

Edgar Morin and the art of rebalancing what needs to grow, degrow and be stabilized.

We have so many different “definitions” about degrowth ... most of the time very interesting but not always useful facing this concrete perspective: what do we understand and how do we act looking on this date, 2030 , year envisaged in 1972 by the Club of Rome In his Meadows report “The limits of growth” (clearly confirmed in 1993, 2004 and recently in 2012) as the moment of economical collapse of the world , if everything is going on... as usual.

The real question is perhaps “what to do with this word “degrowth” and how could we use it most successfully to help the future of earth and humanity?”

We have to change our ways, differently depending on the different part of the earth where we are, different cities, country-sides, regions, nations and continents, regarding the different socio-economical contexts.

Edgar Morin, a French multidisciplinary thinker considers here this challenge as impossible to face with a traditional scientific looking. This looking and its methodology conduct us to see and understand very precisely a crowd of micropoints of the system we are living inside. But rarely understanding the whole process and its complexity because our sciences are too compartmentalized in separated disciplines

“Our system of knowledge, as we are educated for, as engrammed in our minds, conducts us surely to important ignorances. Our way of knowledge has underdeveloped our capacity of contextualizing the information and integrate it in a whole that gives sense.

The break and division of knowledges in juxtaposed disciplines prevent us from seeing and conceptualizing the fundamental and global problems. The hyperspecialisation breaks the complex texture of reality, the emphasis on the “quantative” hidden the “qualitative”.

This way conducts to

- reductionism (reducing complex units to a juxtaposition of “supposed simple” elements constituting them)
- binarism, decomposing in right/wrong what is partially right or partially wrong, or in the same time right and wrong.
- linearism, or linear causality, ignoring the retroactive rings and the circular thinking
- Manichaeism seeing only an opposition between the good and the bad.

A reform of knowledge calls for a reform of thinking. The reform of thinking calls a thinking of reliance that could link the knowledges between themselves, linking the parts to the whole and the whole to the parts and allowing to conceptualize the relation between the global

and the local, the local and the global ...”¹.

As

Baruch Spinoza said “the idea of the sea is included in each single water drop”.

This reform has consequently an impact on the political thinking. Political action is always founded on a conception of the world, the man, the society, the history, the science... that means on a thinking ... We need today a clear diagnosis on the actual course of this “planetaire era” that traps the mankind in its running.

The economist Jean-Luc Gréau² says that the march of the world is not more thought by the political class. The political class is satisfied by expert’s reports, statistics, and soundings. It has no more thinking, no more culture. It ignores human sciences and methods for conceptualizing and treating the complexity of the world, linking the local to the global, the particular to the general. Without thinking, the political becomes a towing of the economical. As Max Weber said, the mankind came from an economy of safety to a safety by economy...

The renewing of political thinking needs a reform of thinking including complexity. That means taking in consideration contexts, interactions, retroactions, recognizing of ambiguities and contradictions, conceptualizing the emergencies (qualities and new properties of a whole), facing the retroactive rings between global and local, local and global. This renewed politics would have a double orientation: politics of humanity and politics of civilization. It would be founded on a triangle conception of the human (inextricably individual-society-species) knowing that the human being is sapiens/demens, faber/mythologicus and economicus/ludens.³ It would think continuously and simultaneously the global, the continental, the national, the regional and the local dimension.

Consequently if we enter in a complex thinking looking on our world, we can put in evidence three paradoxes that can be a way for a better acting concerning the 2030 deadline challenge.

Globalization / localization

1 Edgar MORIN « La voie » 2011

2 Jean-Luc GREAU « L’avenir du capitalisme » 2005

3 Edgar Morin « l’identité humaine » 2001

Globalization is the best and the worse for humanity... The catastrophic issue of the evolution of the world is highly probable, this probability being defined by what an observer - in a given time and space- can induct from continuation and evolution of an occurring processes on the global way.⁴ Globalization is also the best: there is an increasing interdependency between nations, regions communities and individuals. Symbiosis, cultural metissage at all levels, diversities resisting despite homogenization processes trying to destroy them. The «best of the best» is that mortal menaces and fundamental problems create a community of destiny for the whole humanity. The conscience of danger is still weak and dispersed. On the other side, the conscience of a “mother world” is growing perhaps more on the local way where a crowd of initiatives are taken to face, or prepare the facing of the catastrophe: permaculture, transition, simplicity, degrowth ... We have to work on this paradox: all current processes wear in themselves ambivalences. Every crisis carries within it opportunities and risks. “Where the risk increases increase also what saves” (Hölderlin).

Globalization / localization

On all continents “Occident” is cheered or blamed as a standard of evolution and development. Europe and North America did a lot in the history for coming to this situation. Today the system comes to the limits. The so called “North-South relations” who are often not relations but exploitation bringing more material prosperity for the north and less to the south have to change. “South-North” relations are also emerging on a more discrete and alternative way but that could be very useful in the direct coming years. South-North relations appears when some people of the north discover that material and financial wealth are not bringing happiness. Than south-north initiatives exists where competencies of “poor” societies are taken as examples for re-humanizing some dimensions of the occidental life.⁵

Development / Envelopment

Our current idea of development is an under-developed idea ...

4 Donella Meadows (Club of Rome) «The limits of growth » 1972

5 Richard Wilkinson «the impact of inequality” 2005

The word development is connected with production, efficiency, competition, conquest ... it conducts currently to a concrete struggle for life knowing that natural resources are becoming rarer (Africa, North-pole etc...). Human being has also today to see what is fragile on this earth and in itself and to take care of it.

Degrowth as an *Art of rebalancing* means to take in consideration, in the same time and on different levels those three mentioned paradoxes allowing seeing -and acting on- what has to grow, to degrow and to be stabilized.