

Visions of Transmodernity: A New Renaissance of our Human History?

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Abstract: In this paper I will engage with a broad range of literature that provides us with many signals and evidence of an emerging and significant paradigm shift in human evolution. In doing so, I will offer the concept of transmodernity as an umbrella term that connotes the emerging socio-cultural, economic, political and philosophical shift. My research across boundaries of many different fields such as critical economics, philosophy, subaltern and postcolonial studies, social anthropology and psychology, cultural studies, political science and social activism literature will illustrate how an integrated approach and dialogue is urgently needed, indeed more than ever before. Different authors use a variety of terms to capture what can essentially be described as the synchronised phenomenon of emerging higher collective consciousness—transmodernity paradigm (Ghisi); transmodern philosophy of political liberation (Dussel); Hegelian dialectical triad of thesis, antithesis and synthesis (Magda); the reflective/living-systems paradigm (Elgin); the partnership model of caring economics (Eisler); the relational global consciousness of biosphere politics (Rifkin); love ethics (hooks); the circularity paradigm of interdependence (Steinem). With a reference to a variety of authors I will argue that the reason we do not hear much about this movement is because it is not centralised and coordinated under a single unifying name. 'Transmodernity' ropes together many concepts/tenets of other writings that do not necessarily use the same term, but I chose it in order to communicate the overall idea of the emerging paradigm shift as the next cultural and material development in human history. I have opted to use the concept as a medium to convey humanity's unified synchronicity, which is part of a transformation that can be claimed to be 'the new renaissance' of human history.

Keywords: Comparative analysis, dialogue, integrated approach, paradigm shift, new renaissance, transmodernity

Introduction

Dreams require optimism, a sense that one's hopes can be fulfilled.
(Rifkin, 2005, p. 384)

This paper sets its sight on hopeful, positive perspectives in the context of the post- 9/11 world, which has climaxed in a global crisis of wars, terrorism, climate change, over-

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consumerism, increasing gaps between the rich and poor, social alienation, and individual feelings of pressure, anxieties, chaos and powerlessness world-wide. These processes have raised a whole range of futurist scenarios from the 'softer' questions of environmental sustainability to the radical argument that humanity is in danger of collective death (e.g. Brown, 2006; Ghisi, 2006; Rooney, Hearn & Ninan, 2005). The questions of (the earth's) sustainability that have penetrated public discourse only in the last two decades are speeding ahead faster than we can comprehend. The problem is that we still frame it within the existing (modern) economic and political framework which continues to use rationality, money and technology as the most dominant measurements of progress and human development. Reflectively, social scientists, economists, political activists, writers, spiritual leaders and many successful entrepreneurs argue that humanity needs (and is actually going through) a major global mind change and paradigm shift.

In arguing so, I present here my transdisciplinary research, which begun in 2005 when I heard for the first time about the major cultural transformation—a global shift of consciousness, values, worldviews, and paradigms, which is spearheaded by a growing section of society world-wide. While the reviewed works propose a number of different concepts, some authors—the most influential of which are Marc Luyckx Ghisi and Enrique Dussel - link the phenomena of social change they describe to the notion of transmodernity, a term that was first coined by the Spanish philosopher and feminist Rosa Maria Rodriguez Magda in her essay *La Sonrisa de Saturno: Hacia una teoria transmoderna* (1989), albeit in a more philosophical sense referring to general consequences of globalisation.

My motivation in writing this paper is to propose to use the concept of transmodernity as an umbrella term that connotes the emerging socio-cultural, economic, political and philosophical shift. I suggest this merger not as a theoretical exercise, but out of heartfelt sympathy with the shift, and a genuine conviction that in order to be visible, effective and compelling, any movement needs a unifying name (Eisler, 2002). I will take the elaboration of the concept of transmodernity as given by Ghisi (2001, 2006, 2008) as a starting point. However, in recognition that most of the works I review here are written by Europeans/Americans, I also looked at the opinions of postcolonial and subaltern writers who similarly offer a positive view of the transmodern world potentialities. Here, transmodern ideas are primarily advocated by the Argentinean philosopher and historian Enrique Dussel. In sketching Ghisi's and Dussel's main ideas, I need to alert the reader that I will present them as given, so the general picture of their notions of the concept of transmodernity is obtained. In order to avoid the trap of the post-modern deconstruction process which Rifkin (2005) claims brought us to "modernity reduced to intellectual rubble and an anarchic world where everyone's story is equally compelling and worthy of recognition" (p. 5), I am tracing the commonalities of what transmodernity offers in this fresh and promising move towards a new era of humanity. However, within the constraints of this paper, I am also acutely aware that my discussion will remain at the level of the general overview, which always runs the risk of oversimplifying many complex aspects that will be displayed here.

My review of Ghisi's and Dussel's position is followed by reference to other writings in the fields of critical economics, social anthropology and psychology, cultural studies, political science and social activism literature, that seem to be concerned with similarly transmodern

phenomena, but without labelling them as such. These writings communicate a similar idea of an emerging paradigm shift as the next cultural and material development in human (although dominantly Western) history. Hence, I have opted to use the concept of transmodernity as a medium to convey what appears to be a single message: “Humanity finds itself, once again, at a crossroad between a dying old order and the rise of a new age” (Rifkin, 2005, p. 181).

Transmodernity: The Dialectic Triad

The concept of transmodernity is a very complex thesis which Ghisi (1999, 2006, 2008) primarily explains as a new paradigm of the world which communicates certain underlying values that humans rely on to make their judgments and decisions in all areas of their activities—economy, politics and everyday life. Ghisi begins his thesis with an overview of five levels of change, which he describes through an iceberg metaphor of human global (un)consciousness and (un)awareness. Like the submerged parts of an iceberg floating in the sea, Ghisi’s lower levels of societal change are the least visible to humanity. So, the first level is at the darkest and coldest bottom where our global civilization finds itself today, at the edge of unsustainability and what Ghisi describes as the slow death and collective suicide of humanity. The next higher level relates to the death of command, control and conquest patriarchal values which have turned the world into a competitive and territorial battleground. Level three refers to the death of modernity as a dominant paradigm through which we see the world as an objective reality rooted in impartial truth. Level four refers to the death of the industrial type of businesses and decline of the material economy, while level five concerns the overall crisis of overly bureaucratic and pyramidal institutions. While such critical deconstruction of Eurocentric thesis of modernity (based around key mantras of growth, progress and competition) is nothing new and has been very much part of the postmodern critical turn in social science and humanities since late 1980s, Ghisi continues to explain, a transmodern way of thinking is now emerging, as our hope for a desperately needed and newly reconstructed vision. It is claimed that the everything goes of the postmodernists needs to go silenced. Whether they like it or not, there are things that have to have value, there is meaning that must be preserved, otherwise we drown in the coarsest cynicism, an expression of deep disdain for life (Boff, 2009). After the endless postmodern (albeit necessary) deconstructions of modernity in which many intellectuals engaged for the last few decades have led us to eclectic relativity and fundamentalisms that in many ways has paralysed us to claim any possible way forward. The postmodern rubble in which we have found ourselves is quite neatly captured by Rifkin (2005):

If post-modernists razed the ideological walls of modernity and freed the prisoners, they left them with no particular place to go. We became existential nomads, wandering through a boundaryless world full of inchoate longings in a desperate search for something to be attached to and believe in. While the human spirit was freed up from old categories of thought, we are each forced to find our own paths in a chaotic and fragmented world that is even more dangerous than the all-encompassing one we left behind. (p. 5).

According to Ghisi then, the very concept of *transmodern* implies that the best of modernity is kept while at the same time we go beyond it. As such, it is not a linear projection which takes us from (pre)modernity via postmodernity to transmodernity; rather, it transcends modernity in

that it takes us trans, i.e. through, modernity into another state of being, “from the edge of chaos into a new order of society” (Sardar, 2004, p. 2).

This argument very much reflects the original meaning of the term as put forward by Magda (1989), who uses Hegelian logic whereby Modernity, Postmodernity and Transmodernity form a dialectic triad that completes a process of thesis, antithesis and synthesis. As expressed in her own words: “the third tends to preserve the defining impetus of the first yet is devoid of its underlying base: by integrating its negation the third moment reaches a type of specular closure” (Magda, 1989, p. 13). In other words, transmodernity is critical of modernity and postmodernity while at the same time drawing elements from each. In a way it is a return to some form of absolute logic that goes beyond the Western ideology and tries to connect the human race to a new shared story, which can be called a *global relational consciousness* (Rifkin, 2005).

Following Magda (1989, 2001, 2004), the notion of transmodernity appears first in Dussel’s (1995, 1996, 2002, 2004, 2006) and then in Ghisi’s work (1999, 2001, 2006, 2007, 2008). Possibly, the fact that most of the earlier publications by Magda and Dussel are in Spanish may explain “transmodernism’s ‘newness’ in the North” (Cole, 2005, p. 90). However, both Ghisi and Dussel seem to use the term without reference (and awareness) to Magda’s or each other’s writings, which suggests that the term was actually coined in synchronous fashion. While there are many similarities in the works of Ghisi and Dussel, the authors also differ on several points. I will now briefly highlight and compare the main tenets of ‘transmodernity’ as given by Ghisi and Dussel.

Transmodernity - the Main Tenets

Transmodernity can generally be characterized by optimism to provide hope for human race. Ghisi (1999, 2001, 2006, 2007, 2008) describes transmodernity as a *planetary vision* in which humans are beginning to realize that we are all (including plants and animals) connected into one system, which makes us all interdependent, vulnerable and responsible for the Earth as an indivisible living community³. In that sense this paradigm is actively tolerant and genuinely democratic by definition, as the awareness of mutual interdependency grows and the hierarchies between different cultures dismantle.

Transmodernity is also essentially *postpatriarchal* in a sense that women’s visions and intuitions are to be recognized as indispensable in order to invent together innovative urgent solutions. This is radically different from the (preceding and necessary) (post)modern feminist movements that fight for women’s rights only. Rather it is about a joint effort of men and women to fight for the better world of tomorrow by rejecting values of control and domination.

It is also essentially *postsecular* in a sense that redefines a new relation between religions and politics in a way that re-enchants the world towards a new openness to spiritual awareness and presence as a basis for private behaviour and public policy, whilst rejecting any religious divisions and dogmas. It is open to the transcendental, while resisting any authoritarian imposition of religious certainty. In doing so it tries to rediscover the *sacred* as a dimension of life and of our societies.

Transmodernity opposes the endless economic progress and obsession with material wealth and instead promotes the concept of *quality of life* as the measure of progress. This is expressed in the form of the knowledge economy which moves the emphasis from material capital to intangible assets and the nourishment of human potential. It challenges the rationalized notions of work in its artificial divorce from life. It combines rationalism with intuitive brainwork.

It moves away from vertical authority toward “flatter,” more “horizontal,” organizations; away from “recommendations-up-orders-down” management and toward more *consensual decision-making* (Ghisi, 1999, p.3). It downsizes the concept of clergy, technocrats and experts in order to raise the self-awareness, self-knowledge and individual accountability of all, yet it simultaneously uses the modernist achievements of science, technology and social innovation. It promotes *Earth citizenship* and draws from the highest potentials of humanity. It redefines the relation between science, ethics and society to reach for real and radical *transdisciplinarity*.

Yet it is not a uniforming view as *global reconciliation* around a sustainable future and a broad range of cultural diversity is maintained at the same time. Within the global vision of connected humanity it claims that each community or region needs to be free to develop in ways that are uniquely suited to its culture, ecology, climate and other characteristics. It wants us to see that the danger of today is less between cultures and religions, than the conflict *between* different paradigms (Ghisi, 1999). As such it offers a powerful path to peace and a new platform of dialogue between world cultures.

In developing the concept of transmodernity, Ghisi (1999) speaks from the capacity of a Belgian theologian, philosopher and researcher on global cultural transformation who worked in the *Forward Studies Unit* of the European Commission for 10 years, advising presidents Delors and Santer on EU visions, ethics and culture shifts. Dussel (1995), on the other hand, speaks from the Latin American, postcolonial neo-Marxist perspective, and associates transmodernity with his philosophy of liberation. Needless to say, while there are many similarities, Dussel’s perspective on transmodernity is somewhat different from Ghisi’s admittedly Eurocentric perspective. While Ghisi departs from a point of mostly Western socio-cultural and historical analysis, Dussel and his followers take epistemological, philosophical and political aspects of transmodernity as a starting point to unsettle Eurocentric coloniality. Dussel sees the potentiality in transmodernity to move us beyond traditional dichotomies; to articulate a critical cosmopolitanism beyond nationalism and colonialism; to produce knowledge beyond third world and Eurocentric fundamentalisms; to produce radical post-capitalist politics beyond identity politics; to overcome the traditional dichotomy between the political economy and cultural studies; and to move beyond economic reductionism and culturalism (Grosfoguel et al., 2007).

Dussel, just like Ghisi, is concerned about the destructive forces of modernity that are destroying the planet and along with it humankind: “The three malaises of modernity (individualism, the primacy of instrumental reason or technological capitalism, and the despotism of the system), produce a ‘loss of meaning’, an ‘eclipse of ends’, and a ‘loss of freedom’ in bureaucratized societies” (Dussel, 1996, p. 142), and the capitalistic emphasis on “profit, private appropriations and personal benefits” (Dussel, 2006, p. 491) needs to be replaced with transmodern planetary interconnectedness and mutuality.

While Ghisi (1999) concerns himself, as we have seen above, mainly with describing the characteristics of the paradigm shift, Dussel's (2009) central argument revolves around the role of intercultural dialogue in bringing about and defining the shift towards transmodernity. Granted, Ghisi does note certain underlying forces that he considers are driving transmodern changes, among them the inability of reductionist capitalism to respond effectively to increasingly challenging global problems, and the transition from an industrial to a spiritual, wisdom economy. However, for Dussel, genuine dialogue across all cultures is needed in order for transmodernity to transcend Eurocentrism. Let me clarify that Ghisi (1999) also sees intercultural dialogue as central to transmodernity, however, it seems as though to him it is an aspect, rather than the driving force of the transmodern paradigm shift, as it is for Dussel.

In order to understand this claim, it is necessary to briefly outline Dussel's preceding argument: In his revealing historical analysis (see Dussel, 1996), he locates the origins of modernity in the Iberian peninsula, starting with the invasion of the Americas from 1492, which resulted in Europe being able to place itself at the centre, while the rest of the world became a periphery. However, he also shows later (2002, 2004) that it was not until the Industrial Revolution that Europe gained a relative advantage large enough to exert its hegemony over other highly developed cultures of the time—such as China and Hindustan (Dussel, 2002). Given this relatively short timeframe of only 200 years, he continues, European hegemony was unable to fully suppress most of the value structures of ancient cultures, like the Chinese and cultures of the Far East, the Hindustani, the Islamic, the Russian-Byzantine, and Latin American cultures (2002, 2004).

According to Dussel, these ancient cultures hold “enough human potential to give birth to a cultural plurality that will emerge after modernity and capitalism” (2002, p. 234), and that they are presently reaffirming their roots in a trans-modern cultural response to our contemporary challenges (2004). Moreover, he argues that this same process of self-affirmation is taking place in regional European cultures (such as the Galician, Catalan, Basque, and Andalusian cultures in Spain; the Mezzogiorno in Italy; the Bavarians in Germany; and the Scottish, Irish), and in the minorities of the United States, especially the Afro-American and Hispanic cultures (2002). In this, Dussel sees great hope for the future, as the irrupting diversity of perspectives carries a rich pluriversity that can create authentic intercultural dialogue (2004, 2009). In other words, far from limiting itself to a weak relativism by default, or to micro-narratives, the pluriversal or what is also known as decolonial approach would be to search for universal knowledge as pluriversal knowledge, but through horizontal dialogues among different traditions of thought. The construction of transmodern pluriverses means taking seriously the knowledge production of non-Western critical traditions and genealogies of thought and such dialogue, could “propose novel and necessary answers for the anguishing challenges that the Planet throws upon us at the beginning of the twenty-first century” (Dussel, 2004, p. 18).

Like the tropical jungles with their immense quantity of plants and animals genetically essential for the future of humanity, the majority of humanity's cultures excluded by modernity [...] and by globalization [...] retains an immense capacity for and reserve of cultural invention essential for humanity's survival. This creativity will also be needed if humanity is to redefine its relationship with nature based on ecology and interhuman

solidarity, instead of reductively defining it on the solipsistic and schizoid criterion of increasing rates of profit. (Dussel, 2002, pp. 234-235)

Importantly, Dussel warns that (subconscious) Eurocentrism currently pervades all cultural arenas, European and non-European (2002), which makes genuine multiculturalism and dialogue—as opposed to sterile participation that follows Western procedural principles—a difficult endeavour (2004). Therefore, the dialogue needs to take place amongst cultures of the ‘South’ as well as between the South and the North (2004, 2009). Furthermore, genuine transversal dialogue needs to occur between culture’s critical innovators, who argue from the border between their culture and modernity, and who, rather than simply defend their culture, recreate it by critically evaluating both their own and modernity’s cultural tradition (Dussel, 2004, 2009). As a starting point, Dussel recommends certain core philosophical questions, which, while they can be expressed in different ways by different cultures, may still serve as bridges for a dialogue around universal human problems (Dussel, 2009).

In a similar vein, another scholar, Ziauddin Sardar (2004) sees the positive potentiality of the transmodern world to bridge what appears currently the impassable gap between Islam and the West due to the concept of tradition as an *idée fixe* of Western society. He shows how transmodern tenets of truly universal concerns (i.e., the survival of our planet) that inherently then lead to the consensual politics and modalities for adjusting to change are at very heart of Islam. Yet he warns us that in developing a transmodern framework to open discussions it is important to think of the Muslim world beyond the strait jackets of either ultra-modernist or ultra traditionalist governments (neither of whom have any understanding of transmodernism) and involve ordinary people instead—activists, scholars, writers, journalists, etc. In doing so, Sardar (2004) argues we will discover that most people have critical but positive attitudes towards the West; and women will be as willing, if not more so, to participate in such discussions and the transformations they may initiate, as men. He is of the opinion that if the West shifts towards transmodernism, the involvement of the public will open up massive new possibilities for positive change and fruitful synthesis which would replace homogenizing globalization with a more harmonious and enriching experience of living together.

Returning to Dussel’s work, it is evident that he is in agreement with Ghisi and Magda that transmodernity forms a dialectic triad with modernity and post-modernity. Post-modernity—which is in Dussel’s view still inherently Eurocentric, as it has rather paradoxically reinforced the process of Othering by further demarcation of difference and identity politics - has served to raise critical consciousness and general respect for difference (2002; 2006), so that humanity is ready to subsume “the best of globalized European and North American modernity [...] in order to develop a new civilization for the twenty-first century” (Dussel, 2002, p. 224). Instead of being dominated by it, transmodernity is in constant dialogue with modernity (Dussel, 2006). For instance, the best of the modern technological revolution should be adopted, while discarding anti-ecological aspects (Dussel, 2002). Furthermore, the focus on instrumental reason which characterised modernity should not simply be abandoned, but subordinated to ethical principles and “put at the service of the dignity and freedom of all the members of the community” (Dussel, 2006, p. 504). Actually, Dussel agrees with Magda (2004) that increasing globalisation (Dussel, 2002) and the availability of information technology (2009) are driving the emergence of transmodernity, as both enable us to instantaneously receive news about other cultures and

respond with ethical judgement. As examples of social movements that are working towards replacing unjust modern practices with ethical alternatives, Dussel cites, for example, the Zapatist National Liberation Army in Mexico, the Sin Tierra movement in Brazil, the cocateros coca growers in Bolivia, and the piqueteros—the unemployed—in Argentina, as well as groups that fight for the rights of workers, women, homosexuals, immigrants, and older people (Dussel, 2006).

Having reviewed, if briefly, both Ghisi's and Dussel's positions on transmodernity, I will now move on to present my own cross-boundary research, in which I engaged with the literature from a broad variety of fields to uncover theoretical notions and emerging practices from the perspective of socio-cultural demographics, levels of consciousness, economics and politics, interpersonal relations, and human geography that echo with the transmodern paradigm.

Transmodernity: Research Across Boundaries

I first heard about transmodernity in a keynote given by Marc Ghisi at the 2006 Nordic Tourism Studies Conference in Finland. Marc's good news talk (Ghisi, 2006), based on his book (2001) *Au delà de la modernité, du patriarcat et du capitalisme: La société réenchantée?*², was intriguing, and encouraged me to investigate the notion of transmodernity further. My ensuing journey of exploration proved to be purely fascinating and has not stopped since. Engaging with the broader literature in arts, humanities, social science and popular culture, I became very excited as I began to connect the different pieces of puzzle. I don't believe in the concept of purely original ideas, and this project in particular has convinced me of the synchronicity phenomenon (Jarowski, 1996), whereby people sharing similar levels of consciousness are engaged in parallel intellectual universes around the globe, and articulate related ideas, but often express them in different wor(l)ds and terminologies. Reading major works of renowned social historians, political scientists and sociologists, a holistic picture emerged and I became convinced that a new global consciousness is awakening and fundamental changes are to occur. In the following sections, I present to the reader an overview of authors who engage - dispersed over a variety of fields and levels of analysis - with findings and theories that echo the tenets of transmodernity.

Socio-cultural Change: The Silent Revolution of Cultural Creatives

Ghisi substantiates his claims with reference to the phenomenon of the 'silent revolution' led by the growing numbers of so-called *cultural creatives* (Ray, 1996, 1998; Ray & Anderson, 2000), "who create new values and who, without knowing it, are activating the 21st century paradigm" (Ghisi, 2008, p. 158). The concept of the silent revolution of cultural creatives comes from the historian Arnold Toynbee who analysed the rise and fall of 23 civilisations in world history and who claims that when a culture shift occurs, usually 5% of 'creative marginals' are preparing the shift in silence (Ray & Anderson, 2000). This concept has been borrowed by sociologist Paul H. Ray and psychologist Sherry Ruth Anderson who have applied it to their

² In translation: 'Beyond modernity, patriarchy and capitalism: Re-enchanted society?', although not published in English as such. However, its extended version under the different title (Ghisi, 2008) has been translated into English.

market cluster research of politics in America. Drawing upon 13 years of survey research studies on over 100,000 Americans, plus over 100 focus groups and dozens of depth interviews they have discovered that around 24% of Americans are departing from traditional or modern cultures to weave new ways of life. They describe this new subculture as the cultural creatives, who deeply care about ecology and saving the planet, about relationships, peace, social justice, self actualization, spirituality and self-expression. They are both inner-directed and socially concerned. They are activists, volunteers and contributors to social causes—more so than other Americans. Amongst many interesting behavioural indicators, they are those who read and listen to the radio the most, and watch television the least. They reflect on themselves, like to travel, and are seriously looking for a spiritual dimension in life that goes beyond religious dogmas. In their everyday life they search for the harmony of the body, mind and spirit. Interestingly, 66% in this group are women. Ray and Anderson (2000) claim that because they have been fairly invisible in American life, cultural creatives themselves are astonished to find out how many share both their values and their way of life. Their visibility and the power to produce a serious change are overshadowed as they are often disregarded simply as the esoteric New Agers, who simply opt for an alternative lifestyle.

The statistics go beyond the North American continent however³. The Statistics Office of the European Commission (Eurostat) used a similar method to the American study and confirmed a similar trend of approximate 20% of the European population who exhibit a similar set of values (Bréchon & Tchernia, 2002). In his latest work, Ghisi (2008) also gives anecdotal evidence, which shows that this trend is quietly spreading throughout Eastern Europe, Asia, and the Middle East.

Changes in Consciousness: The Reflective/ Living-systems Paradigm

In the typical fashion of synchronicity I mentioned at the beginning of this paper, these European results were presented to the State of the World Forum⁴ in San Francisco in 1997 (a gathering of world leaders convened by the Gorbachev Foundation) where another scholar, Duane Elgin, similarly suggested, on the basis of another independent world-wide survey, the emergence of a new paradigm and global consciousness change. In his Millennium Project Report (1997), Elgin provides many indicators that suggest the new emerging worldview which he calls a *reflective/living-systems paradigm*. He derives his claims from a comprehensive overview of many cultural transformation and paradigm publications by eminent scientists and world leaders as well as the empirical evidence of world statistics on global ecological awareness, main behavioural trends, emerging social values and sustainable ways of living. He also cites much interesting research on world web technology which he claims has the revolutionary capacity to connect and awaken humanity to larger evolutionary possibilities by creating a global awareness (to the same effect as the printing press progressed the oral culture of medieval ages to revolutionise and create the world commerce of modernity). Many of Elgin's

³ Ghisi who met Paul Ray in his capacity of working for the European Commission proposed his 'Forward Studies Unit' to do a similar study in the countries of EU.

⁴ This synchronicity I discovered by accident however. As I have been searching for the 'new paradigm literature' Duane Elgin featured highly on the list and then in reviewing his work I realized that he attended the same event in 1997 where Marc Ghisi presented the European study on cultural creatives.

claims have been also based on the World Values Survey⁵, run by Ronald Inglehart (1977), who also spoke about the silent revolution, although more in terms of a general intergenerational shift in the values of the population in advanced industrial societies and later of postmodern change (1997). Yet, more recently, he has also moved to re-examine the relationship between the sacred and the secular, based on new evidence of the World Values Survey in 80 societies which found that a growing proportion of the population in both rich and poor countries spends time thinking about the meaning and purpose of life (Inglehart & Norris, 2004).

Changes in Societal Systems: The Partnership Model of Caring Economics

For the skeptics who often too easily disregard such claims of societal transformation as being a rather elitist, upper/middle class luxury, in the next two sections, I would like particularly to cite two renowned social and political scientists who provide convincing evidence about new technological, economic and political arrangements that are creating and manifesting the transformation. Firstly, I will discuss the work of Riane Eisler (1987, 1996, 2002, 2007), a renowned macrohistorian⁶ and secondly, that of Jeremy Rifkin (1995, 2005, 2009), a well-known economist and advisor to government leaders and heads of state in Europe and the United States.

Based on her work as a cultural historian and evolutionary theorist over the last 20 years, Riane Eisler introduced the *partnership* and the *domination* system as two underlying possibilities for structuring beliefs, institutions and relations that transcend categories such as religious vs. secular, right vs. left, and technologically developed or underdeveloped. It is her particularly brilliant *The Chalice and the Blade* (1987), a historical analysis of over 30,000 years that provides us with a refreshing view of our past and ‘givens’ in all areas of our personal, communal, economic and political life. With reference to recent archaeological discoveries Eisler shows that ancient times (before 3500BC) were based on matrifocal values, which did not mean the opposition to patriarchy (i.e. the domination of women over men), but rather that societal organization focused on the values of giving life, fertility, the pleasure to exist, artistic creations and sexual pleasure. However, over time, the life-generating and nurturing powers of the universe, in our time still symbolised by the ancient feminine chalice or grail was replaced by the lethal power of the blade. In the new world, of which we are the last heirs, ‘power’ is no longer viewed as the ability to give life, but is construed as the power to bring death, destroy life, subdue others and be obeyed at all cost. For instance, Eisler provides a new interpretation of ‘original sin’ and the beginning of Genesis in the Bible as a text that represents the shift from the ‘old’ matrifocal symbols to the patriarchal myth in which the tree of life and wisdom becomes an evil and the sacred Eros between man and woman becomes the shameful act.

⁵ Ronald Inglehart is a political scientist and the Director of World Values Survey, a global network of social scientists who have carried out (since 1981) representative national surveys of the public’s covering the full range of economic, social and political variations, in over 80 societies on all six inhabited continents, containing 85 percent of the world’s population.

⁶ Riane Eisler is the author of the international bestseller *The Chalice and the Blade: Our History, Our Future* (Eisler, 1987) which has been published in 23 foreign editions, making Riane the only woman who has been selected among 20 great thinkers, (including people like Hegel, Marx and Toynbee) for inclusion in *Macrohstory* and *Macrohstorians* (Galtung & Inayatullah, 1997).

In deconstructing the long history of domination, Eisler provides a beacon for our tired world of ongoing mistrust, blood, misery and injustice. By transcending the trap of polarised thinking she offers a way forward by pointing to the partnership model in which social structure is more generally egalitarian, with difference (be it gender, race, religion, sexual preference or belief system) not automatically associated with superior or inferior social and/or economic status. Females and males are equally valued in the governing ideology and stereotypically feminine values such as nurturance, caring and non-violence can be given operational primacy without resulting in stereotyping of gender roles. Furthermore, in partnership models of society, the spiritual dimension of the life-giving and sustaining powers of both nature and women is recognised and highly valued, as are these powers in men. Spirituality is linked with empathy and equity, and the divine is imaged through myths and symbols of unconditional love. Human relations are held together by pleasure bonds rather than by fear of pain. The pleasures of caring behaviours are socially supported, and pleasure is associated with empathy for others. Caretaking, love-making and other activities that give pleasure are considered sacred. The highest power is the power to give, nurture, and illuminate life. Love is recognised as the highest expression of the evolution of life on our planet, as well as the universal unifying power (Eisler, 1996, p. 403-405).

In providing us with an impressive range of world-wide evidence of personal, communal and economic initiatives, organisations and policies Eisler claims (in a similar vein as all the authors cited above) that we are finally witnessing the world-wide movement towards a *partnership system* (Eisler, 1996, 2002) of *caring economics* (Eisler, 2007). She asserts that the reason why we do not hear much about this movement in the media is because it is not centralised and coordinated under a single unifying name and: “without a name, it’s almost as if it didn’t exist, despite all the progress around us” (Eisler, 2002, p. xxi). In her latest groundbreaking work on the *Real Wealth of Nations* (Eisler, 2007) she deconstructs Adam Smith’s theory of the invisible hand of the market as the best mechanism for producing and distributing the necessities of life to unpack its deep-seated culture of domination and exploitation that has devalued all activities which fall out outside of the market’s parameters of buying and selling. Instead she proposes that the slowly emerging caring economics takes into account the full spectrum of economic activities of the household, from the life enriching activities of caregivers and communities to the life-supporting processes of nature. In juxtaposition to the overwhelming evidence of structural inequalities and social injustices of the domination system, she provides evidence and many practical proposals for new economic inventions—new measures, policies, rules, and practices—to bring about a caring economics that fulfils human needs. In the many examples given, such as high-quality care for children, she also uses a purely financial cost-benefit analysis to demonstrate how caring is one of the best investments a nation can make. In her insightful economic analysis of policies and their (in)effectiveness around the world, she convincingly shows how the dominant culture of the double economic standard of valorising ‘productive’ over caring activities actually influences economic policies and practices. Eisler’s claims of emerging critical and caring businesses is further supported by the evidence that many mainstream businesses are re-questioning the main purpose of their bottom-line existence (i.e., going for profit only) which has led to the concept of spiritual economy and spiritual entrepreneurs conscious of her/his missions towards the common good of humanity (see Allee, 2003; Harman, 1998; Stewart, 2002; World Business Academy, 2009).

Political Change: The European Dream and Biosphere Politics

Whilst Riane Eisler provides us with an economic model to analyse emerging transmodern phenomena in society and the market, Jeremy Rifkin, in his book *The European Dream: How Europe's Vision of the Future is Quietly Eclipsing the American Dream*, claims that it is the European dream of a United Europe (in its potentiality) that is already a political manifestation of the coming era:

The new European dream is powerful because it dares to suggest new history, with an attention to quality of life, sustainability, and peace and harmony. In a sustainable civilization, based on quality of life rather than unlimited individual accumulation of wealth, the very material basis of modern progress would be a thing of the past...The new dream is focused not on amassing wealth but rather, on elevating the human spirit. The European dream seeks to expand human empathy, not territory. It takes humanity out of the materialist prison in which it has been bound since the early days of the eighteenth-century Enlightenment and into the light of a new future motivated by idealism. (Rifkin, 2005, pp. 7-8)

In the light of many EU controversies, hypocrisies and problems, claims could be easily interpreted as overtly idealistic. However, he stresses that dreams reflect hopes, not achievements; hence the notion of the *potentiality* in many of the tenets provided by the ideal of European dream.

In elaborating his thesis Rifkin (2005) provides us with an overview of how the fundamental pillars of the modern era: individualism; the market-exchange economy, the ideology of property; and territory-bound-nation-state governance (forged with capitalistic markets) were created and how they are slowly getting interwoven with new spatial, economic, social and political arrangements of the global era. By giving us an overview of its political architecture and the historical making of the united Europe, its unique features of extra-territorial governance, constitution, internal workings and various policies, he gives us a realistic picture of Europe's many hypocrisies and contradictions, yet, and this is the focus of my review, Rifkin also points to its many achievements and potentialities for advancing greater interconnectedness and mutuality, and a relational global consciousness.

First he presents an overview of the burgeoning network commerce and the 'immateriality' of the knowledge economy (it is estimated that approx. 40% of the European Union economy is already in the non-material, knowledge society) which is giving a birth to a new economic system based on the *cooperative commerce of reciprocity and trust*. Rifkin aptly describes the difference between the market and network economy: "markets are based on the pursuit of self-interest, networks on shared interest" (Rifkin, 2005, p. 193).

Second he contrasts the politics of the nation-state era which operates along two poles of market and government; to the three-sector politics that include civil society which makes the new European dream realizable. In particular, in its embrace to share at least some governing power with civil society organizations (CSOs), Rifkin claims the EU is changing the governance landscape forever. He deals with the EU controversial policy issues of advancing both cultural

diversity and universal human rights and how CSOs represent the social engine to preserve diversity while mobilizing public support behind universal rights' agendas. They are, Rifkin (1995) claims, local, transnational and global players and the essential political partner for the EU regulatory state.

Third, he shows that the EU *precautionary principle* policy for regulating science and technology innovations, and the introduction of new products is successfully being used to review and even suspend experiments and innovations that potentially endanger the health of humans, environment, animals and plants. While acknowledging that the old Enlightenment paradigm to grow, exploit and colonize the Earth still pervades, Rifkin (2005) is of the opinion that this bold, cutting-edge initiative demonstrates a radically different view of nature and respect of Earth as the interconnected whole.

Overall, Rifkin's (2005) analysis of change at the European level is a call to move from the current *geopolitics* - and its assumption that the environment is a giant battleground where we all fight for our survival—to *biosphere* politics, or the premise of the Earth as a living organism made up of interdependent relationships on which we all can only survive by stewarding the larger communities of which we are part. In his latest book (Rifkin, 2009), *The Empathic Civilization: The Race to Global Consciousness in a World in Crisis*, Rifkin elaborates on this call to become more oriented towards mutuality and interconnectedness by providing a historical analysis of empathy, showing that humans are fundamentally empathic beings, and that society has become increasingly empathic throughout history. Referring to the beginning of biosphere consciousness, this latest book asks whether we can “reach global empathy in time to avoid the collapse of civilization and save the Earth” (Rifkin, 2009, p. 3).

Evolutionary Changes in Psycho-social Development: Relational Consciousness

In his work, Rifkin (2005) also draws on the psychoanalytical view of the global political economy and its history. He makes reference to Owen Barfield, the British philosopher who views history as an unfolding of human consciousnesses which can be divided in roughly three stages, which dovetail with Freud's theory of individual mental development (cited in Rifkin, 2005). In the first stage of hunter-gatherer societies, humans had little sense of self and regarded Mother Earth as a primordial mother, treating her with the same love, respect and awe as they might confer on their own tribal mothers (similar to the infant-mother relationship when the infant still feel oneness with her/his Mother).

The beginning of agriculture marked the onset of the second great period of human consciousnesses when humans in their activities of domestication of animals and land slowly began to lose the intimate participation and communion with the natural world. It is comparable to the child/adolescence/adulthood stage of psychoanalysis, when the void left by our own sense of separation from our bodily connection with our own mothers is compensated by endless substitutes - material things, ideologies, unconditional love of God, sex, various addictions - you name it. The unhappiness of the modern era and its status anxieties (de Botton, 2004) become more explicable in light of a statement given by the psychologist Norman Brown (1985, p. 297) and used by Rifkin (2005,): “The more the life of the body passes into things, the less life there is

in the body, and at the same time the increasing accumulation of things represents an ever fuller articulation of the lost life of the body” (p. 373).

Barfield suggests, however, that we are on the cusp of the third great stage of human consciousness—the stage in which we make a self-aware choice to re-participate with the body of nature. It is this new *relational* consciousness in which we are increasingly becoming aware of shared risk and vulnerability, and economic, social and environmental interdependencies, which leads to the emergence of process-oriented behaviour and willingness to accept contradicting realities and multicultural perspectives. In many ways, Barfield’s view reaffirms Eisler’s (1987) evolution theory of human development from the ancient, matrifocal times, via the domination system of patriarchy to the emerging partnership model between men and women; nature and humans; mind, body and soul. So, instead of denying our own mortality (so characteristic to the youth’s sense of invincibility), the current era brings about a maturity stage in which we realize that we can’t really begin to live until we accept the inevitability of our own death. But how do we come to terms with our own death and make the choice to live? Rifkin (2005, p. 374) again provides guidance:

[We do it] by making a self-aware decision to leave the death instinct behind, to no longer seek mastery, control, or domination over nature, including human nature, as a means of fending off death. Instead, accept death as part of life and make a choice to re-participate with the body of nature. Cross over from the self to the other, and reunite in an empathetic bond with the totality of relationships that together make up the Earth’s indivisible living community.

Change in the Quality of Relationships: The Circularity Paradigm and Love Ethics

Thinking back to my earliest engagement with (what I now recognise as) transmodern ideas, I would like to draw on the field of feminist writings focused on love ethics (bell hooks) and what Gloria Steinem (1993, 2004) described as the *circularity paradigm*. Her words (Steinem, 1993, pp. 189-190) very much resonate with the ideas elaborated above:

If we think of ourselves as circles, our goal is completion — not defeating others. Progress lies in the direction we haven’t been... Progress is appreciation. If we think of work structures as circles, excellence and cooperation are the goal—not competition. Progress becomes mutual support and connectedness. If we think of nature as a circle, then we are part of its reciprocity. Progress means interdependence. If we respect nature and each living thing as a microcosm of nature—then we respect the unique miracle of ourselves. And so we have come full circle.

The realization that human powers come from within has been translated into the political arena, producing a socio-political movement of so-called ‘sacred activism’, which reaffirms individual growth, spirituality and actions that counters contemporary global discourses of fear, alienation and disempowerment (e.g. Diamant, 2005; Fonda, 2004; Fox, 2000; Maathai, 2005; Tacey, 2004).

In many ways some of those ideas can be traced in my latest work where I put forward the poststructural concept of embodiment (Ateljevic & Swain, 2006; Ateljevic & Hall, 2007; Wilson & Ateljevic, 2008). I have argued that the poststructural perspective gives us the opportunity to engage with subtle norms and values shaping our lives in the process of which both, the normalized discourse of dehumanized structures and the resisting power of agency, can be revealed in parallel. Yet, in my deconstructions I want(ed) to remain positive and hopeful, as I have begun to be inspired by feminist work on the importance of embracing love ethics and the tracing of positive structures, changes and potentialities that give us hope and models of acting and behaving in our personal and professional lives (Ateljevic, 2005, 2006b; Ateljevic, Pritchard & Morgan, 2007). As Steinem (1993, p. 129) aptly asks:

And where is the routine study of social forms other than hierarchy, patriarchy, and competition – or even an understanding that they exist? Where are the campuses as pioneers of the powers of self-esteem and human possibilities?

Or as Erich Fromm (2006) in his renowned work of the psychoanalysis of modern political economy posed the powerful question of how almost all our energy is spent on learning how to achieve success, prestige, money and power, while the art of living and loving “which ‘only’ profits the soul, but is profitless in the modern sense, is a luxury we have no right to spend much energy on?” (Fromm, 2006, pp. 5-6).

bell hooks (2000, 2002, 2003) has particularly engaged with those ideas in her work of conceptualizing love that goes beyond the exceptional-individual phenomenon. To promote the overall cultural embrace of a global vision wherein we see our lives and our fate as intimately connected to those of everyone else on the planet, she urges both men and women to challenge the patriarchal culture of lovelessness, sexist stereotypes and dehumanization, and to engage in the art of loving for themselves and their universal humanity. She has translated those ideas particularly into the most obvious academic area of influence for the potential social change—our teaching, and in doing so has produced the concept of so-called democratic educators and a pedagogy of hope (2003). In presenting her ideas and looking at what works she urges us teachers to resist oppressive structures by exposing their dehumanization and to embrace the values that motivate progressive social change—spirit, struggle, service, love, the ideals of shared knowledge and shared learning.

In the anticipation of criticism by political economy pessimists that my discussion on love ethics is rather naive, I want to clarify my position. Being originally educated as a neo-Marxist geographer I cannot deny the dominant and overwhelming evidence of structural inequalities around the globe. However, in the process of my career I have learned to agree with the later works of Gloria Steinem and bell hooks who claim that marking oppressed difference creates the mindset of victimisation which seriously affects personal and collective confidence about oneself, hence subtly reproducing further marginalisation. For instance, I have claimed elsewhere how (early anthropological and sociological) critical voices of pessimistic views on tourism have paradoxically reproduced the notion of the passive and victimised Other (e.g., Ateljevic & Doorne, 2003, 2005). So in my hope that we can truly remake the world, I opt to focus on signs that signal a potential move in the collective consciousness. In the plethora of pessimistic views

and bad news I leave that (admittedly important) job to others and commit myself to trace and discover what is positive and possible in our human development potential.

Change on a Personal Level: My Engagement as a Critical Human Geographer

Reflecting upon my own trajectory as an academic and teacher, the concept of transmodernity enables me to see my professional engagement in a new light: In the context of (what I now recognize as) transmodern calls to “shift to a new level of consciousness, to reach a higher moral ground... to shed our fear and give hope to each other” (Wangari Maathai, 2004—Nobel Peace Prize lecture, p.), I have been engaged in critical work in the field of human geography and tourism studies. Together with other critical scholars, we have been advocating an academy of hope and a critical turn in research and practice (see Ateljevic, Pritchard & Morgan, 2007). The objectives of this endeavour have been twofold: First, to move from a dominant business perspective to a richer understanding of the tourism phenomenon in the broader context of material, discursive and social practices (see for example Pritchard et al., 2007); and second, to create a community of resistance in which we seek to transgress oppressing teaching and research structures. Indeed we have been contesting de-humanizing academic ideologies and practices that stifle our creativity in research (see Page, 2005; Tribe, 2003), promote a collective fear of radical change, and entrench a culture of domination that ensures our obedience (see Ateljevic, Pritchard & Morgan, 2007).

In our endeavours to produce transformational knowledge our academy of hope network has been searching for strategies and practices to legitimize our professional, emotional and spiritual responsibilities to those with whom and for whom we co-create knowledge, to our students and also to ourselves. In doing so, we are not seeing this as some self-centered indulgence, but rather as a necessary deconstruction of the geo-body politics of academic knowledge and its deeply embedded destructive dichotomies and hierarchies of rational/emotional; feminine/masculine; subject/object; internal/external; mind/body/spirit; winner/loser; dominant/passive; man/nature; and agency/structure/resistance. We are seeking to examine not just the world as it is, but to reflect on the world as we make it.

Final Reflections

In this paper I have engaged with a broad range of literature that provides us with many signals and evidence of an emerging and significant paradigm shift in our human evolution. In line with the *synchronicity* phenomenon of universal seemingly unconnected coincidences (Jarowski, 1996), the preceding discussion has clearly shown that while many different labels and models exist to describe the global shift in culture, consciousness, society, economics, politics, and human relations, they all similarly point to the same intuitive aspirations for inclusivity, diversity, partnership, sacredness and quality of life, sustainability, universal human rights, the rights of nature and peace on Earth. In other words, different authors use many terms to capture the main forces behind the potentiality of creating the new transmodern world—the reflective/living-systems paradigm (Elgin, 1997); the partnership model of caring economics (Eisler, 2002); the relational global consciousness of biosphere politics (Rifkin, 2009); love ethics (hooks, 2002); the circularity paradigm of interdependence (Steinem, 1993). Echoing Riane Eisler’s argument that the limited global awareness of this world-wide movement is due to

the lack of a unifying name and centralised coordination, I propose to use the notion of transmodernity as an umbrella term that can lift disciplinary attention given to phenomena of change to a broader cross-boundary awareness of the large scale societal shifts that herald the coming era of transmodernity.

This call for a unified approach is not merely motivated by a wish to advance theory, but by my deeply felt desire to enlighten practice. Transmodernity gives us the necessary political and epistemological position to transcend all (post)essentialist contradictions and treatments of race, gender, tradition, culture, economy, and so on and to provide us with a theorization that can give us a ground zero of *biosphere politics* with no inherent domination and superiority of one over another. Once the grounds of shared risk, vulnerability, and interconnectedness of all humans occupying our Earth are acknowledged, a true dialogue without patronising can be created.

In conveying good news however, I do not deny the harsh reality of structural inequalities around the world and my own privileged position in it—to speak, to write and to live comfortably. Yet, it wasn't always like that. As a person who experienced the Balkan war in the 1990s and subsequent displacement with its all challenges during which I encountered both beautiful human support and random discrimination I attest to the powers of positive mindset and human compassion which helps one to empower and to get empowered. In the light of my own experience I want to promote values of wisdom and compassion and individual powers to make a difference and in doing so to point to the possibilities of creating unity by celebrating diversity, which I believe represents the only way to the sustainable future of humanity.

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