

Towards Planetary Consciousness?

Vuokko Jarva
University of Helsinki
Finland

The idea of global crisis as a temporal telescoping of unfavorable events has come into favor at least since the 1973 oil crisis. Fritjof Capra (1982) diagnosed the multidimensional character of the crisis as a Turning point. In Halal's and Marien's analysis the crisis also is multidimensional, caused by influences from the human sphere, as well as both living nature and non-living nature spheres. Both also consider the crisis as a threat to civilization as a whole. The basic difference is, that Capra emphasizes its character as a crisis of the human mind and will, which Halal and Marien refer to only indirectly. This is problematic, as will be discussed below through an alternative point of view.

Mythical Versus Real Agents

Halal and Marien analyze trends. The danger in doing so is that they can be treated as Real Agents or determinants of development. A trend is only a time-series indicating human action, results of it, or natural phenomena – and can take unexpected turns. Extrapolated trends are too often believed to have strong truth-value. Trends are not mythical agents determining future developments.

Technologies are no more Real Agents than trends, especially when considering information technology and artificial intelligence. Technologies are developed by humans for defined purposes, which far too often stem from the wealthy and powerful. The Real Agents are those who decide which kind of technology is created and who will have access. There cannot be much optimism if technology is predominantly utilized for "gambling with the planet", as Nobelist Joseph Stiglitz (2011) has phrased it.

However, there are movements of human action, which are not paid sufficient attention. They are not only trends, but also deep-rooted processes and movements; undercurrents of human action.

The undercurrents of human action that deserve more attention are:

1. **Localization.** This undercurrent has its most visible expression in the formation of new states, which begun in the twentieth century and still continues today. Inside the societies, it makes its appearance both as democratic and revolutionary movements, like the Arab Spring phenomenon of 2011. The economic democracy case can be seen in the microfinance pioneer Grameen Bank in Bangladesh, as well as the cooperative movements all around the world. The third dimension of local democracy is expressed through the activities of the citizens, local as well as international efforts.

2. **Planetization.** Since Limits to Growth of 1972, the idea of planetary consciousness has developed mainly into ecological consciousness. Lately, this has culminated in a focus on the warming of the atmosphere. Though the dominant politicians have not yet been ready to accept radical actions to save the living planet, planetization has advanced on several other fronts. Gains in recycling, utilization of renewable energy, green industry, protection of nature and greening of lifestyles have accumulated quickly. To further help matters Erwin Laszlo and Dalai Lama also drafted "The Manifesto on Planetary Consciousness" in 2001.
3. **Glocalization.** This movement is the realizations of the Club of Rome principle "think globally, act locally", and is thus a combination of the former two. Movements like green consumption, permaculture, slow life, slow cities and downshifting are spreading. One good example is the Green Belt movement in Africa, headed by Nobelist Wangari Maathai. On the intellectual and scientific level these good practices mesh with the recognition of the necessity to sustain our living planet. They also draw attention to the necessity of unified human action for the benefit of future generations of all living beings.

The changes in values, attitudes, policies, and lifestyle towards caring for our planet, locally and globally, are spreading like rivulets of water through myriad human communities. The only question is, when will they reach the critical mass of decisively influencing world affairs?

What drives all human activity is identification, belief and motivation. Identification concerns the feeling of belongingness into a group or larger community, inclusion over exclusion. Beliefs define a human beings perspective, values and attitudes. Motivation is the futures-oriented tension between the present state and the goals of a human agent or a collective. An analysis of the drivers and goals of each four currents of human action are listed below.

Table 1. *Four present currents of human action, their drivers and goals*

	Mainstream globalization	Planetization	Localization	Glocalization
Identification	Identification with the powerful and the wealthy.	Identification with living beings, multiple or placeless identification.	Identification with a community, real or virtual.	Multiple or placeless planetary identification.
Beliefs	Belief in secular gods: money, power and information.	Open systems, Gaia, planetary living beings welfare.	Belief in local proactiveness.	Belief in proactive long-range futures oriented action.
Motivation	Egoism and group survival.	Survival of the living planet.	Self and local group survival and/or independence.	Plus-sum balancing of planetary and local motivations.
Goals	Economic growth, free market economy.	Greening, global ethics, sustainable development.	Local welfare, self-support, local democracy.	Global ecohumanist ethics for a happy planet.

The probabilities of the four scenarios in case of each current becoming dominant is studied in the table 2 below.

Table 2. *Probability of alternatives in relation to the existing currents, time interval 20-30 years*

Alternatives	Mainstream development %	Rise of localization %	Rise of planetization %	Rise of glocalization %
Decline to Disaster: World fails to react. More global warming, widespread energy and water shortages, economic depression, conflict, etc. Loss of civilization in many parts of the globe.	80	40	25	5
Muddling Down: World reacts partially, but problems continues to outdistance policies and technologies, ecological damage continues, increased poverty and conflict	15	30	30	25
Muddling Up: World reacts out of need and the help of IT/AI. Policies and technologies gain on problems. Disaster avoided but some disorder and disappointment	5	25	35	55
Rise to Maturity: Ideal transition to a humane and responsible global order	0	5	10	15

Rise to Maturity or Shift of Power?

Halal and Marien use the expression "rise to maturity" in support of the human evolution theory. This is in many ways dubious. The positive solutions are, following my argument, in the existing undercurrents of human action, in strengthening and empowering those, most notably in the **glocalization** current.

Radical changes in the power- and economical structures are a must. Gambling with the planet has to be stopped, but is not possible through traditional means. In this sense the situation really is a crisis: it cannot be solved without inventing new solutions and empowering the planetary mindset of the masses into spontaneous action. Information technology can be a valuable asset, if utilized to encourage and spread this mindset.

There is one special blind spot in the analyses of our present problems, which needs to be addressed: the catastrophic waste of human resources. In the sphere of labor, incredible amounts of human work is wasted in production of vanities and misutilities. The accumulating unemployment means a remarkable percentage of labor force to be wasted. Poverty, war and malnutrition keep vast amounts of people unable to develop and utilize their resources. All of this, combined with the inner loss of purpose in life, is a huge resource, which is purposely being squandered.

Correspondence

Vuokko Jarva
Adjunct Professor, University of Helsinki, Finland
Carrer Ramon y Cajal 12 1/2
17230 Palames
Spain
Email: jarva@me.com

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