

## **A hypothesis about the Mediterranean (and the world)**

Extract of Franco Farinelli speech on the occasion of the meeting "Gli Attivatori Culturali e la Collaborazione InterMediterranea", organized by Love Difference on September 14<sup>th</sup> 2003 during the 50th Venice Biennale.

Rather than precocious defeudalization, what the European Mediterranean countries and those on the African and Eastern shores had in common, at least until the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> (albeit to different degrees, levels and time scales), was their 'hive-shaped' territorial structure, combined with late (and to some extent still imperfect) state centralization and equally late (and related) industrialization. And when a modern form of territoriality was imposed, at least formally, on both shores of the Mediterranean, the problematic nature of the transition from a series of city states to a single 'state city' expressed itself through a series of common processes and symptoms, by virtue of the fact that they were driven by the same impulse, namely the logic of international financial capital.

The prevailing political structure in the Mediterranean, then, continued to be the city state, the enduring nature of which ended up surviving not only the absence but also the presence of the major world empires (the Roman and Ottoman if not that of Charles V), the centre of an economic world which not infrequently profited from the advent of the territorial-national states, and continues to profit from them in the current crisis of the latter. This is the crisis of the rectilinear scalar module induced by the computerization of space, powerfully subversive with respect to the territorial homogeneity, continuity and isotropism that have marked the entire history of modern continental statehood, to the point that the transition of the latter to the post-modern phase – currently underway today – seems to be assuming all the forms of a deferred Mediterraneanization. Not just because of the incipient decrease in the proportions of state bodies and because of their overall hive-shaped architecture, but due to the very nature of dematerialized, transnational economic activity, the growing dominance of which is now the origin of this process and form, and which in the Mediterranean, on the other hand, is archetypical.

Polybius recounts that, on his return from Rome, the ambassador of Rhodes ended his report to his fellowcitizens about the failure to secure a concession to import wood from Macedonia with the following words: "This means our economic ruin, but we can still preserve our fame of being the most civil people in the whole of the Mediterranean". In other words, and to cite Régis Debray: "the archaic is not what a society leaves behind, the measure and degree to which it becomes industrial, urban, professional, international; it is also that which awaits it as the outcome of such transformations" (Debray, 1984).

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