



**International Summer University 2009**

**BEYOND DEVELOPMENT III**

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*THE SEVEN CHALLENGES FOR A POLICY OF  
CIVILIZATION*

*THE REFLECTION CIRCLES  
A COLLECTIVE METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH*

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We have already mentioned in the general presentation of the International Summer University 2009 that the moments of discussion must offer the opportunity to switch from theoretical presentations to consistent examples and testimonies, to give the floor to individuals and the institutions they represent, to enable the collective debate and the contribution of everyone thanks to the organization in circles (reflection circles) and to allow a confrontation, which will be fruitful not only in the view of finding potential answers but also of progressing in approaching universal problems.

The reflection circles are a space of conversation where we exchange points of view around a “challenge”. The role of the circles is to enable the participants to collectively elaborate a conceptual matrix of a policy of civilization.

We must cease to consider these seven challenges for a policy of civilization as if they are separated or even antagonist, and start to connect them. The awareness that another world is possible is one of the fundamental aspirations of our societies and a powerful lever which could help us in our search.

Our work on the issues at stake of a given theme will be done in circles. The seven themes are chosen because they directly concern the vision of a policy of civilization. We aim at launching a reflection through multiple and diverse questionings and by showing how the actors (scientists, politicians and citizens) build their experiences, reformulate their scientific controversies, seize the results, forge a collective intelligence of situations in order to conduct a well thought action. In these moments of global crisis, we must appropriate the idea, recently proposed by a Member of the Club of Rome at the Helsinki Conference about the extent of the crisis “the question to ask is how to impose [and not to convince them anymore] to the rich people a simpler way of living so that the poor people have the possibility to simply live.

The contents of the circles are declined in the following structure:

**The challenge of global economy.** We suggest thinking about how to come out from a society completely dominated by the merely quantitative imperatives of the model of development and by the sphere of growth and the mechanism of world finance. One year after the collapse of the system, the governments of the big capitalist countries as well as les emerging powers of Asia and Latin America resort as a reaction to the financial crisis to any kind of measure in order to curb recession and to rescue their economies from the stagnation. But the formulas are always the same: a model of market economy, an essentially quantitative economic growth, a reconsideration of the public sector, of welfare, of working hours, are tackled with no serious analysis but the renewal of solutions from the past.

We realize today that the instrumental rationality upon which the system is built does not constitute an acceptable basis. The ravages of the collapse of the economic model to which

we are assisting, are far from being a simple malfunctioning, they result from the exhaustion of the system itself. We need to change path.

**The social challenge.** The reform of society has been for years the fundamental way for improving human relations, to abolish inequalities, in particular during the 19th and 20th century, was. It consists in reforming the structures in order to reach for freedom, equality and fraternity. It consists eliminating the structures of domination and exploitation to create an egalitarian society. Nowadays, we have to retain the idea that reforms must include institutional, structural, social, political aspects, but we must accept that this method is not sufficient anymore. How to reconcile, in case we think they can be reconciled, economy and society? Should we agree with those who recommend changing the “indicators” and re-orienting the model within the rules of the market economy, while preserving the existing model? Is a third model possible? Or is it just a new invention with no concrete follows up? Is the social economy (the last “trendy” principle) an alternative to capitalism? Can we foresee, as an answer to the growth of inequalities, the establishment of an observatory of inequalities which determines the progressive regressions on both sides?

**The challenge of thought.** The parcelling and the disjunction of a knowledge which is locked into disciplines, are unfit for perceiving and conceiving fundamental and global problems, creating the necessity of a “complex thought” which could link different kinds of knowledge, the parties and the whole and as a consequence a thought which could to conceive the relation global - local and local - global. Our ways if thinking must integrate a continuous exchange between the two levels.

If our minds are still dominated by a mutilated, abstract way of acquiring knowledge and by the inability of seizing realities in their complexity and in their global nature, if the philosophical thought, instead of facing the world, remains blocked into literary preciosity we run then to the disaster. Only a thought which is able to seize the complexity not only of our lives, of our destinies, of the relation individual/society/species but also of the global age, can operate the diagnosis of the actual course of the planet and the actual run toward the abyss and define the orientations which enable to jointly initiate the reforms which are vital and necessary. We need to re-examine the reason, to overtake an isolated rationality, the supremacy of calculation and that of abstract logic. We need a complex rationality which faces contradictions and uncertainties without disintegrating them.

**The challenge of education.** Following the challenge of thought, the challenge of education establishes itself as evident. Our actual system must be reformed because it is founded on separation: separation of disciplines and sciences. A new educational system, which is founded on dialogue and therefore radically different from the existing one, must replace it. This system favours the capacities of the mind to think the global and fundamental problems of humanity in their complexity. It should put at its roots the education to the understanding among people, peoples and ethnic groups. Such system of education could and should play a

big role. But, unfortunately we must reform the present education system so that it could reform the minds. Education presents itself as both the epistemological state of knowledge and the gestation of a “new paradigm” in the social field, and in this sense it imposes real challenges to our reflection. Teaching must not solely target the accumulation of knowledge (“filling up” heads) it must organize it in function of strategic essential axes: “this is not about reducing the global realities to their elementary parts, but about distinguishing and connecting them” We need therefore organisational concepts in order to connect different kinds of knowledge. To re-organize knowledge we need to abandon the triviality, we need to open our mind, and do not lock it up into closed concepts.

**The ethical challenge.** The ethical reform requires the integration, in our conscience and personality, of a permanent principle of auto-analysis. In our civilization, we seem to have completely forgotten this possibility, preferring to entrust psychiatrists, psychoanalysts and experts with the research of the solution of our mental and moral troubles. Knowing ourselves through someone else is important, but only auto-analysis allows us to integrate the look of the other in our effort of better knowing ourselves, with our deficiencies, our blanks, our weaknesses. It is obvious that ethics deserves to be re-thought and that a reform, must conform to the structures of the moral person, before giving lessons of morality or courses on civic spirit.

**The ecological challenge.** Environmentalism leads us to modify our way of thinking and our action on society and on ourselves. This modification is far from being accomplished. A new vision of a living nature whose rules and diversities must be respected has not replaced yet the vision of a universe of objects which are designed to be manipulated and exploited by men. A vision of complex interdependence with the living world, whose death would mean our own, has not replaced yet the vision of a “supernatural man”. The historical questions concerning nature and the protection of environment must be incorporated in a new ecological culture: some suggest a “green new deal” (Peter Custers) where the environmental proposals are both part of the everyday life and of the public policies governing the destinies of societies. We must, in principle, recognize ourselves, the other and recognize nature as a whole and in its elementary functions, as nature is a shared responsibility.

Political ecology leads us to modify our action on society and on ourselves. Every environmental policy is two-faced: one looks toward nature, the other toward society. The policy targeting the replacement of fossil energies by cleaner energies is as well a matter of health and quality of life policy. The energy saving policy avoids the squandering and fights against the consumerist intoxication of middle classes at the same time. The policy aiming at reducing industrial agriculture and stockbreeding , and which as a consequence cleans up ground water, detoxifies animal feeding contaminated by hormones and antibiotics, vegetal feeding soaked with pesticides and herbicides, is at the same time a policy of public health, of food quality and of quality of life.

**The challenge of global governance.** We do not claim to be able to draw a thorough picture of our society-world, we do not try to suggest ready made solutions, we want to elaborate a frame which would enable everyone (as an individual and as a society) to choose his/her own path within a policy of humanity. We know that, crises such as the one we are going through now, might promote the quick propagation of these ideas. The crisis of globalization, the crisis of neo-liberalism and the crisis of humanity provide a wealth of dangers but also of opportunities for change. From Seattle to Porto Alegre, a new will sprang. A will of responding to this economical and technical globalization by developing new forms of globalisation leads to the elaboration of a true “policy for humanity”, which, in our view, must go past the idea of development which gathers us here today.

For a policy of humanity to be constituted, we must break with this ambivalent development which is, behind an only apparently universal notion, a myth of the western socio-centrism, a driving force of a frenzied westernization, an instrument of colonisation of the less-developed. We must promote the principles of anthro-politics: policy for humanity at the global scale and policy of civilisation.