

About Meso-Level Dimensions of Globalization

Endre Kiss, Budapest-Székesfehérvár

Member of the Hungarian Chapter of the Club of Rome

The present system, the whole and differentiated form of globalization is not the same as what is often – on purpose, but often without any purpose – being called the globalization of economy. A collection of examples from common language, where the 'interpretation' of globalization: 'economy becoming international' is being fit to the idea of globalization or some of its equivalents as an 'interpreting' category of descriptive linguistics, could make a stand as a document of economical history, or even as a history of everyday thinking.

The present, differentiated form of globalization is by no means to be identified with the globalization of economy, although economy, mainly and relevantly the globalization of capital movements is of course of an outstanding importance among globalized systems. For a little bit more abstract examination it could be a central question, how do other globalized systems acquire 'capital-like' characteristics, how they start to be similar to the original capital in the economic sense.

A qualitative difference can be shown between ideas of globalization restricted to economy and more extensive ones (which still take economy as a basis). In this difference, the special relationship between the sub-systems of politics and economy manifesting itself in the history of societies as well as in each concrete social segment, appears with a classical clarity. While each sub-system (in a strictly system-theoretical sense) manifests itself in its coherent and independent logic, which excludes principles of other systems, the interweaving and mutual determination of these two sub-systems is so strong, that none of these sub-systems can describe society alone, in its clear, system-theoretically legitimate way.

The era of globalization opens a new chapter of this very old paradox.

First, by interpreting general globalization of huge systems as the globalization of 'economy', the basic phenomenon itself is being critically simplified. Second, now getting to the sphere of economics for real, the relationship of 'politics' and 'economy' is often being considered as if general relations of globalization, or specific characteristics specifying and manifesting the basic relations of globalization wouldn't have basically changed the whole system of relations binding politics and economy together. It's especially important to be constantly aware of the specific relationship of the political and economical sub-system among the relations of globalization, because on the the medium level of globalization's present structures, which is the main subject of our analysis,

we're supposed to show as a result the system-like and system-level degradation of politics as a sub-system.

The problem of the duality of politics and economy can also make a typical example for showing the new qualities of globalization on it. If namely, we examine the present's objective complexes determined by globalization solely from one (political) or the other (economical) starting point, we probably can't show up anything unprecedented at the end of our analysis.

We make the present time's new contents – *determined by globalization* – looking from separate perspectives of these two systems – an object of a past, *pre-globalization* reconstruction. Instead of a new language and conceptuality of the multiple pervasions of the two systems, and their gradation into one another evolving in globalization, choosing one sub-system as an exclusive starting point makes the language of an exceeded normality valid (gültig). This new incommensurable reference of economy and politics to one another before the horizon of globalization's relations gives us a chance to describe new structures of globalization. But the description of this same new system (and that's where the essence of the paradox element outlined above can be apprehended) could by no means be used in case of starting solely from any of the two sub-systems. If we describe globalization from the side of economy's sub-system, we shall hardly find any significantly unprecedented, dramatically new element. We may expect the same if we start from the side of the political sub-system alone; normality will exceed over extraordinary and unique in this case too. Both of these starts, unlike decisively new descriptions of globalization, stick to theoretical conditionings of the near past, which in both cases leads to significant conceptual narrowing. Theoretical perception of defining new contents may fail to come about.

If we examine new structures of globalization e. g. with traditional political terminology, we come not just to an image of a normality simply to be achieved in the political sub-system, but straight to one of an idyllic normality, to the same image by the way, which has been developed so often in the early nineties, by a simplified interpretation of Francis *Fukuyama's* famous theory: about the victory of liberal values, the world-wide victory of democratic structure, and its extension switched on extraordinarily new energy. A view of the globalizing world starting solely from the economical sub-system may not be so idyllic, but similar in its direction and nature, as beside the fact of globalization itself (and other facts tightly connected with it), all details of economy and globalization seem to be describable with the language of normality, as there has always been unemployment, inequality, center-periphery-problem or economical cyclicality.

A specific reconstruction, if we like, the social philosophy or social theory of globalization, on the three levels of main approaches, shows three different images, which of course can be unified from a well-chosen, higher point of view.

Globalization – obviously – can be described most organically as a *macro-theory*. Here, of our interpretations so far, we would only emphasize, that our standard definition of globalization is *a critical magnitude of huge functional systems (in the Luhmannian sense) becoming global*.

Although the previous definition of course can't be considered eventual or exhaustive, but of course, every word is equally important in it. It's crucial that functional systems globalize, so first and mainly capital, but as we've already referred to it, the globalization of capital, economy becoming international is still not a sufficient basic phenomenon of the globalization of our time. It's crucial that a critical magnitude of extensive functional systems should globalize in order to pronounce a whole state of the world global. A critical magnitude can't be defined in a school way, according to previous or external criteria, but of course, presuming a critical range or measure takes more than a guess. As globalization means global functioning, in a certain sense, the experience of global functioning itself can be the criterion. So the nuclear catastrophe at Tshernobil, Perestroika, or the financial crisis in Mexico could have made the globalization of a critical magnitude of extensive functional systems an everyday experience already. But not everything is global, which is international or global in a balanced and evenly sparse way. Only *system-character* and *real functioning* make a phenomenon or institute – even a most international one – global. Globalization put this way has a history of its own, not simple or short at all. The examination of this, as an actual real process proves that globalization put this way has no metaphysically predestined specification or realization. In another way, however highly structured and interpretable form globalization may take, none of the highly structured forms could be considered to be without an alternative.

On the level of the macro-theory, globalization in its actual highly differentiated form is called *monetarism*.

The legitimation of using this name has been done at another place, and we're aware of other meanings of this notion the same way as a certain optionality of what to call a highly developed actual state of a global structure. A felicitous element of this name is a direct reference to the outstanding significance of money circulation, which refers to the amount of money, or this way indirectly also to the problem of e.g. state debt. Of course, the idea is not the same as the theory of an economical school of the same name.

The *micro-theory* of globalization has also become reconstructable by these days. But before everyone could directly sense and interpret the micro-world of globalization without any obstacle, one can acquire models and schemes which make this well-known micro-world recognizable *as the micro-world of globalization* only through a sovereign possessing of a reconstruction of macro – and medium level.

The middle, *medium sphere* takes an exclusive position in the theoretical reconstruction of globalization. This exclusive position is not solely of a theoretical origin, as it's obvious that because of its essential definiteness, globalization needs a macro-theoretical explanation most of all. But medium sphere doesn't only show a new side of the phenomenon of globalization, but it shows a *most relevant* new side of it, as this is the level where the new world of globalization faces society, which doesn't (or doesn't only) exist in the network of huge functional systems, but also in the historical and at the same time actual boundaries of *values, contracts and tradition*. As we named the globalization of a certain critical magnitude of functional systems the most basic definition of globalization, the most dramatic confrontation takes place at the medium-sphere. That's where *functional* and *non-functional* spheres meet, that's where these two spheres grow into one another like cog-wheels.

To the medium sphere of globalization belongs also the problem of globalization as a *learning process*, a problem exciting and independent even on its own. One component of this learning process is dejection, moreover disapproval showing up in several social surroundings, by which a definite part of society gets down to treating these processes. This attitude we witnessed in the past decade multiple times, could be compared to classical mental resistance. This resistance can be explained by facts and connections reviewed so far: microsphere's set of facts being immediate and incommensurable with globalization, the difficulty of macro-interpretation, abstract and in need of a professional task so far, and third, obvious possibilities, by which even the most specific new characteristics of the middle-sphere of globalization could (seemingly) be explained with traditional principles and ideas. From the perspective of the learning process this means, globalization can be rejected first on a ground that it doesn't require any radical break-up with the contents of everyday life or actual consciousness, or it's right the enduring of traditional structures and organizations that means ideological or objective balance contrary to the new contents of globalization. Confusing in language or discourse the whole process of globalization and one of its details not once almost conspicuously particular and random, appears as a new problem. So today, we can read inquiries about the 'globalized woman', some of which discuss the relation between feminism and globalization in connection of the low wages of globalizing production going on at periferical premises. This phenomenon is a problem, even if the underlined connection apprehends a

totally legitimate and correct fact. The severing duplication of total and particular use of language can also be shown in a case when they call statements anti-globalization ones, which stand on the ground of globalization's theoretical and practical acceptance with perfect unambiguity, but within that they formulate a negative point of view in some concrete connection of globalization. That's how a political measure of the United States can be called 'anti-globalization' in a way that only the existence of globalization created a ground to bring or not to bring the whole decision.

The process of understanding globalization is a sophisticated intellectual task; it's like the way Niklas Luhmann defined the functions of each sub-system of intellectual understanding, and that is simplifying the complexity of contents and thus making their building into social practice possible. At the end of this process of understanding will appear some mimetic variant of globalization, the 'image' of globalization in a particular mind. On this trace is the understanding of globalization linked to the great problem-cycle of information society. First, information society itself is global, because of the today structure of communication and spreading of information, and at the same time – and of course eventually – also of a mimetic nature itself.

The processes of understanding globalization, the multiple interweaving of this problem with the problem-cycle of information society takes us directly to the problem of *simulacrum-simulation* or *virtuality*, as while globalization or information society can be totally legitimately defined by the definite forging-ahead of simulation, symbolical figures, signs and virtual phenomena, we must draw the attention also to the fact that the dynamical accomplishment of globalization and information society tightly interwoven with it on several traces is also the reason and origin of all these phenomena.

The form of globalization's topical specification is the system called monetarism. The most important medium-level characteristics of this 'state of the world', this dynamic structure can change of course, according to the interwoven symbiosis of functional systems and societies based on values, contracts, and tradition, as these are not unalterable necessities, as neither are macro-level actualizations of globalization. This medium-level characteristics are at the same time important components of the new reality of the past decade, but of course they don't get into our field of vision as their direct or concrete actualities, but as the medium-level crystallizing points, as crucial phenomena of globalization. Their reconstruction is a necessary, maybe decisive element of the argument, which is for many, still about whether there is globalization at all, and if there is, how can it be described.

The most important one of these medium-level new characteristics is the devaluation of politics as a sub-system, in connection of the functional systems of globalization. By this, we've turned back to the preface of our inquiry, to the already paradox systematic relation of economy and politics, or to *this special relation becoming incredibly special in the age of globalization*.

The thesis can of course only show a relative devaluation of politics as an autonomous sub-system, which is at an advanced stage as a process of the medium-level of globalization. This process came into being neither unconditionally nor according to metaphysical suggestions; it doesn't stick to the phenomenon of globalization with unconditional necessity, but it's in a close connection with its monetarist form. This can be sufficiently illustrated by a today widespread argument about the possibility of a '*world government*'. In principle, it's by all means sufficient to raise, that in case of a possible functioning of a world government we could by no means talk about the effect of globalization aiming the devaluation of the political sub-system.

Globalization in general has a new role different from previous ones, as it took the direction of economy, functional systems and great real processes out of the hands of politics, while their control would still behove politics today, based on contract-theories as well as on other basic theories of representative democracy. A deep-reaching task comes from this, one not only prescribed for professional politics or politically active intellectuals: rethinking and partial re-evaluation of the whole view of the political sphere.

All significant notions of political philosophy and political practice went for the era and situation, when the political sub-system had an obviously supreme and integrating role. What shall we do with contract-theories or human rights in a situation where they although get no challenge within the political sub-system, but at the same time, in cases of actual realtions within the relations of globalization-monetarism that can't be made morally or politically responsible (of which functional origins we've referred to, at the preface of our paper), homelessness or unemployment, they get violated most apparently. Although the Yugoslavian war had not yet been broken out at the time of elaborating the thesis of our paper, we believe we still have the right to point out the interpretation of human rights interpreted and instrumentalized here, as a phenomenon which uses these rights *in a negative and positive way* at the same time within the frames of globalization, and this sufficiently demonstrates the relative devaluation of political sub-system within the relations of globalization.

Globalization-monetarism at a medium-level puts basic political principles and values remaining intact within the political sub-system itself between special frames, and it questions them in a new way.

In the new situation it's not the only outstandingly new element that a – within its system – invulnerable and intact political system, at the same time trustee of the final direction and leading of human society doesn't control global processes, but more is the fact that the devaluation of this sub-system happens in a new way and as a result of new motives. Thus theoretical recognition must be immediately followed by a recognition of the fact that at the moment there's a principal and practical inaccessibility concerning the correction of this situation.

The relative devaluation of political sub-system leads to revealing specific new archeological and therefore hidden dimensions. Who would have thought that Marxism, getting to its critical decline in the seventies and eighties, still carried a respectable magnitude of civilisatorical-utopical potentials in itself? It only revealed as this Marxism eventually fell for ever. Who would have thought that the frames of nation-states carried the functions of a social state so naturally and unexpounded, that by their historical wavering also the future of the institutional bearer of social politics became strongly questioned? On this analogy, looking back at the near past, paying attention to the present, forecasting the future, we can draw up, there can be hidden and archeological dimensions revealed even for politics, of which existence we would hardly even think of. Thus the relative devaluation of the political sub-system has already shown it so far, that the devaluation of politics is at the same time the devaluation of 'society' at evolving the most important connections, moreover, the devaluation of politics can even lead to the devaluation of man. All this can justify, how can dimensions of politics – which remain hidden in case the sub-system goes on normally – come to the surface, , but in case of a (relative) devaluation of the sub-system they can be outlined as hidden, coded, 'tacit' functions.

In the highly-structured system of globalization-monetarism we could point out several causal phases which all play a role in the relative devaluation of the political sub-system discussed above. Of these, we would emphasize the state running into debts, partly because it's the most expressive factor, partly because it's a factor of highest practical significance. Representative democracy changes its political elite according to free elections, but as the result of the elections, these elites still always gain the power above the state, the operation of the state, bound to definite conditions. But a state running into debts because of globalization-monetarism can not be operated, or can only be operated partially, so the elites gaining power by legitimate elections practically can't fulfil their democratically made promises because of the state running into debts. That's how the devaluation of the political sub-system is being constantly reproduced in the age of globalization-monetarism.

The impoverishment of a state that had reached a certain level of civilization is critically taboo-breaking even if neither the state itself, nor the theoretician who

describes phenomena stands by the point of view of the social state unconditionally, in a doctrinaire way. As the state critically running into debts is not a problem of 'welfare' any more, but a problem of 'human rights', and thus, at the end of the description of the cycle we came to the starting point of the cycle again. It's the basic values of the political system which inescapably suffer damage during the activity of a state run into debts.

Of course, the relations of globalization-monetarism don't only act towards the relative devaluation of the political sub-system through the problem of a state running into debts. In the circulations of globalization, even fundamental and – within the immanence of political sub-system unattackable – basic values get damaged, like human rights, or they become literally relative in a new way, like civil society. From the aspect of judging Pinochet, the ex-president of Chile, there are *two* civil societies nowadays, one for the ex-dictator, the other one against him. And in the post-socialist sphere, there is a possibility of the winners of the gradation making up a civil society opposed to the losers of the gradation, as it's plausible among the circumstances given, that the losers wouldn't even have the strenght for this.

The relative devaluation of the political sphere – contrary to reasonable but naive possible expectations aiming this – won't free society from at least the usual influence, possible repressivity of the state. As another, also defining result of globalization-monetarism is the fact that economy and several other sub-systems can get around (the otherwise impoverished) state. So while on one side, the impoverished state at the medium-level of globalization won't be able to control a row of sub-systems any more, on the other side, it can expend all of its energy on controlling the ones it can't help at their existence or reproduction figured at the level of civilization.