

# The MEETING OF THE ADVISORY COUNCIL OF THE ANNA LINDH FOUNDATION

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*Member of ALF Advisory Council  
Fondazione Mediterraneo - ITALY*

## THE STRATEGIC ORIENTATION AND PRIORITIES FOR THE ALF in its Next Phase of operation, from 2015.

Along the fading of individualistic liberalism and its counterpart represented by federal communism, we acknowledge the need for a developmental model that includes the right to individuality as well as the respect and protection of common good, the promotion on democracy, justice, and freedom. This is not about pursuing a social ethics based on taking charge of poverty-stricken, like religions do, it is rather the study and application of new indexes of development based on the affirmation and acknowledgment of a new social model that takes into account:

- a) The value of relationship and reciprocity
- b) Sharing and feeling together as instruments of individual and social well-being
- c) The ethics of care and the pursuit of justice as well as overcoming inequalities
- d) Rethinking and redefining the relation between technology and environment
- e) Achievement of new juridical principles for the construction and transaction of goods and resources.

And more precisely:

### **1. The ethics of care and human bonds**

It is becoming increasingly evident that the freedom of the individual is framed within the boundaries of the other's freedom. The model of individual freedom produced and developed by the enlightenment has led to a human subjectivity void of any social and community relations, and therefore we are today forced to rethink how to build well-being for everybody.

#### ***Constraints and resources of belonging***

*Being and feeling part of* requires the recognition of those bonds, which stem from a common root while sharing common dimensions. The strength of this bond is given by the benefits that the subjects receive by accepting the constraint of belonging. The forms of social belonging are codified within rules, but their strength comes from the fact that people accept and share them with regard to their constraints and bonds. Western history is proud of the French revolution for having affirmed civil rights while abolishing privileges related to belonging to certain walks of life. As Bartolini put it “ in the pre-modern world people were not free to choose their own destiny as well as their affections... people used to have committed social roles as well as family and community constraints to which they were to submit their own choices” (2011, p. 6). The value of belonging has been thus long been seen with suspicion by all those who were fighting to affirm individual freedom

The struggle for equality ruled out all the constraints of religion, skin colour, census etc. Today, instead, human bonds have lost their prescriptive fashion and the tragedies related to belonging have been forgotten by now. The forbidden love between Romeo and Juliet, marriage policies ruled by family constraints of reproduction and strengthening of capital (arranged marriages, forced nunnery and military and ecclesiastical careers) belong to the past. Individual autonomy and self-achievement are recognized rights, but now human beings are grappling with new problems due to their liberation from the obligation to the constraint.

If the French revolution brought forward the right of the individual to freedom of expression without family and community constraints, modern society liberalism has turned this principle into an absolute individualism. The right of everybody to fairness of opportunity has taken over an individualistic vision of resource availability. The American model of the self-made man has instilled into the collective imaginary the idea that in a free society, in which everybody has the same lot of opportunity, the rat-race to self-fulfillment is legit.

The end of the 20th century has witnessed to the havoc that absolute individualism has wreaked to the hold of social bonds and the construction of well-being. Today the battle for the affirmation of rights seems to be played as a fight of an individual against another one. Had the characterization of a group against another been overcome, now it is everyone against each other. It is a day in and day out hand-to-hand fight. Bartolini defines this state of affairs “NEG- Negative Endogenous Growth” which entails an increasing growth of whatever it is private as well as an increasing poverty of whatever it is shared: i.e. relationships and environment. In this light “this relational and environmental degradation is central to the understanding of the incapacity of American economy to engender happiness and leisure as well as its own capacity to bring about growth.”

Today, freedom from oppression must be negotiated with the sharing of human bonds, territories, and environment. In that sense, the 21st century opens up to the affirmation of **the right to environmental and social bonds**. In the meantime, it is spreading the awareness that a growth stemming from mere individuals struggling in a rat race for acquiring more goods and resources does not lead to either, wealth nor well-being.

**Acquiring goods is not the only parameter for assessing individual satisfaction, thus feelings, the pleasantness of places, and environment cannot be neglected.** Even economic and social achievement must be assessed in terms of a reduction of working time and more time for human bonds, from a vision that goes beyond theuppies of the ‘80s.

#### *Meaning of life, ethics of meaning*

The value of pleasure in acquiring goods seems to need meaning of life. Therefore, development seems to encompass both the acquisition of personal goods and wondering about the value of common goods and the modalities to give sense to our existence. Thus, the pursuit and value of common goods fits into the management of relationships between citizens and collectivity.

## **2. Environmental maintenance and protection of nature**

The necessity of sustainable development and the urgency of putting an end to a growth void of well-being bring the provocative thought of Latouche to the foreground. The author, in fact, calls upon us to critically rethink the idea of endless economic growth. Taking into account the limits of natural resources and hence the necessity of measures that are respectful of the environment – nature as third subject – and the urgency of energetic innovations that will not pauperize our environmental patrimony are all objectives for research in that they allow the pursuit of happiness for our world.

To attune human beings and nature while dealing with the limits of globalization and western colonization and development is not a slogan for apocalyptic dreamers, it is rather the objective of a critical and self-aware research geared to the affirmation of thought-of policies able to de-grow the rate of intoxicated food, industrialized diet, throw-away objects, and commodity trade detrimental to local economies.

## **3. Rules of transnational development**

The limitless growth of financial capitalism void of National boundaries and the management of fan economy that goes beyond National rules, calls upon the necessity of creating transnational laws protecting common goods. In this sense it is compulsory to rethink models of public development and individual planning. It is also necessary to rethink the limits of individual propriety while searching for new dimensions of assessing common goods and their protection. It is compelling to switch to activities capable of raising awareness of the community value of environmental and cultural goods

while valuing the acquisition of new technologies that have made the world more connected and participatory. How can we deal with the urgency of four kind of crisis: i.e. financial, economic, environmental, and of bonds? Today's interdependent global economy requires the pursuit of collective virtues and social collective responsibility, developing sustainable environmental economic value, acquiring the capacity to assess happiness and civil virtues. To this end, the rules of contexts and of transactions must switch towards ethical principles. "The social responsibility of consumption and savings appears to be the fundamental tool by means of which it will be possible to fully realize an economic democracy within a global society while fostering a grass-root participation that will involve all the actors playing within the system".

#### **4. Democracy and justice: opportunity and resource availability for all**

A new transdisciplinary thought is crossing over human sciences: the concept of capability. First introduced by Nussbaum and Sen (1993) the idea of capability shows what people can acquire whereas the concept of functioning shows what effectively they gain. At any rate, according to the authors the acquisition of the outcome is a function of the possibility of earning it and this is possible inasmuch as the universe of reference offers the possibility of doing so. In that sense, the freedom and democracy of gaining a response to the needs of all the individuals is the ground for every vision of subjective and social well-being. It is quite plain that there no such thing as subjective well-being void of context and hence every individual dimension is embedded in a juridical, cultural, and economic universe of opportunities (Nussbaum, 2010). According to this perspective, it is possible to pursue happiness only with regard to opportunities/capabilities both perceived and available.

In his recent "testament for human future" (2012, p. 53 e segg.) Edgar Morin posits that only a systemic and transdisciplinary dimension allows us to get out of the global crisis while facing without ideologies fake dilemmas like globalization/de-globalization, growth/de-growth, relationship nurturing/enclosing into appearance, conservatism/transformation of goods and knowledge. Today's challenge is, therefore, to improve quality of life and build social happiness within a globalized planet in which current working conditions are not human friendly, but they rather engender new and unforeseen disadvantages to individuals and their relational life. Thus, the models of human development, food policies, the development of housing contexts and the environment must become object of interest for the perspective of individual well-being as well.

**Justice and equality also for the environment are the connecting thread for inclusive social policies; the ethics of self-respect, of the other and the environment go hand in hand and characterize human bonds, professional pathways and commercial exchanges.**

**In that sense ALF works to rise mutual awareness, from a perspective that contributes to social transformation-oriented pathways.**

**The Mediterranean sea connects all of us to one another and to global society and the law of the sea is the same for all peoples: an action is needed which can combine evolution to the rights of people and of the living environment while respecting the natural environment.**