



THEME COMMONS

SUB-THEME:

Degrowth: Roots and Grafts

TITLE OF WORKSHOP

The near and far cultural sources of degrowth



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DEEP ECOLOGY AS A PHILOSOPHICAL BASIS OF DEGROWTH

Guido Dalla Casa

Economic growth was born only in a human culture in a particular moment of its history and is not a "natural push of mankind". It grew up in a culture with a completely anthropocentric background, which considers our species above (out of) Nature and independent from the Ecosystem: it originated from a worldview that sees human activities as possible regardless of their link with the rest of Nature, considered as "human environment". So economic growth does not take into account the way of life of the Earth, based on closed cycles and a steady-state situation.

A culture can persist indefinitely only if it has "modes" of the steady-state type: in present Western civilization degrowth is essential for achieving a transition to a situation of that type, with a number of humans and consumption very lower than the current ones, which are not compatible with Earth Life.

The recently born *Degrowth movement* too often remains on an anthropocentric background. It does not deal with philosophical issues, but an economic degrowth is impossible if you keep an anthropocentric worldview, until you consider man out the Biosphere and unique source of values: so it can be very hard to leave the fixed idea of the perennial increase of material goods.

Ecology as understood by general thought, also known as *shallow ecology*, does not change the background thought of Western culture: it requires only to reduce pollution as much as possible and save some natural areas for the benefit of man. It consider the Earth as the house of man: in essence, everything can go on as before, with some changes and some technical device.

Instead *Deep Ecology* (or *Ecosophy*) is a thought movement, a worldview that requires a background of pantheistic reverence for all sentient beings and for the relationships that connect them to each other and to the so-called "inanimate world". It does not give a particular value to our species, fully considered part of Nature. It is very difficult to accept economic degrowth, as necessary transition to achieve a steady state, without a philosophical base very different from that of present Western civilization, based on a widespread and deep anthropocentrism: what is breathed from birth seems obvious, and therefore does not appear at all. Substantially, for accepting *degrowth*, we must have a strong transition from an anthropocentric to an ecocentric worldview, that is the idea of *Deep Ecology*, a philosophy that requires a pantheistic reverence for all sentient beings and has for first value the good health of the *Whole Ecosystem*.



RE-INVENTING THE FUTURE: THE RELEVANT THOUGHT OF DANILO DOLCI

Marta Garimberti, Letizia Montalbano

Since 1952, at Partinico, a village in Western Sicily, Danilo Dolci had worked together with the local community and had focused on the issue of the individual accountability. Dolci and his team of collaborators put into practice democratic and non-violent ways of living and fight. Survival standards needed to be reached, but these must be achieved by developing collective participation and allowing individual contribution. Therefore, it was necessary to achieve the sharing of common goods, such as water; to fight against waste; to develop an economy made of cooperatives, consortia, popular organizations; to foster a shared popular planning interested in the agricultural produce, craft expertise and able to guarantee a strong control on the Country's highest official representatives and their choices.

All these initiatives are the result of a thought and actions based on the principles of nonviolence, accountability, self-organization, mutual listening and the ability of making decisions in a collective way.



THE DECONSTRUCTION OF THE IMAGINARY OF GROWTH: THE MYTH OF SCIENCE IN TIZIANO TERZANI AND RAIMOND PANIKKAR

Gloria Germani, Ecophilosophical Association

Paper Abstract

Seeing things through the glasses of just one culture, without being aware that we are wearing them: this is the power of myth.

The myth of our western-modern culture is based not only on Growth but — at a deeper level - on the Myth of Science (Newtonian-Cartesian classical science).

The myth of Growth is tightly connected with the belief in Development, in Evolution and with the idea of linear Time, that is, History as human Progress. These, however, are not universal ideas but stem from the Newton-Cartesian science. Furthermore, the Newton-Cartesian framework shapes the paradigm of every single modern science — from medicine to biology, from genetics to psychology and chemistry, from social sciences to economics, as demonstrated by F. Capra (1982) and S.Latouche (1983).

In order to deconstruct our imaginary, instead of interviewing the so-called experts, we need to widen our point of view.

We'll be guided by two great men of our time who spent their lives between the East and the West: Raimon Panikkar (born from a Hindu father and a Spanish mother) and the Italian journalist Tiziano Terzani that I wouldn't hesitate to call a real philosopher. They will teach us that Modern Science is only a narrow view of reality, which today has been discredited by the discoveries of atomic and quantum physics. Technology is not neutral but it could only have developed within the scientific world's view. Both communism and capitalism are the outcome of this framework and globalization and consumerism (with their huge implications on ecosystems and climate change) cannot be separated from the idea of matter and materialism, at the core of Newton-Cartesian science.



TACKLED ISSUES:

- Anthropocentric world view
- “Shallow ecology”
- Newton-Cartesian view vs. oriental point of view
- Ecosophy idea
- Concept of deep ecology
- Paikkar and Terzani thought
- Danilo Dolci experience
- Dolci’s ideas of non violence, accountability, self organization, mutual listening

GIVEN ANSWERS:

1. We must pay attention not only to cultures but also to the power hegemony behind them.
2. There are a lot of cultures that we have to consider challenging mechanistic point of view.

UNANSWERED QUESTIONS, MESSAGES & COMMENTS:

1. Should the dualistic point of view be overcome?
2. Are oriental cultures a real model to follow?
3. Are all mechanistic points of view to reject?
4. Are relations more important than thoughts?
5. Social structures in oriental societies are often discriminating. How can the oriental model be a desirable one?