

A WORLD IN TRANSITION
(Introduction chapter)



the transition period

1. Never was the expression 'unprecedented change' more pertinent to a historical period than to the decades we are living in.

2. In physical phenomena, the moment of bifurcation is characterized by a multitude of possible events and configurations - it is the moment in which the well-known form is destroyed and the new form is scarcely there yet. Identical process takes place with social phenomena. Extraordinary events or the accumulation of diverse new facts may create a period of intense chaos - the old world is gone and the new one seems to go in many different and contradictory directions.

5. Because of the transition, our categories change. Most determinant is the transition from an limitless horizon (in resources, in energy, in science, in reaching outer space) to a limited space where balance has to be found, so that life will still be possible and QL for humans will have the guarantee to be sustainable and improvable. All doctrines built on the growth-model will have to be reformulated in the context of a self-contained planet.

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During the transition period tensions are very high. Short-term solutions will tend to belong still to the "limitless" world view while long-term perspectives are necessarily embodying the convictions pertaining to the stabilization period. (The question of "energy" has been offered as a very good example of that type of conflict.)

6. The transition ^{ang} is ~~a~~ most fascinating period. ^{They offer} It is clearly unique: ~~therefore~~ unique solutions and perspectives have to be found. At the point of inflection, when growth rates are highest (the illusion of power and the fear of losing it are strongest) and when acceleration is changing to deceleration (physical shaking and bumping that goes with that passage) values are necessarily in a conflicting process. For some the old values cannot hold anymore while others cling desperately to them.

In some cases, the new values appear as irrefutable. But, most often, it takes a long time for the new values to impose



themselves, for the problems to be seen in a new context and for new solutions to appear.

The transition acquires dramatic features in a context of globalisation and instant communication.

9. Moreover, as the transition refers to facts that are caught today in the process of globalisation, there are solutions that cannot be found at the national or regional level. Global solutions have to be sought.

Globalisation is not seen primarily as an expansion of one power over all the other existing powers. Rather, it is the result of the close interdependence of all factors in organized human life on this planet.

10. Its main driving force is the communication revolution. One particular and localized event in one concrete place in the world becomes instantaneously present to all corners of the world. This is true of natural disasters as well as of financial upheavals or new techniques. All the difficulties of 'the transition period' are exacerbated by the global communication. But, likewise, communication can contribute to the dynamism of the 'transition period', accelerating a new phase, and making widely known its positive and negative aspects.

challenges

We are at such a bifurcation if we look at the world in terms of "population". A spectacular growth during this century meant an increasing growth rate every year - until 19.... %. Then slowly, almost invisibly, the acceleration starts to slow down. The period of 30 years before and 30 years after the inflection point (average life-time of a human being) is the period of bifurcation.

3. We don't know all the possibilities that can follow the bifurcation. But if we take the macro-scale and rough estimates (in isolation from other global problems, an isolation that is unrealistic) we will see that the world will emerge from the bifurcation with a much bigger population - the equivalent, at least, to two Chinas! (Medium estimates give in the next 30 years 4,1 billion more!)

Never has the human population experienced in the past and most probably never will it experience in the future such a radical change in its composition, at such a huge scale, in such a short period of time. How humans will live together and with nature is one of the open questions at the bifurcation.



4. The period we go through is known, in the population sciences field, as the demographic transition. After this period the population at the world level will stabilize and only minor changes will occur, if all conditions for the survival of the species are maintained.

Several years ago, Jonas Salk has creatively focussed¹ the differences that occur within the two sides of the sigmoid curve which relates the evolution of any species in a finite volume, and hence of humans in the planet. His hypothesis says that before the transition period the appearance of limitless expansion determines independence, competition, power, extremes, part, 'either/or' reasoning, fierce individualism. On the contrary, after the transition period, interdependence, collaboration, consensus, balance, whole, 'both/and' way of thinking, are the dominant modes consonant with the evolution of the curve. (An interesting example of the first part can be seen in the XV century with the one-man exploration of the earth horizon, of which maybe the voyage to the moon has been the last attempt. An example of the second part can be found in a country like The Netherlands which having a clear notion of its space limits has developed a culture of tolerance.) The transition period is, thus, accompanied by an intense conflict between the two sets of values.

7. At the world level the 'population' question is at such a stage. Some values linked to it - reproductive rights of women, equivalence between population growth and consumption patterns - are already widely accepted but their operational translation is still a remote possibility.

This conflict will be intensified with the foreseeable growth of population by 2-4 billions people, until stabilization begins, some 30-40 years from now. It is this horizon, with its immense difficulties but also with its tremendous opportunities, that leads the ICPQL to link indivisibly Population and Quality of Life. In this most human process of transition, all humanrights as integrative of QL are called to play a decisive role.

8. Concomittant with the demographic transition, other important transitions are taking place. It is true that, throughout history, many periods have been experienced as transitional, But never was the whole world caught in such a multiform transition. It does not concern only one aspect but several decisive realms of life.

11. The ICPQL considers that all the processes of transition need to be taken into account when we address ourselves to the basic demographic transition. *"All of these processes are facilitative*

as well as hindrance forces - they can help to facilitate but they also produce many of the obstacles to the capacity to be able to improve the quality of life." (KCD)

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ecological transition

Since the beginning of human history, humankind lived in equilibrium with nature. Nature was taken as a given. In a limitless view of the world, nature was there as an infinite, renewable resource. With industrialization, began a spectacular transition: a radical change in the relationship between nature and history took place. The existing equilibrium changed. Landscapes took another shape, material resources became intensively exploited.

Up to the 50's pollution was a circumscribed problem, dealt with by production engineers, linked to the localization of factories and with consequences seen only at the proximity level. Then, In the last four decades, together with the steeping increase of the world population and the expansion of industrialization, an unexpected change occurred. The rupture of the equilibrium took such a proportion that it affected the understanding of the relationship between nature and humankind.

Vital resources, like air, water, oceans, were discovered to be deeply affected at the world level by very local production units. Wastes piled up and destroyed the soil. Both resources and wastes started to be a pressing global economic concern for present and future generations.

A new relationship with nature will redirect the economy which cannot count anymore with nature as limitless. If taken into full account, this new perspective will challenge drastically the way in which economics functions. To a great extent the damage to the environment is a direct result of the externality nature has represented in the process of creation of plus-value. The concepts behind current production schemes are put into question by the impact they have on nature, in terms of resources, accumulation of wastes, bio-diversity and aesthetic value.

It is not enough that a few countries establish clear and prudent norms for the preservation of the environment. The revolt of nature is an expression of the 'natural' globalization of the planet and of the processes taking place in and on it. Rivers cross several countries; the magma, the underground waters, ~~are~~ like the air - ~~they~~ know no frontiers. The international community has come to the agreement that 'the pollutor pays'. But this is obviously a very short reasoning, since no money can pay the often irreparable damage done to nature. It may happen that some processes are just unacceptable in terms of their consequences. In that case, no ideological liberalism can go unchallenged. It is accepted now by



most physicists that all natural processes are irreversible. Therefore, the economy of ecology cannot ignore such a fundamental law.

Moreover, other inter-related factors must also be scanned: new technologies (e.g. for the use of renewable sources of energy), regulation of industrial policy (e.g. comprehensive ban on processes and products whose ecological impact cannot be counteracted at the present stage of our knowledge), consumption patterns, 'population' growth. But the analysis, consequences and alternative schemes for including environmental 'costs' in the production process remain the heart-of-the-matter.

In this context, the ecological transition process will have as a fundamental element the theoretical and practical approaches to internalize environmental costs in all activities humans are continuously creating.

But, like all other processes of transition, the ecological transition is marked by a period of confusion, false solutions, disarray. A serious conflict of values will manifest itself in the attempt to make population the flexible factor, even to manipulate the factor "population" as a solution to the problems posed by the environment. It has already been denounced the 'cynism of the view' according to which 'under the assumption that ultimate causes are out of reach, proximate causes like population growth are put at the forefront'².

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Though many politicians still look at environment questions as the realm of 'ecologists' and not as key-questions of governance, nature entered politics. Political action has to advance through stewardship of nature, its goods, its equilibrium, its diversity, its renovation, its spiritual value.

A serious scrutiny is needed so as not only to disentangle population from the other factors, but to give to it its due place - "people at the center of development".



facing env. changes

7

moving towards the post-industrial society

The demographic transition is also caught in the radical scientific and technological changes which, by their consequences, represent a transition whose bearing on our ways of being and doing, are transforming already our life on the planet. A few dimensions of the intersection of these two processes are particularly relevant.

(A) The acceleration of scientific progress is creating a new culture world-wide which tends to shake the value system in every type of society. Meanwhile, the role of values at the bifurcation points is felt as so essential to the survival of humankind as a healthy environment is. Converging analysis springing forth both from North and South indicates that 'the absence of internalized and institutionalized ethics and values' leads to 'coercive power in almost exact proportion'.³ As one thinker writes: 'The world of tomorrow can be tamed either through outside force or through shared values'.⁴ *during the transition period*

By rightly focussing on 'choices' and 'rights' at the personal level - therefore, stressing implicitly the role of normative values guiding choices and strengthening rights - the current consensus on population matters is evoking the fundamental place of values at the personal and societal levels.

Moreover, the coexistence of a very strong and pervasive world-culture and of specific cultures is one of the main sources of tension within and between peoples and nations. The information technology can be the conveyor of imaginative processes destined to improve the QL of millions of people. At the same time - as it is mostly geared to profit and constitutes an emanation of the economic world-view of the industrialized countries - it channels the same patterns of consumption and the same values that exist in the Northern hemisphere.

The disarray this confrontation provokes in the social fabric can only be compensated and put straight by a massive and inovative effort in education. Its importance for the Population and QL question is beyond dispute.

At the most immediate level, technological progress itself, coupled with existing communication and globalisation, is contributing to the reshaping of production schemes. Their change is radical. Raw materials are replaced by artificially made materials, capital moves freely and instantaneously around the globe, traditional

Transition 3



technologies are displaced by robotisation, production takes place in disjointed units, sometimes thousands of miles apart, by-products and wastes weigh on the final cost, the public demand is commanded by the marketing environment which, because of the information revolution, reaches out to the most divergent places and situations. In the whole process, labour continues to be the penalised element of the whole scheme - an inheritance from the past that obviously cannot last very long.

We are facing here the most obvious sign of a transition process from the industrial (sometimes still agrarian) society to a new type of civilization. Its effects are felt in the global question of work, a decisive issue in the realm of P and QL.

Finally, in this transition process, the passage from a well-known type of specialized knowledge to what has been called the realm of 'inter-knowledges' (inter-disciplinarity or trans-disciplinarity) gives a new frame to 'population' questions. As in all other human sciences, human issues raised in the Population and QL domains have to be 'contextualized' and, thus, related to all other relevant fields of knowledge.

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world-economy-in-transition

25. We are quite used now to the expression of 'economies-in-transition', putting under this label the former Communist countries. But if we take into consideration the questions raised by such economies as well as the endless questions raised by the mal-functioning - in its ecological and social consequences - of the present economy system, we may well realize that it is at the world level that we are to speak of an 'economy-in-transition'.

26. Until recently, exchange of goods and services by sovereign nations constituted a clearly understood international trade. Today, both finance and production are transboundary phenomena, creating a global economy. ~~The globalization of the economy, which has accelerated its pace in the last decade, leaves us, indeed,~~ with puzzling questions. *and of*

27. ~~From one side, the global economy has grown.~~ The world production increased 3% per year since 1960 and the real production per capita has increased 26%. (BIT -DG) In 1990 the world production represented the double of the 1970 production. From another side, the situation in the different regions of the world follows different patterns. The industrialized countries grew their production per capita by 2.2% , East Asia did grow by 6.3% and South Asia by 3.1%, but Latin America decreased by 0.5% and subsaharian Africa by 0.9%. *a double feat.* From different sources the 'constat' is clear: 'the Third World is more isolated, at the economic level, than it was in 1960.' (BIT,pg6)

28. The international trade presents ~~also~~ serious questions. Between 1970 and 1991 the share in international trade has remained constant for the industrialized countries (while their internal trade has increased), has increased from 4.6 to 12.5% in Asia but has decreased in Latin America, subsaharian Africa and Eastern Europe and Central Asia. The conclusion of the Uruguay Round will have, according to several sources, a more marked impact on the North than on the South.

29. (Najman) Finally, the stock of foreign direct investment has doubled between 1988 and 1993 (from 1,146 to 2,125 billion dollars; it has been multiplied by almost 5 times since 1980 when it sood at 470 billion US dollars), while the share of the industrialized countries has grown from 68% in the sixties to some 80 % in the beginning of the nineties. However, the flow of direct investment



into developing countries has also grown very much, reaching about 40 % of the total in 1993, with China absorbing almost 30 % of the total. This example illustrates the disparities between different countries in the South, with some 10 countries receiving in 1992 some 76 % of the total flows and the 46 LDCs totally marginal to foreign direct investment.

29. (Pintasilgo) Finally, international direct investments have grown 10 times between the sixties and the end of the eighties (from 104 billion dollars to 1,173 billion), with a share of the industrialized countries has grown from 68% in the sixties to so 80% in the beginning of the nineties. However, the direct investments in the developing countries has also grown very much, with China absorbing one fourth of the flux to the Third World. This example illustrates the disparities between different countries in the South, with some 10 countries receiving in 1992 some 76% of the total flux and the 46 LDCs totally marginal to foreign investments.

30. Globalisation of the economy is then a paradoxical phenomenon. Becoming a motor for some, it is leaving behind a great part of the world population: one in every four individuals. It is true that there are hopes about the world trade; there is the example of the Asian 'tigers' that some consider to be the new model for all. But the demographic growth of the next decades is bound to render these disparities even stronger. Where is the world economy going?

An economy in a process of transition does not reveal its direction for the next decades. The bifurcation leads to too many scenarios. We only know that the 'transition' conveys intense conflict and unbearable human suffering. One thing is sure: this situation of blatant inequality cannot last.

31. We acknowledge the fact that the models of development that have been tried have exhausted themselves. They are inadequate. "The underlying basis for many of the models were unable first of all to capture the dynamics that were really happening, they were focussed on very specific goals, especially goals of economic growth." (KCD) Preponderantly utilitarian and transactional, they never were looked at as an integrated whole. "Utilitarian in the sense that everything that was done was for the use of and were transactional because it was all a system of "I do this, you give this to me" whether you're talking of people, of families, of the economy, of nation states." Today they are simply irrelevant. they no longer capture and value the manifold dimensions of QL.

Transition 3

The need for to. It poses itself - from a principle - for an economy which, returning global, ~~to~~ create never the less strong disparities towards an economy that will guarantee survival of all ~~peoples~~ ^{populations}. The present economic rationale is unable to cope with the dem. transition and



→ to guarantee economic resources ^{as basis for QL} for the population that will come in the next 4 decades.

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32. Moreover the end of the Cold War (which, in economic terms, was marked with the severe antagonism of capitalism/communism) has contributed to the disappearance of the development alternatives that were beginning to be defined in different regions. (Rajni Kothari "Alternatives".)

In less than 20 years, all countries have made a radical shift in their economic policy. In the 70's the UN agenda was centered on the affirmation of national sovereignty in the economic field - the Charter on Economic Rights and Duties of the States at the UN General Assembly of 74, the 'endogenous development' as the main idea inspiring the Medium-term Plan of UNESCO. Today all countries are following the same model. Any change in the world system is likely to have a highly multiplied effect on the economies of each country, as all bear the same logic and use the same tools.

If we are in such a period, how is it possible to accelerate the demographic transition? Where to find the rational, within the present economic system, for the absolute priority of social policies? How to find the financial resources for the education and health measures that are, politically, a pre-condition of population policies?

I don't know the

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the key-role of the social fabrics

33. The limits of the existing models are apparent in the situation of ~~so many~~ human beings in all regions of the world and in the rising social inequity, leading to personal suffering and to the breaking of social cohesion at many levels (family, society, nation). Old patterns tend to dissolve while there is not yet enough evidence of and conviction about new ways of structuring the family, the city and the other social institutions that keep society together.

34. The bipolar world gave room, under globalisation, to a combination of a unipolar world with a fragmented world where conflicts of opposite interest arise. They are fed by a growing militarisation of life. With the disappearance of the Cold War threats and the wish to channel military expenses to peace problems, there is the emergence of a new, expanded concept of human security with explicit social, economic and ecological aspects. The elaboration of the concept is an important breakthrough, revealing that the UN system is in search of new and more just mechanisms. However, the dynamism of the concept is somewhat thwarted by the evidence of another type of militarisation, springing forth in many distinct situations and by the incapacity to convert the military-industrial complexes of former USSR. Thus, individual and social insecurity is still part of humankind's lot.

35. Moreover, the emergence in the last 20 years of global problems decisive for today's and future generations and which cannot be solved within national boundaries alone demand an international social awareness and cohesion that globalisation, in its present forms, doesn't provide. *reinforce the insecurity*

36. The social transition is more than the passage from old forms to new ones. It is most of all the transformation of theories and practices that allow and produce human insecurity (in poverty, exclusion, absence of opportunities for work, disregard of social rights) into a new frame of thought and action that, at least, guarantees for all people to meet their basic survival needs and for humanity as a whole to enjoy collective security in the social domain..

37. For such a goal to be realistic, it is imperative that social policies gain a first place in the priorities of governments. Such



has been the main and radical message of the UN Social development Conference.

Not all social policies have the same impact on the social transition. Some have a direct bearing on its acceleration, others an indirect one. The most directly linked to the 'population' question are undoubtedly: education, health and work. Unless a major, urgent and creative action is taken in each of these fields, no 'population programs' will have a real impact on the demographic transition.

38. ~~Together with the clarification on the issues,~~ ^{also} a broader understanding of the role of the social actors is an essential part of the social transition. In the most diversified situations, Civil society is gaining momentum.

The change occurred within the UN context concerning the presence of all kinds of non-governmental organizations in UN-led and UN-organized parallel events to the world Conferences of the last four years shows that the representatives of the States themselves are aware of this world trend.

~~But we have to go further.~~ Throughout the world social activism attempts to do what the State has shown to be unable to do. Attention has to be given to the newness and the perceptions revealed in such actions. Social transition cannot happen without the implication of the civil society. Ideas have to be searched for and mechanisms have to be found to make of organizations working in different fields the right social partners for the elaboration and implementation of social policies.

39. For every ^{social} human being it is at the level of their daily lives that the 'transition' processes are felt. The 'social transition' has not yet started. But we know that it is the speed with which we may be able to guarantee access to education and good health services to all as well as to promote the redefinition of work that will give the just and humanly worthy measure of the commitment to accelerate the demographic transition.

even



where to find political will

40. A political transition is the most obvious element of the all-encompassing transition framework in which demographic transition is taking place.

It is not only the end of the 'balance of power' and of the yalta division of zones of influence. It is also the upheaval in many countries who are still in the process of becoming a Nation-State at the very same time that regional and global integration is eroding the traditional prerogatives of the Nation-State.

On one side, the urge to be a Nation-State (with its basic claim for territory and access to international trade) creates a climate of war to which the present organization of the multilateral efforts seems unable to bring an efficient answer. On the other side, the trends towards regionalization creates reticences and finds obstacles in the fear of the member-states to lose their sovereignty.

41. Political transition is also at stake in the limitations presented by democracy itself. In a time when there is also a massive transition for democracy and a widely spread move towards 'people's power', we have to acknowledge the incapacity of democracies to manage some of the most pressing problems of their respective societies - unemployment, crime, drugs. Moreover democracies appear almost powerless as to the new instruments needed to pursue their goals. Globalization renders omnipresent the chains of political, economic and social activity and intensifies to a new level the interconnectedness among polities. Alternatives have withered and no new experiences appear capable to give a horizon for political action.

42. All these elements, shown in the growing loss of control by national governments, render governance almost futile. We run the risk of establishing mechanisms of political power that are devoid of the necessary tools for their basic function of ensuring, protecting, promoting, deciding.

Long-term changes demand policies and measures which are almost impossible to take in the context of short-term electoral cycles. At the same time, the permanence of the same leaders at the helm of states has proved to be an obstacle for renewal and, more often than not, an incentive to cooptation and, ultimately, corruption.

43. International fora - and particularly the UN system - partake also of this upheaval. The assumption of the new demand of social



and economic security, the need for enforcement mechanisms of the decisions taken, the urgency to find ways to incorporate in the decision-making process the organic representation of civil society, by definition fluid and flexible, are but a few tasks with a special relevance to the P and QL problematique.

44. Finally, globalization imposes a new type of understanding of social processes. The more global is an issue the greater is the need for efficient processes of coming to terms with it at the local level. Only the empowerment of people - and particularly of women - can provide the basis for such processes.

In order to accelerate the demographic transition we need political will at the national and international level. But how to ask for such will when paralysis is the tone of international leadership and when, in spite of the universal acceptance of democracy, representative democracy is clearly showing its limits in answering some basic questions of governance?

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In a world shaped by globalisation and global communication there is no justification for policies and decisions which will affect the present and future generations to be taken only by the political decision-makers at the national and international level. Globalisation and instant communication make of democratic consultation an imperative and an indispensable tool to achieve the main goal of enabling people to determine, to fight for and to enjoy a human QL.

The more the 'Population' issue is perceived as global the more all problems connected with it have to be discussed and the solutions will have to be owned by all those directly concerned. No doubt problems are complex and the interweaving of several transition processes doesn't reduce their complexity. But We affirm and show evidence that human life, even in the most destituted situation, is the most complex process of all which has the unique feature and dignity of understanding itself at the crossroads of complexity.



what next?

43. The cumulative effect of all transition processes creates and is perceived as a period of confusion and of chaos. Maybe the elements of 'chaos' necessary to engender a new scientific revolution are already there. If so, we will be equipped with new theories and new tools which will help us to face the challenge of our time and provide our contemporaries with a human QL.

'Speaking' about life and death of human beings, about the way they work and love, breath and nurture themselves, the 'demographic transition' is at the heart of the other transitions. The demographic transition is not following an isolated logic on which, by simple will, an accelerated pace could be imposed. In this context of globalisation, it finds itself in the turmoil of all the other transition processes.

44. Two movements follow from such interaction. All other processes are accentuated with the impact of the demographic transition and of the conflicts it brings about. The marginal role of subsaharian Africa in the global economy may not be allien to its persistent population growth rate.

But likewise, the demographic transition reacts, as a sismograph, to the turbulence of the other transition processes. The evolution of the demographic factors in Eastern Europe and Central Asia are certainly onof the most radical demonstrations of the immediate effect of political, economical, social, ecological transition processes on the demographic transition period.

45. *"The Commission in terms of a goal looks at the overall goal of sustainable improvement in the quality of life as the major goal but recognises that there is the necessity to meet minimum survival needs that cannot be considered simply as sustainable improvement in the quality of life, but there are minimums that we have to address."*

The approach of the Commission is a holistic approach that implies both a new way of looking at things and a new way of doing things.

It is true that, here and there, demographers may be calling 'success stories' situations where fertility rate has been brought to a low level. But the evidence gatherd by the ICPQL doesn't permit to speak about population growth rate in isolation from



other factors that make up the QL of people. Again and again, people in Public Hearings denounced the social cost of population actions that, though giving good numeric results for demography, have violated the basic human rights of masses of individuals.

46. In this context, the ICPQL finds itself facing a huge predicament. Traditional and present models offer an ever more complex and implosive picture of the possibilities to bring about decent living conditions to the masses of the poor. But, still further, they offer little hope for the 2-4 billion people that will come into life in the next decades. Such a perspective is the major sign of the impending impasse of the transition period in which we find ourselves. This report addresses this impasse.

The present generation of responsible adults has fought for freedom everywhere, has condemned all forms of 'apartheid'. It cannot now look passively to the destitution of much more than 1 billion people, it cannot wait to be the spectator of the destitution of those who will come in the future decades.

1. Jonas Salk and Jonathan Salk, "Population and human values". 1981.

2. Frank Amalric, "Population growth and the environmental crisis: beyond the 'obvious'", in "The north, the south and the environment", UNU Press, 1995, pg. 85-101.

3. Robert Nisbert, in *Ecumenical Review*

4. Ali Mazrui. ?? Alternatives??

