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Draft of the Territorialists' Society Manifesto

(third draft which includes the decisions reached for the conference)

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Foreword

During the first “Guarantors' Committee” meeting, which took place on April 16th 2010, a unanimous decision was made to create an association named “The Territorialists' Society”. A host of experts from many different disciplines gathered together with the aim of developing a complex integrated system of territorial sciences.

From the mid-eighties onwards, many of us have used the territorialist approach as a point of reference for carrying out research and developing projects. This approach focuses on *territory as a common good* with its own historic, cultural, social, environmental and productive identity and considers *landscape* to be its visible manifestation. For further information regarding the meaning of identity, please refer to point 6 of the paragraph entitled “The Principles”.

We have sought out the aspects of heritage which can be attributed to a *place* in order to develop the idea of territoriality, territorial design and government aimed at enhancing quality of life and social well-being. This process has led to the creation of a common reference point for “topophil” academics from a host of different disciplines: urban planners, architects, designers, ecologists, geographers, anthropologists, sociologists, historians, economists, earth scientists, geophiles, agronomists, archaeologists and so on.

The association aims to encourage the exchange of ideas among territorialists from various disciplines: it is therefore more *culturally oriented* than the numerous approaches which already characterise territorial sciences.

The frame

Circumstances which have prompted the need to reorganize knowledge through a “territorialist” approach, or rather, a “humanistic” approach which is sensitive to the culture of places, are characterised by a multiplicity of factors amongst which:

-the processes of globalisation are not only responsible for increasing the divide between the *pursuit of economic growth* and that of *social well-being* but also for inducing empires, states, companies and cities to dedicate their competitive efforts to the former. This divergence is accompanied by the fact that the economy which dominates our era, which prompts the behaviour of governments and international institutions, which prevails in central banks, universities, specialist journals and journalistic dissemination, has not been a *social science* for quite some time now. For the most part, the economy has become a sort of “growth technology”. Just a means of pressing on and relentlessly increasing GDP. When transformed into a technique this knowledge moves towards its objectives with less and less regard for the effects that economic growth has on human working conditions, individual and social relations, democratic institutions, culture, the environment and territory, leaving other experts to repair the damage it causes as it marches on. The same *post-factum* approach has already been adopted by the other sciences;

-the dominant political economy, both in its Neoclassic and Marxist forms, *is incapable of organically integrating territorial problems*. This can either be explained by ignorance or by rejecting the idea of the *coevolution* of the productive and distributive process with the *cultural*

evolution of mankind and the *transformation of the world's living environments*. By separating these three processes, giving attention only to the first, the economy overlooks the repercussions of such behaviour, namely changes to the human mind and within the historic and naturalistic environment which, in turn, directly influence economic behaviour. The result is an incomplete and somewhat artificial economic analysis which is responsible for generating economic policies which fail to meet the needs of both populations and the natural environment. Hence, the growing divergence between: 1) GDP per capita trends, perceived well-being and a standard of living which actually meets people's needs; 2) the needs of an ever-growing population and the natural environment's reaction to these.

The return to considering territory as the cradle and consequence of human activity expresses and symbolises the need to reintegrate the influence human activity has on the human mind and the natural environment into both social and economic analysis. These effects are always historically and geographically determined;

- with the complexity of these transformations in mind, it is apparent that the traditional methods used for measuring wealth, such as GDP, are grossly inadequate; or rather, more and more frequently, incidences of social polarisation as well as an increase in *old forms of poverty* (hunger, infant mortality, unemployment, lack of job security) and *new ones* (reduced environmental quality and quality of life, ecological disasters, loss of identity, individualism, consumerism etc) coincide with *GDP growth*; in this process the global crisis is both crippling the economy, ecology and culture and seriously undermining strictly economic development theories ;

- increased concentrations of capital have dictated a *constant move away from* locally monitored and managed technical, economical and financial decision-making centres; this distancing also relates to factors which play a key role in the material reproduction of life: water, food, energy, seeds etc. These factors are transformed into goods and, at the same time, transform inhabitants into customers in the “market of life”.

This distancing between inhabitants and decision-making centres is due to the fact *techno science has developed into a form of business*. Science is gradually being reduced to a sort of productive machine whose main aim is to make profit. We are faced with an unprecedented phenomenon which has never before been witnessed in the history of human society. Nowadays, many trans-national corporations base a great deal of their economic supremacy on the discoveries made and patents registered within their own independent scientific laboratories. In this day and age, biotechnological research tends to assume the semblance of a business. We are witnessing an unprecedented privatistic dissemination of technoscience which poses new problems regarding public power and forms of legislation. Furthermore, these circumstances challenge traditional democratic frameworks and move decision-making centres even further away. ;

- *the elimination, marginalisation, degradation and decontextualisation* of places, landscapes people's living environments and close convivial relations. This is due to the exponential growth of a second artificial nature which is characterised by wide areas of post-urban sprawl and a subsequent reduction of territory to a simple base for economic activity: the ensuing simplification of the mechanised landscape, produced by modern economic thought, is a trivialised, standardised landscape which is on the verge of collapse.

As a result of the territorial structure of its strictly economic development paradigms, contemporary civilization has, for the most part, produced elements which are highly critical both for landscapes and the environment, destroying places and violating the structuring elements which form the long-term identity of regions. Therefore, there is a different rationale behind the contemporary use of territory. When these modern day approaches deal with the environment, places and landscape identities, on the surface they appear to sanctify them but upon closer examination it becomes apparent that they are sacrificed in favour of the urgent needs of economic growth. What is more,

they are considered as insignificant aspects of an area which must be occupied indifferently, without showing any sensitivity to the identifying characteristics of individual places . We are not dealing with *a territorial design* which involves the creation of places but with *designs upon existing territory*, such as the occupation of areas through scattered buildings or infrastructures which destroy places. This form of destruction is made all the more serious by the dominance of its irreversible character: as the product of the course of history, territory is a rare, irreplaceable resource which can never be fully re-generated.

These, amongst other factors, call for a critical analysis of the mainstream story-telling which depict the contemporary world as something which is inevitably destined to be overwhelmed by the processes of *detritorialisation and despatialisation* which have been created by globalisation. They also implore us to condemn the inanity of corrective as well as “end of pipe” sectoral interventions and to finally bring to the fore the need to develop territorial sciences which are really capable of dealing with the global nature of processes at a local level. This is paramount if we are to rediscover the geo-cultural wealth of places and to invent and reinvent a wealth of knowledge and life forms which are both unique and common.

The principles

If we take the current circumstances, which strongly motivate the need for reframing knowledge as our starting point, the exchange among “territorialists” assumes some basic premises:

1. As a product of material culture, *the result of long standing coevolutionary processes between human settlements and the environment* (in this particular sense it is something which does not exist in nature), territory is constantly transformed by the cultural project of a civilisation, which can either reproduce or even increase (constructive coevolution) or diminish (destructive domain) its patrimonial value. The “territorialist” society mission operates within the first sphere, or rather, in our severely deterritorialized contemporary society. Its role is to create *added territorial value* through the social management of territory making with a view to increasing the individual and social well-being of those who live in, work in or pass through it .

2. For this reason, territory cannot be considered either as a mere “*lifeless support*” for social relations (economic, political, intersubjective) or as nothing more than *part of the earth's ecosystem* which has been “anthropised” to a greater or lesser extent and is equipped with certain “assets” (both tangible and not) which have accumulated over time. The “territorialist” approach sees territory as *a highly complex living system* which is the result of the meeting between cultural events and nature and is made up of *places* (or regions) with their own identity, history, character and long established structure. In this sense, two main points must be stressed: a) *the inseparability of nature and culture* and the interactive bond which human societies have with the earth (as a geological, topographical, ecological, vegetable and animal entity). This calls for the definitive overcome of the dichotomic division of territory in both natural and anthropised spaces; b) the inseparable nature of territory and history. By definition, territory has always had and could never part with its very own historic depth. Indeed, this factor actively influences the mental, linguistic, perceptive and sensory processes of our individual and collective existence. However, given the hidden nature assumed by identity over time, we are not always aware of these processes.

3. In this system of places the relations between subjects are mediated, fuelled and characterised by the *relations* that they themselves have with *a material environment*. In this situation, given that they are relatively stable and connected to the material nature of places, even environmental components are considered to be “intangible”. As such, they are referred to as *immaterial capital or heritage*. They represent a wealth of knowledge in which social capital,

contextual *savoir-faire*, local cognitive capital, industrial environments, local entrepreneurial and institutional capabilities, local reproductive systems, lifestyles and identifying characteristics of the *milieu* and so on, all play a vital role. Many and manifold are the knowledge systems and local value systems which serve as the basis for the evolution of historic-geographic continuity and adaptation (these are all the more important during unstable and unpredictable times). The knowledge and values expressed by the local population are fundamental for a vital territory which is capable of regenerating itself. For this reason, the main aim of “territorialist” research and activities must be to carry out an in-depth analysis of the many cognitive and value reference frameworks which are present at a local level and translate them reciprocally in order to create a connective infra-language which is capable of expressing common local projects.

4. The territorialist approach considers some relationships with the material environment to be more appropriate than others. It tends to free them from the economism which curtails some of their semantic potential and to release them from the mechanistic-industrialist paradigm which sees places as “mere lifeless props” for the production of goods. In any case, relationships with the material environment are considered to be “ecological”, in the broadest sense of the word, as they are the *basis* for social relations (economic, political, cultural, institutional) even though they do not deal with them exhaustively.

Following the ecological breakthrough, which took place in the middle of the last century, and its deterministic consequences, it is necessary to rebuild relationships between *naturality*, *rurality* and *urbanity* and to acknowledge their pervasive co-existence throughout the world. With an evolution of contemporary scientific thought which appears to alter the meaning of human presence in the world underway, it is necessary to focus on the *bio-cultural diversity* which animates territorial dynamics and stimulates interactive processes. Recent international documents highlight the need to shift attention from bio-diversity (currently under celebration) to the historically and culturally determined diversity in which the choices of contemporary society are made. It is in this complex and problematic framework that we must attempt to find a new form of territoriality which is brimming with environmental memories and awareness. This quest calls for the *de-naturalisation* of choices regarding anthropic transformation which are all too often disguised as generic references to natural events (false natural emergencies which conceal real “planned calamities” and devastating “emergency” territorial management trends).

5. *The local dimension is fundamental.* The local dimension is a vantage point which highlights the features, identity and unique nature of a place. The term “place” does not refer to spatial dimensions, nor does it make reference to a particular scale. A place is not necessarily small. A village, a valley, a bioregion, the Mediterranean, the Alps and even Europe can all be considered as places if they are analysed, interpreted and treated from a design perspective which takes their unique identifying features into account. Everything starts and ends in places, although, today more than ever, passing through all the various scales along the way. In order to understand and perhaps even transform places, a *multi-tiered vision* is necessary: every topography is a cosmography. There can be no topophilia without geophilia. There can be no local identity without a sense of universal belonging, without opening up towards the “other” as these factors are indispensable if we are to reproduce places .

6. Establishing the right balance between the opening and closure of a local system makes identity much more than a fixed construction whose inheritance is to be passed on unaltered. On the contrary, it should be seen as a *long-term dynamic reality which is projected into the future*. Local identity represents, first and foremost, a possibility, an opportunity, a project. Local identity which looks towards the future is more important than one which simply looks back in time. In this sense, one fundamental principle is to free territorial matters from discriminatory interpretations (ethnocentric, xenophobic, neo-nationalist, and racist) which often lead to political and economic

competition between local societies. It is, therefore, necessary to turn our systematic critical attention to the potential which can be drawn from these degenerations and, in particular, to the political instrumental revision of the history and memory of places.

7. When it comes to developing a solidarity-based dynamic and indentitarian project *the inhabitants and their way of life* assume a direct and essential role. Way of life should be seen as the combination of what a place and its people can offer to human progress. The multiplicity of lifestyles is of great value as each different type represents a consolidated response to a sum of unique conditions. Adding a parameter to decide which of these are more modern or better, would mean employing a sort criterion which does not have a *raison d'être*. For instance, after an environmental disaster we might find that the way of life of a community in the state of *Mato Grosso* is much better equipped to deal with new environmental problems than all those meticulously worked out scientific theories.

In this multitude of lifestyles, each and every one represents a vessel for original solutions to the problems of humanity which are painstakingly pinpointed over time and experimented at length. The interest in preserving the multiplicity of lifestyles is a universal interest which could be compared with that relating to biodiversity. Therefore, the tendency of business to digest and recycle every way of life based on the profit it expects to make really does represent a threat to humanity..

8. *The development of local society* constitutes the “anti-economistic” interpretation of the term “development” and it is no mere coincidence that the quality of the natural and social environment together with that of landscape are becoming increasingly important. This interpretation not only tackles aspects which must *decrease* (the domination of global economic relations, the consumption of resources, land, energy, the environment, local social relations etc), but above all, those which must *increase*: active citizenship, place consciousness, unique lifestyles, local economic systems based on heritage enhancement, local expertise for looking after territory and reproducing life, the quality of contextualised urban and rural landscapes, forms of reciprocal support among inhabitants, self-government and solidarity-based federalism.

In other words, the development of local society not only depends on the growth of its well-being, understood as a *joie de vivre*, public happiness or *buen vivir*, but also on its ability to promote political participation, keep an open mind towards the values and knowledge of others and create alternative critical routes to the political and economic models which are currently employed. This is of the utmost importance as these models give rise to new forms of individual and social poverty and result in the irreversible consumption of territory and environmental resources.

The duties of the association

With reference to these principles, the Society aims to promote studies and valorise experiences which are intended to act as alternative socio-political counterproposals. It will do so by recognising and valorising efforts and practices (both among the ruled and the ruling) which recover and reinvent the dual meaning of the concept of *ethos*. That is, a *way of acting and behaving with one another* and a *way of life*.

The Society has cultural purposes and aims to promote comparison between disciplines which assume the centrality of territory, or rather the importance of local places and heritage in learning and transformation processes with a view to enhancing social well-being and public happiness. It also aims to maintain the integrity of the systems which support life on our planet by raising awareness and developing a sense of responsibility towards *territory as a common good* .

In order to verify these assumptions in scientific research and in territorial government, it is really a priority to promote scope for multi/transdisciplinary research and action. This concept must include the vast area of the *arts and sciences of territory* and be able to identify coherent solutions which deal with territory as a unique entity, thus overcoming the fragmentation which is typical of sectoral disciplines and policies.

The complex subjectivity which produces territoriality cannot be represented *separately* by numerous disciplinary specialisations. On the contrary, it must be expressed through a common effort which uses numerous peculiarities as a starting point to tap into and find solutions to the new needs of society. The territorialist standpoint implies a *multi-disciplinary and increasingly transdisciplinary* vision which is capable of tackling the challenges which arise from the implicit complexities of territorial dynamics. Scientific culture is being urged to devise more acceptable and efficient territorial policies and a shared vision which combines everyone's efforts could be the way to do so.

However, this sharing process must start with a consideration of the plurality of ideas, different schools of thought and interpretative paradigms which can be found in different disciplinary horizons. There is not just one idea of territory, on the contrary, it is the very fertile comparison of different interpretations which increases knowledge and helps territorial projects to take shape. The Society also thrives on the comparison of diverging paths in which everyone can learn something from the others and, when necessary, call into question their own statutes and linguistic apparatus.

This comparison/confrontation is a necessary process in order to develop *an epistemological approach as well as common terminology among the various disciplines*. The starting point for this process will be to acknowledge the clear distinction between natural sciences and human sciences and to question the now hegemonic approaches of the technosciences.

The Society does not, however, intend to substitute the numerous professional associations which characterise the disciplines which contribute to its creation. On the contrary, it is a place where the numerous disciplines it encompasses can come together and combine their theoretical, methodological and experimental knowledge to tackle relevant issues and problems as and when they are identified by the association. The main aim of the Society should be to create these transversal complementarities in order to produce a holistic vision of territory and its problems together with a cross-fertilisation of the various fields of expertise.

Although the Society is largely promoted by academics in the university environment, it is in fact an *external and autonomous* association. It will, however, not abstain from intervening, externally or internally, in the transformation processes involving research and higher education institutes in order to curb the increasing influence of the corporate sector and to create, where possible, new opportunities to socially recognize the importance of *research skills* both within and outwith the University.

It might, therefore, promote autonomous cultural institutes (such as the *Maisons des sciences de l'homme* which were founded by Fernand Braudel). Moreover, when the right conditions present themselves, the association will also be involved in the promotion of multidisciplinary institutions within the University such as inter-faculty and inter-university Departments, inter-university centres, PhD courses, research projects and so on, in order to disseminate "territorialist" culture within the university.

The Society must develop its *international dimension*: on the one hand we have to consider many territorial problems "on a much vaster scale" and to deal with the increasing interference of global matters. On the other hand, the supranational relevance of the scientific, political and cultural references which act as the foundations of the "territorialist" approach (all we have to do is recall the emergence of "new paradigms" for the conservation of nature within the IUCN, the discussion of local implementation of the universal Unesco values, the territorialist breakthrough in the European Council's Landscape Convention). These very references can help to bring out the unique

features of our country as well as its multitude of local situations and the role they can play in “local development”. Considering these local situations to be “fragments of the world” does not imply a banal spatial extension but rather a multi-tiered approach which uses places to highlight openings and connecting networks.

In this way, the main priority of the Society must be to promote relations with *European associations and societies which have similar experiences and* which share the same cultural identity. Naturally, this process should not minimise but actually enhance the diverse nature of this common culture in two important ways: firstly in terms of languages as the founding heritage of human societies (by refusing to conform to the intensive and standardised use of English expressions) and secondly in terms of the unique socio-productive characteristics which can be related to specific lifestyles.

In brief, the duties of the association may involve any of the following fields:

- a) developing scientific debate in order to create a *unified multidisciplinary corpus of territorial arts and sciences which shares the territorialist standpoint*;
- b) promoting guidelines for territorial government policies using this corpus as a starting point ;
- c) promoting *autonomous* cultural and research institutes;
- d) promoting multi/transdisciplinary experimental research into *specific local socio-economic systems* in order to identify their socio-economic structure, key problems and potential for endogenous development;
- e) promoting the transdisciplinary territorialist culture in *teaching and research activities within the university*, focusing debate on the creation of territorial science schools and departments in universities ;
- f) exchanging views and providing the scientific, cultural and technical tools needed for *social projects* able to produce added territorial value. This can be achieved by enhancing political, ethical and social practices and experiences which either dissociate themselves from or come forward as alternatives to development and management models which violate places, territory and their environment. This, in turn, means giving more cultural visibility to the *agents of change* (macro trends, far-sighted actions and social actors who interpret this role);
- g) promoting international networks with associations, research centres and university institutes which operate in similar cultural horizons;
- h) promoting an *annual congress*, publishing a *journal* with international contributions and *referees*.

Topics for the first congress (and the journal) which came to light during the guarantors' meeting and subsequent debate:

-The contributions made by various socio-territorial disciplines for the creation of public well-being and happiness.

-Interdisciplinarity, transdisciplinarity, pluralism, a unitary vision of territory, common language and concepts ;

-The creation of the “statute” of a place: the statutory elements which contribute to its formation with regard to the various disciplines within the society.

-The definition of heritage elements for local development.

- The local/central relationship with particular reference to Italy in the long-term: state and nation, territory and federalism, state centralism versus self-organisation, local action;
- Methods, measuring techniques and policies to stop sprawl in settlement practices.
- The relation between territory and landscape, landscape planning and territorial planning.
- Identity and territorial design in a globalised world;
- The relation between territory, sustainability (ecological and social) and equity (economic).
- The multifunctional role of agriculture and food sovereignty in the regeneration of cities and territory.