The Humanification of the Urban Community:
An Italian Smart District Experience

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ABSTRACT

This article explores a cognitive, heuristic and perceptive approach to human behaviour that is to call humanification to inspire urban planners and sustainable transition managers to focus on communities in anticipation of a new culture. This perspective offers the opportunity to understand urban sustainable communities as a full sustainable experience. The case of Centocelle (Rome) Italian district is reported here as an example concerned the transformation of the local community into a self-community organization in which the work of facilitation and mediation was focused to raise a direct representation of local capacities. Humanification as an approach contributed to sustainable cognitive behaviors of a new cultural process that establishes new relationships between citizens and their home.

Keywords Sustainability Culture, Human Becoming, Biosemiotic, Epistemology, Pre-Adaptation

INTRODUCTION

When the focus of urban planners and smart city managers is to render future cities more sustainable, they often take for granted that this goal implies a change of the current human culture (Ingold, 2017; Dessein et al., 2015a). The 'cultural revolution' is what actually is mentioning by transition managers; this implies not just incremental change but radical transformations (Rotmans et al., 2001). These radical transformations are often understood as systemic, evolutionary and complex; there are deep transformations that imply an alignment among socio-technical, socio-political and socio-economic mechanisms (Kemp and Rotmans, 2005). While society is always expected to evolve towards new transitions, the sustainable transition implies a change in the way urban planners, smart designers and managers enhance desirable changes in this direction. This article aims to advance a theoretical focus on humanification of sustainable transition, analysing the citizens' behavior as expression of a sustainability in the making that enhances urban regeneration through the case of Centocelle (Italy). The case illustrates that the lens of humanification allows a deeper understanding of the process of culturalization of sustainability under micro-dynamics of becoming, in which both individuals and communities mingle in a kind of expressive anthropogenesis condition. This fundamental understanding has potential for generating new ideas on how to cultivate and manage smarter communities for future sustainable cities. The development of effective and systemic approach to smart cities, based both on smart technologies and shared common social issues required new methods

to facilitate smarter cities ideas into urban planning strategies for an actual improvement of people quality of life. Exploring humanification means to unravel "the continuous production of knowledge that accumulates in the layers and relational networks within an urban community" (Putnam, 1993).

EXPLORING HUMANIFICATION

Sustainable transitions require changes that can occur in small local experiments, in which evident elements are highlighted as scalable and through which networks can be developed into new movements so to rewrite a sustainable culture for the future (Schlaile and Urmetzer, 2019). This process requires a new regenerative culture of the sustainable knowledge no longer based on 'managers' versus 'managed' but a new way to co-produce a useful knowledge for everyone. Recent approaches consider this concept as a mixture between subject and object of sustainability suggesting that a low level of cultural influence might conditions the very co-creation of knowledge (Dessein et al., 2015b). This interpretation implies that when sustainable cities and communities is a goal, the role of the managers is those to create the space that allows the interplay between the subject and the object (Merleau-Ponty, 2002). This interplay is here understood as a process of humanification beyond cultural automatisms, in a similar way Bergson (2002) calls "thinking beyond the human condition", as "we are not simply creatures of habit and automatism, but also organisms involved in a creative evolution of becoming". In that sense, humanification concerns a learning behavior before a culture sharing, it is "a condition for anthropogenesis" (Ingold, 2013).

The "humanification" of the city (Lissandrello, 2019) is a new working concept that indicates governance and participation as potential evolution processes towards deep transformation capacities that can potential challenge transition atrophies. Humanification thus includes what Ingold terms humanifying and humaning (Ingold, 2017), referring to Llull's (1985) enigmatic definition of "human humanify themselves". Llull also understands this process as a continuous productive achievement that does not aim at a specific end but instead it is always in the making, '*a faciendum not a factum*" (Ortega, 1961). In "the life in the making" or in "human becomings" Ingold mentions what Bergson (1911) said as: *l'être en se faisant*." All these approaches constitute the pillars to understand sustainability as a way humans are shaping their environments and themselves in a process of evolution. Ingold quotes I Think I Am a Verb by Sebeok (1986) when he talks about the "functional circle" of biosemiotic action. This means that the way any human evolution takes place occurs through exploring and learning at the same time, as a semiotic structure. Thinking sustainability transitions under the lens of humanification implies understanding the diverse stages of progression from the development of individual capacities to the sociality of sustainability, to its institutionalization. This implies a new theoretical framework that does not separate the subject and the object of sustainability, but includes them in a cycle of a semantic behavior.

This article aims to advance a theoretical focus on humanification analysing citizens' behavior as actors of a sustainability pathway that enhances urban regeneration. Humanification means for a sustainability transition, a culture in becoming, as well as governance in becoming, under expressive anthropogenesis conditions. This means that sustainability as a cultural pathway follows an epistemology evolution. The expression of sustainability comes thus before the culture that will sustain this kind of expression.

Citizens' behavior and their local community building through the case of the Social Urban Network (SUN) smart platform in Centolcelle, Rome is analysed in the remaining of this article under the lens of humanification towards a sustainable transition. The theoretical framework and the case contributes to knowledge on sustainability as a process in its cultural expression as a condition able to create potential human capital.

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