



# Italy and innovation: a complex marriage

Some comments derived by my interaction with Giorgio De Michelis

Alfonso Fuggetta  
Cefriel - Politecnico di Milano

October 27th, 2017

# Two angles in Giorgio's work

- The relationship between innovation, Italian companies, and Italian culture and heritage.
- The (public) policies and strategies to promote innovation in Italy.

Innovation is vital for any country and Italy is certainly no exception.

Even more, we are in urgent need of a wide, deep, and consistent innovation strategy able to promote the growth and competitiveness of both the public sector and private companies.

# 1. Inflection point

- Either you change or you die.
  - Blockbusters
  - Nokia, Blackberry, Windows Mobile ...
- It starts well before you see the initial effects
  - The state of the mobile market in 2002 ...

Technologies are a devastating enabler to  
disrupt and radically transform entire  
markets.

Nobody is “safe” or “protected”.

You cannot wait and see what happens.

# The notion of “change”

- It is not just a “technology push” or some “mobile interface”
- It is not just “adding a few sensors”.
- 360° revolution:
  - New products
  - New services
  - New processes
  - New business models

# A few examples

- The death of intermediation and of many traditional distribution channels:
  - Direct access to market (e.g., media or B2C).
  - Blockchain
- Industrial Machinery: from islands to nodes of a network
- Automotive: from combustion engines (and related components) to electrical vehicles:
  - What will the destiny of many Italian automotive suppliers be?
- The case of Eldor.

What is the “expected life span”  
of a company?



We still miss the sense  
of urgency and inevitability

# The crucial role of competences

# 2. The role of companies

# The true meaning of “open innovation”

- It is not a cheap marketplace of ready-to-use innovations.
- It is opening the doors to the external world.

Innovation does not happen  
only within a company.

Even more, usually it happens outside.

Innovation is not free  
as in “free beer”

Innovation means willingness to fail.

It is essential to fail cheap & quick.

Accept only “new errors” (Davide Oldani).

Look for the forgotten, ignored,  
or latent demand.

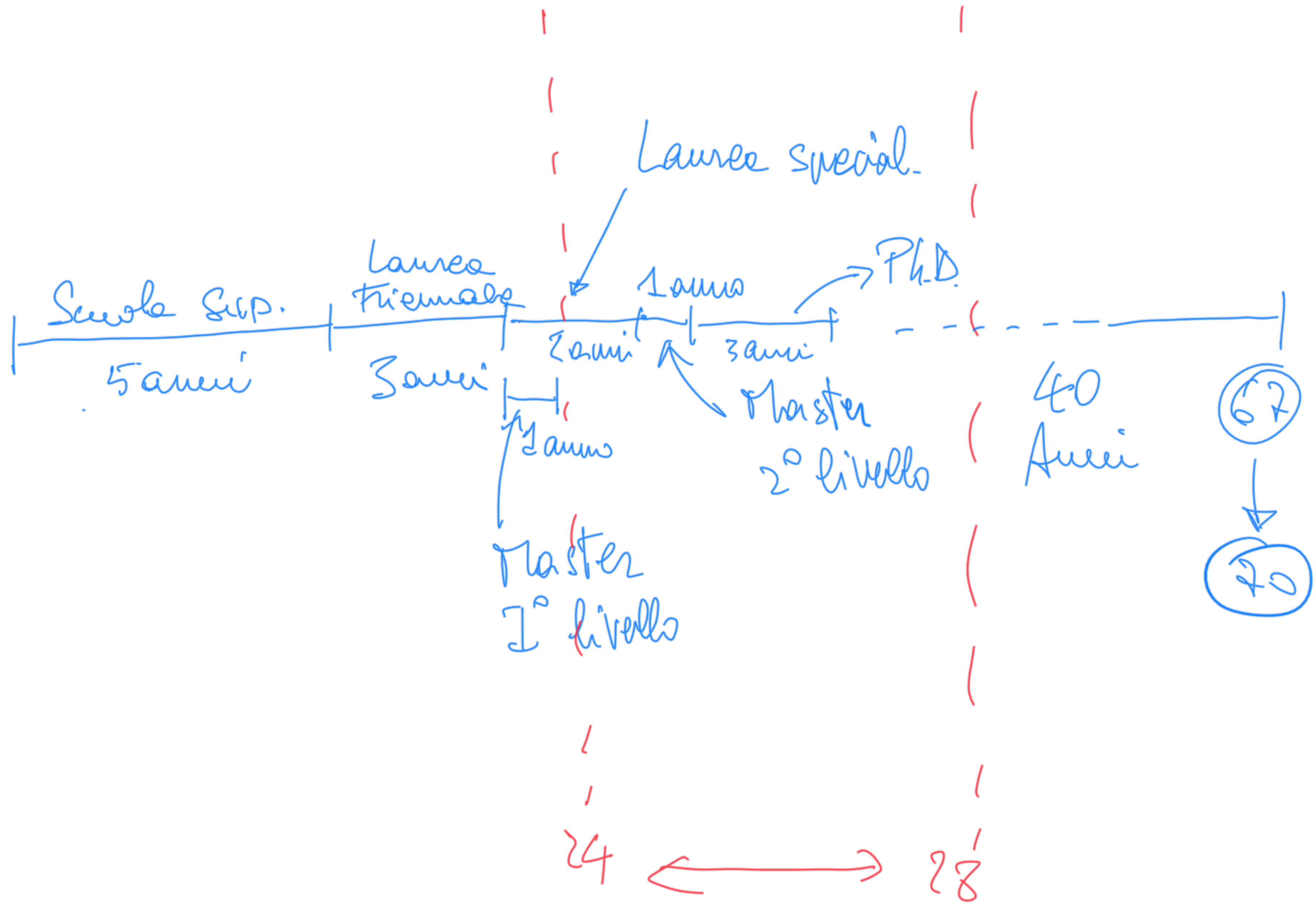
Invent the future and don't just react to  
“what the customers want”.

You must not listen to your customers:  
you must know them.



# 3. The role of universities and research centers

# Basic education and the “learn to learn” paradigm



Research  $\neq$  Innovation

No point in using the same approach

Startups are a way,  
not “the way”

# 4. The role of public bodies

Especially in Italy,  
the less they do, the better it is

Don't do, enable and support



A sort of conclusion

- Is all of this feasible in our country?
  - Don't know
- Is there an alternative?
  - No
- Thanks!