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## A Bonsai Civilization?

Dear Members of the Space Renaissance International and all astronautic-humanists,

I just read a book titled "*Building Social Business: The New Kind of Capitalism That Serves Humanity's Most Pressing Needs*" by Muhammad Yunus, inventor of microcredit, the Grameen Bank, and winner of the 2006 Nobel Peace Prize.

One concept among the many developed by Yunus and plainly illustrated in the book, particularly struck me:

"To me poor people are like bonsai trees. When you plant the best seed of the tallest tree in a flower-pot, you get a replica of the tallest tree, only inches tall. There is nothing wrong with the seed you planted, only the soil-base that is too inadequate. Poor people are bonsai people. There is nothing wrong in their seeds. Simply, society never gave them the base to grow on. All it needs to get the poor people out of poverty for us to create an enabling environment for them. Once the poor can unleash their energy and creativity, poverty will disappear very quickly."

What a great humanist simile!

I would like very much to meet Dr. Yunus and propose to him the logical step forward of his concept: humanity will be a bonsai civilization if it remains confined in its mother planet.

The poor people will suffer from this limit more than the other social classes since they have already been suffering for ages. The current closed world crisis will simply continue to take away any hope they may have.

But the poor people will not be alone. Should the world remain closed, the whole growth of civilization will be disabled, which will mean a quick decay for all of the social ensembles and communities, none of them excluded. The poor people will be progressively deprived of the charity of the wealthy. It will probably mean in many cases passing from a miserable life to a horrible death.

But some millions of wealthy and honest people—socially grown up thanks to the electronic revolution and sincerely hoping for an ethic evolution of our society—will not be any luckier. Their social status will quickly decline to the edge of poverty.

The North African revolutions going on right now express a double awareness, most of all residing among the young people. First, due to the crisis, their poverty status is worsening to below the threshold of survival. Second, the so-called "Web 2.0", the social networks, are justifying their name, revealing their power as true *social* networks. That confirms the excellent intuition stated by Amartya Sen (another Indian receiving the Nobel prize for economics in 1998) that the spread of information is very much more effective than guns in spreading democracy in countries still subject to tyrannies.

But in a decaying civilization environment, the wealthy social status quickly becomes a privilege that can be maintained only by renouncing more and more of the people own sovereignty in favor of Mafias and tyrannical powers. This means that the so-called first world could rapidly go back in history, falling to pre-democratic status. Some commenter begun talking about *post-democracy*. But that would not be a higher status toward direct democracy (that would be allowed by Web 2.0), but a horrible involution. To avoid the above scenario and progress toward a higher level of ethics and democracy, **the world desperately needs new industries.**



Dr. Patrick Collins, Professor of Environmental Economics at Japan's Azabu University (and member of the Space Renaissance International Board), recently commented on an article by Rick Tumlinson on *Huffington Post* ([http://www.huffingtonpost.com/rick-tumlinson/a-new-american-space-age\\_b\\_820563.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/rick-tumlinson/a-new-american-space-age_b_820563.html)):

“A key problem of the US economy today is the **lack of new industries** which are needed to replace the old industries shipped out to Japan, China, India and elsewhere. America needs new industries for which popular demand will grow to large scale, and in which America can sustain an edge for decades. What is more promising than space travel and opening the space frontier? Luckily, just traveling to space is a fascinating experience - and American companies and the FAA (US Federal Aeronautics Administration) - though not American investors nor NASA - are currently leading the work to start sub-orbital space travel. To date, however, both (the US) government and Wall Street have refused to invest in this new frontier — to the amazing extent that, having walked on the Moon in 1969, Americans won't even be able to get to space later this year! The new paradigm of space development is 'By the People For the People' - instead of 'by government for government': however, the government still has an important role to play, as Rick Tumlinson explains. NASA's \$18 BILLION budget is 1,000 times that of the FAA's space office: so dedicating just 5% of this to aiding the development of space travel - which NASA's own 1998 report 'General Public Space Travel and Tourism' says will become the largest industry in space - could rev up the US economy like nothing else.”

Rick's article discusses the US space agency, but the problem and our proposed solution are the same for the whole world.

**Are you willing to simply watch the transformation of our civilization into a morally and economically bonsai civilization?**

If you reply NO to this question, as we do at SRI, you have one only choice: to work and fight for the Space Renaissance, expanding our civilization beyond the Earth's limits.

We need your contribute and your help, to spread these simple concepts outside of the space community, since they are in the interest of all human beings, present and future, and of all the other species living on this planet.

- Join the Space Renaissance <http://www.spacerenaissance.org/sri-register.htm>
- Attend the first congress of the International Space Renaissance to be held in June 2011 <http://www.spacerenaissance.org/SRIC/SRIC-HOME.html>
- Buy online the book "Three Theses for the Space Renaissance" <http://www.lulu.com/commerce/index.php?fBuyContent=10003567>
- Organize meetings for discussion of the above arguments for your community: You can participate in the Congress to improve the Thesis and be entitled to vote.
- Submit papers to the Congress, responding to our Call for Papers <http://www.spacerenaissance.org/SRIC/SRIC-CallForPapers.html>

Wherever there are at least five registered members, a local SRI chapter may be created. This is an essential step of any movement: give birth to regular meetings, for instance, once a month either in person or on-line where people can be invited, so the group can progressively grow.

Please reproduce this message, print it on paper, put it in your living or working space, invite people to discuss our goals and objectives and our congress.

Let's start working!

Aim High! Ad Astra!

Adriano V. Autino, SRI, President