

**Public policies and the social and democratic issues of
globalization**

**What projects to be developed by the public, social and
cooperative Economy?**

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**

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A philosophical look at globalization

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Presentation

As philosophy use a process of questioning, we shall ask four questions:

- What is the function of a philosophy of globalization?
- Does innovation give a new form to the economic culture?
- What ethics needs the social and solidarity economy
- What public culture for the digital age?

I

Why a philosophy of globalization?

Because globalization is at the same time a reality and its representation, it needs a worldview which can be shared by everyone. After the dream of an alliance for the world peace, the competition makes of the personal creativity a universal ability which each has to improve all his life long.

II

Does innovation renew the economic culture?

Innovation at first serves the globalized competition. However, owing to (because) the increasing importance of the motivations in the reasons for producing and for consuming, we must combine with the technical inventiveness the power to create a relational, existential and social added value.

III

What ethics needs the social and cooperative economy?

The ethics of well-being is based on an individualistic utilitarianism which is philosophically weak and economically wrong. For the social progressivism, the individuality finds its own fulfilment in its work only by increasing itself in a collective power, by developing its capacity to act and by concretizing the abilities with which it is endowed.

IV

What public culture at the digital age?

When action becomes interaction, the understanding of others (public, citizens, customers, students ...) is the justification for developing knowledges and building projects. So, inter-comprehension becomes the mental and spiritual material of the democratic culture at the age of the new digital media.

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Globalization is an indisputable economic, geostrategic and digital reality. But it is just as well the idea that the public, researchers and media have made of these global changes. And yet this idea is not the same for the investors and migrants, for the winners and losers, for the poor people and rich people ... So that the picture that one has of globalization matters so much as its reality because it contributes to legitimize it or, on the contrary, to reject it.

That is why a philosophy of globalization is necessary to give a the world over common vision of the worldview, involving the idea of a possible global common good which allows heterogeneous peoples to feel belonging to a common world, to share the same hope and to work for a collective destiny of the human race.

Such a philosophic vision of globalization certainly existed, but it is changing today. The thinkers at the age of Enlightenment designed the idea of a cosmopolitan global common good: in their opinion, the world peace is possible if it based on the universal solidarity of the human race. It is an ideal of universal justice, the founding condition of which is of mental and cultural order: all the human beings are presumed to wish excessively for the freedom and equality as for their supreme fulfillment. Under this condition, human rights can be of use as supreme norm to a universal society of nations in which the law will prevail over politics. This ideal still livened up the creation of the UNO.

But today, globalization is more economic than juridical, and it is less the hope of the collective union of the human race under the same laws that is in the minds than the uncertainty, unpredictability and insecurity. Instead of being a factor of hope, the future is what is not insured and thus what frightens. So that the anxiety and mistrust become, paradoxically, what we have the world over in common.

Nevertheless, this change of course did not question the most universal support of any globalization, namely the mental and moral factor. The former cosmopolitan world ideal relied on the minds to succeed in setting up a universal legal community. Nowadays, the economic internationalism relies yet on the minds in the face of the unpredictability of the future: the individuals must be more than ever inventive, creative and informed. Consequently, a globalization of the personal culture really starts up, it called innovation, innovation having stood out as the ultimate criterion of the scientific, moral, esthetic and intellectual competence: creativity, sometimes more than rationality, is considered as a universal skill which everyone has to improve all his life long.

It is thus necessary to ask differently the question of the initial question: if the human creativity became the main resource of all the nations which are one against the other in competition, should we make of the development of the personal creativity the main basis of a public culture for future world citizens, the human resource becoming now a new common global good? We shall limit ourselves to a more modest question: what effects has globalization on the economic, ethical and political culture?

II

Does innovation renew the economic culture?

Innovation at first serves the globalized competition. However, owing to (because) the increasing importance of the motivations in the reasons for producing and for consuming, we must combine with the technical inventiveness the power to create a relational, existential and social added value.

We have to be realistic: innovation is, mostly, a retort to the unpredictability of the effects of globalization. Because the goods and services are constantly changing, the best way of not undergoing the change, it is to produce it oneself and innovate continuously.

This practice of innovation is strictly technical, and has the effect of intensifying always more the competition, urgency and inequality in the race to the success. That is why, in view of the pernicious effects of a wild competition, innovation also receives another mission, which consists exactly in directing the globalization to societal and environmental purposes.

But to reach there, a change in the ways of thinking is necessary to look differently at the economic matter, which includes from now on the quality of life, sense of the existence, links with the others and future of the planet. So that the economic activity does not produce simply things, but just as much human relations, human initiatives, potentialities of action and meaning.

When the requirement of competitiveness concerns the quality of products, reliability of the methods, confidence in the competences and sustainability of the long-term projects, it is important that a creative innovation has to correct or reorientate the destructive

innovation of the competitive rivalry. Then, to give meaning to what we produce adds to the simply technical innovation an existentially creative innovation.

The innovator-creator does not act on the things, but on the ideas and desires. He does not transform the objects, but our relation to the objects. He acts on the meaning which objects have for us, that is on their value. The creator looks at the things from their sense, and by the sense, he moves the world. The engineer is a technician of the change, the creator is the inspirer. In the view of the technician, the change is a product, it is the result of the effort and the calculations of the intelligence; in the view of the creator, the change is a beginning, it inaugurates a new history to be lived for a good, service or team. Creativity is an inventive strength which acts in the long-term.

The weakness of most of the education systems is to understand in an only technical way the need to make the population reach the digital management of knowledge (by making use of computers from the youngest age), without realizing that it is not there only a question of a simple mechanically reproducible expertise, but of an upheaval of the relation to the world and culture. When goods, property, wealth dematerialize so much so that they become, in a way, a pure movement, that is so mental as financial mobility, the competence which must be aroused is the one which creates a social, relational and existential increase in value.

III

What ethics needs the social and cooperative economy?

The ethics of well-being is based on an individualistic utilitarianism which is philosophically weak and economically wrong. For the social progressivism, the individuality finds its own fulfilment in its work only by increasing itself in a collective power, by developing its capacity to act and by concretizing the abilities with which it is endowed.

Which leads us to a new questioning: to give to innovation a function which is not exclusively productivist, but also repairer of inequality, restorer of links and creative of possibilities to be shared, it needs an ethics of social progressivism. But a painful observation must be taken into account: a wide piece of the progressive ideal changed into an ethics of well-being.

It is a cultural contradiction of modernity that left its mark on capitalism. If it consists in sparing for oneself the fight and the dissatisfaction, the progress eliminates the effort, but it also prevents the advance because the material progress takes the place of the moral advance. We end in the paradox of the transhumanism, the completed technical progress finally eliminating the man himself.

The ethics of well-being distorted the original philosophy of human rights, which were designed as duties towards the transcendence of the humanity in every individual; today, they became privatized rights ... The ethics of well-being can even become dangerous when

it threatens to encourage the eugenic temptation in the choice of the births or to eliminate, maybe, the old men in the name of the well-being which they cannot enjoy any more.

The ethics of well-being harms quite particularly the cooperative ideal of the social economy, because it considers the beneficiaries of the solidarity only as assisted victims, low-priced user of the public compassionism. The ethics of well-being reduces the consumer to a calculating profiteer, a kind of autistic closed on himself, in break with the others, hung on his egoistic rights, so much that he makes them apolitical and antisocial.

But this individualistic and utilitarian presupposition is really an anthropological error, and it is at the same time philosophically weak and economically wrong. Because the exact characteristic creativity of the human desire is the one of the sublimation, a creative transformation of a lower desire in an upper desire. The individuality fulfils itself in the work only in being extended with a collective power, by developing its capacity to act and by concretizing its own abilities.

To develop its skills and venture in the action, one needs a stronger motive than the egoistic calculation, and which is the desire to be more than oneself. To be more than oneself while being oneself, it is the way in which the vital energy of the sportsman, researcher, artist or businessman carries the life beyond itself. For oneself being more than oneself while being oneself is a surpassing of oneself which operates as an increase of oneself. The sceptical relativism of our time cannot see that this profoundly human motivation is more widespread than we believe it.

IV

What public culture at the digital age?

When action becomes interaction, the understanding of others (public, citizens, customers, students ...) is the justification for developing knowledges and building projects. So, inter-comprehension becomes the mental and spiritual material of the democratic culture at the age of the new digital media.

Let us draw briefly the conclusions from the cultural and educational point of view. We shall end by some words on the horizon of what can be a public culture at the age of the digital globalization.

Because of Internet, we have to rethink the democratic culture. Does it inaugurate a definitive merchandization of the world and an unlimited exploitation of the feelings of everyone? Or else is there it the emergence of a spiritual world, the virtual world, carried by the power to inspire and to create? That is for sure: the phenomenon is much more than an economic avatar, it is an upheaval of civilization that demands an new agreement between economy, politics and culture.

Even again it is necessary to change our vision. So long as we imagine the culture as a closed heritage, we give way to a “chosiste”, materialistic and backward-looking vision the drawback of which is to hinder the understanding of the facts.

Indeed, the dematerialization of the wealth which goes with the digitalization of the economic activity is able to give a new place to the operations of the thought that are the capacity for expressing, judging, representing, understanding, aestheticizing the relations between the mankind and the world (visualisations, blogs, forums, video conferences, professional networks, evaluations and so on). So that technology can increase, widen and raise the sphere of the meanings and the motivations and go so far as to make prevail the meaning of an action over its material profitability. This opening of the action to the spiritual world is determining for the future relations between religions, between cultures and also between innovations.

Because of Internet, the transformation of the work in interaction and the transformation of the life in information is carried at the highest point. The work feeds on new coordinations between the knowledges, on associations between the professional energies, on mediations between needs and services. Which imposes on the democracy a new cultural imperative: because it is no so much the knowledge which imparts authority and power as *understanding*. Knowledge is not enough, it is necessary to do so that it is understood, necessary to make it digestible, convertible, usable by another one; it is necessary to make it a public good, an inter-comprehension of the actors being from now on the condition of their possible cultural solidarity. A democrat should have as adage: *I am what another understands of me*.

Isn't the internationalist vocation of the CIRIEC its scientific and cultural illustration?