

Citizenship and strategy for change

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Citizenship and democracy entail that the group of members of a community as a whole, may be associated to the future construction and the city management, and thus, in mutation periods, to the strategies for change.

Besides, these strategies must be adapted to the world complexity, and they must also take into account interdependences among societies and among each issue.

The more complex a world is, the more important relations among issues are, and the more difficult to deal with and solve them separately it is. In complex situations, the matter is not to choose among alternative solutions, but it is to be able to elaborate a satisfactory solution. And, under democracy, such an elaboration must be able to associate citizens collectively. That is why the political responsibility is shifted. In other times, this was shown in decision-making and when choosing among alternative solutions, because of the old adage: “governing is choosing.” Nowadays, it is mainly exercised organizing analysis processes and agreement processes, both processes which allow community to elaborate a collective thorough thought about their problems so that adapted solutions can then be created.

This results in new tools of collective intelligence. Strategy, for both a community and an enterprise, consists in mobilizing energies and intelligences around some common priorities. Stating these priorities and combining the actions which they entail, are then two important dimensions of political responsibility.

Under democracy, to elaborate such strategies means everybody participates. A real true democracy privileges managements “from the bottom of the pyramid upwards” (bottom-up). From views and perspectives often stated soundly by some leaders capable of sharing their enthusiasms, the construction of democratic strategies means to state significant challenges, to share analyses, and to gradually deduce the strategic axis. Adapted tools are resorted to. The collective work achieved by the Alliance for a Responsible, Plural and United World since 1994, represents a learning process of elaborating such collective strategies. Let’s remember briefly, its stages, bearing in mind its methodology and tools developed for such a purpose.

1. First Stage: Diagnosis; Platform for a responsible, plural and united world

Its Platform stands out four main ideas whose statement constitutes the very first stage of elaborating strategies for change:

1. diversity of viewpoints and situations have to be taken into account
2. the current world crises are relation crises (among human beings, among societies, among humankind and the biosphere), therefore relations have to be reconstructed, and particularly, change strategies which take them into account, have to be elaborated
3. coming mutations are referred to different fields of human activity: our way of thinking, transmitting, producing, consuming, managing, using our natural resources
4. strategies for change are necessarily direct: it is not possible just to juxtapose strategies, one strategy referred to education, other to the production system, and another to the government.

2. Second Stage: Distribution of analysis work and proposal work

The assertion which says everything is kept equal, that problems are tied one another may result in powerlessness when a means to face problems and mobilize the most specialized competence is not found. Likewise, the assertion of diversity does not mean that everybody all throughout the world has to work constantly together, but on the contrary, each viewpoint should be able to be expressed. The second stage, thus, has been prone to organize collective work and to share different tasks so as to express different viewpoints.

Diversity of professional and social means has been shown when “colleagues’ associations” corresponding to different social sectors and professional whose point of view seemed important, were created. These colleagues’ associations are sometimes defined in terms according to the profession referred to (such as entrepreneurs, peasants, military members, those chosen, etc.), and sometimes according to their status in society (the youth, women, those excluded, etc.). Diversity of topics to be dealt results in a slow analysis of thoughts, 1990 to 1997, to determine the fields on which strategies for change should be elaborated. Dozens of topics were identified in 1991 (named as “the twelve tasks of Vézelay’s group): weapon conversion; non-perishable/sustainable agriculture; education; etc. In 1995, this thematic approximation was systematized and enhanced; this thus resulted in what it was called “the sectorial via to the Alliance.” Different human activities were examined. Changes which were to be achieved were regrouped into ten chapters and then these into four thematic poles.

About forty thematic international structures were born from this effort to structuring. They were regrouped into four thematic poles corresponding to four big areas of human activity. The pole named “representation” involves whatever all and every human being has in his mind and whatever is transferred as information, such as knowing, such as knowing-doing, and such as the world representation (values, education, science, technology, culture, the arts, media); the pole named “economy and society” involves the way in which societies

are organized and the way in which they produce, consume, exchange and develop (social organization and ways of living, spatial organization, production systems, exchanges, flow of financial resources); the pole named “government” deals with political and legal regulations which societies at different levels, from local to global level, are provided with (citizenship, politics, law, local government, State and regional groups, global government); the pole named “biosphere” covers a set of relationships among humankind and the rest of the biosphere (specially water, soils, energy, weather, ecosystem management).

It is commendable to define the field each pole deals with as this imposes a systematic rapprochement and mobilizes specific knowledge according to each matter. However, this may entail to lock thoughts into each specialized sector and led to a juxtaposition of strategies without any relation among themselves.

3. Third Stage: elaboration of proposal documents and their cartographical expression

Since 1996, it has been necessary to cross different colleagues’ and thematic approaches. All it was necessary to find was the ways to ensure the specific means for this meeting. A methodological way that leads each thematic structure to consider in its own approach the other dimensions of human activity and each colleagues’ association of professional-partners to raise, when analysing, those topics which are familiar as well as other dimensions of human activity, has been embraced. For that purpose, a cartographic approach has been gradually taken. Structures and colleagues’ associations have been invited to apply their analysis and proposals onto a map in which their main concern, aim of their work, be set in the core and around different human activity fields, and classified according to the four thematic poles. Therefore, proposals are evidence of the relationships among the fields of human activity: between ethics and government; between production systems and management of the ecosystems; between social organization and education; etc.

4. Forth Stage: rapprochement of proposals referred to the same human activity field

The procedure embraced to achieve each colleagues’ association and structure consider, in their proposal, the relations with other topics led -by construction- most people to express about a sundry of topics. Therefore, different visions of different colleagues’ associations and structures about the same sector of human activity are available. The following stage consists, of course, in knowing how millions of people gathered in sixty colleagues’ associations and structures submitted proposals of a same topic. The quantity of structures and colleagues’ associations does not allow to represent a set of proposals into an only one map. Thus, a presentation which distinguished five families of proposals has been taken: those which come from twenty colleagues’; those which come from thematic structures of the “representation” pole; those which come from the “economics and society” thematic pole; those from “government” thematic pole; and finally, those from the “humankind and biosphere” thematic pole.

5. Fifth Stage: regrouping of proposals around strategic axes

Those sixty colleagues' associations and structures together yielded about a thousand five hundred answers. A thousand five hundred does not make up a strategy. On the contrary, it may show an insurmountable dispersion of points of view. In fact, innumerable repetitions are shown when observing the maps superficially. Such repetitions are just interesting as they prove that a strategic rapprochement is possible and also that convergences, unexpected though, may develop. Means which apparently detaches everything may result in a similar vision of strategies for change. Either by proximity or similarity, proposals from one or another sector can be brought together. The advantage of this cartographic approach is to provide this activity of synthesis with full transparency. It is also necessary that when referring to a same priority defined by a statement of a strategic axis, that what the different proposals brought together around such axis aim at, and where they come from, to be clearly seen. In this way, grouping around shared strategic axes will be fruitful. To achieve this, the procedure is as follows:

- Activity 1: to bring the proposals tied among each other together into each sector of human activity. Each sector of human activity (twenty sectors of maps of structures and colleagues' associations) make groups according to the proposals stated. The procedure consists of examining each of such proposals, determine what distinguished one from another, establish similarities and sharing points, name the groups made as they arise. In fact, repetitions arise fast and groups are made in a natural way. Then, when said group reaches a significant quantity of categories, it is necessary to try and make subgroups among themselves taking into account their most similar features. This first task provide a sector with relative axes.
- Activity 2: to group strategic axes into the core of a same thematic pole. Among sectors of the same thematic pole sometimes those groups are similar. For example, the government thematic pole, in the case either of citizenship, or politics, or law, or local government, or State, or regional groups or global government, the same categories arise. There is no strategic axis for the global government and another for the local one, but there are rather strategic axes which such different sectors share. The following text depicts this.
- Activity 3: to confront strategic axes identified in each thematic pole. Having finished the previous stage, the statement of the relative strategic axes in each of the poles is now dealt. Once again, obvious similarities arise among the identified axes in different poles. This happens in certain axes identified as "economy and society" pole and "government" pole. The examination of those maps established for each strategic axis shows again a unique and same axis, derived from different fields. These similar strategic axes are then grouped in a natural way so as to make up complete maps. Twenty strategic axes are thus dealt in this way, each one grouped into a set of proposals acquired from different fields of human activity (see Picture attached).
- Activity 4: to reformulate those proposals contained in the strategic axes. The previous activity discloses all the effects of initial statements of such proposals. A proposition which at first was understandable in a structure or colleagues' association framework and generated it ends up being difficult to understand when it is taken out of context: the statement is too vague to provide information. It is necessary to correct these statements so that the maps of strategic axes can become immediately legible.

- Activity 5: to join strategic axis proposals into the structures and colleagues' association from which they have been generated. The last stage consists in showing up, by means of the strategic axes, those structures and colleagues' associations from which the proposals that constitute such strategic axis were generated.
- Activity 6: Detail the proposals referred to the strategic axis. When each proposition statement is corresponded to a proposal document, a superficial statement of a proposal turns into its full description. The elements of an action plan that turn into a group of a given strategic axis, constitute thus in a systematic way, the set of detailed proposals.