territories. For a year and a half, a local economy was reborn, local resources, including energy, were rediscovered, while polluted rivers and plains regained their original health.

Despite all the challenges associated with the digital divide, we were witnessing a re-territorialization (to use the term coined by Raffestin, 1985), with the central areas of major urban areas being emptied in favor of a redistribution of population, activities, and life. Therefore, a different approach to anthropization is possible, considering that environmental and social sustainability must be viewed on a large scale and that information and energy can be distributed and disseminated. This requires the ability to understand and leverage local conditions, which, rather than simply constraints, become design suggestions.

Keywords: Anthropization, Innovation, Sustainability

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