

Keynote, World Futures Studies Federation 40th anniversary, Bucuresti:

Future studies, like peace-development-environment studies, is an inter-disciplinary, inter-national effort to get a grip on key issues; divided into preferred futures--utopias--whose?; predicted futures--forecasting--who does it for whom?; and future practice--scenarios bending the predicted toward the preferred--by and for whom?

The title of Ravi Morey's Looking Backward: 2050-2013 catches future studies in a nutshell: exploring intermediate stages between a fully democratic world government and our 2013 present. The road may pass through a bankrupt USA bailed out by a democratic China in 2025. Some may argue that is already happening, with China--more democratic than the West knows--being creditor No. 1, and the USA--more bankrupt than the USA admits--debtor No. 1; Nos. 1 and 190 among 190 countries.

Like in 1967, in Oslo, for the predecessor organization Mankind 2000 this keynote is on international futures. Preferred futures:

* Economically: A Living Wage for everybody on earth, eliminating misery, an end to flagrant inequality, and a new economics, focused on the reproduction of human beings and nature; not on book-keeping writ large and capital-driven markets. Let it die, maybe by euthanasia.

* Militarily: A change from winning-victory orientation to solution-orientation for the underlying conflicts, by mediation-dialogues for conflict resolution, trauma reconciliation, empathy with the world views of others, building cooperation for mutual and equal benefit.

* Politically: A high level of autonomy for local authorities, for the 2000 nations inside the 200 states, for states, for regions, for the global level; through federations and confederations-communities.

* Culturally: A multi-cultural world with Western-marxist, Islamic, Buddhist, Japanese, Chinese, Polynesian, Ubuntu development models on par with Western neo-liberal; for humanity to pick the best from them all.

Too much for 40 years? No: 40 years accelerated history gave us:

- * economically: an ever increasing flow of goods at ever lower prices--not services where time serving each other may add to money changing hands--the emerging BRICS++ economies, the declining West;
- * militarily: inter-state wars decreasing; the end of the bipolar Cold War via a short unipolar period with one superpower to a multi-polar (octagonal?) world with poles like Latin America, USA, Russia, India, China, OIC (Islamic), EU, Africa as potential peace communities;
- * politically: the transition of Spain and Portugal to democracy, the fall of the wall around West Berlin, the end of communist dictatorship and the Soviet Empire, the end of apartheid in South Africa;
- * culturally: the much maligned and misunderstood anti-Confucian cultural revolution in China liberating hundreds of millions, women, the young, the rural and West China people, paving the way for lifting close to 400 million from misery to lower middle class 1991-2004;
- * socially: the feminist revolution, a gift from USA; the incredible improvement of our health making 90 years quite healthy life normal--and for couples 60-70 years together!--non-smoking being a key factor.

We live in somebody's utopia. But much of it came as surprises from the people. Forecasting may be good at trends, bad at events. Extrapolation is insufficient, a deep understanding of the "system as a whole"--holism--and contradictions--dialectics, tipping points, in short 2,500 years taoist epistemology, is indispensable. Failing to do so Western life becomes very dramatic: one 9/11 after the other.

A way out: in 1970 9,000 in 10 countries were interviewed about their Images of the World in the Year 2000ⁱ. The more economically developed the country, the more pessimistic their images: environment problems. inequality, breakdown of families, violence. Maybe common people know where the shoe pinches and elites not?--their predictions when Year 2000

came were by far superior to the experts.

So, what is the forecast for the coming 40 years? There are positive and negative points to be made, good and bad news, as usual:

* Economically, the end of socialism followed by the end of capitalism killing 140,000 daily with intolerable inequality, leading to major revolts and violence in many countries, or to something worse: apathy;

* Militarily, the decline of the state and patriotism, the rise of repressed nations and nationalism, increasing terrorism, state/non-state (9/11 being one), from 2000 nations wanting a place in the sun, the decline of the US empire, the rise of US global and domestic fascism, an increase in mediation and nonviolence in general;

* Politically, more multi-party national elections with more party-ocracy, bank-ocracy, techn-ocracy, auto-crazy, corruption, widening circles of mutual benefit but with increasing inequality;

* Culturally, decline of Western Christian-secular culture and rise of Islam and conflict between those two universalizing world-views.

Thus, the prospects for "peace with our futures" is mixed. But:

Surf on positive trends: the search for alternative economies, the decline of the state system and the US empire, increasing use of mediation and nonviolence, widening circles of mutual rights and obligations, the decline of Western arrogance.

Fight inequality, boycott companies with CEOs making more than 5-10 times the workers, switch to cooperatives, transfer accounts to savings banks, introduce a sales tax of 5% for financial transactions to finance a living wage and to put a brake on insane speculation, increase the quantity and quality of mediation and nonviolence all over, fight for democracy with transparency, dialogue, petitions, referenda, pick the best from world views, both-and, not either-or.

Islam offers togetherness and sharing needed in the West, West offers diversity and freedom needed in Islam; go for mutual learning.

Those who surf and fight will rise. The others will sink.

i. Ornauer, Sicinski, Wiberg, Galtung, Paris: Mouton, 1976.