

A Change of Minds

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At the turn of the decade the new century has proved its potential to be the most challenging yet. We have begun to grasp an understanding of the consequences of our actions on a global scale and the power we hold to change the world. It is now possible to appreciate just how far we have come and shoulder our responsibility in the shaping of our fates. We know we are no longer children at play: it is time to really analyze where we stand and what to do about it.

Thus it is inevitable to first and foremost acknowledge present situations: we are arriving at a turning point in the course of human development. Our economic models are facing daunting crisis, political systems are evidencing severe shortcomings and the social structures are crumbling under new strains. The whole scenario of human interaction seems to be demanding new solutions for changing times. After a dissociation of the different aspects of our individuality it seems we are now beginning to reevaluate the whole articulation of our lifestyles. As a result we are rediscovering the integral nature of each person and their organic needs and potential, and this is translating to a larger scale. We now see the recreation of the fundamental concepts that has been surfacing as of late in business and social studies, and that is changing our approach on problem solving. This is the rise of new schemes changing the face of businesses and integral social and environmental schemes changing all traditional management patterns around the globe.

It has become plain we can no longer sit back and watch events unfold, since it is so easy to see our own hand in the making it all. Indifference is no longer an option once the realization sinks in that our fates are all connected and that now is the time to take an active role. Knowledge and experience bring conscience, and with it the loss of innocence but also a whole new dimension of capabilities. Technological and scientific advance have provided us with means beyond anyone's wildest imagination a few decades ago. New enterprises provide ever more examples of the impact individuals can have in the lives of whole communities providing change for the better. The ever growing complexity of our problems exposes the inadequacy of the traditional actors

to be effective in facing the actual problems. The state simply cannot reach all spheres of conflict in society, is not present in the integrity of the territory and cannot react with sufficient speed to face emergencies and the urgent needs of those who are the most vulnerable. The local agent is needed and that is precisely why it is so necessary that we boost our actions in the new decade. Solutions are only effective when they are conceived in the thick of things: they need to be deeply aware of the particulars of the matter, of who are the people who must be involved in order to make things work. Solutions provided by the people for the people. This is the model that must be followed, the one that can grasp at once the whole scope of intricacies in question without losing sight of the goal. Each person can make the difference, and that is why we must act, but it is also why a coordinated effort is needed. A communion of ideals and a clear perspective of the task at hand are the fundamental starting point; then comes the integration of practical factors that make initiatives a real solution. As I have stated before, we now understand that society is an organic body, and no solution can have far reaching effects without a clear understanding of the dynamics involved in the social system.

South America in particular is in dire need of conscientious action. Our continent is oppressed by violence and poverty resulting from decades of mismanagement. Political structures remain stagnant and sterile, citizens show a profound lack of confidence in the system and economies remain underdeveloped excluding large sectors of the population from achieving basic living standards while resources remain unexploited, Argentina itself being a picture perfect example of this reality. This is the perfect scenery for the exercising of the new models, where individuals can and must lead the way to the future.

We can all see clearly that independent movements and organizations are the main ambassadors of change, as the young are breaking away from the general submission to tolerance and indifference. As Coca-Cola puts it in a recent campaign: "one initiative and many people equal a great change". We know we want change, have the ideals, see an opportunity and lack the fear. We hold the potential, but it seems that for the most part we lack a clear idea on how to best use it. This is why we need to bring this to practice here and now, in real actions, generating a new habit of commitment and active participation. We must start generating spaces to develop the strategies and apply them. There is a lot to be done and any number of fields to be tackled, there is something for each and every one of us: be it education, urbanization, health,

ecology, economic development, social integration, you name it. At the same time, there is a vast reservoir of natural resources and human capital. It is the ideal starting point for the implementation and refining of sustainable enterprises, which will not only promote benefit locally, but on a world scale as well. Resources are the basic input in any economic exploit, they are necessary for satisfying any and all human needs, and that is why it should be in the best interest of all that we adopt standards of reasonable use and protection. No one can do without them and we should bear this in mind if we are to prevent unnecessary conflict and human suffering. The people of South America must take a stand on this issue and combine efforts to achieve proper management policies. Participation is the key to an efficient administration which balances the different expectations of all, harmonizing short and long term needs and organizing priorities. It also means restructuring our conception of democracy and the way we deal with public affairs and the general wellbeing of our societies, formulating new social practices in the process. This is also a way to provide for a greater sphere of interactions between the state and the people, reverting the tendency of increasing delegation of power on behalf of the population and the corruption that often sprouts from poor control mechanisms within government structures. The time is ripe for focusing our efforts and awakening the citizenship to a new era, and proving both to ourselves and the world at large that it is possible.

It is daunting task for sure, but a thousand mile journey starts with a single step as the saying goes. I want to believe things will be better, and I know that if you are not part of the solution you are part of the problem. Show us the door and we will do the walking, it is just a matter of figuring how to take the first steps.