

THE LIMITS OF „ZERO ECONOMIC GROWTH” STRATEGY

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Abstract: The deep and the comprehensive character of the ecological crisis, but especially the extremely serious consequences and risks that it generates, maintain and amplify, menacing the existence of economy and human society, the overcoming of ecological crisis, or at least the diminution of its appearances, represents today an absolute priority.

As for the achievement of this goal, we consider that it cannot be left to the sudden mechanisms of nature and its laws, and moreover it cannot be left to the spontaneous mechanisms of the market. On the contrary we think that it will be possible to be done only if the actions done in this respect are based on a huge and deeply based strategy.

In the following study we will present some of strategies that we consider as the most efficient, strategies that would have real chances of diminution and even elimination of the ecological crisis.

One of the solutions that caused some serious disputes is the one that suggested a zero growth to break the deadlock. This idea coming from a serious institution such as the Club of Rome attracted more attention.

We think it is normal to underline the idea that the two authors of the project (Meadows siblings) started from mondial statistics which indicated during the 70's an excessive growth of the population, the weathering of the soil, the suffocation of the overpopulated and polluted cities, the exhaustion of the resources of the irreproducible raw materials, the melting of the polar ice with the possibility of some floods, the pollution of water and air through the derivative products of the industry etc. On the basis of the analysis of these data, they reached the conclusion that limiting the economic growth would temperate the tendency to a negative evolution of the indicator mentioned above. By analyzing the zero growth strategy we don't want to republish the criticism made during time to these solutions; but on the contrary we are interested in some conclusions taken out from the multitude of attitudes expressed to show that the solution of zero growth was practically born in a catalyst that led to the appearance of other solutions.

From the beginning the report entitled „The limits of growth” was the topic of some interesting disputes on the theme of the limited character of resources concluded in valuable studies which are even today serious supports for reflecting on the future. The studies „Catastrophe or a new society? A latino-americian model of the world?”, Published by the Argentinean Bariloche Foundation having Amilcar Herrera as a coordinator and „Mankind at crossroads” by Mihailo Mesarovit and Eduard Pestel are just on example. These projects of world development vehemently criticized the discrepancy between the rich and the poor, the immorality of waste in the developed countries as compared to the great lack in the third world; underlined the annoying fact that „in the developed regions of world the material consumption reached the proportion of an absurd waste”, with all the consequences that come out. The above mentioned study draws attention on a real fact: the existent resources especially row materials and energy is limited. But from this realistic and necessary finding, to the suggestion of a solution of limiting the growth, the way was too easily chosen, evading intentionally or not the promising chance that the dimension of the known resources will be multiplied, on the basis of the new discoveries sustained by the new achievements of science and technics. And as if this had not been enough they didn't take into account the possibility that known type of growth that alarmed through

waste, to be changed with a rational one, based on another matrix of values, and on another technical way of production and consumption.

We have to underline the fact that the project of zero growth was an attempt to suggest that any model of economical growth must be thought on the canons of logics, hidden of ideology. The attempt remained at a level of suggestion because on the whole they didn't manage to prove that development can be part of social-political pattern. For instance when the society of future is proposed to be an egalitarian one, to allow the participation of all the countries in an equal way, in the advantages that can be obtained on international trade; it is easily observable that this statement contains a big amount of ideology. In spite of all this facts, we consider that the attempt had its role, mainly that of objectification of the analysis on a field of activity which is not negligible. On this open path the efforts of mathematical shaping and formalizing contributed once again to the growth of the scientific and objectivity level of a forming science like the environment economy.

They noticed that in spite of the fact that the study wants to be a global one, it is built on premises and values belonging to the rich. But in spite of the fact that the bases of the study is about development world, the solutions claim to be valid everywhere, irrespective of the mosaic-like, political and economical landscape of world. It is well-known that every country and region has their own problems. And the problem of a majoritary part of this world was and still is underdevelopment. To propose to this world a zero economic growth is first of all an immoral act. Moreover, such a solution is totally opposed to the conception of lasting development. If zero growth were accepted, the next generations from the underdeveloped countries would be practically condemned to live not better but in continuous poverty. Edgar Faure's words are memorable in this respect: „the hypocrisy of the rich countries will be immeasurable if on behalf of pollution and protection of raw material, they require the limiting of the economic growth. Limiting or ending the rate of birth for the poor countries is necessary of course, but raising the cultural level, development of education etc is lastly the best way of controlling birth”.

Edgar Faure ideas expressed at beginning of the 70's are still up-to-date. To stop the economic growth is neither possible nor necessary. The various negative consequences of the economic growth are not due to the some additional percent which amplify the GDP, and in the same way the zero growth doesn't involve a removing of all these consequences.

Unfortunately some studies like „The limit of growth” use brave but risky extrapolation which many times lead to utopia and racism. Thus, we do not manage to identify precisely what catastrophe can be avoided by limiting the economic growth in the underdeveloped word. Or, how else could we stop the growth of population in the third world mostly half-illiterate, than through malthusianist-like solutions, which attracted vehement criticism of the contemporaries. And in fact we consider that the population increase is not such an important cause to the failure of the economical growth.

The overcoming of the ecological crisis cannot miss an analysis from the perspective of value. Analysing the way in which the science has approached in time the problematic of value, we can identify a series of extremely interesting things regarding the way in which the humankind of the last century understood that it must produce what is necessary, but most of all how this behaviour proved to be practically “the generator” of the ambient crisis nowadays.

Both in the objective form of value – the work, as well as in the subjective form of the value, based on utility, the main factors which concurred in order to give substance to the value were the work and the capital. In all this time, the nature has been regarded as being less important. And this, in the conditions in which “[I]t furnished food for the labor force, substance for the work objects, energy for the labor means and the source for the

product information and technology. After each process of production, the Nature got only the material offals and energy. After the consumption process, the prize was similar; in few cases, a part of the economic potential of services type headed towards the Nature element, in order to remodel the affected ecosystem, to replant the forest transformed into furniture, to repopulate the rivers with fish, to repair the degraded fields. The fear to have too little economic potential for the man's pleasures or to rebuild the components recognised by different types of theories (when only the man, when the man and the capital, the capital and the land) determined the main decisive factor regarding the repartition, the man, to neglect the Nature".

Disasters of a serious gravity made the world realise that the nature is invaded with offals and that the old theories of the value, where only the work and the capital are considered main actors, does not provide a real explaining basis. Thus, the entropic value was born, which tells us, uncomfortably. That we are using resources from a finite deposit and that we do not replace them with others. In the same way the preoccupation for the economy of value imposed itself, moving the centre of the analysis from explaining the causes of the value, finite through its nature, to be reduced, with the maintaining of the quality of the product in which it is incorporated, "the tendency towards quality" and not quantity, to use a phrase preferred by Keynes, becomes an imperative because, as Paul Bran draws the attention, "[T]he law of the entropic value will not forgive us if we do not use the feeding of the Nature with services meant to reduce the pollution and to repair what we broke during the years of the 'industrial unleash', of the low entropy theft, theft followed, in many cases, by the ecological crime". Therefore, the economy of value sends directly towards the reduction of the consumptions specific to raw materials and energy. In the conditions we know that the natural substance of the goods cannot be lowered bellow certain threshold, without questioning the existence of the product itself, it could be said that such a solution can only delay the moment of the resource exhaustion. And if the whole remains the same, we will get to its total consumption only later, engaging and exhausting decreasingly from its content, but we will get there.

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