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From sustainable development to degrowth: philosophical and educational strategies for sustainability

The article is dedicated to analyzing the philosophical and educational grounds for the sustainable development of humankind. The growth of human civilization is already recognized to have its strict natural limits, and that has resulted in the formulation of the concept of sustainable development as a strategy for the future of humankind. However, there is some discrepancy noted in the concept of sustainable development – in particular, it is the lack of fundamental consistency between its 'economic' and 'ecological' components. It is insufficient to consider the nature being valuable only as a base of resources, as means for social and economic development. As sustainability could only be based on some minimal conditions for living within the regenerative capacity of the planet's ecosystems, it is evident that the current crisis is a crisis of senses, values and lifestyle no less than it is the crisis of industry and social demography. Sustainability is argued to require a new kind of society that would be able to decrease its growth and its excessive consumption habits. The article analyzes the concept of degrowth as a kind of more radical and practical supplement to the rather abstract idea of sustainable development: degrowth is defined as an ecologically sound development. That concept is also shown to present new challenges for higher education as a social institution tasked with constituting a human personality capable of living in a environmentally sound future. Thus, higher education is faced today with the challenge of shaping out not only knowledge and skills, but values and behavior patterns as well, by giving more attention to general culture, critical thinking and creativity and by increasing social responsibility for environmental protection and adopting lifestyle practices of degrowth and reduced consumption.

Keywords: *degrowth, sustainable development, higher education, ecological education, all-around human personal development, deurbanization.*

Introduction

The issue of contemporary ecological crises presents itself a challenge for many fields and areas of the contemporary thought, including that of philosophy and education. While in the politics for the past decades there

has appeared a number of resolutions and proclamations, laying out the ideological foundations for sustainable development, it is still the unsolved task to translate the principles stated in those resolutions into everyday practices and into the common lifestyle for the people of the whole world. Gone are the days where general declarations alone could be enough for outlining the administrative measures conducted by a centralized government that could change the way of life of the millions. In fact, it is a certain vagueness peculiar to any abstract declaration that hinders such a translation, and it is the system of the contemporary higher education that could enable clear understanding and moral adoption of principles in question and help to create human persons bearing corresponding ethical norms aimed at realizing those principles in their on-going life activity.

The idea of sustainable development has been an established topic for academic discussions since the end of the 20th century, particularly in the field of philosophy of ecology (works by M. Kiselyov, F. Kanak, A. Tolstoukhov et al.). However, that idea appears to be rather too general to be considered sufficient for constituting the philosophical and methodological background for the higher education for the sustainable development. As explained by Stephen Gough and William Scott from University of Bath [2007], we can't be sure what future would demand from our students, and thus outlining the education strategies for sustainable development is quite a challenging task. The analyses conducted by Ka-Ho Mok [2006] and Ashok Dansana [2013] reveal all the difficulties and contradictions of implementing the higher education for sustainable development in the most rapidly growing region – South-Eastern Asia, especially in China and India: namely, the misbalance of social and economic development on the one hand, and the environmental problems on the other hand. At the same time, Ukrainian researchers has also conducted an attempt to define the strategies of higher education for the sustainable development of humankind as well, including outlining methodical recommendations for achieving the corresponding goals – in works by V. Zinchenko, L. Gorbunova and others [Zinchenko et al. 2019]. Still, the idea of sustainable development appears as rather incomplete and shallow ground in relation to the definition of values and broad Weltanschauung principles that could manifest themselves as personal moral guidelines in human society of the 21st century. On the other hand, the proponents of the *'degrowth'* concept, which has arisen during the recent years as both a practical movement and a theoretical idea, argue that it "offers a consistent framework for rethinking society based on other values, such as sustainability, solidarity, equity, conviviality, direct democracy and enjoyment of life" [Degrowth 2020].

The aim of this paper is to investigate the concept of degrowth as a reference point for defining philosophical foundations and higher education strategies for sustainable development of human civilization. The methods

used in this research include analysis of both theoretical ideas and practices of implementing the notions and goals of sustainability into higher education; the dialectical method is used to reveal all the contradictions of both the concept of sustainable development and its implication into everyday life, as well as for clarifying the very notion of development. The methodological basis of the investigation conducted is also presented by the concept of post-non-classical science proposed by Vyacheslav Stepin [2005], as a supplement and alternative approach to classical unity and non-classical radical plurality while dialectically combining unity in plurality and developing non-linear thinking. In fact, that approach is well manifested not in science alone, but in higher education for sustainable development as well, because it is the ecological paradigm of post-non-classical science that enables us talking about education values and value-ridden skills and knowledge that would allow human personalities to create and practice the actual sustainable development of the humankind civilization.

The limits to growth of the humankind or its sustainable development

Until the start of the last third part of the 20th century, the idea that the growth of the humankind civilization could have natural limits would have appeared as literally impossible in the light of scientism and general optimism regarding the development of technology, including nuclear physics, computers, and space exploration. It is only in the second half of the 1960s and in the beginning of the 1970s that the first critics has stated that it is nature itself that imposes objective limits on what and how the human growth could achieve. In 1972, the Club of Rome – an informal international organization founded four years earlier – has published its famous first report: "The Limits to Growth". The authors of this book, having analyzed the then current situation in the development of civilization, concluded that "if the present growth trends in world population, industrialization, pollution, food production, and resource depletion continue unchanged, the limits to growth on this planet will be reached sometime within the next one hundred years. The most probable result will be a rather sudden and uncontrollable decline in both population and industrial capacity" [Meadows et al. 1972: 23].

Still, as any unfavorable academic prediction, this prognosis did provide itself a way to not be fulfilled – by calling humanity to alter the existing growth trends and establish a condition of ecological and economic equilibrium that could be sustainable far into the future. Such call has received the required social attention – it is on the basis of the said prediction that scientists and intergovernmental commissions have developed a slogan to denote new strategies for the human civilization: "sustainable development", which is now one and the most well-known conception of an alternative (and positive)

vision of the future of humanity. According to the proponents of this approach, sustainable development is permanent, long-lasting, harmonious, harmless – that is, it is a strategy that does not threaten the future, is not realized at the expense of coming generations, and is aimed at combining the three distinct vectors – economical, social, and environmental. However, the analysis of documents that have been actively adopted by different international agents and interstate commissions since the late 1980s, demonstrates the existence of some discrepancy inherent in the concept of sustainable development – in particular, it is the lack of fundamental consistency between its 'economical' and 'environmental' components. The latter is not even explained with sufficient clarification: the nature is presented in the declaration by the Johannesburg (2002) World summit on sustainable development just as a 'the natural resource base of economic and social development' [United Nations 2002: 8], – that is, rather as means for the economical and social development of humankind and not as a goal in itself, not a separate self-sufficient ecological component of the said development. Besides, the meanings and contents of such a development are being considered primarily from the point of view of the Western liberal-democratic system of social and political values, and those are not always acceptable for other ethical systems.

The lack of answer to the call of altering the existing growth trends is well demonstrated by some of the authors of the original 'Limits to Growth' report in their 'The 30-Year Update' published in 2004. The Rio (1992) and Johannesburg (2002) declarations are defined here as having failed their goals due to various ideological and economic disputes and to "the efforts of those pursuing their narrow national, corporate, or individual self-interests" [Meadows, D. et al. 2004: xii]. In spite of some positive changes (including general decline in population growth and development of new less harmful technologies), the general situation in the beginning of the 21st century is considered to be worse than in 1972. Luckily, there has been discovered a more precise and quantitative way to formulate 'the limits to growth' – *the Ecological Footprint of humanity*, a system of indicators based on the recognition that Earth has a finite amount of biological production that supports all life on it.

The conception of 'carrying capacity', i.e. the idea that our planet could only provide a limited quantity of resources required by humanity to prosper and develop itself, is certainly not new and dates back to Malthusianism. The latter's ideological suppositions and implications have in fact little to do with scientific comprehension of 'limits to growth' as it used to consider population growth as a main cause of poverty and – to put it in today's terms – environmental degradation, while the current research reveals that it is not just the population growth that is the major threat to the natural environment, but rather the consumption growth – not 'the poor' people are to be blamed, but on the contrary, 'the rich' ones.

According to Mathis Wackernagel and his colleagues, the ecological footprint is the land area that would be required to provide humanity with the resources (food, wood, land etc.) and absorb the emissions (mostly carbon dioxide). In 1961, humanity's load corresponded to 70% of the biosphere's capacity, but in 1999 this percentage was accounted to 120% – the 20% overshoot meant that it would require 1.2 earths for the humanity to continue living on the same level of consumption [Wackernagel 2002]. By 2014, that number rose to 1.7: that is, humanity's ecological footprint was 69.6 percent greater than Earth's biocapacity [Lin, D. et al. 2018: 9], the growth mostly being due to China and other Eastern Asian countries reaching the consumption level peculiar to 'the first world'. It is hard to disagree with the investigators engaged in counting the ecological footprint who state that it quantifies the gap between human demand on and the regeneration of natural resources, and the declared sustainability goals cannot be achieved on the ground of on-going erosion of the natural resources. Sustainability could only be based on some minimal conditions for living within the regenerative capacity of the planet's ecosystems: "Keeping humanity's Ecological Footprint within the biocapacity of the planet is the foundational minimum threshold for enabling human activities to persist rather than decline" [Lin, D. et al. 2018: 16].

I would argue that the numbers stated above present but a manifestation of the inability of humanity to find a solution for its existence in the 21st century. As the representatives of the Club of Rome have confessed in 2004, "... we are much more pessimistic about the global future than we were in 1972. It is a sad fact that humanity has largely squandered the past 30 years in futile debates and well-intentioned, but halfhearted, responses to the global ecological challenge. We do not have another 30 years to dither. Much will have to change if the ongoing overshoot is not to be followed by collapse during the twenty-first century" [Meadows, D. et al. 2004: xvi]. While 'squandered' could sound as a harsh term, considering all the efforts made, it still marks certain insufficiency of the current concept of sustainable development.

In my opinion, sustainable development in its current form is not yet a valid ground for comprehending and organizing the necessary measures just because it is partly based on linear notions of understanding development as economical (and social) growth. The task is to find some way to substantiate actually plural and non-Westernized understanding of sustainable development, as well as a true balance of its vectors and components. It is important to emphasize that the environmental dimension of defining human development strategies for the 21st century is not something external, a kind of a 'limiting factor' imposed on the economical and social components, symbolizing the limits of their application and actual economic and social 'growth', – and it is difficult to draw axiological or philosophical statements from political declarations on the foundations of sustainable development.

Similarly, it is not possible to solve ecological problems of humanity beyond their social aspect: particularly in the poor countries, social and economic development cannot be separated from finding a solution to the environmental problems [Goldoftas 2006: 9].

Besides, for quite some time in the past, social development of some parts of the world was made possible just at the expense of the exploitation of nature and other, poorer countries. As Raphael Hoetmer and Miriam Lang reflect in their recent work with the apt-sounding name 'Beyond Development: Stopping the machines of socio-ecological destruction and building alternative worlds', a predatory relationship with nature focused on continuous growth, in an era in which there seemed to be no limits to its exploitation, was one of the key sources for the theory and practice of the welfare state of the 20th century, alongside the wealth transfer from the South to the North, the abundance of very cheap energy, as well as the challenge presented to capitalist countries by the Soviet socialism. Still, only a few privileged society could have benefited from the noted historical form of social and economic development, and now, as many "others" are demanding to be included into the same circle, and as cheap energy is no more, "the Welfare State is no longer even possible in Europe, so we should seek out other paths for securing social rights in both the Global South and North that lead in the direction of commoning them, while asking of the State only to ensure favorable conditions for this" [Hoetmer & Lang 2019: 280].

Concept of degrowth of human future development

That actually means that despite the well-sounding intention of proponents of sustainable development to combine the vectors of social and economic development with environmental preservation, this concept does not provide any substantiation for realistic measures towards achieving the desired goals. In other words, besides the obvious economical and political aspects, the problem in question could be considered as a contradiction in philosophical grounds for understanding the goal of human civilization and the sense of the very human life, and particularly as a contradiction between such terms as development, growth, and progress. After all, the recognition of existing 'limits to growth' should be logically followed not by a search for ways to overcome those limits and to achieve the planned growth by any (other) means, but rather by questioning the idea of growth itself – at least, in those its forms that humanity got accustomed to during the last decades. The current ecological crisis is thus a crisis of senses, values and lifestyle no less (or even more) than it is the crisis of industry and social demography. And one of the reason for it is the understanding of development as a synonym of

growth and progress, which is peculiar to the age of Modernity – with its strict linearity and one-dimensionality.

That's why recent years have witnessed the formulation of a more radical and clearly pronounced concept of human future development – that of *'degrowth'*. This English term is in fact an equivalent of the French word 'la décroissance', which could also be translated as 'diminution' or 'decrease' (thus the accustomed variant was chosen to be even more disruptive) and which dates back to the same year of 1972 when it was proposed by French social philosopher André Gorz. In his works, Gorz stressed out that the main tragedy of the 20th century was the destruction of the rationalist utopia of the Modernity age that was found to be based on irrational beliefs and wrong ideological suppositions: "La crise présente est non pas la crise de la Raison mais la crise des motifs irrationels, désormais apparents, de la rationalisation telle qu'elle a été enterprise" [Gorz 2004: 13]. That crisis was imminent because the utopia of the industrial growth presupposed that the development of productive forces, the expansion of economy and the dominance of human over nature would lead to the freedom and development of human oneself – and that's what was proved to be erroneous.

In difference from many other critics of the Modernity, André Gorz does not only explain the reasons for the crisis, but also shows some way to overcome it – by arguing the necessity to transfer from the society of production and the society of labor towards the society of culture opposing the market economy. That's where the concept of *degrowth* comes into play: "La décroissance est donc un impératif de survie. Mais elle suppose une autre économie, un autre style de vie, une autre civilisation, d'autres rapports sociaux..." [Gorz 2008: 29]. The human society should become independent of growth, and that's the only way to make it sustainable, by certain downscaling of the economy, "leading to a future where we can live better with less" [Degrowth 2020]. It is socially sustainable economic degrowth that could lessen the ecological footprint of humanity by presenting a countermovement to protect nature and humans opposed to imposition of market values and increasing profits [Martínez-Alier 2013: 64–65].

As a slogan against profit-only economy, development hegemony and utilitarianism, 'degrowth' is also a practical movement and a project of voluntary societal shrinking of production and consumption aimed at social and ecological sustainability. According to a group of its activists, "Degrowth is a criticism of the belief in ecological modernization which claims that new technologies and efficiency improvements are key solutions to the ecological crisis. While technological innovation is a source of debate in degrowth, all degrowth actors question the capacity of technological innovation to overcome biophysical limits and sustain infinite economic growth" [Demaria et al. 2013: 198].

I would define degrowth as a balanced form of development opposite to unlimited extensive progress: a decrease in progress as not a 'step backwards', but as a dialectical negation. In fact, philosophy of dialectics presupposes comprehending development as just the unity of opposites – of qualitative and quantitative, irreversible and reversible, progressive and regressive: development is not just the change, but the unity of change and preservation [Myelkov 2004: 77]. That is, we have to decrease our growth – our excessive consumption habits, our extensive exploitation of resources – in order to preserve and to continue to exist and to develop both nature and culture. The position of degrowth thus does not stand against human development – it just stands against comprehending human development in terms of abstract economic growth. *Abstract* – because the growth of such indicators as national GDP and other state-centered factors have in fact little to do with human life, its meaning and the fulfilling of its goals. An excellent and quite practical example of more human approach to economic and social development is 'Happy Planet Index' calculated by independent British public agencies under the slogan "Economics as if people and the planet mattered". HPI summarizes the index of human wellbeing (satisfaction with life based on poll results) and the average life expectancy in a given country, as well as the degree of income inequality between different segments of society and the already noted ecological footprint data.

In particular, the results provided by this project demonstrate that wealthy European countries, which are usually considered as a certain quality standards and an example of "success" of social and economic development, occupy a relatively low place in the "happiness index", while leading positions are being held by Latin American countries and Southeast Asia. According to the latest (2016) report, the first three places are occupied by Costa Rica, Mexico and Colombia, respectively. No European country has got it to the top ten – the best result is shown by Norway (the 12th place out of 140), while most countries in the region, including France and Germany, are closer to the middle of the list and, for example, wealthy Luxembourg took the second place. from the very end (139th). The reason is that the countries of Europe (with the exception of some Eastern European countries, which belong to another category by the HPI, not "Europe", but "Post-communist") demonstrate rather good performance in the first three factors – that is, in life expectancy (from 79.8 to 82.2 years), income equality (from 16% in Greece and Portugal to 4% in the Netherlands) and wellbeing (from 5.0 on a ten-point scale in the same Portugal to 7.8 in Switzerland), – but at the same time all these countries testify to their almost destructive approach to the environment with the ecological footprint calculated in 'global hectares per capita': from 3.67 GHa / Capita in Spain (15th place overall) to 15.82 GHa / Capita in the already mentioned Luxembourg (139th). Ukraine is right in the middle of the list, taking the 70th place, between Hungary and Tunisia and, incidentally, two steps above China [Jeffrey, Wheatley, Abdallah 2016].

As the analysis of the data suggests, the current standards of living in Europe cannot be a universal model to follow, at least for the sake of the environmental conservation. If China, Ukraine and all (or most) other countries would adapt themselves to the level of consumption and pollution that is typical for Luxembourg, France or Germany, not to mention the United States, it will mean the imminent destruction of nature and the entire planet in a few coming decades or so. Therefore, the situation where a minority of human population consumes a vast part of resources and energy and produces a corresponding share of wastes can't be considered normal any more, and sustainable development is thus not an evolutionary, but rather revolutionary approach that require to step away from both 'Eurocentrism' and 'economocentrism', as argued, for example, by Japanese scholar Shuntaro Ito [Ito 1997].

At the same time, it is ecological approach that help us to prove the idea of degrowth as a trend not opposing, but enabling the actual development – the latter being multidimensional and decentralized (as opposed to linear Westernization). That is, the subject, the driving force behind the development is not some abstract humanity and not even actual nation states with their GDP and other formal denotations of even more abstract growth, but – each human person in his or her own personal development that dialectically combines progress and regress and does not hinder a similar development of other personalities (but rather empowers the latter). That's why I would argue that defining strategies of multidimensional 'degrowth development' and achieving actual sustainability requires a fundamental shift in education as a means for constituting an individual capable of living in a environmentally sound future – and particularly higher education [Mielkov 2019].

Higher education for the goals of sustainable development and prospects of degrowth

The critical importance of higher education for the goals of sustainable development and degrowth originates just from the fact that there must be a human person able to achieve those goals created and educated, obtaining all the necessary qualities for such an achievement. As stated by Anthony Cortese already in the 1990s, "Higher education institutes bear a profound, moral responsibility to increase the awareness, knowledge, skills, and values needed to create a just and sustainable future. Higher education often plays a critical but often overlooked role in making this vision a reality. It prepares most of the professionals who develop, lead, manage, teach, work in, and influence society's institutions" [cit. by: Dansana 2013: 121]. The similar idea has been recently expressed by the authors of the 2018 report by the Club of Rome, who concluded that the 'education for a sustainable civilization' requires a fundamental shift from learning how to memorize to learning how to think

in new, systemic way and to develop a capacity for independent and original thinking in all the students of today's HEIs [Weizsäcker, Wijkman 2018: 196].

At the same time, such guidelines have been also manifested in the UN Resolution "Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development" adopted in September 2015. This document is positioned as "a plan of action for people, planet and prosperity" in order to eradicate poverty in all its forms and dimensions, to strengthen universal peace and to heal the planet by protecting it from destruction. The fourth of the seventeen stated goals in the Agenda is dedicated to education: "Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all" [United Nations 2015: 14]. However, a closer analysis of those guidelines leads to the conclusion that education, and higher education in particular, is a factor that can and should ensure the fulfillment of almost all other goals as well, from achieving social justice and economic wellbeing for all people to ensuring sustainable consumption and taking actions to combat climate change – as it is education that is able to lay the foundation for appropriate behavior among HEI graduates.

And that leads us to noting the specific feature of higher education in the contemporary world: it is a whole new paradigm that comprises not only educating knowledge and skills, but values and behavior patterns as well. In fact, it is ecology that appears as a scientific paradigm for today's science, which has been called 'post-non-classical' [Stepin 2005] as opposed to 'value-free' classical science of the 18th and 19th centuries, where the paradigm was Newton's mechanics, and 'non-classical' science of the 20th century based on relativity and quantum physics, which imposed the dependence of the investigation results on its means, but still not on its subject. In ecology, even knowledge is 'value-ridden' as it informs us about the loss of bio-diversity in the world due to various human activities and the growing consumption level – so that a person who obtains that knowledge (being it a scientist who discovers it or a student who studies it) can't remain indifferent – and should feel the urge to act in accordance, in order to protect the life on Earth and humanity itself.

Thus, the knowledge in question should be available (and taught) not just to future scientists in the corresponding field of biology or environmental management, but to all students in general, as a part of their education as a person, not just as a professional. That's what is called a 'whole-person development', 'all-round development' as a necessary addition to the formation of students' basic and professional knowledge and skills for the fullest possible disclosure of their human potential as future leaders and active society members. Of course, today we cannot yet talk about abandoning the professional nature of higher education and reorienting institutions to the training of 'universal personalities' equally successful in acquiring knowledge and working in any sector of the economy – it would be too utopian. Rather, the challenge is to find the right balance between the breadth and the depth of higher education programs –

and, in addition to helping students acquire the necessary knowledge and skills in specific disciplines, to provide them with some information about other areas of study and knowledge that do affect any profession and to help them in developing a broader outlook, a significant level of general culture. It is worth noting that the current situation in the world that could be characterized by features known as VUCA (volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity) requires any professional to constantly create new knowledge and skills rather than rely on those pre-existed, and thus the goal is the education of creative personality. British authors Stephen Gough and William Scott consider it a form of dialectic of training and learning, with the transition from just information education paradigm (unilateral transfer of knowledge from teacher to student, i.e. instruction) to communication (the 2nd paradigm already known since the 20th century) and to the third, synthetic paradigm of higher education (mediation: multifaceted learning, with priority given to promoting self-learning and self-organization of students), – and such a methodological program is the way to successfully implement the basic principles of higher education for the sustainable development of human civilization [Gough & Scott 2007: 116–118].

Of course, contemporary higher education in order to realize its potential in enabling degrowth and sustainability should also inform students about the current situation of the environment, – but at the same time it should also consider promoting values and responsibility of sustainable development and practicing the necessary skills and behavior patterns. Such practices could lead just to learning ways to reduce consumption and wastes. As an example, we can refer to Shandong University in China (Jinan province) that follows the implementation of the concept of a 'green university' focused on the principles of sustainable development. Particular attention here is paid not only to the contents of the disciplines taught, but also to the practices of energy efficiency in campuses, with increasing social responsibility for environmental protection and the transition to renewable energy, food and other materials used in the activities of the university. Thus, the installation of a solar panel on the roof of a WC is reported to save 700 tons of coal annually; energy consumption is also being lessened by electric lighting on the streets operated by an automatic system that switches it on and off according to the level of natural illumination, while similar system indoors are based on voice activation or sensors that recognize the presence of students in the room; plants are planted on the roofs of libraries and laboratory buildings, both for landscaping purposes and for maintaining a constant comfortable indoor temperature. Since 2006, there have been enforced policies on free energy limits: students, graduate students and doctoral students have to pay their own money for exceeding the monthly limit of 5 kWh, 8 kWh and 16 kWh, respectively. Of course, the academic side of the university life is following that trend as well: there are twenty or so courses on sustainable development taught to students of different faculties, such as

"Energy and Environment", "Clean Production and Circular Economy", "New and Renewable Energy" etc.; the disciplines are mandatory for all students majoring in science and technology and for some students of humanities, arts and medicine. There are also ecological groups organized, as well as various environmental events held on relevant topics – from the celebration of World Water or Earth Days to the annual competition in saving energy and reducing emissions [Mu et al. 2015: 485–486].

However, while it is quite easy for a university teacher to inform his or her students about the threat to the environment, and it is a bit more difficult, but still rather possible – in case of a sufficient level of organization – to introduce policies and practices aimed at reducing the consumption at a single given HEI campus (or even in many institutions at a national level), – educating values, general culture and enable students to adopt the Weltanschauung principles of degrowth and sustainability, so they would follow the knowledge and the practices they learn at their alma mater later in both their private life and professional activity, is indeed a very challenging task. Is it possible to 'teach values' at all? After all, a student enters the university being an established person with his or her moral principles already shaped out, and the need to sustain the economic well-being of a family later in life could well overshadow the practices of energy consumption that student was accustomed to while leading a single and comparatively carefree life at a university campus – just as those 'national, corporate, or individual self-interests' mentioned by the Club of Rome authors have overshadowed all the well-meant international declarations on sustainable development.

Still, a culturally developed and, so to say, 'ecologically conscious' person can hardly pursue short-sighted goals of unconditional economic and even social growth without minding the long-term outlook (or, the not-so-long, considering the current trends) that threatens the well-being of humanity in general. In fact, we could see some proof of the possibility to follow fundamental values in the sad events that took place in 2020 and that have somewhat forced many people to radically change their familiar lifestyle. Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, some sociologists and political analysts have suggested that the world will never be the same again after quarantine – and this prediction is gradually coming true before our eyes. First, it may not be a mistake to point out that the circumstances of the 2020 pandemic have forced many politicians and policy makers to rethink the ideology of economic centrism: the quarantine measures are aimed at saving lives at the cost of literal economic degrowth! That is, a human life is thus recognized as the highest value, both in China and in Western Europe and the United States, and this recognition is an opportunity to lay the foundations for mutual understanding and solidarity of people around the world based on

their common values and not on national, or ethnic, or ideological differences between them, to say nothing of the economic competition.

Second, significant social and environmental consequences meant a forced transition to remote forms of work for many professionals, thus promoting such important form of degrowth as *deurbanization*. The ideas that the path or even a revolutionary movement to 'ecological civilization' requires the reduction of big cities of modern civilization for quite some time used to sound too utopian to be taken seriously by anyone but academic philosophers in the ivory towers of their universities. However, the development of information technology at the beginning of the 21st century has turned such ideas from a dream into a reality, giving people (at least those engaged in services and creative specialties) the possibility to live and work not in large and polluted cities, but in small, 'human-commensurable' eco-settlements. Not only they are living closer to nature, but they are also working according to their own individual schedule, not using vehicles with internal combustion engines and harmful emissions into the atmosphere and not spending their free time to get to their offices and then back home. In 1991, Robert Gilman has defined an 'eco-village' as a 'human-scale' (not larger than 5000 or 1000 habitants, and usually only 50 to 150 of them) full-featured settlement (having all the major functions of civilized living, like residence, food provision, leisure, social life etc.) in which human activities are harmlessly integrated into the natural world (by using alternative energy sources, waste recycling etc.) in a way that is supportive of healthy human development and can be successfully continued into the indefinite future [Gilman 1991: 10]. It is worth noting that such a lifestyle is not a Rousseau's coming back to the times before the industrialization, – on the contrary, it is the degrowth that follows the development of human civilization, as hard and monotonous peasant labor of traditional villages is being replaced in 'eco-villages' by means of new computer and information technologies. Thus, deurbanization present itself a form of 'regress', but development nevertheless.

Moreover, it seems that some large corporations, which previously used to force their employees to stay at work for the proper eight hours (a requirement rather formal, sustained not so much for the sake of productivity, but rather in the spirit of standardization and maintenance of discipline peculiar to the past age of Modernity), – those corporations are becoming convinced now that remote work is not only safer for health reasons under the pandemic, but also more efficient in itself. In July 2020, Google corporation has announced that it will keep its employees home until at least July 2021 [Copeland & Grant 2020]. In August, the same decision was announced by Facebook: "I think that it's possible that over the next five to 10 years – maybe closer to 10 than five, but somewhere in that range – I think we could get to about half of the company working remotely permanently," said CEO Mark Zuckerberg" [Gartenberg 2020]. I would argue that among other benefits, including that of degrowth, such a transformation

in the field of labor could lead to further democratization of society, minimizing authoritarian tendencies of leadership and contributing to the formation of workplace democracy. However, that is a topic for another investigation.

Conclusion

So, let us summarize the main points stressed in the paper. During the last decades, scholars have proved that the growth of human civilization has natural limits so that overshooting would lead to destruction, and the recognition of that fact resulted in the formulation of the concept of sustainable development as a strategy for the future of humankind. However, the said concept is rather unclear and abstract in providing any consistency between its 'economic' and 'environmental' components, the latter appearing rather as means for achieving economic development. As a supplement to the idea of sustainable development, there has appeared a notion of degrowth. Thanks to such indicators as 'Ecological Footprint' and 'Happy Planet Index', it is revealed that economic growth leads to destructive consumption, but not to happiness. In turn, degrowth does not mean degradation and anti-development – on the contrary, it is ecologically sound development, that follows natural trends and includes preservation in opposition to one-sided progress at any cost. That is, degrowth provides a philosophical ground for sustainable development – and a new challenge for higher education, as defining strategies of 'degrowth development' and achieving sustainability requires a fundamental shift in education as a means for constituting an individual capable of living in a environmentally sound future. Today higher education faces a whole new paradigm that comprises of shaping out not only knowledge and skills, but values and behavior patterns as well, by increasing social responsibility for environmental protection and adopting lifestyle practices of reduced consumption.

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Юрий Мелков. **От устойчивого развития к уменьшению: философские и образовательные стратегии устойчивости**

Статья посвящена анализу философских и образовательных оснований устойчивого развития человечества. Уже признано, что рост человеческой цивилизации имеет свои строгие естественные пределы, что привело к формулировке концепции устойчивого развития как стратегии для будущего человечества. Однако в данной концепции отмечается некоторое несоответствие – в частности, отсутствие фундаментальной согласованности между его «экономической» и «экологической» составляющими. Недостаточно рассматривать природу только как базу ресурсов, как средство для социально-экономического развития. Поскольку устойчивость может быть основана лишь на некоторых минимальных условиях жизни в пределах регенеративной способности экосистемы планеты, очевидно, что нынешний кризис – это кризис чувств, ценностей и образа жизни не в меньшей степени, чем кризис промышленности и социальной демографии. Утверждается, что для обеспечения устойчивости требуется новый тип общества, которое могло бы снизить свой рост и свои чрезмерные потребительские наклонности. В статье анализируется концепция уменьшения (degrowth) как своего рода более радикальное и практичное дополнение к довольно абстрактной идее устойчивого развития: уменьшение роста определяется как экологически безопасное развитие. Также показано, что эта концепция ставит новые задачи перед высшим образованием как социальным институтом, задачей которого является формирование человеческой личности, способной жить в экологически безопасном будущем. Перед высшим образованием сегодня таким образом стоит задача формирования не только знаний и навыков, но также ценностей и моделей поведения, что требует уделять больше внимания общей культуре, критическому мышлению и творческой составляющей личности, а также повышению социальной ответ-

ственности за охрану окружающей среды и усвоению стилежизненных практик уменьшения роста и снижения потребления.

Ключевые слова: *уменьшение, устойчивое развитие, высшее образование, экологическое образование, всестороннее развитие человеческой личности, деурбанизация.*

Юрій Мєлков. **Від стійкого розвитку до зменшення: філософські та освітні стратегії стійкості**

Статтю присвячено аналізу філософських і освітніх підвалин стійкого розвитку людства. Вже визнано, що зростання людської цивілізації має свої суворі природні межі, що призвело до формулювання концепції стійкого розвитку як стратегії для майбутнього людства. Однак у даній концепції відзначається деяка невідповідність – зокрема, відсутність фундаментальної узгодженості між його «економічною» і «екологічною» складовими. Недостатньо розглядати природу тільки як базу ресурсів, як засіб для соціально-економічного розвитку. Оскільки стійкість може бути заснована лише на деяких мінімальних умовах життя в межах регенеративної здатності екосистеми планети, очевидно, що нинішня криза – це криза почуттів, цінностей і способу життя не в меншій мірі, ніж це криза промисловості та соціальної демографії. Стверджується, що для забезпечення стійкості потрібний новий тип суспільства, яке могло б знизити свій ріст і свої надмірні споживчі нахили. У статті аналізується концепція зменшення (degrowth) як свого роду більш радикальне і практичне доповнення до досить абстрактної ідеї сталого розвитку: зменшення росту визначається як екологічно безпечний розвиток. Також показано, що ця концепція ставить нові завдання перед вищою освітою як соціальним інститутом, завданням якого є формування людської особистості, здатної жити в екологічно безпечному майбутньому. Перед вищою освітою сьогодні таким чином постаэ завдання формування не тільки знань і навичок, але також цінностей і моделей поведінки, що вимагає приділяти більше уваги загальній культурі, критичному мисленню та творчої складової особистості, а також підвищенню соціальної відповідальності за охорону навколишнього середовища і засвоєнню стилєжиттєвих практик зменшення росту і зниження споживання.

Ключові слова: *зменшення, сталий розвиток, вища освіта, екологічна освіта, всебічний розвиток людської особистості, деурбанізація.*

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