

# Alternative Futures of Globalization: Globotech versus Ecarmony

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*Globalization, new technologies, demographic changes, environmental crisis, as well as epistemic changes are all crucial drivers of change that are radically transforming the way we think about and envision our common future. These drivers for change can highlight the current systems of capitalist, patriarchal and colonial oppression or can be used by women and other disadvantaged social groups to achieve global and local social transformations. Globalization is one such driver where certain aspects of this uneven process are highlighted by the leading world elite and made seen as universal and objective. In this process economic globalization is equated with "globalization," western and male experiences are equated with "human" experiences and chosen highlights presented in terms of a "global" vision. At the same time, alternative understandings and visions of globalization are being developed by people from gender, class, caste and race "peripheries."*

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### *The Impact of Globalization*

The impact of globalization has been well documented. There is some debate over which aspects of globalization are positive and desirable and which ones are negative. The consensus is greater when discussing negative aspects of globalization. These include widening gap between the rich and poor globally and within nation states, further environmental degradation and continuation of cultural colonization. The positive aspects of globalization include a shift towards the understanding of human differences within the unified view of humanity, increased ecological consciousness, higher cultural interchange, more consumer and employment choices and the opening up of the possibilities in travel, communication, and business.

Since globalization is an uneven process its effects are also felt unevenly. Advantaged social groups, both globally and locally, are more likely to get most of the benefits globalization is offering. The opposite holds true for world's disadvantaged - they are the ones that are most likely to feel the negative consequences of economic globalization (for example, in the form of structural adjustment policies), environmental pollution and degradation and western hegemonic cultural onslaught. Unfortunately, the positive aspects of economic globalization are not enough to make up for the ecological and economic consequences that are seriously undermining the quality of life, and even the mere existence of the world's future generations. The belief that markets are somehow "self-corrective" and that "free" trade can be divorced from western-capitalist colonisation and imperialism is misleading. The overwhelming nature of globalization has also created a discourse in which the positive and the negative aspects of globalization are seen as inseparable and globalization itself as process beyond intervention and control. However, as there is not "one globalisation" but many various processes that are creating this phenomenon there are always choices to be made in terms of which aspects of globalization can and should be encouraged and which ones need to be subdued. Actions are necessary in order to re-shape the global economy and move toward ecologically sustainable, equitable human development. These changes can and need to be made at a variety of levels. According to Hazel Henderson, these levels include: the family-individual, civic society, provincial and local systems, corporate system, the nation-state, the international system and the global (planetary) system level. While the international, national and corporate system are too often seen as the only active players in globalization, the environment and local communities,

families and individuals are seen as passive and impotent recipients of sweeping social changes. But can globalization continue without the support of planetary and local (including individual humans and families) ecosystems? And if it can, won't it eventually self-destruct once the support of planetary and local systems reserves come to an end (in the form of ecological destruction and severe poverty, for example)?

Humans can and need to act before such a negative scenario materializes. Short-term thinking and piecemeal, ad-hoc solutions cannot be sufficient any more with such high "investments" and important "reserves" at stake. To move beyond current mainstream globalization discourse a different vision of global-planetary-international system is needed. The vision that has the highest potential to subvert dystopian globalization scenario has been developed by social groups that are the most disadvantaged by the negative effects of globalization. One such group is women from the developing world who suffer negative consequences of triple systems of oppression: patriarchy, colonization and global capitalism. In addition, both women from the developing and overdeveloped world have been putting emphasis on global strategies that will preserve and sustain life. The indigenous and intuitive knowledge of the gender that is more closely involved in the creation and the maintenance of the human life is necessary in order to conserve planetary conditions and sustain future generations.

### *Women are Supporting Globalization but is Globalization Supporting Women?*

It is now increasingly recognised that women provide and are expected to provide services that buffer the negative aspects of economic restructuring caused by extension of global capitalism. UN, UNESCO and UNIFEM studies have repeatedly shown that while some women benefit from national economic restructuring (more job opportunities, higher consumer choices) the benefits are usually reserved for educated professional women. In addition, it is the most vulnerable women who suffer from existing inequalities and insecurities being intensified by globalization. Even when women benefit from economic globalization this happens in an environment that is increasingly hierarchical, unequal and insecure. Risks and benefits are not being shared equally; in fact, the disproportion between groups that are coping risks and those that are gaining benefits is increasing at the global and national level.

While there is a focus on the "unification" of our world in western theories of globalization, conflicts in the developing world violently diversify people (nationalise, reify ethnicity, religion and tribe). "Global network society" is created in the world where the access to information superhighway is still a privilege denied to many. Global "post scarcity" society is theorized while millions die of hunger and poverty related deaths. While globalization is seen as a new phenomena some disadvantaged social groups mostly experience it as a continuation (and cementing at the global level) of processes such as colonisation, imperialism and patriarchy.

In this era of globalization, some traditional western feminist concepts also need to be redefined. For example, women who enter the paid labour force are not automatically "empowered" if they do so in an environment in which they also need to supply additional services previously covered by now privatised public sector (health, education, disability care). Similarly, a working mother does not necessarily provide an example of gender equality for future generations in a situation where daughters have to leave school to replace the mother at home, taking care of younger siblings and doing household chores.

The real challenge for global feminism is how to materialise its visions of one world in which inequality based on gender, class, caste, religion, and ethnicity is absent both locally and globally. How to create global peace when globalization also encourages global arms trade and weapons flow? And how to encourage life sustaining futures in situations where mobile capital shifts exploitation of the nature from one "liberated" local space to another with governments more desperate for foreign currency and foreign investments?

But while women are in general coping with the more negative influences of globalization from "above", they are also leaders in social movements that are developing global visions from "below". Although both movements might have a similar goal (or vision for the future) - the creation of "one world" - this "common" goal is called upon for different symbolic politics. In the case of globalization from above, corporate capitalism and the state evoke the image of globalised world in order to (1) increase profits or (2) to justify the implementation of conservative policies. The globalization discourse pushed by corporate capitalism highlights the positive aspects of globalization along almost utopian lines. What is lost in this discourse is that positive globalization experiences are not universal, and that the impact of globalization is differently felt in accor-

dance to belongings to certain social groups (class, race, gender, nationality). This globalization discourse follows developmental modernist evolutionism arguing that the globalization (defined in terms of spreading of “free” markets and neo-liberalist philosophy) will ultimately benefit everyone. On the other hand, images of globality brought by grass roots and modern (“left”) social movements focus on issues of justice, human rights and equality rather than on technological and market forces. While there is great deal of debate among those trying to push globalization from above and even more debate among those trying to push globality from below, these two visions/images (globally) represent two basic models as well as current political choices on how to create positive futures.

### *Globalization Scenarios: Globotech versus Ecarmony*

These two scenarios represent two “ideal models” - two main tendencies and political choices for the future deducted from the multifaceted reality with all its complexities, “hybridities” and “heterogeneities”. The main purpose for summarising various components into these two models is to highlight that globalization is not a “given”, that various discourses on globalization are “pushed” by various social groups and that there are always choices to be made, from the individual to the global system level. Another purpose for describing these two models is also to explore which one has the higher long-term potential to sustain planetary life.

In essence, the “Globotech” scenario continues “business as usual” while “Ecarmony” requires global transformation. The trends and the (human, historical, social) structures leading to both are currently present but Globotech proponents are better equipped in finances, time and energy resources. Globotech is also better supported by historical social structures, such as patriarchy and capitalism.

### *Globotech*

In the Globotech scenario, globalization continues to be mostly from “above”, influenced by multi-nationals and states. The world is populated by the global consumer. The social order is profit-oriented, focused on “wants”, instant satisfaction of needs and with ever increasing material choices. In this “borderless” world economic boundaries dissolve but the free flow of capital is not accompanied by free flow of people. Welfare policies are implemented where necessary, mostly to ward off the political

upheaval of "have-nots". Have-nots exist everywhere but their concentration is higher among women, racial and ethnic minorities, and other marginalised social groups. Global geographical distribution of wealth is mostly visible outside of the urban areas, that is while the global city looks similar everywhere, non-city areas in the overdeveloped world still provide relatively comfortable lives as compared to non-city areas in developing world. The positive impact of new technologies include flexibility of work, increase in communication across the world, increased human longevity, the wiping out of certain genetically inherited diseases, and higher security provided by global monitoring and surveillance. There is an increased interaction between humans, machines and artificial intelligence. Ecological resources are stretched but this worry has not turned global expansionist orientation towards conservation principles. Rather, the main growth industry is space exploration and excavation.

In this scenario, the main goals for the development and use of new technologies is to expand our finite Earth into infinite Space. The use of new technologies is increasingly seen as human savior: they can maximise food production, disease elimination, facilitate learning and ward off attacks on "Spaceship Earth" (viruses, bacteria, asteroids). While new life forms are actively sought outside the Earth, an increasing number of local planetary species are being extinct. But also new "mutant" life forms are created through genetic engineering and gene manipulation. The access to information highway is not equally shared among poor and rich. That is, economic ranking has become one of the main hierarchical principles.

There are opportunities and choices for many people but those in poverty are prevented from accessing them because of structural barriers. Charity and welfare programs relieve crisis situations, but only when they are given priority by global media. The global media increasingly participates in defining global priorities and controlling global issues. In general, global society is arranged hierarchically, and there is little compassion for those who have not made use of the opportunities and choices offered globally. The exploitation of underprivileged is not direct but structural, and their plight is ignored. Local governance is replaced by global governance, and supranational organizations and institutions are in charge of implementing the policies that direct globalization. Multinational corporations are extremely influential, albeit "behind the (political) scene".

Globotech societies admire individualism, competition, success, breaking the boundaries of physical world, appearance, anything "spectacular",

youth, abundance and excess. In the overdeveloped world, multiculturalism is tokenistic (to satisfy demands for inclusion) and pragmatic (to stimulate penetration of foreign markets). Among the poor from the previously called "Third World", multiculturalism is forced upon the people, implemented with colonisation and western-style consumerism. While "indigenisation" is a matter of choice for rich in the North-West, westernisation is the matter of survival strategies for both elites and the poor in the South-East. Culturally, elites insists upon the creation of one global culture, which modify, appropriate and commodify the difference (s). While historical localities develop their cultural forms they do so with the higher influence of western rather than local traditions. At the same time, global mass culture remains in the west, and in the overriding framework of western understanding and conception of the world. Globally, only rational aspects of knowledge are valued, and intellectual development is paramount. Indigenous and women's ways of knowing have found their places in the history "theme parks". New methods of teaching and learning are developed to stimulate intellect and facilitate fast and flexible acquisition of information.

Gender and family relationships are slightly changed. The nuclear family is seen as the most desirable family form as it is best at fostering individualism. However, among the wealthy, parenting and other social functions that family used to satisfy (food, care for disabled, old and sick, physical and household care) are increasingly being outsourced to what used to be carried out by small business but is now replaced by franchise. Time that is "saved" through outsourcing is spent on developing resources (time at work, learning of new skills) as continuous investments are needed in order to successfully compete at the markets. Among the elite, the dominant gender organization is that of unisex androgyny. Female-male polarity is being developed among some elite groups but this polarity is here mostly appearance based. On the other hand, in non-western societies that are still not benefiting from Globotech arrangements, this polarity is the main organizing principle between genders. But even when women participate in the areas where an androgynous principle is more respected they do so in the environment saturated with patriarchal messages and values. For example, they break into executive positions in the media industry, but media images of women are still those where women are objectified and commodified.

Androgyny is defined as women meeting men's standards and living according to patriarchal norms and values. Reproduction is mediated

through new technologies - the key words are artificial womb, out-of-body conception, baby factories, population control, sperm banks, and genetic defect prevention. In the elites' world the search is for perfection, perfect product, perfect service, perfect offspring, and perfect appearances (all culturally defined and biased). Among elites population is controlled in terms of "quality" while among poor population it is controlled in terms of "quantity". Again, while elites chase perfection the others are engaged with mere survival. For them, coping strategies that were previously developed for use in crisis times are now implemented on a continual basis. As the management of the environment is mostly based on profitability local groups are disturbed and they migrate internally. Globalization is further assisted by such large dislocations which enable the maximum utilisation of environmental and population resources.

In Globotech societies, ethical issues are discussed within organised religions but these discussions are rarely followed in the "real world" - where "anything goes". This value system is being guided by token multiculturalism, where all the perspectives are listened to and "accepted" so that the practices that are harmful for unprivileged social groups can be discussed horizontally (as one of the practices) and not vertically (good and bad practices). But this ethical smorgasbord is rather fictional than real as the values are firmly influenced by global media controlled, in turn, by multinationals. At the same time, science and technology are given the privilege of being amoral, that is they are considered objective and value-free human endeavours. The scientific worldview is the most dominant worldview which includes only those cultural contributions that operate under scientific terms of reference. Worldviews that challenge scientific truth and operate outside scientific discourse are effectively excluded.

### *Ecarmony*

The Ecarmony scenario results from globalization being governed from below. The push for Ecarmony comes from social movements in post-scarcity societies and is mobilised around issues of purpose, identity, higher goals and meanings. In the developing world the push for Ecarmony is facilitated out of necessity. The eutopian (the good society) "one world" is imagined as a guiding principle for human unity. The desire for belonging to one world is facilitated by huge demographic changes. Aging population in the overdeveloped world requires the importation of young

professionals from the developing areas. Also, ethnic diasporas within national states have grown in size and influence while people from the overdeveloped world increasingly populate developing regions in order to simplify their lives, find the meaning (or thrill) and learn. Ecarmony also develops with the help of expansive multiculturalism. This multiculturalism is based on the need to learn so that persons or groups can prosper and the desire to push the boundaries of the known. Social movements have put an enormous pressure on global organizations to regulate global markets, eliminate the debt of developing nations and to condition economic support by implementation of basic UN documents on human rights. Economic development is seen as important but is also defined in broader terms. Indicators of economic progress are connected with long-term indicators of continuation (indicators for sustainability) and horizontal indicators of stress (indicators for quality of life). Technological development is less spectacular and focused on “softer” technologies.

The main values in Ecarmony are justice, equity, fairness, peace, inner and outer transformation, security, long-term view. The long-term view is valued because previously short-term thinking has almost endangered the survival of humans on the Earth, as consequences of actions were not drawn to their logical conclusions. It was precisely this ecological scare, the awareness of destruction that was almost getting to the point of being irreversible, that led to major changes in people’s consciousness.

While previously the main principle leading societies was that of expansion, in Ecarmony conservation and sustainability is the new norm. Education is given priority as it is understood that without awareness of social and natural processes, interpersonal and group relationships as well as the psychological and physiological processes within the self, humanity cannot prosper. Huge energies are invested in conflict prevention and resolution as peace is seen as the prerequisite for progress. Ethical considerations are also seen as important as it is accepted that they need to be renegotiated among various groups and thus are also seen as a way of enhancing multiculturalism and preventing conflicts. Reproduction, health care and education are “holistic” and reductionist methods of current sciences are used within that context.

The crisis in identity in the overdeveloped world has led to the realisation that individual lives make sense only in the wider context of human and planetary family. Accordingly, the large popularity of global spiritual movements and refocusing of the major religions in accordance

to global lines has occurred. The understanding of human and planetary unity is not lost among some groups in the "developing" world who continue to practice their beliefs now somewhat challenged by the new focus on globality.

Given the previous depth of colonisation and imperialism, poverty alleviation in global Ecarmony is not as fast as most would want. But equally challenging is the reduction in consumption in the overdeveloped world. External measures such as poverty and environment taxes are introduced so as to reduce consumption and create funding for environmental improvements and poverty elimination measures. But the greatest value is placed on awareness and understanding rather than on external measures. Global media is used not only for entertainment but also to facilitate education and change in consciousness. The philosophy of individualism and rationality have taken deep roots in the "west" but organizing in interest groups and social movements based on linking rather than ranking has enabled slow shift towards communal values. The grand debate is on how to prevent the "tyranny of the local community" and reconcile communal and individual values and priorities.

New information technologies have equally contributed to the creation of egalitarian principles, and Ecarmony societies are increasingly organised according to web of network principles. In the areas previously void of new information technologies these are slowly introduced, mostly in community and regional centers rather than solely among more successful individuals.

In Ecarmony, diversity is seen as the leading principle in successful adaptation and survival and both the family and gender are organised in accordance to diversity principles. The expression of multiple-gender identities has replaced previous female-male polarity and has become one way of destabilizing the importance of gender in defining personal roles and functions within society. But although it is acknowledged that various groups have various ethical systems, some ethical principles are no longer being negotiated. These principles are backed by the existence of global governance with multiple regional centers, a sort of Pan-Continental Confederation that comprises nation-states, NGO's, multinational companies, racial, ethnic, cultural and civilisational representatives, work unions, business and various economical strata and interest group representatives. The perspectives of future generations and Gaia are also heard through their present human representatives whose focus is on how certain measures are going to impact their "clients". These various gov-

erning bodies have reached a consensus on basic values that are non-negotiable in Ecarmony.

Control and surveillance are enabled by the development of new technologies and are used to prevent and mitigate natural and human catastrophes. But human privacy is also valued and new technologies are used less in policing the population. The economical diversification is present but the new global tax system prevents the income gap from being higher than 1 to 10. Global democracy has not been reached as more vocal, educated and well-off individuals have more prominent say. But every attempt is being made that the perspective of the "powerless" or "subaltern" is included and their interests taken into account. Cyber-democracy is practiced but is not expected that it can totally replace face-to-face human contact. Parenting and teaching are also assisted with new technologies but again within the "holistic" context.

### *Redefining Global Priorities*

The Globotech scenario is actively "pushed" by global business, military and the state sector. Alternatives to western and patriarchal colonisation of the future have been developed within the women's movement, feminist theory and practice, and by non-western theorists and grass roots movements. These "dissenting" futures lean toward the Ecarmony model.

As compared to the Globotech scenario, Ecarmony is life maintenance rather than life destruction oriented. Therefore it has the highest potentials to sustain life. The argument that Globotech scenario can eventually "liberate" and "save" our species is not without ground. The poverty resulting from population explosion combined with unequal distribution of global resources can be diminished by the usage of genetically modified crops. Global diseases can be wiped out with the achievements of medical sciences. The attack on "Spaceship Earth" from outer space can be warded off with the use of nuclear and laser weaponry. Eventually, even without ecological catastrophes (though in millions years from now) the Earth and the Sun will stop providing "renewable" energies.

However without the changes in relationships among nations, cultures, and genders new technological and medical achievements will continue to provide benefits for the chosen few. We will still have the situation in which thousands of children die every year from diarrhoea and other medically treated diseases, or hunger and other poverty related causes of

death. In the situation where hundreds of life species are destroyed on Earth yearly, conservationist principles rather than expansionist principles are more urgently required. The global society that has the highest long-term advantage to sustain life needs to balance conservation and expansion principle. However, expansionism has been the guiding principle within western societies for several hundred years, it has recently become the global principle and is at the point of having an irreversible ecologically destructive consequences. Therefore, conservationist principles need to be given higher priority until the conditions are created for balance to be restored.

Mainstream images of future dangers (and possibilities) pushed by global media industry desire us to believe that the main danger for humans is from outside. Humans thus need to mobilise to attack "the Other". New technologies and science are our new Messiah and consequently the main human activity in the future will be to wage wars against old and new enemies (cyborgs, mutants, aliens, other planets or asteroids). Globalization from above is based on such view of the future where the fittest, the smartest and the shrewd survive. It is also based on a philosophy that requires expansion, control, relationships of domination and subordination, commodification and utilisation of "the Other" and Nature.

But it is increasingly recognised that the main danger for humans is currently coming from within and that if conservationist principles and values do not become guiding principles governing "globalization", there will be less and less life on Earth to be "saved" or "exported". Currently, the globalization of capitalism is leading to the extinction of numerous animal and plant species each year. Environmental scientists warn us that if current trends continue humans will themselves soon become "the endangered species". No matter how artificial we create our societies, it is obvious that we cannot (as yet) deny the reality of our biological bodies. And it is also obvious that if we do not change our social relationships (among nations, genders, ideological groups and so on), it will be very difficult to prevent global annihilation and self-destruction.

### *Creating a Global Gentle Society*

There is no alternative to the vision of one global world. Thinking globally and acting locally has to be expanded to include actions at the global level as well. The discourse of globalization has the power to suppress critical perspective and prevent pro-active positive actions if it fo-

cuses on globalization's overwhelming nature. Therefore globalization needs to be understood in terms of being governed by various social groups and as composed of various smaller scale processes. The social transformation towards Ecarmony scenario requires much more than the continuation towards Globotech (which means a continuation of "business as usual"). Resistance toward the Globotech model is real though dispersed and sporadic. Humanity does not lack utopias but it does need the willingness for positive change that will include more altruism and less individualism as well as understanding of mechanisms that will enable positive change, and the realisation of global eutopian society. If we are ready to become co-creators of the evolution, responsible for altering nature and our biological selves, we also need to take the responsibility and learn from the nature how to sustain the creation. This can only be possible within a global "gentle society", one that is committed to the slow but steady, long-term oriented change, and to the gentle evolution of our societies and ourselves.

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