

ARE INTERNATIONAL VOLUNTEERS DIGITAL SWALLOWS? THE IMPACT OF DIGITAL SOCIAL WORK ON INTERNATIONAL VOLUNTEERISM.

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*Dedicated to our friend prof. Alberto Godenzi, Boston College
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1. The biggest unrest

1.1. International Volunteerism: an experience of encounter, service and exchange

Maybe we could agree about a basic notion of our topic: International Volunteerism is a free encounter through service between people from different countries. It is not only a meeting between people but an experience of service. It is not only a ministrations but an exchange: individuals who are going to be served are also a kind of volunteers. They accept the presence and actions that the volunteer is going to develop. The people accept to be helped and they give hospitality, links, feelings, wisdom and advises, beauty, their commons... They will reveal the volunteer's identity: who he is in the whole world, indeed. A lot of gifts are going to be presented by people to the volunteer. People and volunteers are not giving exactly the same gifts but everyone puts their own. That encounter is not only relationship or contemplation but a laborious co-creation: it is an exchange of different presents. Some of them are material helping or qualified tasks; another are spiritual knowledge, happiness, cultural socialization –inculturation-, global education, professional training or may be one of the most remarkable experiences in your life. It is not a unilateral giving but an exchange, a cooperatively woven experience, a creative building-up. Volunteerism is always a discovering travel: inside that meeting not only two separated worlds are coming together but we could discover commons that have always been joined. International Volunteerism is not a double experience of service and encounter: the relationship is inside a co-creation. Even when the other individual seemed to have a passive role, he is an active host of our giving presence. The volunteer experience is always “through” service, a giving and gift. They are going to create something, to solve some problem or to add value. Finally, international volunteerism is not only about individuals but people. Why?

1.2. International volunteers: never alone

When an international volunteer travel to a sociologically far town, he never goes alone: family, friends and colleagues are walking thru him. But someone else is traveling inside him. Most of us have the experience of opening our luggage by the border police. And when we pack, we check if there is anything that is not ours. Effectively, there are a lot of things we don't see and they are not completely harmless.

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The volunteer doesn't ever act alone: his role has a long shadow. When the volunteer is *traveling* to his mission, a strong light shines from his back and casts a thick shadow. The volunteer is not only an individual: he is a representation of his country, he carries the history between countries and he is an actor inside the commercial, political and cultural exchanges. The volunteer is carrying the world and history on his shoulders. He not only carries them but he tries to work to transform them. The volunteer is always "between": "between" is the crucial place for volunteers.

1.3. The hidden luggage carried by international volunteers

The international volunteer use to live in a rich country² and frequently he has high education, an institutional network, welfare benefits, social security, a professional career, etc. May be he is not resident in the highest floors of the social skyscraper but he lives in the superior part of the building. He enjoys premium citizenship in the world. When he joins in volunteer programs in a poor country, he is also there as a Western citizenship. Every characteristic of Western culture is carried by him. Every topic of the specific history between the countries is part of the relationship between volunteers and people. The role of the volunteer is not the historic role of the country (although your country has a colonial past, the volunteer is not a colonialist) but it is part of the relationship. It is not easy to work on this kind of social material. May be you are not conscious about the reach of the problems or may be the people don't know a lot about the role of your country in the underdevelopment of their region. But whether or not there is awareness, the dynamics between countries and classes are part of the relationship between people.

A large part of the international relationship is hidden. We are not aware of the complex structure between countries. Industrial factories of global companies, external debt, commercial exchanges, historical conflicts, international cooperation or political alliances form ambiguous dynamics. It is not easy to access to information, understand them or think a balanced judgment. But the differences between countries are so big that it is difficult not to conclude that we have a moral debt and a giant responsibility in the underdevelopment of the country. Although our country was not colonial power in this country, we were part of the Western geopolitical power. Without doubts, we have responsibility.

1.4. Contradictions and crossroads

When you are Western citizen, it is difficult to live with that social responsibility for the misfortune of poor countries or poor people in our own nation. Daily, you have your life, your job or benefits, your home and car, your city security and public transport –especially if you are living in Europe-... Your elder relatives have their retirement pay and if they needed help, they would have public support. Even if you are an active supporter of NGOs and you try to live according to a fair, ecological and peaceful style of life, the biggest contradictions are part of your inner life. You know that in Africa they are suffering Ebola and you are sure behind the border walls and protected by a powerful health system.

These contradictions could be canalized by social commitments, donations, a transformative way of life, a continuous attention to the multiple facts of the world, a militant action for a progressive global democracy, etc. But even when you are honest, you feel an inner tension. We are morally poor: we are existentially poor people because we make the evil we don't

² May be an *inverse international volunteerism* or *ascending volunteerism* –from poor countries to rich countries- would be countercultural or, at least, provocative. We have examples of volunteers who are witness or they are protagonists of social awareness campaigns.

know (as Saint Paul says). That poverty is the price of freedom. That poverty is the place for sharing who we are and what we can do when we coexist with poorer people than us. We need to begin our relationship with poor Otherness as existentially poor people. We don't solve problems but we share from our poverty and giving attitude. This is the way of helping: the *helped helper*. It is not a pathological dependence nor a guilty attitude but a humble approach to us and to them. Regard: volunteerism is always a reciprocal volunteerism. Even we are awake to our poor human condition, we are going to feel contradictions. We need to live with them and to work in the right direction to solve them. The knowledge about positive progress through contradictions is part of the wisdom. Every progression always crosses several contradictions. Even if we are committed people, we have always an inner bag of unrest.

1.5. The cultural heart of darkness

This unrest is immense in the general population -who are not activists for Justice-. Western cultures are built on the basis of omission or minimization of the responsibilities of international and national processes of exploitation, domination, alienation or exclusion. The syndrome of Cain is part of the heart of social darkness: *I am not the guardian of my brother*. Cosmopolitan brotherhood is a dangerous virus against the cultural hardware & software of Wealth: contradictions appear inside the system and citizens could ask about alternatives; structural changes could come. Individualism, nationalism, xenophobia, racism, triviality or impotence are antivirus programs for the defense of the moral consciousness of people. All of them are supporting resources for *Cainism* (the Spanish poet Antonio Machado wrote about "Cainism").

But these cultural antivirus programs are not capable to eliminate every contradiction. They push deeper the problematic doubts, guilt feelings, intellectual questions, fair yearnings and compassionate emotions; they try to hide them in the farthest tower of the last region of our inner, far of our heart and guarded by an effective dragon: Fear. The positive and guilt feelings and desires are the content of the big internal unrest of people. We cannot forget the face of our brothers, even they are far of us. Cain always knows that Abel is his brother even he is buried in the deepest pit of his own heart.

1.6. Tricks for peace

Some more sophisticated anti-compassion programs are more effective: they try to trick the awareness. They simulate helping activity or they try to calm the unrest with some generous donations. Magic and power are both false solutions. Sometimes, people look for external approbation and the **prestige of goodness**: may be the reputation of social sainthood could calm down the unrest... But even if you are the president of a charity the solution is not power but the humble poverty of giving yourselves. If you felt power over poor people or nations, they could be manipulated easier and contradictions would disappear. **Paternalism**, for example, is one pathological solution to the moral unrest: you don't allow poor people are equal to you. You are not ever part of the problem: they have and are their own problem and you are the right solution. **Power solutions** to the cultural and inner unrest are more frequent than we think. Sometimes, the anti-compassion programs are negative power: impotence or sentimentalism are two typical examples. When you feel **impotence**, you believe that nothing can be done. You can do nothing and poor people either. People minimize the strength of solidarity, they are pessimistic and they have not hope. May be they are **relativistic** about the real suffering of poor people. They use to say: "Actually, they are happy with few things or "They don't want changes". **Sentimentalism** is another pathology: some people suffer a lot when they watch sensitive images on TV or they hear the voice of witness. They live a

emotional catharsis but they don't change anything. Maybe they frequently accuse themselves and they are hypercritical with their class background, their wealth and their style of life. But they never do anything that could make a difference. It is a kind of **punitive narcissism** (other example of negative power).

We are not trying to underestimate any partial commitment but sometimes our giving try to be magical. **Magic** is a utilitarian exchange: you put your giving, pronounce your spell and get your profit. Social magic try to eliminate contradictions in exchange for a limited help –or try a balance of compensations-. Sometimes the **redistributive approach** to welfare systems helps to conceive Justice and Brotherhood like a magical compensation: money in exchange of peace). But money is not the problem: you yourself and your entire life are the true solution to poverty –an individual and collective “you”-. If you only can give money, then you are really very poor. Hysterical hyper-activism use also to be a sort of magic. **Social hysteria** happens when you do compulsively a lot in the wrong direction because you are not capable to say yourself where it is the right way.

All of these tricks are more or less present in our lives. The culture of our society suffer that unrest and society try not to change. We use magic, power, anti-power or omissions for calming down our social unrest. But the unrest is like a balloon or a corpse behind deep waters: it always emerges once, twice and every time.

1.7. Reading hearts

When you are international volunteer, unrest is not eliminated. You don't avoid such dangerous tricks. But if you think and prepare yourself, you can begin to convert your contradictions in fertilizer for a new land for the tree of peace.

Our fights for Justice should be capable to “read” the deepest unrest of people. They are not only a *collective Cain*: they are victims of themselves and they are prisoners of a “golden jail”. We must understand these profound feelings, the “motions” and emotions of our culture and interpret the meaning. We should not accuse but talk the deep words which are capable to touch the Heart -Heart as the place of awareness, self and life-. Ignatian wisdom teaches about the reading of the individual and collective feelings or “motions” (for example, in Barcelona, Ignatius tried to read the city soul...). Jesuit Father General Adolfo Nicolas said in the CLC General Assembly in Lebanon (August 2013), that we should be able to talk the heart languages. The **languages of identity** (used by militancies) are not listened and the words of **prophecy** (so frequent in the social activism) are not understood: identity and prophecy must be assumed by the **languages of the heart** or wisdom. We must open ways of recognition, loving and giving from the heart of our culture with the help of poor people. We need to talk the non-powerful languages of heart. It is not a collective psychology (punitive narcissism, social hysteria, cultural magic, etc.) but wisdom. The fights for Justice are cultural fights: we are proposing an approach based on *the cultural fights for Justice*.

1.8. The volunteer, countercultural blacksmith of a new world

The original relationship between volunteers and poor people is asymmetrical and social, political and economical unequal. If both parts don't work on this risky material, there will be problems. What kind of problems? We have explained some of them: guilty, paternalism, hysteria, sentimentalism, impotence, dependence of acceptance... Maybe you feel that poor people are heroes, saints or magicians and they could give you forgiveness and they are the producers and administrators of goodness. Then, this dependence is pathological. The way is plenty of dangers because is a conflictive field. The volunteer operates inside a social,

economical, cultural and sometimes political conflict. The social volunteer is essentially a peacemaker inside social war. This peaceful mission will begin in his own soul and his inner peace will call for social reconciliation. Social reconciliation and brotherhood are the horizon of our strategies, commitments and yearnings.

The volunteer can't deny his own background. He has a lot of resources: social capital, networks, skills, information, cultural capital, international protection by powerful nations, attention of the media, etc. The turn point is not about identity or guilty but the giving. We are that we give. We Are We Give.

The international volunteer performs a long travel but that travelling is not only across oceans and Earth. His travel is also cultural and social: he is going to build a renewed space inside the historical relationships between nations. His work is humble and small but it's a realization and seed of a new solidarity approach. He carries the original materials and forges like a blacksmith a new inclusive home to share and create together. Like the Jesuit *Guaraina* experience in the heart of South America, the international volunteer is recreating a shared and freed land inside an empire. It is not easy: there are tricks and tics, temptations and impasses. The volunteer needs to discern his inner movements and to be accompanied by friends, partners and *Sherpas* for climbing that tall mountain. He needs strength, skills, resilience and tenderness to bend, melt and merge the sociological, cultural and biographical raw materials. The volunteer is the worker of a big mobilization of people, ideas, feelings or biographies...

2. Mobility

International volunteer's role has changed over time. Which is his role in our epoch? Nobody think that International Volunteerism is obsolete. Conversely, may be the main characteristic of our modern phase is mobilization. The Mobil Condition is one of the engines of our world. We are not only talking about class mobility but a general dynamics of mobility as a condition of modern people, with different manifestations. Modernity experiences a kind of integral mobility and International Volunteerism joins in several of these specific mobilizations.

The 10 tracks of integral mobility are:

- 1) **Internal mobility** begins with personal movement toward changing our own expectations. In our imagination, we move to another place or wish to move to another place which social norms had made off-limits Internal mobility allows us to imagine ourselves in another place in which we are able to search, change, and improve.
- 2) **Psychological mobility** helps us to orient ourselves in radically different contexts by reevaluating aspects of our character, attitudes, preferences, and habits.
- 3) **Identity mobility** allows us to deal with the diversity of social identities and roles in the various groups of which we are part.
- 4) **Physical & geographical mobility** refers to moving from one place to another, changing location, traveling.
- 5) **Relational mobility** involves making contact with new individuals or with individuals who are different in terms of place of residence, nationality, social class, ideology, or religion.
- 6) **Communicative mobility** is understood as the increase in number and diversity of connections which results from communication between individuals of very different backgrounds, as well as the exchange and transfer of knowledge and texts (hypertextuality).

- 7) **Media mobility** is the ability to consult and participate in much more diverse sources of information and/or knowledge.
- 8) **Social mobility** is understood as paths leading to a change in social class, educational level, occupation, or social status. Processes of inclusion and exclusion are relevant part of that social mobility.
- 9) **Economical mobility** is the ability to move capital, workers, people as well as tangible and intangible goods and services around the world.
- 10) **Political mobility** is understood existentially as a high degree of freedom and opportunity, and/or the operational rights involved in communication, participation, and entrepreneurship. Individuals and groups demand participation in the decision-making process within a new type of governance.

People navigate through multiple screens, participate in various networks, communities and decision-making processes, and transfer ideas and images to create new ones. They move cross-culturally, making the best of each perspective part of their own. Freedom seems to be redefined in terms of mobility, of removing old boundaries. Clearly, this creates new boundaries and vulnerabilities, divisions and conflicts, obstacles and uncertainties. But at the same time, mobility also offers us a framework and the tools necessary to overcome these obstacles. Without a doubt, having and using mobility provokes new social differences. But at the same time, Information and Communications Technologies (ICT) are very mobile, very easily transferable. The mobility of digital technology is easily appropriated by society at large. It seems that the human condition plays a role in the articulation between this large-scale global movement and the small-scale movement experienced internally by individuals and communities. The call to develop, communicate, and participate represents a huge mobilization of all our forces, individual and shared.

Mobility is at the core of changes now taking place throughout the world. Mobility is a far-reaching phenomenon which is expressed in several ways. We call these the **10 tracks of mobility**:

- 1) **Internal mobility.** International volunteer moves his own soul. His engagement is radical and implies a transformation of his own mind. He is not only incarnated in a new world but he moves to an alternative world that doesn't exist yet: they are creating it. They imagine another better world, they move to Utopia and they are moving their own life. The volunteer embodies a new world. Volunteers and people are discoverers and settlers of a *new brave world*.
- 2) **Psychological mobility.** The volunteer experiences a process of inner transformation in an unknown and challenging context. He faces new routines, habits, food, way of life, customs and manners. New skills and attitudes are demanded and our personality is tested. Any authentic volunteer experience changes yourself because you are inside a conflictive and dramatic social structure and you are a prince, son of the King, and also friend of slaves. International volunteerism is a social drama in which we are going to change and rewrite our role and the script of the play.
- 3) **Identity mobility.** Identity is going to be changed. Volunteerism is an adventure because you don't know where the destiny is: you are acting in an unpredictable context crossed by conflicts and social exclusion. You are opened to Otherness and you cannot close your mind and soul. Identity is merged with new cultural mores and traditions. Volunteerism is time of cultural creation in dialogue with the diverse ethnic and regional traditions and the counterculture of solidarity.
- 4) **Physical & geographical mobility.** Obviously, international volunteerism is a travel, discover, adventure, exploration, geographical movement and you open new paths. It is a road movie, a road experience. You are moving across physical and symbolic

borders, you create crossroads where people don't see ways, you will settle and plant in no-land and no-where.

- 5) **Relational mobility.** The international volunteer establishes new relationships with very different people from another culture or religion, nationality and low social class. Furthermore, he wants to create a new pattern of relationships between people: he wants to move themselves in direction to a new kind of sociability doesn't exist yet.
- 6) **Communicative mobility.** The international volunteer is a wire among people from different countries. He is a storyteller: he reports facts, problems, miracles, biographies, expectations... He tells everybody his discovering: he is a bridge between worlds, an ocean cable thru the deep waters of solidarity and global exclusion.
- 7) **Media mobility.** The volunteer discovers new sources of information. He will listen to different leaders, analysts, alternative thinkers, very diverse visions, community media, NGO news services, hidden voices. He is going to establish new connections with new networkers and he is going to be the voice of voiceless.
- 8) **Social mobility.** If volunteers are helping inside an asymmetrical relationship, they are moving across the social stratification. They are going to create intermediate class places and they are going to feel the contradictions and crossroads of inter-status tensions. They are trying to build inter-class relationships liberated of exploitation, domination and alienation schemes.
- 9) **Economical mobility.** Volunteers create economical value thru service and donations. They change economical patterns and try to amplify social market and Fair Trade exchanges. In humanitarian crisis, they are logistic organizers and move emergency resources thru the most dangerous conditions.
- 10) **Political mobility.** Finally, international volunteers try to create with people a new freed cell inside the global order. They try to promote the participation of people in the global scenario and to carry their voices to the ordinary places of their countries. Volunteerism is the most basic mobilization. Presences are revolutionary: new people in unexpected places change visions and governance. International volunteers are political agents, global citizens and, together with people, they want to be on the global table.

International volunteerism is one of the most expressive and sophisticated manifestations of modern mobility in the new 21st Century. Expansive Modern mobility is driven by another new condition of Modern Times: digitalization. If international volunteerism is a key fact of Modern mobility... how is affected by digital condition?

3. Digital Social Work

3.1. Digital volunteerism?

Digitalization is not only related to the binary logic. Binary methodology expresses the will of compatibility between the most different systems. The digital condition is a modern expression of universalism, coexistence, shared codes, co-creation, cosmopolitanism. Digitalization is a translation to shared language. Digitalization symbolizes a universal process of conversation and networking, and implies a moral position in the world-building. Thus, we speak about "Digital culture". Digital culture is characterized by several facts: open codes, peer to peer sharing, hypertexts (integrated multi-perceptions), virtual experiences, networking, collective intelligence, self-organization, creative commons, bottom up design, open design & open source, cocreation, gamification, prosumers (advanced consumers who are collaborating collectively in the improvement of products), proxicity (proximity + ubiquity) or netcracy (a non-hierarchical, horizontal, changing and flexible system of governance). The impact of digital culture in the classical shapes of participation, politics, NGO, social thinking or

volunteerism is huge. We are still thinking about these too new facts. But I would like to advance some essay about the digital volunteerism as a kind of Digital Social Work.

3.2. Not only computers

Which are the characteristics of Digital Social Work (or Digital Social Action)? Informationalism is not only about computers. Informationalism is a way of development: a new source of productivity, legitimacy and progress. The informational source of development is the improvement of the methodology for capturing, treatment and application of information (this is the core of the Castels' paradigm). We are talking about better methods for capturing significant information (discernment), working about that information (deliberation) and application to new products or services (decision). The sequence discernment-deliberation-decision is the axis of Informationalism. Digital logic has been revolutionary and it changes the whole way of development. Informationalism has been possible because digital revolution has happened. The ways to produce knowledge and the own organization of creators have changed. Informationalism is a revolution like Industrialism: everything is changing. It involves every dimension of our social life: relationships, family, solidarity, communication, jobs, corporations, awareness, world, church... Digital culture is not an added sector to the public life: it is inside the DNA of the culture and sociological patterns and they are changed by digitalization. If Informationalism is more than "Informatics", Digitalization is more than a system of 1 & 0.

Without doubts, computers, smartphones, etc. are relevant digital tools, but Digitalization is more than these technical resources. We think that the access to digital engines and social networking could be a powerful impact for class mobility and stratification changes. And we are convinced that we should introduce digital resources in the first stages of social intervention and basic education: it is a starter and an accelerator of empowerment processes. It is not the last stage because is considered like a luxury tool. Digital culture is changing the architecture of social mobility and it is challenging the old methodology of social work. But we don't want to reduce digitalization to technology or even some of its nearest manifestations as social networks.

Digitalization is not only technology: it is a kind of new culture or, at least, a strong new logic that transforms culture and social patterns. The social embodiment of digitalization is creating new patterns of social work. Which are the characteristics of the Digital Social Work?

3.3. Umbrella Revolution

Some characteristics from the Hong Kong Umbrella Revolution could help us to think the digital social action. All of us remember the powerful pictures of *The Night of the Smartphones*: thousands of people lit up the night with their smartphones. Those smartphones expressed they were talking with millions of people around the world. They were not alone: they were a world. The analysis of the Umbrella Revolution is relevant because one of the main volunteerism's challenges is the connection with citizen movements and social transformations. Furthermore, most leaders are Christian people. We synthesize in then points.

- 1) A full-grown global community. The numbers of demonstrators were being exponentially increased by the participation thru social networks. The Umbrella Movement was "digitalized", communicated and shared by millions of citizens around the world. A huge multitude was virtually connected with the occupy activists and demonstrations were happening in different cities in Asia, Europe and America.

- 2) Knowledge creation. In that global community of protest, a lot of people were creating knowledge about the essence, significance and value of the Umbrella Revolution. It was crucial the building of the information for the world public opinion. The activists and their partners around the world create news, opinion, concepts, diagnosis, reputation and even they joined in the writing of the Wikipedia contents about them. This creation of knowledge was collaborative, free, democratic, critical and plural.
- 3) Conversation and cultural co-creation. The roots of the Umbrella revolution are Christian, but the mobilization is diverse. Everyone recreate the contents of the Occupation from their own culture, tradition and aesthetic identity. This cultural mixing and co-creation from every primary community provide a deeper significance and universalism. Digitalization doesn't equate every culture but enables the conversation between them. Digitalization is not standardization but inclusive pluralism.
- 4) P2P. You are not only connected with a general cause: in the digital era of activism you interact with other individuals: you can read their blogs, tweets, you can hear and see them in YouTube. You support personally them. Digitalization combines massive and individual approaches.
- 5) Commons. The Umbrella Revolution was living on the streets. They needed resources, logistic infrastructure, food, facilities, services, etc. They built and self-managed a community city inside the hyper-capitalist city. They built a city of commons. Moreover, some social media and wifi access were closed by Hong Kong authorities. A foreign supporter created and shared software and they could have free Internet connection and access to alternative social media.
- 6) Inclusion. The Umbrella community was inclusive, intergenerational, universalist. They had no borders: they tried to engage everybody –even policemen- in a transversal proposal. Digitalism is essentially inclusive.
- 7) Celebrative dimension. The Umbrella Revolution expressed itself thru documents and also thru Aesthetics. The activists and their supporters created a lot of Social Art outcomes. They has the Lennon Wall: a public place in which you could put post-its to communicate and a big projector showed diverse messages, pictures, inspirational quotes, etc. They made logos and symbols like the Umbrella Man: a big statue made by wooden materials. It is not a serious fight –their lives are n risk: remember Tiannanmen and the Tank Man- but also a celebration of democracy and freedom. The celebrative dimension and the Social Art creation developed an emotional collective intelligence and they reached to transcendence.
- 8) Integrality. It was unique: the Hong Kong demonstrators studied on the streets. They did their school and university homeworks. Some of them offered support for studying about statistics, History and other disciplines. Furthermore, they included an ecological vision: they recycled every residue, They were civic: they didn't step on the grass and they cleaned everything. They wre peacemakers and they invoked to love. They defined their mobilization like a “demonstration with peace and love”.
- 9) Creativity and self-management Effectivily, they built a city thru collaborative methodologies. It was an amazing development of creativity, transparency, participation and democratic governance.
- 10) Digital identity. Certainly, digital tools were not only resources for the young Umbrella activists: these smartphones are generational symbols of their identity.

3.4. Digital Social Work

We could study another phenomena. For example, the “disappearance” or abduction of 43 students in Iguala city, in the Mexican Guerrero State. There are similar characteristics. It is not the effect of computers or technology, but a new social-political framework for citizenship

development and social change. What is the main characteristic of Digital Social Work? Social Digitalization is a new methodology for universal encounter and cooperation. Digitalization enables compatibility, massive processes, high communication, sharing, copy & remix, personalization and the cheapest radical mobilization. You can deepen your friendships with people who are living in the farthest country or the most hidden forest and you can create with them like if they were your neighbor. Digitalization is about encounter and co-creation. An international volunteerism is about encounter and service. Then, international volunteerism is affected by digital culture.

Since the beginning of industrialization, social work has never faced a challenge as great as the challenge of globalization. Global social work faces a highly complex set of problems, which require new ways of governance, the ability to develop hybrid models or collaborations with other organizations, and greater reflection on the process.

We are going to formulate the Decalogue of digital social work:

- 1) **Complexity.** Digital Social Work (DSW) is informational: it is about knowledge. Its raw material is information and its main tool is discernment. Multiple intelligences are the languages for research. Meaningfulness is its horizon. You need immersion –even virtual immersion, simulators and gamification-, deep cultural competences and historical vision. Visual thinking is also a useful method but you manage complex icons of sound, text, images... Beauty and feelings are also implied in the process: It is not only about big data. The inner space of everyone and the inner room of the institutions are the environment for informational analysis and creation. DSW creates a new alternative telling for hidden and excluded realities.
- 2) **Personalization.** Digitalism appears sometimes as a cold, abstract and anonymous process. But digitalization enables an intense personalization. It works for empowerment, responsibility, singularization, complex identities without borders. DSW is community empowerment and social responsibility.
- 3) **Mobility.** Digitalization gives you a couple of wings but also you need roots. Roots & Wings is a good slogan for digital mobility. Effectively, the digital competences demand dynamism, entrepreneurship, pro-active attitudes and a building approach. Digital Social Work looks for integral mobility for development.
- 4) **Conversation.** Digitalization is a huge global and trans-lingual conversation. Storytelling is crucial and you need to express, translate, communicate. Social Art is one of the most powerful ways for DSW. DSW needs to be restructures by the philosophy of conversation.
- 5) **Networking.** DSW is a multi-scaling work: at the same time individual, P2P, group, community and massive cooperation. It works with local groups and global communities. Essentially, digitalization is about universalism: it is deeply Modern. DSW has a ecosystem vision of the very diverse actors you need (with different competences and status). It overcomes the differences between public and private; integrates entertainment and te most serious advocacy. It is transversal and fluid: Digital Society is the Fourth Sector (1st sector is Public Administration, 2nd Sector is Commerce and 3st Sector is NGO).
- 6) **Alternatives.** DSW is always looking for a shorter and alternative way for fulfill its goal and mission. It promotes the imagination, essays, experiments, creativity, innovation. And DSW is not possible without hope.
- 7) **Co-culturalism.** DSW demands a high diversity, pluralism, coexistence, inclusive approaches and free expression of ideas, beliefs and ways of life. But it is not relativism: that is not possible without strong values of respect to human dignity and peaceful demoracy. DSW is not much multiculturalism or inter-culturalism as co-

culturalism: you mix and co-create new cultural commons, bridges between different religions, ideologies, traditions, identities, etc. And that co-culturalism empowers your own original culture (because nobody knows perfectly about his own religion if he doesn't know about another faith). It requires not much identity and rights as the peaceful speaking of languages of the heart.

- 8) **Business model** approach. DGT is not worried about forms or rules: it works for its mission. Business Model is a method born in the last decade of the 20th Century for adaptation of corporations to our changing world. Business Model looks for a balanced system or value production for you mission. Everything is ordered for the mission or it disappears. DSW is missional and it creates its own rules.
- 9) **Replicability**. DSW only works with open codes, access and transparency. It is looking for realized experiences and best practices. They are patterns to copy in any other place. DSW doesn't look for power but radical experienced models. It has a problem-solving approach based on evidences. Global replicability is the key of DSW.
- 10) **Wikigovernance**. DSW need a complex architecture of deliberation. That kind of deliberation looks for engagement, participation, individual acceptance, democratic legitimacy and a constant work for achieve consent in every decision. If you have not created that individual consent, people abandon your project. It is the permanent temptation of "zapping" (if you don't create consent, they abandon your channel although you have formally the authority). The Wikinomic paradigm of digital production is the framework for the politics of digitalization: participatory governance, changing teams, variable geometries for decision, self-management, etc. Wikigovernance ios not abstract nor virtual: they demand presence and retaking of public spaces (the pattern of occupation).

How could we apply this DSW model to international volunteerism. May be we would need another wider reflection about a new program and agenda. I think it is easy to project the consequences. But, effectively, a new framework calls for new competences, the 21st digital competences.

3.5. The 21st Century Skills

21st Century Skills are a set of fundamental abilities for taking advantage of the new media and responding to new challenges. Digital skills are an adaptation of these 21st Century Skills specifically to the potential of digital media. Being at the heart of the social, economic and cultural reconfiguration, 21st Century Skills and digital skills are almost synonyms.

Today, it is necessary to respond to problems with innovative methods which are able to apply the 21st Century Skills in order to take into account the problems' complex and comprehensive natures. To do so, organizations must be reconfigured. Research on organizational models, skills and problem-solving methods is central to our concerns. It will be increasingly vital that we think deeply about the fundamental issues in order to connect with the most urgent problems and generate useful methodological applications as a response to these problems. The greatest problem we currently face is the lack of adequate reflection.

The high degree of modernization essential to our world requires a change more in methodology than in ideas. The main problem of our society does not stem from ideas. The main problem is a lack of the skills necessary to reflect upon, debate, and put ideas into practice. The contexts in which ideas are used have become so diverse and personalized that people need skills that will guide them in unique and ever-changing situations. Those who lack adequate methodology and skills will be unable to solve their problems or take advantage of

the great potential for participation, communication, and social creativity that is growing and developing around the world.

What type of methodology is necessary? We need a methodology that enables us to create and promote new 21st Century Skills and digital skills. When we refer to 21st Century Skills, we are not referring to digital literacy but to the skills people and communities need in order to effectively use all the media of our times (including digital media). Several principles exist, and in our research study we have identified six key principles: their initials form the acronym REGINA. We assign special value to this six-principled 21st Century Skill hexagon, since it results from work conducted with child and teen workers, as well as with other highly vulnerable child populations.

We have created the **R.E.G.I.N.A. model, based on the 21st Century Skills**, which identifies six proficiencies: **R**eflection, **E**ntrepreneurship, **G**lobalism, **I**nnovation, **N**etworking, and **A**wareness of others).

- 1) **REFLECTION:** The ability to reflect is critical in a world saturated with information and high levels of uncertainty. Reflection implies an ongoing process of interpreting and making sense of personal and collective domains, during planning as well as during activities. Never was reflection as critical as in our time. This skill includes the ability to combine and create hypertext while applying the principles of transparency and opensourcing. Opensourcing calls for the free sharing of knowledge and encourages charity, synergy, and the enrichment of others. Critical analysis and synthesis are crucial. Reflection creates diverse and integrated managers of all types of intelligences. At the same time, reflection is essential to the ability to tell stories which produce a sense of identity and history.
- 2) **ENTREPRENEURSHIP:** Taking advantage of the increasing availability of media, knowledge, and opportunities requires active participation. Entrepreneurship requires a proactive stance, initiative, awareness, risk-taking, and the search for sustainability.
- 3) **GLOBALISM:** Globalism refers to the mindset that thinks and acts about events with a comprehensive, universal, ecological, and systematic awareness, and that views events, with their local, specific and unique expressions with a global view of phenomena (which integrates internal and external aspects).
- 4) **INNOVATION:** Innovation is crucial. The new paradigm of informationalism is the ability to improve the quality of acquiring, processing, and applying informational methods. Digital information is central to these modern times. It is the source of innovation because it requires people and groups to strive for high levels of creativity, imagination, flexibility, diversification, experimentation with alternatives, and lateral thinking.
- 5) **NETWORKING:** Networking allows for inclusion, collaborative work, both participation and responsibility, creation with others (whether few or many), in-depth deliberation with others, making the most of the synergy, P2P exchange, and crowd sourcing. It calls upon creative *wikinomics* structures (creative mass participation).
- 6) **AWARENESS OF OTHERS:** Awareness of others gives the ability to understand both the diversity of phenomena and perspectives and the uniqueness of individuals and groups so that constructive relationships with all stakeholders can be established. The REGINA Model is strongly focused on the concept of otherness and thus enables a simultaneous approach to both personal and social aspects.

The 21st Century Skills found in the REGINA model identify six proficiencies fundamental to using digital media as drivers of the development and mobility of individuals within their communities. Combined with digital literacy and media use, they comprise what we refer to

as digital capital, and can be measured in a way that allows for the creation of an index. **Digital capital refers to the set of digital skills, digital literacy, and digital media stockpiled by an individual, community, or society.**

These 21st Century Skills are of course not completely new, but are based on historically relevant skills updated for today's media and opportunities. They are not six unconnected skills: quite the contrary, when taken together, they create a social dynamic that promotes mobility. Digital skills are the means for increasing mobility for the entire planet.

3.6. The informational promise

People navigate through multiple screens, participate in various networks, communities and decision-making processes, and transfer ideas and images to create new ones. They move cross-culturally, making the best of each perspective part of their own. Freedom seems to be redefined in terms of mobility, of removing old boundaries. Clearly, this creates new boundaries and vulnerabilities, divisions and conflicts, obstacles and uncertainties. But at the same time, mobility also offers us a framework and the tools necessary to overcome these obstacles. Without a doubt, having and using mobility provokes new social differences. But at the same time, Information and Communications Technologies (ICT) are very mobile, very easily transferable. The mobility of digital technology is easily appropriated by society at large.

It seems that the human condition plays a role in the articulation between this large-scale global movement and the small-scale movement experienced internally by individuals and communities. The call to develop, communicate, and participate represents a huge mobilization of all our forces, individual and shared.

These new ICTs have allowed, promoted, and intensified mobility in all its expressions. Digital culture is the greatest global driver of mobility.

Naturally, this is not mainly a procedural issue. On the contrary, methodologies are a form of habit or use. It is not about making people more computerized, but about incorporating the moral basis of this research. Mobility is based on individuals whose dignity is acknowledged, whose skills are trusted, and whose development and involvement within society is safeguarded. Such a society by its nature must become freer, fairer, more pluralistic, and more egalitarian. Mobility is not linked to any moral or political system.

Moreover, mobility is not the only or even the principal social value. Sustainable development requires a new paradigm of mobility, which includes individual and collective components. Individuals, communities, and societies which cohere are founded on meaning and solidarity. Mobility is the test of development and freedom. Deeply rooted individuals cannot develop and grow unless they can pursue their dreams. Conversely, mobile individuals need the roots of living for and with others. Roots and wings seem to form a pair that is essential to the human condition. Digital skills give us wings to fly, but they also give wings to our roots, allowing our roots to take flight, enriching meaning and solidarity. Improving communication, awareness of others, hospitality, relationships, a sense of belonging, knowledge, and reflection are possibilities which contribute to mobility and enhance the quality of meaning and solidarity. Mobility is not simply a driver of superficiality.

There is great promise in this era of information: **digital technologies and skills with their uses for communication and information are driving personal and social development.** We call them information and not digital drivers because their raw material is knowledge and communication which are not digital; it is value information. Currently, corporations dedicated

to communications and digital culture symbolize, better than other institutions today, this new social promise. They are aspirational corporations, in the sense that they have the potential to make important contributions to personal growth and social development.

- Personal growth is encouraged because information propels the individual into a new world of diverse contacts and relationships. There are also new sources of knowledge and entertainment, which enable individuals to communicate better with families and friends.
- Social development is encouraged because the key is also informationalism and digital culture is the newest and most powerful medium for obtaining, managing, and applying information.

The promise of this era of information is closely connected to the spread of democracy because information promotes mobility, communication, and participation. However, a digital culture must also be aware that, without a strong social, cultural, and political fabric, the information economy will weaken. An ultra individualistic society, although there may be a larger flow of communication, can generate very low quality communication and information, and that would threaten the sector's sustainability.

In our new global economy, the source of wealth is not based on the domination of some countries by others, confining the dominated to specific types of work controlled by a few big population centers. It is an economy that responds to a world with many centers of power. It is a strategy to attract clusters of investors or become a tax haven. But that cannot be a country's entire strategy for economic growth. Even economic growth itself is not a valid objective, since history has clearly demonstrated that economic growth by itself neither generates social welfare nor decreases poverty. The amount of wealth that is generated depends on how well a society's human resources have been educated (not only educational level but also training and practice in the 21st Century Skills) and also on the quality of the society's institutions, i.e., the institutions that serve corporate, political, administrative, and individual needs. This is the infrastructure that allows for innovation and the addition of value. Both factors - human resources and institutional quality - are crucial in a digital culture, because digital skills and new collective ways to communicate and act on information are part of such a culture.

4. International volunteers are swallows

The first and simplest question to ask about any project or organization is, "What is your story?" The story is not about chronological data or about its evolution. The concept of story is used in the narrative sense, and seeks to benefit all participants and audience members. Storytelling was reestablished at the end of the twentieth century because narrative is helpful when explaining complex ideas, creating a social entity, or guiding behaviors and organizations. Indeed, storytelling is a technique for organizing information which allows the narrative to explain complex ideas concisely and vividly. A modern storytelling narrative is able to express, in a simple and vibrant way, the essence of a concept through the use of a very short story, charged with emotional intelligence and power. Interest in storytelling has grown as it has been applied to contexts in which narratives were not previously present. This is very often the case for businesses and organizations. An organization's storytelling is capable of expressing, in a simple, comprehensible, and participative way, the essence and power of the institution or its projects. Storytelling can use metaphors, similes, short expressions, slogans, or images, and each tells their own story. Frequently, a story is created through visual thinking. To say that the first question to ask of a project is, "What is your story?," is to search for a narrative which concisely and vividly expresses the project's essence: not only the issue at hand, but also its motivation and direction.

Everyone has learned the Oscar Wilde's story entitled The Happy Prince. A prince lived inside his Unconcern Palace with high walls. Anything disturbed his life and all his responsibilities were on the hands of ministers. When he died, a statue was built and then he was capable to contemplate the whole world. Years later, a swallow rested in the shoulder of the prince when the bird was migrating to Egypt because winter was coming. The prince asked for help: he needed to pull away his golden skin and his diamond eyes for helping poor people.

May be, international volunteers are merciful swallows. The international volunteer knows he has the status of a prince, a Western citizen. He has education, a powerful nationality, international protection, welfare state and benefits, health system: he can move around the world with his green passport and white skin. We are princes. But from the high column of our heart, we have seen the pain of people. And we want to pull away our skin. We want to see, we want to give, we want to *love and serve*. May be if we were Christians like our beloved Oscar Wilde, we would think that the Happy Prince is Jesus, the high column is the cross, he pulled away his skin and his crown was made of thorns. May be our heart is our best swallow.

International volunteers are also swallows. And they are going to be messengers, bridge-makers, tailors of a disjointed world. International volunteers are the best wings of our compassionate universality. They do things that power couldn't ever do: things that only Love is capable to do. Like the two hearts of Prince and Swallow, at the end of the Wilde's story, international volunteers do things nobody can destroy. Let us make things that deserve eternal in our Modern world, in our Planet Heart. Are International volunteers digital swallows? I know you are, thank you.