

Workshop n. 19

Title: **The sexual economy of growth: degrowth meet gender difference** Theme: **commons**

I really wanted this workshop because it brings together the two most important issues to which I devote myself for many years: degrowth and the critics of the violence of development, and on the other the transformation of relationship between men and women and the critics of male violence against the women; I think we have to reflect on the connection between the growth value and patriarchy values.

My own presentation between Degrowth and Gender (Maschile plurale)...

I think that the Degrowth Movement has taken a lot of things from the women movement and cultural revolution, from a point of view of methodology and of from a point of view of content. But I do not think that there is a strong sense from this point of view. In addition, many of the major public representatives of the movement are men. There are many women in the movement, sometimes more than men, but are less present in public space.

The growth model is based on cultural and anthropological assumptions that also concern the definition of male and female models, the division of labour, the public-private contraposition, the regulation of social relations between the sexes.

In order to enable another kind of work, more humane and respectful, another form of production, more responsible and sustainable, another idea of the territory, of its resources and public goods in our daily lives, we need to reinvent a new way of being men and women, fathers and mothers, a different way to establish family relationships and projects. It is necessary to rethink, even symbolically, the connection between the everyday and domestic dimensions of our relations and the "political invention" of another model of well-being, and of another relationship between the sexes.

Let me suggest some points for discussion.

1) The exaltation of production and the devaluation of reproduction and maintenance of life

The sexual division of labor is not an invention of capitalism. However, capitalism has been able to exploit for their own purposes this traditional division.

It seems to me in different ways. First the naturalization of women's work care has gradually decreased attention to the living conditions and the need for regeneration of individuals and families.

The growth society put at the centre of social imaginary the **capacity to produce and realize marketable goods and objects**, services and economic and **financial performances measured with the accountancy**, to raise profits, while it **obscures the need for reproduction and maintenance of life** and the importance for the quality of life of the relational dimensions of wealth, sharing and reciprocity, and the establishment of non-market goods and services. In this way the productive work traditionally assigned to men has been symbolically and economically acknowledged, while the caring and relational work reserved to women has been substantially depreciated and depleted of its centrality in the life of a society.

Concretely, this means that the creation and accumulation of wealth on which capitalist growth is based on a huge care work and re-production that is not paid and is not taken into account.

Furthermore **capitalism has been able to take advantage also of the productive work of women**, but without grant him equal rights, guarantees and compensation. Women's work has remained in a state of insecurity and subordination in relation to that of men, even when the real work is actually the same.

There is an extensive literature on women's unpaid care work of women. And in tomorrow plenary Antonella Picchio will discuss about this issue.

But now I would like to say something about the condition of man, what I call the cage of home oeconomicus.

2) The cage of homo oeconomicus

A second issue is **the growth society, moreover, presupposes and produces the *homo oeconomicus* as a basic anthropological model**: a "rational" being that aims to achieve maximum utility, the maximum benefit for themselves or for their group, through an instrumental approach to the life and relationships and through a strategic calculation of resources and opportunities. Such economicistic instances - that raise values such as productivity, utility, instrumentality, and consumerism - have long gone beyond the economic sphere to invade every area of social relations.

The material and psychic economy of the majority of men in developed societies has **also produced a commodification of human relationships, care, sexuality, until corrupting and corroding the field of affection and intimate life**. The adherence to a such sexist model of identity and relationship made men slaves of work and productivity obsession; it has also **framed a significant part of their sexual experiences in multiple forms of commodification**, sometimes particularly violent (trafficking, prostitution, paid performance etc ...).

3) Degrowth and the transformation of male daily life

So when we speak about the decolonisation of our imaginary we need to think about the male culture. **The decolonization of imaginary for men also starts from a rethinking of their male culture, of sexual dominant models and of their limitations and misery**. Not only from a general point of view but also in their daily life and relationship, in their work/life balance.

Today a part of men and fathers are willing to discover and explore the space of free relations with other men and other women, in recognition of autonomy, of differences, of multiple desires and expectations. It is also willing to **explore the richness and complexity of care work and reproduction through a greater - quantitative and qualitative - presence in the relationships** with their children, or relatives, and through a **greater openness towards skills and professions traditionally delegated to women**.

In the past, men built their identity primarily if not solely in the public space, in economic and democratic. Today we have to find a better balance between the presence and care of living spaces and relationships and the construction of a change in economic, social and political.

I think there is also a **relationship between the disavowal of relationships and interdependencies that are fundamental to the life and ideology of a culture of competitiveness and unlimited growth** that does not recognize any limits.

_We need to reflect on the transformation not only of the outside world, but in our relations with the world.

A journey of self-awareness and transformation from its recognition of sexual partiality and of the wealth of differences becomes a key moment of a transition from a society based on growth to a society founded on degrowth, subsistence and regeneration, since this prospective can keep together and reconcile macro and micro, personal and collective, public and private, social and intimate aspects.

Key words: gender, difference, freedom

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ORIGINAL WORKSHOP PROPOSAL

Workshop n. 19

Title: *The sexual economy of growth: degrowth meet gender difference*

Theme: commons

The symbolic, cultural and social issues concerning the relations between sexes are inextricably intertwined with the material dimensions, with the forms of production, with the organization of work and consumption. We are conscious that building new relationships between genders and generations means to reinvent the same material organization of our society by challenging the exploitation of wage and non-wage labor, by rejecting the commodification of life, bodies and relationships. It means to contrast a form of market that takes advantage and plays a stereotyped imaginary of the female body and the male desire to sell anything. It means to oppose the reduction of body to ownership, of sexuality to consumption, in an ever more violent and indifferent market that put up for sale even procreation and care. So it means to rethink symbolically and in practice the balance between production and reproduction, it means to revalue and to make room for care, for social relations, for gift, defending the non-monetary or non-instrumental forms of exchange. It means, in short, to engage a shift to sustainable lifestyles and to a society no longer dependent on growth and on continued instrumental production of needs. On the other hand, in order to enable another kind of work, more humane and respectful, another form of production, more responsible and sustainable, another idea of the territory, of its resources and public goods in our daily lives, we need to reinvent a new way of being men and women, fathers and mothers, a different way to establish family relationships and projects. It is necessary to rethink, even symbolically, the connection between the everyday and domestic dimensions of our relations and the "political invention" of another model of well-being, and of another relationship between the sexes.

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PROPOSTA WORKSHOP ORIGINARIA

Titolo: L'economia sessuale della crescita: la decrescita incontra la differenza di genere

Asse tematico: beni comuni

Le questioni simboliche, culturali e sociali che riguardano i rapporti tra i sessi si intrecciano inestricabilmente con le dimensioni materiali, con le forme produttive, con l'organizzazione del lavoro e del consumo. Siamo consapevoli che costruire nuovi rapporti tra generi e generazioni significa reinventare la stessa organizzazione materiale della nostra società, mettere in discussione lo sfruttamento del lavoro salariato e non salariato, rifiutare la mercificazione della vita, dei corpi e delle relazioni. Significa contrastare una forma di mercato che sfrutta e riproduce un immaginario stereotipato del corpo femminile e del desiderio maschile per vendere qualsiasi cosa. Significa opporsi alla riduzione del corpo a proprietà, della sessualità a consumo, in un mercato sempre più violento e indifferente che mette in vendita anche la procreazione e la cura. Significa, dunque, ripensare simbolicamente e praticamente l'equilibrio tra produzione e riproduzione, rivalutare e far spazio alla cura, alle relazioni sociali, al dono, difendendo le forme di scambio non monetarie o non strumentali. Significa insomma, impegnarsi in un cambiamento verso stili di vita sostenibili e verso una società non più dipendente dalla crescita e dalla continua produzione strumentale di bisogni. D'altra parte per rendere possibile un altro lavoro più umano e rispettoso, un'altra produzione più responsabile e sostenibile, un'altra idea del territorio, delle sue risorse e dei beni comuni occorre reinventare nel nostro quotidiano un modo diverso di essere uomini e donne, padri e madri, un modo diverso di stabilire relazioni e progetti familiari. Occorre ripensare anche simbolicamente la connessione tra la dimensioni più quotidiane e domestiche del nostro relazionarci e "l'invenzione politica" di un altro modello di benessere, di un altro rapporto tra i sessi.

Parole chiave: genere, differenza, libertà

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