

# Understanding Contemporary Change. What is the “Global Systemic Shift” of our days - and how does it work? A seven-dimensional approach of reconstruction, analysis and foresight to address “post-ideological”, “post-9/11” and “post-Empire” complexity\*

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*“More than ever before, we need a new generation of leaders who understand different dimensions of society and the economy, and its implications for governance and public policy.”*

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Kofi Annan, former Secretary-General of the United Nations, at the inauguration of Oxford’s Blavatnik School, September 2012

*“You may come from the United States or Korea, Japan or Arab countries, but you’re now part of a global family. Therefore, it’s very important to raise your capacity as global citizens. Only then, I think we can say, we’re living in a harmoniously prosperous world.”*

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Ban Ki-moon, U.N. Secretary-General, in a speech at the Freeman Spogli Institute for International Studies, Stanford University, January 2013

## I. Addressing “post-ideological” and “post-9/11” complexity: Basic pillars towards a contemporary approach

1. There seems to be a broadening search in today’s interdisciplinary Social Sciences, including in particular - although to varying degrees - Economics, Politics, Sociology and the (Inter- and Trans-) Cultural Sciences, towards a more sophisticated, precise and reality-habile understanding of the current “Global systemic shift” than those so far available - both in theoretical and in applied policy trajectories. An increasing number of scholars are attempting to co-develop a more multi-dimensional, pluri-disciplinary and simultaneously less - be it overt or hidden - ideology-prone methodology to understand the current phase of globalization. Could you briefly outline what the current “Global systemic shift” may look like in such a view?

In the most basic sense, “Global systemic shift” is the interrelation between the macro-, meso- and micro-development of global change in our time - and the specifics of the resulting constellation. This constellation is of course nothing fixed, it is permanently changing. Thus the term denotes the systemic pattern of the global shift of a certain phase of development, a certain stage of “mature” globalization - not of all times, and neither of the whole 20th century, nor even of its second half, but more specifically of the

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\*This article is written as a question-answer dialogue in a (neo-)platonian tradition.

“post-ideological” phase of complexity. It is in the first instance a name for the constellation that has been developing since the attacks on the World Trade Center in New York on 9/11. But this is only the first layer of a more complex net of interrelations. The post-9/11 constellation is embedded in the greater pattern that developed since the fall of the Berlin wall in 1989 and the collapse of communism in 1991. Already if we examine the interrelation between just the effects of 9/11 and 1989, we notice that there are different speeds and depths of development, and that there are superpositions and a variety of interferences both on the diachronic and the synchronic levels: some issues of 1989 remain alive, they became subconscious so to say, just to reappear after a certain period of incubation, sometimes similar, sometimes transformed within the post-9/11 constellation; others have disappeared. In addition, certain influence and discourse patterns are characterized by different modes of development: for example, politics can change from one day to another, economics goes through medium term crises, while cultural dimensions are much slower and need more time to substantially change. So right from the very start, in order to understand the present phase of globalization and the related change, what I call “Global Systemic Shift”, we are confronted with multiple factors, elements, and laws of change that immediately constitute a complex picture. As a consequence, “Global systemic shift” as a research approach is conceived as an experimental, multidimensional, inter- and transdisciplinary, typology-based and integrative approach that wants to understand the (synchronically and diachronically) “stratified picture” of contemporary change through the comprehension of a) systemic, b) structural and c) discursive elements and order patterns which are supposedly active behind the phenomenological curtains, as the events in their immediate and indirect phenomenology, the empirical evidence and the palpable facts suggest. Together, these three types of elements are the expression of, and at the same time co-constitute a highly complex, overarching “system rationality” of change, which is composed by some basic trajectories, all of them only graspable by putting together different disciplines, as well as by a variety of sub-rationalities. Contemporary change expresses itself through - and, more than that, seems to be (more or less literally) “embodied” into - specific, timely discourses and order patterns. We want to understand how these discourses and order patterns are constituted, how they behave, and how they interrelate.

## 2. What did you find out?

First of all, that the basic trajectories of change of our days are usually “mixed”, i.e. they include mainstreams and traces of different societal rationalities. They usually include elements of traditional (i.e. institutional and party) politics, but also (and increasingly) elements of political economy, contextual politics and of the history of ideas within (and in some cases against) a specific phase and culture of modernization and globalized (post-)modernity. To make the overall attempt towards a (necessarily) “multiversal” in-depth understanding even more complex, challenging and (fortunately) also more adventurous, these discourses seem to be highly interwoven with each other, as far as the available empirical evidence shows. But it’s not that any given way of such interweavement is stable or remains the same; it is changing, it is shifting continuously. So you are helpless, you are lost if you want to “fix” your findings, based on the evidence of certain mechanisms, once and for all, or if you want to create a simple synchronic (analytical) or diachronic (historical) methodology of reading. You only have a chance of getting closer to phenomena in a serious way if you look anew every time - equipped with certain instruments, knowledge of basic laws, layers of stratification, insight into constitutive paradoxes and contradiction. To put it in once sentence: You have to have a fresh look, but you have to be equipped like a professional. Only based on the combination of these two prerequisites, you have a chance to understand things and, as an effect, to give good, sound, pragmatic and useful policy advice – which is the logical goal of the endeavour. Today, we are looking to a hyper-complex movement of transformation characterized by multi-dimensionality and “deep ambivalence”, where every phenomenon is not any longer one-sided, but where there are always, and unavoidably two side of the medal, often opposed to each other in one and the same synchronic moment and diachronic process. There is a good thing in this: It forces us to look concretely, not abstractly. Because reality is so complex, that it is the new abstraction – and in comparison, many given conceptual abstractions – like for example those that the traditional political sciences or the disciplinarily restricted sociological criteria provide us – seem to be flat, uninspired and often even meaningless in front of what is concretely happening. For some, this may be disappointing; for others, it is exciting. For me, it is the inspiration to create better models of how to read

the present phase of global development – soundly based, of course, on our classical modern teachers like for example Arnold Toynbee, Carroll Quigley, Immanuel Wallerstein, Bruce Mazlish and some others. You have to look very carefully at what is there, every time anew, and you cannot ignore the empirical constellation here and now by just “reading” it through an abstract methodology. On the other hand, reality is worthless without theory.

### **3. So what do we have to do to understand current reality?**

You need “theory”, which literally means “the vision of the whole”, in order to understand reality. Or to put it in the more traditional European terms of modern hermeneutics: More than ever before, in order to understand things and to take decisions accordingly, you need an understanding of the part, and an insight into the whole. But what is most important, you have to know how they are interrelated; how they endlessly mutually inform each other; and how there is a circular, creative process between the two, which can never be fixed into this or that ideological framework. We need an approach which is creative and post-ideological – open for what is happening, but well equipped. In short, you are lost in most cases already from the start when relying on ideology, because every inclination towards an abstract, “complete” approach will immediately obscure reality. Some may think that this is unfortunate: that it is a pity that things have gotten so complex. I am convinced of the contrary. The new complexity is an invitation to a new openness, both of mind and reality. And as Western open societies, we are those who are best equipped to deal with such a situation – while for example China and other authoritarian nations are not. What we need today is a consistent and serious “synchronic-diachronic”, or “subjective-objective” approach able to combine different disciplines and to overcome over-specialization which was an invention of the early modernity and the world of the 18th and 19th centuries, and today proves to be increasingly incapable to address the multifaceted nature of phenomena. We have to work towards such an approach with much more fervour than in the past years. Because that is where the global constellation has evolved to; and that is where the real opportunities of open societies, as opposed to authoritarian societies lay. If we depart from the assumption that the great battle of the 21st century will not be the one between the new “G-2” China and USA, but between open and closed societies, democracy and authoritarianism, then multidisciplinary and an open and inclusive mindset are our strongest weapons (of conviction) in order to create progress for all. Just that we have still to do a lot of work to reflect it appropriately in a new, non-ideological approach to the “global systemic shift”.

**4. But what can Multi- and Transdisciplinarity exactly be in such a constellation? A constellation when there cannot be any simple “integrative” use of any given specialized disciplines anymore, but when we simultaneously still lack a viable approach to appropriately “bridge” disciplines? In other words: If “integration” of disciplines and approaches is still undeveloped, problematical or even dangerous, as the “postmodern”, “deconstructive” thinkers mainly of European origins like Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida, Jean-Francois Lyotard, but even Jürgen Habermas or Karl-Otto Apel told us – how can we work in multi-dimensional directions? Was not Multi- and Transdisciplinarity not always about “integration” to the exactly same extent, that it was about “differentiation”? In other, more specific terms: Was the idea behind it not always equally about “realism” to the same extent that it was about “deconstruction”?**

I believe this is indeed an important point for the future. In fact, as a prerequisite for every further step we have to enter into maybe not uncharted, but nevertheless dangerous territory. We have to differentiate between Interdisciplinarity, Transdisciplinarity, Multidisciplinarity, Metadisciplinarity and even what is sometimes called Integral Meta-Theory or, as it is in some other cases called, multimethodical Meta-Studies. All in all, we are dealing with the problematics of Multimethod Studies (MMS) in general here. And I’m not mentioning other approaches aiming at “overarching” ideas like, for example, Wallerstein’s “Theory of World Systems”, the Neomarxist approaches, the Neoliberal Theories, including the “End of History”, or even Roy Bhaskars “Critical Realism”, because I consider them the last “classical” ideological or in any case para-ideological, often prematurely “unifying” and thus not anymore exactly contemporary approaches – although they continue to provide lots of teachings and useful concepts and instruments in a variety of

territories and niches. In essence, I am in disaccord with all these approaches. In the case of Wallerstein and Neomarxism in strong discord.

**5. So you think you are a pioneer in starting something totally new? Do we need pioneers to master the present reality and its foreseeable trajectories – because nobody before was confronted with such complexity and multifacetedness?**

No. I am convinced that we need a new, more sophisticated approach, that takes into account more elements, is more complexity-friendly and is less reductive than most that we have, but by actively building on the existing ones provided by analysts and thinkers in the past years, and by taking over their still valid elements through a new key of combination. I do not believe in eclecticism, but in the historical evolution of paradigms. This is in full accordance with what our great integrative thinkers both in the European and in the Anglo-Saxon traditions taught us. We have to build not an entirely new, but a consciously innovative key of how to lecture the present, and the imminent future. I'm sorry if this could seem a little bit contradictory or abstract, but I'm afraid we have to go through this "constitutive paradox" briefly before endeavouring any further step.

**6. Right, go on.**

As scholars like Giovanni Sartori already during the "paradigm wars" between qualitative and quantitative social analysis in the 1970s and 1980s, and more recently researchers like Ariel I. Ahram, Rudra Sil, Eileen Doherty or Dvora Yanow and Peregrine Schwartz-Shea have pointed out, innovative macro-analysis can – and in fact does in many cases – lead with a certain unavoidability, or even necessity, to the self-undermining or "dilution" of core concepts of traditional analysis: "In the course of seeking to describe the entire globe, core terms in the social scientific vocabulary, like democracy or development, are altered, diluted, or rendered vacuous. Instead of gaining analytical leverage through more powerful techniques of comparison, social science is likely only to stumble into a morass of terminology so general as to be vague in applicability and meaning." (Ariel I. Ahram, *Concepts and Measurement in Multimethod Research*, *Political Science Quarterly*, December 2011, 65/4). One result in current Global Studies and in the social sciences aiming at pragmatic Political Anticipation is, as at today, a new ideological polarization: "Interpretivism, which favors more reflexive and ideographic case studies, now stands alongside nomothetically oriented qualitative and quantitative work." (Rudra Sil, Eileen M. Doherty: *Beyond Boundaries? Disciplines, Paradigms, and Theoretical Integration in International Studies*, SUNY New York 2000; Dvora Yanow and Peregrine Schwartz-Shea: *Interpretation And Method: Empirical Research Methods And the Interpretive Turn*. M. E. Sharpe 2006). "For those aspiring to develop generalizable theory, partnership between qualitative and quantitative methods is a new norm and multimethod research (MMR) an increasingly prominent technique" (idem).

**7. To a certain extent, this - rather new, as it seems at first glance, but in certain traits without doubt repetitive - ideological polarization in the (social) sciences seems to be already a constituent part of the contemporary challenge to "understand the whole out of its parts", and of the riddle of understanding the current global change in its complex contradictions, and paradoxes. There are, as it seems, two immediate main questions here. First: You are speaking of "rationality types", which is a concept of German social theorist Jürgen Habermas, associates and followers who try to intuit the "open society" of the future, and seems to be at the center of your approach. In some occasions, you have even spoken in these terms with regard to the "resilient open society" of the 21st century. But what does this terminology exactly mean? And what kind of rationality types are, in reality, shaping the current stage of global change and transnationally interrelated development?**

First of all: "Interrelated development" is, despite all recent progress in addressing complexity, still a better term than "global development", in my view. Second, while my own aim is all about a realist approach, I do not want to go exclusively into the debate about the current dialectics between "classical" and "offensive", or between "moderate" and "aggressive" realism with regard to global democratization, respectively

the active or passive containment of authoritarian nations - neither in judgement building, policy advice, nor, eventually, in today's applied global politics, as far as they exist. I do not want either go exclusively into the debate of risk management, nor the different methodological and paradigmatic approaches to risk prevention and anticipation in applied policy (see, for example, Nick Bostrom: The Future of Humanity. Future of Humanity Institute, Oxford University 2007, <http://www.nickbostrom.com/papers/future.pdf>). I prefer to address "rationality types" (Habermas) that are active in societies, because I am convinced this is more flexible and effective to understand constellations and processes, as well to anticipate decisions and situations. The term "rationality type" includes paradigms that are active in modern societies; left and right of course, but also progressive and regressive, or liberal and conservative. Then you have to add the specific cultural and historical traits, under which they act; they constitute a very different "rationality type" in Asia as compared with, for example, the U.S. Then you add the contradictions inbuilt in a given "rationality type", which are often the most important structural feature to understand, the inner dialectics and the blind spots of given societal ratios. If you consider all this and apply it to given phenomena and constellations you have a lot of material to understand the underlying forces of a given situation, including the inbuilt possible options and the directions, in which it may evolve. The good news is that in the German social science tradition, the concept of "rationality type" as an instrument of analysis and foresight has reached a comparatively mature stage; it offers a relatively complete theoretical background for applications of more pragmatic character.

**8. So the concept of "rationality type" is the point of departure that may offer a bridge between theory and practice?**

Yes, that's our hope. It is a pragmatic instrument, not merely a theoretical hypothesis, and so it was conceived by Juergen Habermas and others since the 1960tis. I have my reasons for the choice of exactly this basic point of departure. Although the overall endeavour of building an appropriate approach to Global Analysis and Political Anticipation has necessarily much to do of course with a vast variety of issues, the task of understanding as a prerequisite of taking action is much more complicated nowadays than it was in the age of the ideological East-West polarization. Reality has gotten so complex, that in many ways reality itself is the new theory. In this sense, we have to be reality-oriented, not theory-fixed. We have to be realistic, and that includes being first of all critical about our unconscious - i.e. critical about our own "rationality type", and critical about its - necessarily - underlying paradigms and ideologies both as something given and as something that constantly develops. We have to confront hyper-complexity in a lot of different ways, not in just one, and be multi-polar.

**9. What is the basic idea of your specific approach to the hyper-complexity and multipolarity of contemporary reality?**

The basic idea, departing from theoretical outlines in the work of Juergen Habermas and others, is that typologically speaking there are at least six main rationality types or systemic order patterns with their specific discourse logics that shape our phase of globalization. They are at the same time to a certain extent types of the irrational, subconscious of globalization. If we understand, and subsequently put together these six per two (conscious and subconscious), equals twelve phases, order patterns or logical dimensions to create a basic understanding of the overall dimension: the evolving whole which we can delineate as the seventh dimension or, respectively, as fourteenth dimension, which may be the same to some extent (and the choice is important, but may come essentially to the same), we may have made a huge step forward, I guess. I usually concentrate on the seven-dimensional model of rationality types as discourse logics, to not make it too complicated, because to integrate six dimensions into the vision of the seventh is already a huge challenge. So I always propose to work first of all with seven dimensions, and leave their "shadow" or "other side" to the discussion of the main seven-dimensional process of "building an image of stratification" (Thomas J. Fararo).

**10. Before coming in detail to this - as it seems, crucial - aspect of your approach to the current stage of Globalization through 6-, 12- or ("integrated") 7- respectively 14-dimensionality, one question is: What is, in the light of what has been said so far, the difference between the terms of "Globalization" and your - apparently newly coined - concept of "Global Systemic**

**Shift”? Or do these concepts essentially denote the same, and thus you just – in essence - changed the marker?**

No, that is not my intent. I am not interested in markers, or signal names, or concepts coloured by interests, be the latter (again) conscious or unconscious. Let us resume the essence of the argument here. Let us start by once again clearing the basics: “Globalization” is the general macro-process of development since the 1970s, which has been going on since then. It was sped up and in many ways radicalized since the 1990s, i.e. after the fall of the Berlin wall. And it will probably continue to be a “divisive” concept further in the future, most probably within new environments, and through new constellations and characteristics. A second dimension was added since 9/11, which opened up another specific layer in the overall transition and transformation process. As such, the current result in the form of “global systemic shift” is so to say a kind of a “natural” development in history. Being produced at the interplay between at least two historic phases, and growing at the six-fold point of interweavement between technology, economy, politics, culture, religion/spirituality and demography, globalization seems to be an unavoidable and necessary stage of unfolding towards an upcoming unified humanity on a increasingly small planet, made possible by the exponentially growing outreach of technology, migration and not least by the development of humanity into outer space. The current global systemic shift thus denotes nothing other than the specifics of the change occurring within the present stage of globalization, which could in principle also happen in a different way. If you want, we could say that the current stage of “globalization” in the more general term is the “natural” dimension of what is happening; the “global systemic shift” in the more specific term is how it specifically happens through man-made constellations, events and relations between the different systemic rationality types at play – which of course depend on the macro-historic stage, that they have reached through a process of 5000 years until the present moment. Since it is foreseeable that in a future not too far away these rationality types may have changed again or shifted in their centers towards different, maybe more advanced positions, it is clear that we should assert in this present moment that yes, “globalization” may remain the decisive macro-process that will continue to stay at the center of human development for the centuries to come; while the “global systemic shift” in specific will most probably strongly change over time, and be shaped through very different constellations, ratios and assemblies. Globalization can be anticipated to a high degree, the Global Systemic Shift a lot less.

**11. That specifically means?**

My, and our research interest – since there is a number of much appreciated colleagues who are on a similar track – is in principle to address the “hermeneutic circle” between “the whole” of contemporary change and its “parts, i.e. between “Globalization” in general and the “Global Systemic Shift” in its constituent parts and their interweavement; as well as exploring the specifically contemporary mutual interdependence between “Globalization” and “Global System Shift”. In the end, the goal is as simple as its realization is extremely challenging, if not impossible: to understand the contemporary socio-political processes in their interweavement by using a consciously multi-faceted tool of analysis able to handle their specific, “post-ideological” complexities – a.o. by integrating the approaches of the different specialized sciences. All this in order to address one and the same historic symptom or event (be it of political, economic, cultural, religious-spiritual, technological or demographic nature or “center of gravity” in its rationality type or lead discourse) from different, in many cases contradictory or coalescing viewpoints.

**12. So what kind of change exactly is meant by “Global systemic shift,” if we specify it further, and differentiate it from “Globalization”?**

The change exerted by the global shift inbuilt in globalization in our days in essence consists in the interaction and conjunction of six core fields of societal transformation. A seventh dimension is the transformation they are shaping seen as a whole, which is more than the sum of its parts given that it adds its own laws and mechanisms to the process. These seven dimensions are constituted as interplay between typological rationality types, which give way to respective typological (or, to a certain extent, only for archetypically modern) discourses active in the logics of current events. Thus we have to consider, to study and to critically question all these seven dimensions – or rationality types - as well as the (constantly changing) modes and

ways of their systemic interweavement if we want to understand what is really going on on an appropriate level of complexity and integration.

### 13. And that is?

Important thinkers like Bruce Mazlish, Mark Juergensmeyer, Manfred Steger, Immanuel Wallerstein, Joseph S. Nye or Francis Fukuyama in the USA, the UK and Australia, or Jürgen Habermas, Hans-Otto Apel, Ulrich Wehler, Herfried Münkler, Ulrich Beck, Peter Sloterdijk or Johannes Heinrichs in Germany have relatively unanimously pointed out one aspect, although departing from widely different (and unconnected) questions of interest: that worldwide development since the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, the collapse of communism in 1991, and even more specifically since September 11, 2001 has not depended any more on traditional notions of politics and economics alone. That was largely the case within the patterns of (inter-dependent) polarization that characterized the era of capitalism vs. socialism (or more precisely, of state capitalism versus private capitalism) in the post-World-War-II constellation between 1945 and 1989. The global change factually depends on more factors and forces now. It depends on more systemic dimensions and fields of action than we used to consider previously.

### 14. Which fields, specifically?

Until today the systemic discourses, typologies and action patterns of 1. *politics* and 2. *economics* certainly have remained dominant. But the global development is increasingly co-shaped by 3. the so-called “*cultural turn*” of civilizations and 4. by the “*renaissance of religions*” – including an increasingly fierce battle within the latter field between confessional religion and experiential spirituality, and between regressive and progressive religious/spiritual currents and movements. Additionally, there is a rapidly growing importance of two additional systemic forces that can also be regarded as typological discourses and pattern of contemporary societal logics: 5. *technology*, and 6. *demography*. While politics, economics, culture and religion seem to be widely dependent on dialogue and consensus building and are thus embedded in societal processes in the strict sense, technology and demography seem to be two rising systemic influences that are less embedded, are less controllable and are thus becoming to a certain extent “*meta-societal*” forces of transformation. And the seventh dimension which is the resulting *change as a whole* is constantly contested between the changing supremacies of two or more of the respective typological discourse patterns which take over the lead for a certain period of time and are then replaced by the temporary supremacy of others.

## II. Towards a multi-fold picture at the interface between differentiation and integration

### 15. What does all this mean precisely if we try to see the bigger picture?

Overall seen, departing from the theory of rationality types, we can currently speak of a *structurally sixfold* systemic shift: a change in the basics of the organizational and paradigmatic patterns of worldwide order structures, which seems to be occurring exactly in the interplay between the six typological macro-spheres or discourse patterns of politics, economics, culture, religion/spirituality, technology and demography on a worldwide scale. Together, they shape the seventh dimension which is not only the result of their complex and changing interaction, but adds a certain paradigmatic macro-feature: which of the six typological discourses has the lead during a certain epoch of development at the expense of the others? And why, in which way, and for how long? For example, during the “*neoliberal*” years in the 1990s until the financial crisis of 2007-2010, the economic discourses and order patterns held a certain macro-supremacy over those of politics, and over the others on a worldwide scale; even if this constellation between the six dimensions departed from the West, it ultimately affected the whole world, including areas where, as for example in the Islamic world, the discourses of religion may have still played an at least similarly important role as those of economics and finance. In the aftermath of the crisis, this temporary structural supremacy of the discourses and the typological “*mindsets*” of economics seem to be changing again now with politics trying to reclaim its lost territory, and with religion and culture bringing to the fore a new wave of ethical thinking. And let

us not forget that every single one of these fields is torn in itself: that there are currents of a so-called “left” against currents of a so-called “right”, if you want to brand them still like this, within each of the six fields. So each single field is (1.) structured through inner conflicts between communitarian and individualistic forces, (2.) is in most cases and situations shaped by compromises, (3.) continuously produces winners and losers not only in the overlapping space with other discourses and system logics, but also in its own inside, and (4.) functions dialectically, if not even by antithetic procedures.

**16. What does that imply for the future of the Social Sciences, including the Political and the Economic Sciences? How can they grasp this obviously very complex whole, and put it in a sound relation to its parts – while, as this attempt seems to suggest, temporarily considering the continuous evolution and transformation of (literally?) everything involved?**

It is indeed a huge, maybe an overwhelming task, no doubt. But since the present world seems to be structured in such a complex manner, we have to do our best to meet the challenge, whether we want it or not. For the Social Sciences – at least for those that conceive themselves as specifically contemporary and remain eager to carry out cutting-edge research and analysis –, this means first of all the request for a higher, more elaborated level of Inter- and Transdisciplinarity; second, the need to develop respective quantitative and qualitative methodologies, to put them in balance to each other, and to practically apply them. Not all of these methodologies have to be “invented” anew; on the contrary, most of them already exist in the different fields of investigation. The decisive point of the coming years will not be to create new approaches and methods, but to bring them together and to integrate them. Or as my friend Mark Edwards of the University of Western Australia put it – together with other colleagues like Jennifer Gidley of RMIT University Melbourne or Wendelin Küpers of Massey University Auckland –: the decisive point will be to develop an “integral meta-theoretical” approach. That is what I call, with regard to the seven-dimensional approach of the “Global systemic shift,” “System Action Theory.”

**17. Summing up?**

It follows that everyone who wants to understand what globalization in our Obama, Cameron, Xi Jinping, Singh, Hollande, Putin, Shinzo Abe and Merkel era is, how it practically works and how exactly it changes things in the complex interweavement of different, in part contradictory discursive and systemic forces, actors and worldviews, has to take a look at all the six fields of system logics and their specific ways of interaction both synchronically and diachronically, i.e. both at a given moment and over time. And then, the seventh dimension of the whole has to be examined. Again, it is a huge task. But again, we cannot avoid trying to meet it in the long run, whether we like it or not.

**18. Could you give us insight into how the “Global systemic shift” works? What are the laws that are structuring it?**

Looking at most of today’s concrete socio-political phenomena, it seems to be hypothetically plausible that there may be some basic laws that structure the overall process of change, i.e. the general mechanisms of the “Global systemic shift.” These laws are: 1. The interactions between the six discursive fields are embedded in a continuing process of change regarding their mutual influence and their temporary supremacy over each other. 2. The mutual interdependences and influences between them vary according to place and situation, and thus are differentiated regionally and locally – as, for example, have convincingly pointed out Jan Nederveen Pieterse of UCSB and Cesare Casarino of the University of Minnesota. 3. As I tried to point out above, the law of interaction that structures the relationship between the six fields or systemic dimensions is that one or two of them are taking the lead during a certain period and within the framework of a concrete constellation for a specific amount of time, and are then replaced by other fields out of the six we have identified, which are subsequently taking over for another period of time in other given situations, in order to be then replaced by a new constellation of relative and temporary supremacy, etc. The overall field is constantly changing, while – and even if – its constitutive elements remain the same. And again, the process as a whole cannot be reduced to any of its parts, nor is it merely the sum of its parts. Considering this whole as a seventh potential dimension can help us to not reduce the global systemic change to the

elements that are constituting and shaping it. Global change is always more than we can think and analyze, and it is always an irreducibly open process. We should never forget that.

**19. But if this is the case: Is the “Global systemic shift” still a singular event then, or has it become a constant, in principle never-ending process of transformation?**

In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, we indeed spoke of big transformational events, like the end of WWII, the oil crisis, the fall of the Berlin Wall. The political, economic, cultural and religious analysis was concentrated on the *topos* of a single, non-recurring event. After the transit into the 21<sup>st</sup> century, we may be well advised to consider change a permanent *process*, or a state of things in itself. So change is becoming something that is indeed more a continuing process rather than a single, outstanding *event*. Accordingly, the “Global systemic shift” seems not to be a single epochal event as most important changes were in past times, but rather a continuous process or a lasting state of things that presents some typologies that remain stable, but that constantly changes all the time in its details and modes of realization. That seems to be a paradox at first glance. But I think it is an accurate description of what we are observing.

**20. So something remains the same, while everything changes? Is this still politics, or is it already philosophy?**

It is both, as the field of investigation requires. There is no politics without philosophy. Everyone who has ever been involved in political service first-hand in any influential position knows that very well. The synchronicity and interplay between a kind of basic stability of a few systemic cornerstones and the omnipresence and new “universality” of change of most of the elements involved seems to be the *signum* of our “post-postmodern” epoch. So one task we have to address is to understand how typologies of discourse and system logics remain in essence the same over a certain period of time, while the field of reality as such is composed of a myriad of details and “applications” that are changing and thus evolving all the time. The quest thus is how to include constants and variables to the same extent and at the same time in one integrative approach, which must function synchronically and diachronically.

**21. What does it mean to “integrate” all these aspects, which are quite different, as it seems? Is it merely to state an example of how to exert interdisciplinary analysis in the coming decades? Or is it rather to concretely influence the rise of a first “global consciousness?”**

In my view, by undertaking such an exemplary attempt – it will most probably not be more than that, for the foreseeable future; it will in the best case be an exemplary gesture, not too distant from the gesture of art, rather than a mainstream scientific approach I guess –, we are indeed trying to be working consciously, willingly together at co-shaping the “Global Imaginary” (Manfred Steger, Saskia Sassen). Second, we would also like to contribute to give this “Global Imaginary” some very first kind of “self-consciousness” – even if probably nevertheless not to a sufficient extent, and only in a temporary and preliminary form. Of course, the essential point here which is at least as important as all the others is to not overestimate the importance, the outreach, the potential and the factual outcome of such an approach. It is, and it will most probably always remain, just one option of “reading” the overall development of our time among many other options – not more, and not less. It is per se no “meta-integrative” approach, even though it searches, in its own ways, for a “meta-theoretical” integration. It tries to bring together different analytic methods and approaches, but it does not aspire to integrate all the other “integrative” attempts of our time. It is important to understand this difference.

**22. Why do you speak of the “three ends” of our time as implicit in the “Global systemic shift?”**

Because as far as I can see, the present “Global systemic shift” basically departs from three epochal ends that seem to characterize our era:

1. The end of “Neoliberalism” in the sphere of *economics*. See for example, the financial and economic crisis of 2007-10 and its plurifold outcome, which a.o. consists in the rise of sustainability to become a core dimension of finance, the ascent of social finance institutions to the role of international

“big players,” the revival of a new, second generation of “postmaterialists,” the rise of new (sub-) “cultures of gift” and of a new autonomy of money from banks like in the emerging, smartphone-based “mobile money” culture which tries to empower the “global individual” to become to a certain extent independent from financial institutions, but also the opening-up of the academic economic and financial theory towards “green” and “alternative” approaches. On these changes, and as a partial product of the research on the “Global systemic shift,” I have recently had my book: *Social Banking and Social Finance: Answers to the Economic Crisis*, Springer New York, 2011, published, see: [http://europe.stanford.edu/publications/social\\_banking\\_and\\_social\\_finance\\_answers\\_to\\_the\\_economic\\_crisis/](http://europe.stanford.edu/publications/social_banking_and_social_finance_answers_to_the_economic_crisis/) and [http://europe.stanford.edu/news/a\\_new\\_view\\_on\\_the\\_financial\\_and\\_economic\\_crisis\\_of\\_20072010\\_20101015/](http://europe.stanford.edu/news/a_new_view_on_the_financial_and_economic_crisis_of_20072010_20101015/).

2. The end of the “New World Order” in the sphere of *politics*. We are witnessing an ongoing transformation in the patterns of the post-1989/91 monolateral supremacy of the U.S. (often called the “New World Order” after the collapse of communism in 1991). The U.S. were until a couple of years ago the “only remaining superpower” (Zbigniew Brzezinski). But what we are observing now is the end of the – probably for many years last historical – monolateral political world order, and the rise of a more multipolar world with the contemporary ascent of China, India, Brazil and other regional and international players (including South Africa, i.e. the BASIC countries, but also new geopolitical spaces that are creating alliances like South America or parts of Africa), the changing role of the Middle East in a world that is moving away from oil, and the ongoing European unification process, including stronger ties with its neighbours. This overall development has been probably sketched best a) in Harvard’s Joseph S. Nye’s vision of a threefold “Future of Power,” where different nation states, trans-national non-governmental actors and new global “social media” like Facebook, Twitter, webcams, smartphones, etc. will replace the traditional monolateral dominance of the nation-state as the center of socio-political power. In another aspect, this overall change is b) also well described in London School of Economics scholar’s Martin Jacques’ notion of the rise of “competing modernities.” The new global condition of “competing modernities” consists in the fact that the coming decades will produce culturally and politically very different societies in the East, West, North and South, many of which will be similarly evolved regarding technology and economy, but very different in their convictions of what a “good life” is, what “modernization” means, and how, if at all, it is related to individuality, freedom and democracy (like in the West), or rather to collectivism, harmony and stability through authority (China). c) The “end of the New World order” is not least also taking place because “Soft Power,” i.e. global opinion leadership and the “supremacy of ideas,” may partially replace military, diplomatic and classical nation state power, as outlined in U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clintons strategy of how to lead in the 21<sup>st</sup> century through transnational “civilian power” and through the “freedom of the Internet” as tool of global democratization. All these three dimensions are influencing each other, and – taken together – are in the process of transforming the traditional global political patterns not only superficially, but in their basic mechanisms.
3. The end of “Postmodernism” in the sphere of *culture*. The leading cultural paradigm in the West since the late 1980s (and as the heritage of the 1960s revolutions) has been “Postmodernism,” a socio-cultural worldview that claimed that there are no “essences,” and no “truth” in reality, but that everything is a socio-cultural construct of arbitrary means, which depend on time, culture and circumstances. For example, “Postmodernism” denied that there was any “real” basis for the Human Rights and their assumption, that every individual has his or her own, untouchable value which is rooted in its “essence” as being a Self, or “I”. Leading “postmodern” thinkers of worldwide influence like Jacques Derrida denied the existence of an “I”, at least as an ontological reality, as well as most other concepts of humanistic modernity. That’s why Derrida and other leading “postmodern” socio-political thinkers like, for example, Michel Foucault, Jean-Francois Lyotard, Jean Baudrillard, Louis Althusser, Jacques Lacan, Richard Rorty, Fredric Jameson, Helene Cixous (my personal favourite philosopher, another paradoxon indeed!), Gerburg Treusch-Dieter (my – much beloved – “doctoral mother” in Berlin) or in Germany Wolfgang Welsch, always faced great difficulties when confronted with the question of

international Human Rights, humanism, enlightenment or global democratization. Because of their radical nominalism, they had to deny the very philosophical basis of the existence of any “reality” or “essence” of more or less any crucial modern Western concept. The consequence was that although these leading Western thinkers of their time were radically democratic, they had to face the paradox that authoritarian regimes like China which refuses the very idea of Human Rights because of its democratic implications, thanked them for showing that the Human Rights (and in consequence, democratization, enlightenment and humanism as such) were in the end nothing else than an artificial, relatively young cultural “invention” of the West, used as a tool of supremacy over other cultures and societies by the Western political class. So to make it short, the radical nominalism, if not philosophical anarchism of “Postmodernism,” which aimed at questioning and “withstanding” (Derrida) *every* claim to power independently of its democratic, humanistic or simply order-fostering traits, created its own sharp contradictions. Part of this ideology came to an end with the attacks on the World Trade Center on 9/11. This was a kind of key event, where, according to the famous article of TIME columnist Roger Rosenblatt, “The Age of Irony Comes To an End. No longer will we fail to take things seriously” written a couple of days later, the “essential reality” of grief, anger and hope as concrete societal forces, but also the “tangible reality” of ideals to believe in order to defend the democratic societies of the West, led to a broad re-discovery of Western realism and idealism – also in the much more than the U.S. and the UK secular Continental Europe and throughout the democratic agents all over the world, including the international civil society. It was, as we realize today, the start of the end of “Postmodernism” as the leading cultural paradigm of the West.

### 23. In which sense?

Indeed, since 9/11 we have observed the emergence of a broad variety of new philosophical and socio-cultural “essentialisms” and “integralisms” of very different quality (and with many inbuilt pros and cons) in Western democratic societies, including the world of education. For example, the ascent of the new interdisciplinary field of “Contextual political analysis,” which tries to consciously establish a “constructively integrative” method of analysis that balances realism and nominalism, instead of the postmodern “deconstructive” approach that was in large parts inclined to de-legitimation and rejected *every* form of realism as such, thus opening up a deep gap between *thinking* about politics and *politics* itself. As “Postmodernism” was in principle opposed to politics in many ways not only, but also because of its 1960s heritage, the ideology of “resistance” was often romantically exaggerated. The result of “Postmodernism” was the creation of a deep, lasting structural antagonism between the systemic forces of culture and politics especially in Central Europe. Let me say just in brackets here that unfortunately, contextual political analysis seems to be still a field in large parts confined to the Anglophone academia, and still widely marginalized, if not de facto unestablished, at the Central European universities, which are still struggling to institutionally proceed to inter- and transdisciplinary approaches to reconcile culture and politics. Although there are some quite positive exceptions like the European University of Frankfurt/Oder or some research clusters at the Free University Berlin, the field seems to be only slowly building. At the same time, we have the return of parts of the “postmodern” deconstructive ideology in the form of new radically subversive and anarchic movements like, for example, “Wikileaks” (Julian Assange), which I regard as a paradox inbuilt in the openness and transparency present in the democratic Western world.

### 24. Why?

Because in the form of “Wikileaks,” the openness and transparency of the West threatens to undermine its own basis. “Wikileaks” publishes critical information necessary for the protection of the democratic societies, and factually hands them over to the enemies of these open societies, which you can be sure are the very first ones to study every single word of the “Wikileaks” publications, in order to use the information then against the West, and thus against the open democracies, and – most importantly – against the very idea of “open society” (Karl R. Popper) as such.

### 25. There are three more dimensions in play.

As I believe, these “three ends” are supposedly accompanied by

4. the global “Renaissance of Religion” in the sphere of *religion/spirituality*. This is manifest in the ascent of various currents within all major world religions to new political and cultural power (Mark Juergensmeyer), including a new militance within Hinduism, Islam, and radical Christianity; the inner fights between “Schelerians” and “Thomists” within the Catholic Church; but also the latent schism within the Church of England and within the Anglican Church in general. If parts of these would re-join the Catholic Church, as it has been looked-out, it would be certainly nothing less than a global historical earthquake. This dimension is also becoming politically and socially relevant through the new battle between the “classical” experiential approaches to spirituality like Freemasonry, Anthroposophy and Rosicrucianism on the one hand, and the confessional religious institutions of Christianity in the West, i.e. the confessional churches, on the other hand. And there is a more general return of the “*philosophia perennis*,” i.e. of a certain essentialism in the Western hemisphere that is affecting basically all levels and fields of society, because it is related to the “*zeitgeist*,” it seems to be “in the air.” To put it in other terms, one important endeavour after 9/11 came to balance religion, spirituality and rationalism / secularization within the pluralistic open societies of the world, in order to keep them at the spearhead of global social development.

The overall development is accompanied

5. by the ascent of *technology* to become a truly global force of *liberation* and *conditioning* at the same time. This double role of technology as a systemic force of liberation and de-emancipation (de-individualization) *at the same time* in our epoch, per se contradictory and “deeply ambivalent” occurs, for example, in the form of the so-called new “liberation technologies” at Stanford University; but on the other hand (second) also in the form of the changing socio-political *habitus* triggered by the new “social technologies” like Facebook, Twitter, webcams, smartphones or I-pads, which are modifying our ways to socially connect and interact in fundamental manners. Third, by the rapid expansion of the concept of “medium” from an “extension of man” towards a “constituent part of the human being,” given that technology is no longer only outside the “subjective” human body as its “objective” tool, but is invading the human body in the form of “invasive technologies,” and becoming part of it, e.g. becoming a “subjective-objective” reality, assumedly influencing, if not modifying also the consciousness the body-mind continuum produces (James Giordano, Nick Bostrom, Julian Savulescu, Kevin Warwick).

The “Global systemic shift” seems to be – last but not least – co-shaped by (and dependent on)

6. the exponentially growing importance of *demography*. Global population has quintupled since the start of the 20<sup>th</sup> century alone. The population of China has more than doubled between 1949 and 1989 alone, from 580 million to 1,2 billion. In the medieval ages, the population was not even a 500<sup>th</sup> of today. Modernity (including industrialization, *Arbeitsteilung*, und *damit verbundene Ausdifferenzierung von Gesellschaft*) leads to an explosion of population, as we see since the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The age of “competing modernities” will be no exception here. Was a human life worth more when there were much, much less people on earth? Where will all the new people live, and go to live? Expansion into surrounding so space, most probably, and almost unavoidably. That means: In our days, demographic developments are shifting the balances between, to take just two examples, the global East and West and between the global North and South. Probably even more importantly: they are shifting balances and constellations between all four corners of the socio-political and economic world. And they do that widely independently of political and economic backgrounds, cultural strategies (for example, France in Africa in the 1990s) or geographical frontiers. They do it at least independently from the sense that still prevailed at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century: “natural” influence zones of the past against future-oriented strategical “centers of gravity.” Demography today is in fact becoming a “non-aligned,” neither past- nor future-centred factor of globalization that is independent of most of the classical variables of political theory and of political economy. It is thus no wonder that many analysts today still cannot handle it, or even actively refuse to include it into the (still building) “accepted” interdisciplinary political theory – *de facto* out of in many ways too “leftist” or too “rightist” notions of balance, and of analytical justice.

**26. And thus your core hypothesis is?**

My central hypothesis is that *all these six developments* are increasingly acting on each other and influencing the process as a whole. So we have to consider them all, as well as their structural and specific (i.e. changing) interweavement, as far as this is actually possible, and as far as it makes sense with regard to specific questions of analysis, integrative understanding and action under given circumstances.

**27. But despite of all these good points, why do we need an “integrative picture” of globalization at all? Would it not suffice to have the single pictures as drawn from the specialized viewpoints, lets say, of Political Science, which of course does not appropriately address the issues of culture or religion, or from the view of the Economic Sciences, which of course are estrange to most of the present cultural and religious issues as well? In short: “why should we need to make such an “impossible” effort to put all these relatively exact (and in themselves logical) viewpoints together – knowing that there is no single place in the world at any given university that allows us to do that appropriately, in the strict sense of inter- and transdisciplinarity? In other words: Knowing that (except for single task forces, and/or centers) there is no strictly, and no exclusively “interdisciplinary” academic department active today, why should we undertake such an “academically suicidal” task?**

The reason is, as always with important matters, simple in the end, even if it may be complex, if not impossible, to produce an answer in the strict sense of the term. My response is this: whereas all the (discursively and typologically speaking six) elements I mentioned are more or less well known in the different specialized sciences, their joint analysis remains widely isolated. This is due to the fact that they have not yet been integrated satisfyingly into a unifying macro-picture (what James Giordano and Ashok Vaseashta refer to as “Integrative Scientific Convergence,” and what Barbara A. Holland calls “multiversal” approach), or into a “coherent unity” by “synthetic work” (Nick Bostrom). However, it can be assumed that the possibilities to anticipate the outcomes of the overall process and to handle it appropriately will depend strongly on the possibility to develop a synthetic macro-picture, which must identify the core developments behind the very different single phenomena. This macro-picture is in my view best handled if we differentiate it, as a seventh independent dimension, from the six building stones that constitute it. Thus part of my and our research attempts to identify some of the core elements in play by investigating the – very different, but probably coalescing – roots and streams of the “Global systemic shift” within the increasing interweavement between political, cultural, religious, economic, technological and demographic symptoms. As I mentioned, such an approach (almost) necessarily delineates a method called “System Action Theory” designed to allow an integrative, seven-dimensional analysis of the current global change by combining system and action research tools. In other words: the characteristic research approach called “Global systemic shift” tries to cover the political, cultural, economic, religious/spiritual, technological and demographic macro-tendencies behind the apparent phenomena; as well as to identify the bigger movements behind these phenomena – which, to be sure, are certainly many, complex, interwoven and pluri-optional appearances.

**28. Does such a motivation not carry almost necessarily, although probably hiddely or even unconsciously, in some way the pretention to uncover the relationship between appearance and essence? And would that not mean to go back to a kind of Hegelian view, or even to the contemporary extensions of Marxism, even if disguised as one crucial contemporary approach?**

No, not at all. I am not a Marxist, rather the contrary – even if I am still wondering what a more balanced opposite to Marxist analysis might reasonably and positively be in the coming years. I am decisively not satisfied with the attempts that have been undertaken in this direction so far in the past two, or three decades. I am certainly not a Neoliberal, either. Even my greatest, and most far-reaching sympathies and hopes are all for the individual, and its political, economic, cultural, spiritual, technological and demographical self-reliance. Moreover, to disappoint you (maybe) further, and I am certainly very sorry for that, I see myself neither in the American tradition of Immanuel Wallerstein nor of the German one of Johannes Heinrichs, to take just some pre-eminent examples I mentioned at the outset of this talk, even if I very much acknowledge many of their findings as compared with the political and cognitive background of their times.

Overall seen, I believe the challenge today is a different one. And this is certainly only my personal view, even if I am aware that it is of the most unusual implications, and of the most important outlook, as far as I can see (and I am biased here, of course, how couldn't I?).

### **29. And that is?**

It is – to come back to the modern “fore-father” of trying to “think the whole” Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel whom you mentioned, and who anticipated in an until to the present day very instructive way most of the pros and cons, the chances and the rifts and shadows of any such attempt – a “later” approach in modern history. The challenge today is simply to be bold enough to search for a new, truly contemporary integrative position, i.e. a timely one. It must be (and overall seen will be) a position that originates specifically in our own time, while not neglecting the history of ideas behind the history of politics, in the applied sense. One motivation among others to do all this – and for me personally one main motivation certainly – is to continue the overall work of the enlightenment in contemporary ways. The motivation is especially, I think, to exert what German thinker Juergen Habermas has called the “permanent, unending work” at the interface between “De-Mythologization” and “Modernization” that has to be synchronized with a sound, rational “post-postmodern” Idealism – or, to put it in probably better terms, into a new, transnational civil religion, if you want.

### **30. This seems to be all important for the future of globalization, at least regarding its trans-national lead terms. But what does it exactly mean, in the details?**

I believe that globalized societies with no reasoned, well balanced relationship and integration between the three elements of De-Mythologization, Modernization and rational Idealism (or civil religion) will have quite a difficult future, if at all. Please differentiate here between “De-Mythologization” and “De-Legitimation,” this is quite important. “De-Mythologization” does not mean to deligitimate the structures of given societies, as I mentioned is the case, in my view, with “Wikileaks.” “De-Mythologization” rather liberates the progressive “civil religion” by uncovering and confining “neo-essential” traits that always have one tendency to cloud rationalism and to create irrational beliefs and self-interpretations in any society at any time. But let me also underscore (once again) that De-Mythologization within any truly contemporary take on the “Global systemic shift” is not simply “deconstruction” anymore, as it was in “post-modern” times. It is now much more, and something much more positive and constructive; it includes, for instance, the conscious, and accurate, i.e. time-intensive differentiation between progressive and regressive forms of spirituality, as well as their very different societal and political consequences. Not least, because both progressive and regressive spiritualities are becoming increasingly important global actors (Mark Juergensmeyer).

### **31. How could we explain this further?**

It is easy to see that the rise of religious discourses and cultural mythologies creates new mythologies within - and mystifications of - parts of the globalized social and societal sphere (Victor Faessel). Thus one important task of the coming years will be the balanced rationalization of improper, collectivistic and “unitarian” mythologizations in order to keep the open societies open. Since myths always tend to close down societies and to de-individualize them for the sake of collectivity, besides stabilizing inappropriately, if not freezing what is factually hindering change and development, we have to continue the “unfinished project of modernity” (Habermas) now in more contemporary, and that means more complex-adequate ways. The seven-dimensionality of the “System Action” approach is one attempt – among many others you see at work today – to do that.

### **32. In a recent speech at your Institute at Stanford, U.N. Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon stated that**

*“the level and degree of global change that we face today is far more profound than at any other period in my adult lifetime. We have no time to lose. I am convinced national and state action can spur progress in global negotiations, creating a virtuous cycle. I have learned to speak out for one essential reason: Lives and*

*fundamental values are at stake.*” (Ban Ki-moon, U.N. Secretary-General, Freeman Spogli Institute for International Studies, Stanford University, January 17, 2013, <http://news.stanford.edu/news/2013/january/ban-un-talk-011713.html>).

**This last sentence in some way echoes what you were saying on the role of (de-)mythologization, contextual politics, ideas and civil religion for the future of globalization. Do you agree with Ban’s statement?**

Yes, I do. As I understand that Ban points out the growing importance of values both for Globalization and the Global systemic shift, I think that the decisive task is indeed to understand the unprecedented depth, and extension, of global change in our days. Ban is right in saying that it was never that “profound” like today. And he is also right that we have no time to lose. We need models to understand this situation appropriately, and we are only in the process of developing them. We do not have them yet at hand, they are not fully operable yet. We have to activate them, and we have no time to lose indeed: neither in practice, nor in theory, nor – in particular – at their interplay. I last but not least agree with Ban that we need to create a “virtuous cycle” instead of the “vicious cycle” that is characterizing some aspects of the current international (and such interrelated) crises of all three global main actors, the “G-3”: USA (ideological polarization), China (social unrest and growing societal rift with more than 180,000 uprisings in 2011 alone) and Europe (Debt- and Euro-Crises since 2007, i.e. for more than 6 years now). But make no mistakes: Not one of these actors is “in crisis”. The whole world is in crisis. This crisis is a logical, and to some extent necessary reaction to the end of the “incubation phase” of globalization since 1989. It took us 15 years to reach a “mature” phase of globalization – and the global crises are the response to it, differently in every global actor, but all originating in one and the same process assumably. Not Europe, not China, not the U.S. is in crisis: the whole world is in crisis. And that is what I call the “Global Systemic Shift”, which is nothing else than the effect of “Globalization” after a certain phase of development. This phase is necessary, to reach the next level of development, and emancipation. We cannot avoid it. That means, we should work with it.

**33. Ban outlined three ways to navigate the transition: sustainable development, empowering young people and women, and pursuing dignity and democracy. Is this the direction to follow?**

Yes. I agree with Ban, but would add the necessity of globalizing education and of improving the methods of how to understand it. Last but not least, I think it will be crucial to innovate academic inter- and trans-disciplinarity, to take it earnestly eventually. Because it is this dimension: the innovation of the academic understanding of the current phase of globalization, that will decisively contribute to all three “ways” which Ban sketches: sustainable development, pursuing democracy, and maybe most important: to empower young people to find their way through the hyper-complexity of our days.

**34. So to put it in just one sentence, what is the final goal of all this?**

The final goal is indeed “to increase our capacity as global citizens”, as U.N. secretary general Ban Ki-moon expressed it in the speech you quoted. The focus here is decisively on “capacity”. I think - and I hope - that the 7-dimensional approach can contribute to this - raise of capacity in thinking global and better understanding the world, in particular in three dimensions: 1. in advising governments, 2. in educating the future elites, which have to think more multi-dimensionally, and 3. In empowering the average citizen to raise his or her capacity to indeed become, and be a global citizen. Of course, these three dimensions are closely interwoven, and probably not fully effective without each other. Thus we would like to give them equal importance. The first dimension requires thinkers able to connect different disciplines and to apply their findings into the complexity of practice; the second gifted teachers able to inspire and motivate the most talented of our youth. The third requires the rebirth of the public intellectual in academia, i.e. intellectuals able to reach out beyond the narrow spaces of think-tanks and lecture halls by stimulating discussion and creating broader consciousness. All three are equally important, but what has been most neglected in the past years under the pressure of re-specialization is the interconnection between academia and the intellectual; the academic sphere has promoted education administrators rather than sought for public intellectuals,

who are necessarily multi-disciplinary and have to be willing to anticipate the future by reading the present, i.e. to take rational risks. In short, the task is tridimensional, and the dimension we have to reconsider with most urgency, is the role of the public intellectual in the education system, particularly in traditional academia that today, a.o. as an effect of the recent crises, is less innovative and reality-oriented than it could be. In the end, we need a new approach bound to the combination of continuity and innovation. The seven-dimensional methodology of “System Action Theory” is an attempt towards such an approach.

**35. Who will be responsible for the success of its application, and for its eventual shortfalls?**

It depends on all partners involved, both from the theoretic and the practice-oriented fields, whether the process of in-depth, i.e. seven-dimensional convergence and transformation will be a productive and satisfying one. And that’s certainly what I wish for. Because the most important issue in my view is that progress will be made, independently of any specific single solutions that may be found for the single problems. Progress, multidimensional progress where different, in the ideal case of course all six fields of systemic action mutually influence and empower each other, is certainly more important than many of the rather one-sided economic or political outlooks that we may continue to hear in the coming years from all (political, ideological, social, cultural) sides involved. In my view, it is all decisive to make continuous, stable, multidimensional and differentiated progress, even though it may be a more silent one that appears to be less spectacular than single symbolic events who - wrongly - in many cases tend to create a “unitarism” of understanding and explain things by mixing and melting differing discourse types, thus falsifying their meanings and creating unhealthy hybrids which on the medium and long term create rather confusion than the enlightened progress we want. In contrast, we want a rational modernization which is always, and unavoidably based on a step-by-step process: first differentiation (or *gesellschaftliche Ausdifferenzierung*, in Habermas’ and Apel’s words), than integration. Integration can never precede differentiation; it must always be vice versa for every given and future rational multiversal approach. It must be: first differentiation, than (maybe, and as far as suitable) integration. No other option given. And: Both phases have to be implemented in critical manners, and in a consciously “(self-)critical attitude. No other option given either.