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Towards a nonviolent degrowth. A glance to methods and techniques of nonviolent action as a tool to achieve degrowth

Arnau Matas Morell
Universitat de les Illes Balears

arnau.matas@gmail.com

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Abstract

There is a social movement articulated around the degrowth ideas. This movement fits in the category of «new social movements» due to its values, organization forms, mobilization, action, goals and cultural contents. These types of movements have become one of the main social change drivers. Some forms of action of these movements belong to the non-violent action tradition (protest, non-cooperation, direct action, etc). Because of its imagery as well as its techniques and methods, non-violence has proven historically its ability to change reality or, at least generate the conditions for that change. That's the reason why it is interesting to start up a dialogue between non violence and degrowth, two concurring proposals that combined can be very useful in order to move toward more equitable an and sustainable ways of life.

1   Introduction

In a global context of rising inequity and ecological crisis too, often we see attempts of solving problems caused by violence using more violence. Similarly, the serious environmental crisis caused by the economic growth politics —a fetish converted in telós of politics— tries to be solved by more economic growth. This, because, when all our tools are hammers we tend to see every problem as a nail.

Due to this reason, non-violence and degrowth are alternative tools that allow us to perceive conflicts in a different manner and show different transformation possibilities. Both nonviolence and degrowth question some central aspects of our societies: violence and economic growth respectively. This is why they become a magnificent political and economic alternative, which can lead us to more pacific ways of life toward the rest of people and the planet.

2   The (new) social movements as drivers of social change

How would our societies be without the emergence of great collective movements such as the workers, pacifist, feminist, ecologist or the civil rights movements? There is no possible answer, but it shows the interesting question of the social movements role and their relationship with social change

2.1   The new social movements

The new social movements —manner in which we refer to pacifism, feminism, environmentalism among

others— are new regarding their values (that are not themselves new, but are articulated in a new way), their organization forms, mobilization and action, their sociopolitical goals and their cultural contents. Given their potential, nowadays these movements are social change by excellence.

Social movements are by no means a new phenomenon, on the contrary, we could find rather easily numerous times and periods in which a sufficient number of people have confronted the established political power and the hegemonic vision of reality. Times in which a group has achieved collective political identity, acquiring some organization and continuity and with given social transformation goals —to build up new political imaginaries and, thus, new ways of life and relationship (Quesada, 2008; Miguel, 2008).

Hence, sociology has made numerous attempts of defining and explaining social movements. For they have always influenced the sociological theory and it is nowadays impossible to study society without taking their presence into account. This is even more evident after the irruption of the so-called «new social movements», manner in which we classify pacifism, feminism or environmentalism (distinguished thus from «classical movements» such as for example the workers). Due to this reason, there is plurality in the definition of social movements and each theory is inscribed within some general sociological theory, emphasizing one or another aspect of each movement. Among the main focuses, stand out the relative privation (Ted Gurr), the rational election, the resource mobilization (McCarthy, Zald and Jenkins), the «European» or «identitarian» approaches, the cognitive focus (Ron Eyerman and Andrew Jamison), the «post materialist» focus (Ronald Inglehart), the particularistic school (Charles Tilly) and the networks focus (Max Kaase) (Riechmann and Fernández Buey, 1994).

There's no room here to go into detail through every focus, but according to many authors most of the main focuses are not mutually exclusive but complementary or, at least, contain elements, which could be combined in a stronger and more general theory.

In this way, Riechmann and Fernández Buey summarized eight features that guide us in our attempt to define new social movements:

1. Emancipatory orientation (but plural, not with a closed ideology).

2. Typologically placed in some half point among the movements with orientation of power and the movements with cultural orientation.

3. An «antimodernist» orientation or some kind of alter-modernization or criticism to the linear conception of history; the belief in progress as a material and moral perpetual development, nor the inconditional optimism towards science and technology and, mainly, the instrumental reason.

4. Heterogeneous social composition with predominance of professional persons of social and cultural services.

5. Differetiated goals and action strategies.

6. Decentralized and antihierarchical organizational structure, networking with a low level of institutionalization and professionalization, with low confidence in bureaucracy and charismatic leadership.

7. Politization of the daily and private life, with the attempt to develop alternative forms of communal life, production and consumption, transforming men and women who compose society into a concrete process.

8. Pragmatic and flexible use (in general) of methods of collective action, from non conventional to more conventional methods. Non conventional will be understand as the civil disobedience, the passive resistance and the direct action, all with strong expressive elements and often pedagogic or

counterinformative.

Sociologically the «new movements» are «new» because of its values (which are not really new but they are articulated in a new way), its organization forms, its mobilization and action, and because of its socio-political goals and its cultural contents. Thus, these movements are so creative trying to generate conditions for the growth of knowledge and values innovation. Moreover, they embody a new culture of protest (Riechmann and Fernández Buey, 1994; Miguel, 2008).

Philosophically, these movements are «new» because they are an expression of a «civilization crisis» or «modernity crisis» and an answer to it as well (Riechmann and Fernández Buey, 1994: 71). In this sense, Claus Offe thinks that these movements shows how the three rationality formulas that have been promoted and legitimated the processes of modernization in the last two centuries – scientific techniques, economic calculus and juridical regulation – have become discredited and insufficient. Thus, nowadays nobody is able to found the rationality of the political action in these criteria exclusively (Offe, 1988: 264).

The new social movements have alternative epistemologies – much rich and plural, since they widen the range of possibilities that are considered as real. These movements work as alternative reality definitors, bringing out a counter-hegemonic view and speech about reality and its possibilities. So they subvert some hegemonic aspects of imaginaries and they put into action the construction of alternative realities, even in a local level. Thus, here we found the reflexive character of the social movements (Gusfield, 1994).

With independence of the criteria that we use to being able to study them, it remains to solve the question of the bond between the social movements and the social change. In the following section this problem will be discussed.

2.2   Social movements and social change

In many of the considerations about social movements that which is more emphasized is the narrow link between these movements and social change (Sztompka, 1995). Maybe the idea seems to be obvious but needs some clarifications. Among the main approaches we found three explanatory ways to establish the bound between movements and social change:

1. Social movements are the cause of social change (they are necessary and sufficient condition).

2. Social movements are a consequence of some social change (they are epiphenomena or symptoms of more extended processes in the society).

3. Social movements are both the cause and the consequence of social change in a dialectic relation (Rucht, 1988: 306; Sztompka, 1995: 307).

Either way, we want to agree with the voices that defend social movements as a main vehicles of change, even in a global level, where is not possible to study international relations without taking them as main actors (Echart, 2008). Nowadays social movements have become one of the most important sources to foster the institutional political agenda and the political parties (Miguel, 2008: 285). The existence of these movements already constitutes a certain social change because it deprives the public discussion of questions and areas that were accepted as a rule before.

In this way, social movements are – for Blumer – one of the main ways of society reconstruction; for Killian are social change creators; for Touraine are historic actors; for Eyerman and Jamison are transforming agents of political life and they are carrying historical projects; Adamson and Borgos state that social movements and the conflict they promote are primary agents of social change (Sztompka, 1995: 303). So which are the mechanisms of this change?

Social movements change society, so they seems to promote several external changes, but we need to remember that this movements also belong to society, so also they suffer internal changes. Society

changing society. Changes in the movement and changes by the movement well together, constituting processes mutually interconnected. So, as Gary Marx and James Wood say, social movements are social change par excellence (Sztompka, 1995: 307-308). And empowerment par excellence, we want to add.

It's true that, analytically, we would separate social movements dynamics into two main streams: internal and external. If we focus the internal dynamics, we can see how new social movements articulate strategies of «liberation of the daily life» and «revolution of the living» (for example, an equitable distribution of home tasks between male and female). In this context we can talk about micropolitics, linked to «microphysics of power», in the range of Lebenswelt, the lower level of daily interaction (Riechmann and Fernández Buey, 1994: 70).

There are movements as hippie or punk that maybe do not have an influence in political structures but make a contribution in the change of people way of life, and also contribute to the «cognitive liberation»: a questioning of the principles, values and attitudes learned and internalized since the early years of our lives (Miguel, 2008: 292). All this allows them to carry out a redesign of the area of the public/private and the formation of a new political imaginary (Offe, 1992; Miguel, 2008: 284).

On the other hand, if we focus on external dynamics (what the movements make to the society in which they operate) we can say that the crucial property of the social movements is their effectiveness in introducing structural transformations, the so called «morphogenetic potential» (Sztompka, 1995: 321). This potential of transformation can show several forms depending on the social structure. Sztompka, for example, studies several potentials like the ideological one (the impact in the cosmovision, Weltanschauung, or imaginary), the potential of reform (impact in the normative and axiological structure of the society), re-organizational potential of the social interaction and the social links, or the redistributive potential of the power, the goods or the opportunities (1995: 322-323).

As Tarrow analyzes, in absence of changes in the structure of the political power, the achieved advantages and the legitimate access agreed on during the cycles of protests are always reversible. This explains the importance that has the problem of the power in all movements – oriented towards reform or revolutionary ones – who aim for the redistribution on a large scale. The movement will attain the whole of the their potential only if the whole domain of the social structure are attacked effectively (Tarrow, 1997).

Parallelly, it is a mistake to propose the double morphogenesis of social movements (internal and external) in chronological terms. It is not true that internal morphogenesis precedes external one. It is not true that the movement first crystallizes to be able to acquire morphogenetic potential and then is capable of employing it in the structural reform. Contrary, the movement influences the changes that occur in the society not only when finally has been structured completely, but at all times since their beginning. In this sense Lauer wrote that every movement implies two processes in mutual interaction – the processes result as a consequence of the movement and the social process in itself. Social change in action (Sztompka, 1995: 324).

2.3 Degrowth and new social movements

Degrowth is a slogan that refers to a set of approaches and practices that reject – in an explicit or intuitive way – productivism, consumer society and development that have led us to the current multidimensional crisis. Degrowth opposes to the fetish of economic growth, that has become an end in itself and it compares perversely Gross Domestic Product with welfare. So degrowth turns up as a proposal of transformation with some epistemological novelties and an alternative economic philosophy (Latouche, 2008; Taibo, 2009; Fotopoulos, 2002).

It is possible to look for degrowth antecedents and background as far as necessary. It is equally true that degrowht as a social movement – in Europe – has increasing importance in recent times. As a consequence

its increasing importance in academic debates and more presence in the media. As Laura Blanco explains (2008), there are four european regions (France-Belgium, United Kingdom-Eire, Italy and Catalonia) where the movement organizes itself through several local and autonomous groups that mobilize in a local way and interoperate through transversal nets.

Nowadays it could be affirmed that under the banner of degrowth there is a social movement that can classified perfectly within the framework of the «new social movements». One of the characteristics of this movement is that it starts from real and concrete alternative practices and agglutinates several proposals not only counterfactic or normative – it also are real experiences, even minoritary and invisible.

Thus, people working on organic agriculture, consumption cooperatives, exchange nets, fair trade nets, bike users groups, platforms of opposition to transportation and urbanistic projects, anticapitalist activists, etc, are constituting a rich social movement – which increases – that identifies with the spirit and the proposals of degrowth.

Following Carlos Taibo (2009) this framework works in three main scales:

1. Individual. People who believe and practice the voluntary simplicity and the self-production of goods and services in the measure in which this is possible.

2. Collective. The self-management, the creation of consumption cooperatives, the social nets of exchange, etc. An amalgam that works at local scale and with values based in cooperation – in opposition to the competition – and the relational enrichment that opposes to the mercantilism of the life.

3. Political action. This third dimension belongs to people political mobilization to press against the political and economical institutions. Or also, directly, to create and to put into practice the alternatives that are wanted. It is a matter of practising a counterpower to transform the installed political, social and economic structures based on the growth imaginary.

Although degrowth movement has not attained the dimensions of other movements like the pacifist, the environmentalist or the feminist yet, everything seems to indicate that for its contents as well as for its methodologies, organization and performance, degrowth can today be fitted into the «new social movements» category.

3   Nonviolence: imaginary and methodologies

What is nonviolence? In our opinion it is a set of ideas and practices that transforms reality from a rejection of violence in all their dimensions – direct, structural, cultural. Nonviolence is rich and plural. It starts from a wide amalgam of experiences distributed in space and time. Actually, it is not possible to understand our recent history without taking into account nonviolence and its methods.

Due to this reason it's difficult to define and conceptualize nonviolence. For some people nonviolence is just a conflict intervention and transformation skill; other people believe that nonviolence is a sociopolitical struggle methodology; many people also think that nonviolence is such a kind of journey of introspection and personal research, even a whole cosmovision (López, 2006: 27-31).

There is an ancient incorporation of nonviolence in political though[1], nevertheless nonviolence, as a social

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[1] As Mario López (2006: 182-185) explains, the western culture has many antecedents of what we could consider fights for the reduction of human suffering using non violent means». From the Ancient times, with the examples of Aristophanes and Sophocles, as well as Socrates behaviour, or the writings of Epicurus, the Grecoroman stoicism, Seneca and Marcus Aurelius. The first christians, as well as some representatives of the mediaeval christianity like Francis of Assisi. The modern utopian and antimilitarist thought, some forms of minoritary protestantism (quaker, amish, mennonites) with heir community living. The lessons of Étienne de la Boétie, the defense of the Indians of Bartolomé de las Casas, the thought of Spinoza and the critics to the violence of Jonathan Swift.

struggle methodology, is more recent. We find many examples of this kind of action in struggle against colonial domination, resistance to the dictatorial and totalitarian regimes and in the claim for civil rights (López, 2001; Ackerman and Duval, 2000; Sharp, 1973; Boserup and Mack, 2001).

In the following sections we will see the main features of nonviolence imaginary and we will discuss several examples of their practices.

3.1   Nonviolent imaginary

Today it is common to talk about some nonviolence authors and activists[2]. The most famous ones are Thoreau, Gandhi and Luther King. Each day we are knowing better some recent nonviolent experiences as Finland, 1905; Denmark and Norway against nazi occupation, 1940; Czechoslovakia, 1968; Bolivia, 1977; Poland, 1980; Uruguay, 1983; Philippines, 1986; South Africa, 1994; or insubordination to the army in Spain. We also find many present examples of nonviolent activism like the cacerolazo in Argentina and Chile or the e-activism through the Internet (Ortega and Pozo, 2005; López, 2006; Ackerman and Duval, 2000; Sharp, 1973; Myers, 1999).

Do all these experiences have anything in common? They are an alternative to the use of violence as a mean to reach an end or to solve a conflict. Which are, briefly, the main features of nonviolence imaginary? We can summarize the main features – that have ethical, political and epistemological dimensions – as following:

1. Nonviolence attempts to overcome conflicts without causing suffering to people. Thus, nonviolence refuses to understand conflicts as a zero-sum situations – in which a participant's gain or loss is exactly balanced by the losses or gains of the other participants. It also rejects excessively «realistic» points of view that deny any possibility to manage the conflicts without a certain dose of violence. Just because nonviolence has a positive conception of conflict, and conflict is considered one of the mains systemic change drivers (Lederach, 1995: 18).

2. It doesn't have enemies to win and to defeat, but persons to convince. From nonviolence, a situation in which the other parts don't have to be eliminated is viewed as a real solution to the conflicts. The question is not to win, but proceed in a way to generate the best postconflict conditions of life between the parts. Nonviolence imaginary concedes dignity, consciousness and rational capacity to enemies or opponents. Thus, nonviolence humanizes the politics. In that point nonviolence is frankly subversive.

3. Nonviolence pursues the achievement of a fair and egalitarian society through peaceful – not passive – methods. This means that justice and equality are not only honourable ends but useful means for social transformation. So nonviolence is positive and constructive because it doesn't consist in a simple – but essential! – rejection of the violence, instead of that, it proposes alternatives. As Barash and Webel say, nonviolence is proactive not reactive (2002: 522). It's constructive as well because it creates new things in substitution of those that it rejects. This means that – as Gandhi said – nonviolence implies the means and ends unity (Galtung, 1990).

4. Nonviolence is a tool of change for the civil society, not for the elites, the factic or institutional political

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This list is only a small sample of far antecedents of nonviolence. Beyond this, we also find the nonviolence's trace in the great religions like taoism (and its «universal love»), hinduism (and its concept of «ahimsa»), the buddhism (and its unit and mercy of all living beings), the christianity (and its love to the enemies), the confucianisme, the jainisme, the bahaisme and the Islamism, and in some philosophical currents like the cynicism, the stoicism and the theosophy. Moreover, nonviolence has been an essential form of life for many communities (López, 2001: 228-229).

[2] The list of modern theoreticians of nonviolence is long. They are the well known: Mohandas Gandhi, Henry D. Thoreau, Leon Tolstoy, Clarence M. Case, Richard Gregg, Wilfred H. Crook, Bartholomeus de Ligt and Krishnalal Shridharani, as well as some other authors of the second half of the 20th century, specially Gene Sharp and Aldo Capitini, among other ones like Jean V. Bondurant, Theodor Ebert, Charles C. Walker, Jean-Marie Muller, Peter Ackerman and Christopher Kruegler. It's also necessary to highlight contributions from the feminist and indigenous thought like Vandana Shiva, Elise M. Boulding or Rigoberta Menchú (López, 2006: 188, 206).

powers. Just because the change comes from the basis, so it is much more democratic and participative. Thus, nonviolence is a participation method that broadens and deepens democracy. In that sense, nonviolence and social participation are the same thing: people empowerment in process.

3.2   The methods and techniques of nonviolent action

Beyond its imaginary, which practices do we find behind the label «nonviolence»? In Gene Sharp's (1973) compilation of historical nonviolent action we find many examples showing the relevance of this kind of action in our recent past. He argues that it is not possible to understand our recent history without considering nonviolence and its methodology worldwide. Following Sharp, it's possible to classify methods and techniques of nonviolent action into three main groups: protest and persuasion, noncooperation and intervention. Let's see them in detail.

1. Nonviolent protest and persuasion is a class which includes a large number of methods which are mainly symbolic acts of peaceful opposition or of attempted persuasion. Examples:

- Declarations, public speeches, mass petitions

- Banners, posters, paint as protest

- Mock awards

- Mock or symbolic elections

- Delivering symbolic objects

- Symbolic sounds (by using palms, bells or whistles)

- Public performances, drama, humorous skits and pranks, music

- Marches, protest meetings

- Mock funerals, tributes

- Assemblies of protest or support

- Walk out, withdrawal from meetings

- Renouncing honors and memberships

- Homage at burial places (temple, embassy....)

- Silence: turning one's back, not to applaud

2. The methods of nonviolent action involve noncooperation with the opponent. That is, the activists deliberately withdraw the usual forms and degree of their cooperation with the person, activity, institution, or regime with which they have become engaged in conflict. There is different ways of noncooperation: social, economic and political. Examples:

- Social boycott (volunteer collaborators, policemen, soldiers...)

- Lysistratic nonaction (sexual boycott)

- Suspension of social and sport activities

- Boycott of social affairs

- Social disobedience of habits and customs

- Civil disobedience of illegitimate or unjust laws

- Stay-at-home

- Protest emigration

- Consumers', workers', producers' suppliers' and handlers' boycott.

- Refusal of technical assistance

- Withdrawal of bank deposits

- Refusal to pay debts or interest

- Blacklisting of traders

- Embargo

- Strike (massive, selective, reverse, massive reporting «sick», working-to-rule, slowdown...)

- Boycott of government and its departments, agencies and other bodies

- Administrative noncooperation

- Withdrawal from international organizations

- Expulsion from international organizations

3. Methods of nonviolent intervention operate both negatively and positively: they may disrupt —even destroy— or establish behavior patterns, policies, relationships, or institutions. Such intervention can be physical, psychological, social, economical or political. Examples:

- Self-exposure to the elements, fast, hunger strike...

- Sit-in space or land

- Nonviolent interposition between our opponents and its activity

- Nonviolent obstruction: to prevent opponent's activity

- Establishing new social patterns

- Collapse the bureaucracy, overloading of administrative systems

- Alternative parallel institutions

- Alternative media

- Preclusive purchasing (monopolize adversaries' goods), seizure of assets

- Alternative markets

- Alternative transportation systems

- Seeking imprisonment

- Dual sovereignty and parallel government

Sharp elaborated this classification during years 1970, so today it would be necessary to add many novelties. For example novelties related to the media and Internet social networks, because they suppose

a qualitative change in terms of perception, socialization and the possibilities of information and organization of social actions (Miguel, 2008; Millán Paredes, 2006; Rincón, 2006; Martín Barbero and Rey, 1999).

In conclusion, taking past experiences of social movements and freedom struggles we can see that nonviolence is not a panacea. However, if there is training, good strategic choices, etc, is possible to change attitudes and perceptions – on the one hand – and structures and institutions – on the other hand. At least, nonviolence has the mechanisms to generate the conditions for these changes.

4   Towards a nonviolent degrowth

Due to several reasons, degrowth is a need, not only an ideal. Does it have any consequences? Of course, if our future needs an obligatory decrease in material and energetic consumption levels, it is important we ensure a transition that is as pacific and equitable as possible. Especially with the threat (not so remote) of eco-totalitarianism.

4.1   The unexpected virtues of a double negation

Without considering the intriguing question as to the role of language in the world's construction, we wish to briefly comment on the curiosity of this double negative term: «nonviolent degrowth». These are two ideas that, because of their etymology, are negatives: they oppose violence and growth respectively. These ideas are not so far from reality: the model of mad economic growth and violence are two of our biggest problems and we have to rise against them. Obviously, over time the sense of «degrowth» and «nonviolence» have acquired many positive contents and a constructive vocation. Perhaps it would be good some lexical imagination to find more and better positive expressions. However, this negative appearance is not at all bad simply because we have a bigger enemy than growth and violence: all the powerful discursive and institutional frameworks that legitimaze it day by day. So the need of an explicit opposition to these legitimations is fully justified. Who knows if we still have to explore some kind of negation aesthetics, even a negation erotica. As there is no doubt, and as Marcos from Selva Lacandona said, to start a revolution we need one «no» and many «yesses».

Without doubt this is the aim of the double negation – nonviolent degrowth –, that articulates many «yesses» until the point of meeting the challenge of building a fair and sustainable society using peaceful means.

Perhaps its main virtue is to break logic. To break the vicious and perverse logic of violence; to break the spiral of growth for growth's sake as an end in itself. It does not have any magic recipes, but it appeals to peoples' humanity and imagination. As Einstein said, «l*ogic* will get you from A to *B*. Imagination will take you everywhere» (Lederach, 2007: 243).

The need to articulate a proposal that mixes nonviolence with degrowth is made more and more clear as an eventual lack of «cheap» energetic resources are seen as real and imminent. Gradually, there are less and less people who don't believe in the worrisome consequences of climate change and petrol's zenith. Therefore some degrowth – production, consumption – is not only a desire but a need. The Western way of life must decrease in that sense (Latouche, 2008; Ridoux, 2009).

Faced with this panorama, the threat is clear: the decrease in material and energetic consumption could be carried out through technofascist and ecototalitarian policies. So in front of a deep crisis caused by the increase in the cost of energy, transportation systems will collapse. Some direct consequences could be

the fall of civil aviation, the disintegration of the countryisde and several geopolitical armed conflicts (Sempere, 2007; Riechmann, 2009; Fernández Durán, 2008).

Such a scenario is prone to the rise of demagogic policies, taking advantage of peoples' fears of eventually losing their Western way of life (Latouche, 2008). We don't have to forget that we actually have a boom in the ultra-right in Europe (Beck, 2005).

The current crisis shows three main possible regulations: general chaos, a dictatorship of the rich countries, protecting their privileges, or an advance towards a sober and rationed society employing convivial self-regulation.

For all these reasons it is important to combine the best ideas and practices of degrowth and nonviolence. If Andre Gorz (2008) doubted about the real possibilities of a degrowth political project, perhaps nonviolence and its methodologies can be very useful to widen degrowth's possibilities and potential.

4.2   Nonviolence and degrowth: two concurrent proposals

It is recognized that degrowth drinks from nonviolent and anti-authoritarian sources (Taibo, 2009: 73). However, explicit references to nonviolent methodologies are not commonly found in degrowth's literature and research.

Nonviolence deals with one of the central issues of contemporary political philosophy: violence. We cannot ignore the fact that violence plays a key role in the organisation of our societies. Not only by its presence – in direct and structural dimensions – but also because the modern conception of the state gives a central role to such violence (Weber, 1998). States, being one of the main actors in current politics, together with the question of its legitimate, legitimated and legitimating violence claims for an urgent and deep reflection. Hence, nonviolence is a perfect reality to vertebrate an answer, in societies which too often have sought to solve problems brought on by violence by using more violence.

Similarly, the severe environmental crisis caused by the policies of economic growth aims to be resolved through more economic growth degrowth. Thus, degrowth discusses one of the central issues of dominant economic philosophy: growth. It is an idea that has led us to a multidimensional crisis which threatens our posibilites of survival, an issue that also calls for a deep and urgent reflection (Latouche, 2009; Gorz, 2008; Illich, 1974).

This double subversion – against violence, against growth – is dangerous for established power, because it attacks the core of its imaginary – in Castoriadi's sense (1998) –, being a whole applied epistemological alternative.

Everybody knows that nonviolence and degrowth movements are rich and plural. So talk about it using that labels is a simplification. Nevertheless, in a general sense, both have some similarities we could comment on. It is time to ask if both movements are compatible and conciliable. Based on Ridoux (2009), Latouche (2008, 2009) or Taibo (2009) considerations, we can find some common points between nonviolence and degrowth:

1. Both proposals show a worry for structural violence: they pursue a fair and equitable society.

2.They believe in a redistribution of power and resources as a requirement for the decreasing of this structural violence.

3. Both are proposals that subvert the dominant ideas questioning the main aspects about ontology, epistemology or ethics.

4. In this sense, both proposals discuss, each in their own way, important demonstrations of cultural or

symbolic violence.

5. Because of that, both proposals are trying to change the dominant ideas as a requirement for a sustainable structural transformation.

6. In spite of enjoying an important theoretical and philosophical corpus, both proposals are mainly starred by social movements that, moreover, can be set in the 'new social movements'.

7. Both movements construct and offer the alternatives that they propose. In this sense, its action is not only a necessary theoretical exercise of criticism and denunciation, but also an attempt to generate concrete change.

8. As social movements, they present a double morphogenesis – internal and external. They transform reality while their members transform themselves.

9. Its organizational model tends to the horizontality.

10. This organizational model also tends to the autonomy.

11. Because of this, degrowth and nonviolence constitute amazing ways of empowerment of people who share these movements.

12. Its real power does not lay on its goals but in its means.

13. In this way nonviolence and degrowth are more an instrument of change for the civil society than for the elites.

14. For its proposals and its procedures, nonviolence and degrowth sigh for a radical democratization, understood in a very wide range (from forms of participatory democracy to libertarian projects).

15. So they discuss the capacity or the will of political and economical institutions to carry out the social change in the expected way.

16. They promote personal change as a requirement for social transformation.

17. They act at local level even though sometimes they go to global meetings.

18. They constitute nets that allow to articulate local proposals in a general framework.

19. They have an epistemology that tends to holistic approaches and therefore claims for a redesign of the relationship among the ethical field and the political, economical and ecological fields.

5   Conclusion

Although the degrowth movement has not yet attained the dimensions of other movements like pacifism, environmentalism or feminism, everything seems to indicate that for its contents as well as for its methodologies, organization and performance, degrowth can today be fitted into the «new social movements» category.

In spite of the importance of nonviolence and its techniques, few explicit references to nonviolence and its methods for social change are found in publications about degrowth. However, several degrowth social movements are using these methodologies. It is necessary to move forward in this direction.

In this sense, it is pertinent to promote dialogue between these two ideas and their practices and to penetrate in the relationship between degrowth and nonviolence. It is also necessary to analyze how they can update and apply the techniques and methods of the nonviolent action when stands for degrowth aims.

We found several common points between nonviolence and degrowth. For example, both proposals are trying to change dominant ideas as a requirement for a sustainable structural transformation. They also construct and offer the alternatives that they propose. In this sense, its action is not only a necessary theoretical exercise of criticism and denunciation, but also an attempt to generate concrete change. Other common points found are an organizational model that tends to the horizontality and the autonomy and, mostly, to an aspiration to a radical democratization.

Thus, we think that today nonviolence is one of the most suggestive degrowth 's faces. Certainly degrowth proposals do not only belong to social movements but, it is equally true that, to attain degrowth 's targets, an individual change is not enough: in the end it is all about power. It is all about performing power and redistributing it. For this reason, we think that a combination of techniques (such as protest, noncooperation, direct action and so on) is necessary in order to promote changes in degrowth's two basic dimensions: changes in the ideas and changes in the socioeconomic and political structure. This can be carried out by changing people's perceptions and behaviours (values, habits and so on) and transforming the structures of economical and political institutions (production, distribution, consumption, decision making, etc.). Perhaps it is not completely daring to affirm that degrowth, either it is nonviolent, or it will not be.

Acknowledgements

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