

About negative globalisation – Zygmunt Bauman

Abstract

The value theoretical relation to globalisation is diametrically opposite - positive or negative. Neoliberal globalisation apologists seek to highlight its positive characteristics, while its critics point to a whole series of negative characteristics. This other theoretical orientation belongs to Zygmunt Bauman. His attitude towards globalisation is highly negative: in itself, globalisation carries a number of negative risks, of which the most difficult is the one that leads to the possible self-destruction of humanity. Therefore, he decisively stated that if we do not develop the perception of planetary responsibility and the ability to foresee the future, cataclysm is quite certain and real.

Keywords: *globalisation, risks, progress, self-destruction, planetary responsibility*

Introduction

Bauman's intellectual opus is very complex and observed discursively it incorporates multiple aspects and both individual and social life issues. Several segments will be abstracted from that opulent academic opus, which, according to our opinion, is up-to-date and relevant for sociology, and it refers first of all to problems globalisation itself brings along, yet which has a negative influence on it. Globalisation is negative because it is neoliberally founded and oriented, and as a result it produces and generates issues such as: de-sovereignty of the country, social inequalities increase, compromised safety and questioning the survival of mankind.

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Positive and negative globalisation

It is familiar that the term *globalisation* is relatively new. We have used it almost the entire time for almost half a century. There is almost no discourse, which does not take globalisation into account, its causes, consequences and problems that go along with it.

The term *globalisation* itself is perceived in different ways. Starting from the definition that it is all about connecting local and regional areas, as well as state, ethnic, cultural and political segments in one integrated unity, and ending with the statement that it presents a place for the manifestation of clashes and conflicts, authoritarianism and the absence of freedom, social injustice and discrimination.

The term *globalisation* describes in simple words the process of *interdependence* and integration of contemporary societies.

Globalisation processes are very intensive and extensive; therefore, they include all areas of both personal and social life with its speed and width. Every social phenomenon that exists nowadays can be related to globalisation, either in positive or negative way.

Those who speak about globalisation in a *positive* light point out that globalisation connects individuals, countries, nations, cultures, religions, regions and continents in “one” unity and integrative streams, expands markets of merchandise, capital and labour force, creates prosperity, increases employment and life standard by creating necessary conditions for personal, economic and social development. They believe that both the rich and the poor benefit from globalisation, because products can be bought cheaper on the market.

We have to mention Giddens (Anthony Giddens) here who showed an illustratively positive aspect of globalization with the example of the – *supermarket*.

The shelves in supermarkets show the exact effects of globalisation. Firstly, because thanks to globalisation and it removing obstacles, the amount and variety of products we see in supermarkets has increased. Secondly, products from a great number of countries arrive in supermarkets. Thirdly, if globalisation did not exist, many of the products would not be in the supermarkets and they would be unfamiliar to customers. And, finally, products are no longer distributed to one single country, but rather in many countries. ‘Declarations on products show the new geographical diversity; instructions for product use and its ingredients are often printed in many languages, so they would be approachable to consumers in a large number of countries.’ (Giddens, 2005: 55).

On the other hand, globalisation can be spoken of in *negative manners*. Globalisation suffocates competition, and returns oligopolies, imposes corporative protectionism, strengthens multinational corporations and global institutions of power which destroy national economies, state sovereignties and countries, abolishes trade union and union protection of employees, spreads violence and fear, increases unemployment and poverty.

According to Bauman's opinion, globalisation brings *good* things to ones, and *bad* things to others.

Nevertheless, globalisation until now showed itself to be a "completely *negative*" phenomenon. (Bauman, 2010: 13).

Globalisation is 'negative' because it is ***neoliberally funded***.

For many contemporary theoreticians neoliberalism presents a modern monster, which questions the cultural and civilisation heritage by giving advantage to economic market fundamentalism, as well as human kind existence. Neoliberal doctrines based upon several mantras existence, such as privatisation, liberalisation, deregulation and financial restriction of public expenses powerful global financial institutions impose on undeveloped and poor countries.

Speaking about *privatisation*, neoliberalists believe that everything one country owns should be privatised and the country should be liberated from any forms of expenses their maintenance requires. The main institution of global financial power, which supports the concept of neoliberal globalisation is the International Monetary Fund, which demands accepting the programme of structural adaptation as an obligatory condition for approving the loan, along with measures of privatisation, liberalisation, deregulation and financial restriction. Neoliberal doctrinaires also point out the significance of *liberalisation* of economy and market which in fact gives the possibility to the competitive foreign companies to suffocate national companies of poor and undeveloped countries, and to gain control over their economies in that way. The measure of *deregulation* refers to depriving states financial and monetary sovereignty, because they are, under the pressure of global financial institutions and corporations, forced to abolish regulations which would protect local production and the economy. And, in the end, the measure of *fiscal restrictions*, i.e. '*reduction*' obliges to reduced allocations for science, education, culture, art, social and health protection, as well as on reduced wages in civil services by introducing 'austerity measures', and the so-called 'freezing' and 'cuts' of wages. And while the support of education in developed countries is very strong, in the undeveloped countries it is actually minimised due to the pressure of neoliberal institutions of power.

Bauman points out that the negative, neoliberal component of globalisation manifests itself via different ways and in different areas of human lives. It is all explained firstly in the example of – **a country**.

We should mention that according to postmodern society, Bauman's attitude was not consistent. At first he 'welcomed' it, but in his "later works he became a lot more cautious" (Repstad, 2014: 118).

One of the more significant reasons for Bauman becoming 'more cautious' in his relation towards postmodern society is connected with the country itself.

Bauman points out that in the postmodern period the 'country lost its ability, and the desire for (and this is decided morally) spiritual guidance'. The 'economic, cultural and military tripod' the country rested on was now 'broken'. The country cannot ensure its exclusiveness neither in the economic nor in the cultural sense, exactly because of the "global production and too high expenses for armament, national militaries are no longer the guardians of peace and safety. In almost all areas of life the power monopoly over each single resident is running away from the country's weakened hand" (Bauman, 2009c: 173-174).

A particular problem imposed by the neoliberal model of economic globalisation through its powerful institutions refers to de-sovereignty of so-called national countries, which are becoming more dependent and helpless compared to the "supra-national" institutions, which possess 'supra-sovereignty'.

In a particularly strong and turbulent globalisation processes, the country loses its sovereignty in the economic, political, social, and every other area. The country is no longer absolute 'master of its territory'. A neoliberal de-sovereigned country cannot ensure even social safety to its citizens.

Neoliberalism questions and abolishes a '**social country**', i.e. '**welfare state**' therefore the country can no longer realise the successful concept of population social protection and social safety. Regardless of the state losing a huge part of its sovereignty which represents its position shaken under the impact of globalisation processes and supra-state institutions, the country itself is still very significant. 'Whether it is the servant of global economic forces or not, the state cannot simply send a letter of resignation (to which address?!), pack its things and leave its place. It remains responsible for order and law inside its territory and it is still responsible for methods of this function implementation. Paradoxically, that same meek and all the greater surrender to other forces, under and out of its control is the one that makes it almost inevitable, not only the delaying but also expansion, both extensive and intensive, and its functions of order preservation and observation.' There-

fore, when it comes to *safety*, ‘the country, establishing its *raison d’être* and its prerogative to demand obedience from citizens offering promise that it will protect its subjects from existential threats, since it can no longer fulfill that promise... is forced to move the brunt from protection from dangers to social safety to personal safety danger’ (Bauman, 2010: 157).

Global and local unsafety is a consequence of neoliberal global power centres impact. Apart from powerful Western countries governments, the most significant global neoliberal power institutions are the International Monetary Fund, World Bank, and World Trade Organisation. They strive to impose and expand the area of neoliberal agency, which endangers already established cultural and civilization values, especially those which refer to human dignity and humanity, democracy, human rights and freedom protection, and social justice.

Bauman decidedly points out that ‘United States activities, along with their various satellites such as the World Bank, International Monetary Fund and World Trade Organisation,’ created forms of insecurity in the shape of various forms of nationalism, religious fanaticism, terrorism, in the neoliberally oriented globalisation. Observed from the other side, safety is possible, but for everyone. ‘On a globalised planet, which is inhabited by forced ‘open’ societies, safety cannot be achieved, and let alone secured reliably in one country or chosen groups of countries: not with their own means, and not independently from the state of affairs in the rest of the world’ (Bauman, 2010: 114).

The country is de-sovereignised under the influence of supra-state power institutions. It is not the ‘master of its territory’ and it cannot provide citizens safety.

Neither country nor supra-state power institutions can provide a population social protection. The highlighted product of ‘negative globalisation’ is referred exactly on more and more highlighted– *social inequalities*.

Bauman decisively points out that the number of everyday ‘bad news for human equality, *therefore for life quality of all of us...* is increasing. Persistence of poverty on this planet affected why economic growth fundamentalism is enough to make sensible people stop and think about direct collateral victims of such wealth distribution. The deepening abyss which separates poor and desperate from wealthy, optimistic, safe and arrogant ones... is apparent reason for serious concern’. According to Bauman’s opinion, ‘the main victim of deeper inequalities will be democracy – while less and less available survival means and acceptable life are becoming subjects of yet unseen fights (maybe even wars) between those who are taken care of and the poor’. One of the basic market economy moral justifications – *that aspiration for personal profit*

is at the same time the best mechanism for achieving mutual benefits is being questioned and practically unveiled to be a lie. During the two decades before the breakout of the last financial crisis, the largest number of OECD Countries real incomes of the richest 10% of households was growing much faster than the incomes of the poorest 10%. In some of these countries real incomes on the bottom of the ladder even got lower. That is how the disparity of incomes spread significantly. In the USA average incomes of the richest 10% are now 14 times bigger than is the case with the poorest 10%...

The number of billionaires in USA increased by 40 times in the last 25 years by 2007 – while the total property of the richest 400 Americans increased from 169 billion to 1.500 billion USD. After 2007, during the period of loan collapse followed by economic depression and growing unemployment, this trend was exponentially accelerated... the number of billionaires in the USA reached a historical digit of 1.210 in 2011, while their total property rose from 3.500 billion in 2007 to 4.500 billion USD in 2010. All in all, the total property of the richest 1.000 people in the world is almost twice as big as the property of the poorest 2.5 billion people. According to the data of World Institute for Development Economic Research, '1% of the richest people in the world now owns 2.000 times more money than the 50% on the bottom of the ladder'. International Labor Organisation (ILO) estimates that currently 3 billion people live below the poverty line, which is set on 2 USD per day. Today: the richest 20% of the population spends 90% of the produced merchandise, while the poorest 20% spends 1%. Also, it is estimated that 40% of the world's wealth is in the hands of 1% of the population, while the richest 20 people have resources equal to those a billion of the poorest people have. Wealthy people additionally get rich *just because* they are rich. Poor people are getting poorer *just because* they are poor. Nowadays, inequality continues its growth *following its own logic and acceleration*... The poorest 10% of the world regularly remains hungry. The richest 10% cannot remember when the last time someone in the history of their families was hungry. The poorest 10% can rarely provide an elementary education for their children; the richest 10% tries to pay for scholarships which will enable their children contacts with only co called 'equals' and 'better ones', because they started to fear the possibilities of their children making contacts with other children. The poorest 10% almost as a rule lives in places where there is neither social security nor help for the unemployed people. The richest 10% cannot even imagine living a life on such help. The poorest 10% can work only occasionally in the city, or they are farmers in rural areas; the richest 10% cannot imagine a situation without a safe monthly wage... The difference in wealth has increased drastically, but without promised economic progress. To resume: Is

it true that 'we benefit from the wealth of a small amount of people? No, it is not'"(Bauman, 2013).

Citing a slightly longer version of Bauman's attitude towards the extreme social inequalities on a global level, we actually wanted to point out the existence of high differentiation between rich on one side and the poor on the other.

This social differentiation shows that, as Bauman asserts, it is about a 'new distribution of privileges and disempowerment, richness and poverty, possibilities and hopelessness, power and helplessness, freedom and non-freedom.' (Vuletić, 2009: 23).

According to that, globalisation brings 'privileges', 'wealth', 'possibilities', 'power' and 'freedom' for someone, and 'disempowerment', 'poverty', 'hopelessness', 'helplessness' and 'non-freedom' to others.

Showing the way in which globalisation manifests extreme social inequalities; Bauman takes Tanzania as an example. He points out that Tanzania as 'one of the poorest countries makes 2.2 billion USD per year, which is distributed to 25 million residents', and on the other hand the 'bank corporation *Goldman Sach* earns 2,6 billion USD which is distributed among 161 shareholders' (Bauman, 2010: 89). The extent to which social differences go are showed by Bauman on the example of food, pointing out that the 'average urban resident of North America uses 4.7 hectares of land for nourishment, while the average resident in India has to satisfy his needs with only 0.4 hectares'. Bauman is being ironical when he states, 'since the governments in the rich West are spending 350 billion per year for agricultural subsidies, European cows do better than half of the world population' (Bauman, 2009b: 37).

Apart from the existence of significant social inequalities, globalisation also brings other risks. One of them refers to competitiveness, which leads to occurrences of two types of wars on an international area.

On the one hand it is about "**globalisation wars**" which occur under the influence of 'international community' and which are, in most cases, regionally based, such as per say, military operations and 'humanitarian interventions' against Iraq (2003) or FR Yugoslavia (1999). These are wars whose aim is to remove obstacles of "closed territories" for unlimited merchandise and capital flow on a global area. On the other side there are '**wars caused by globalisation**' which make anxious and worried people desperately seek safe places and safe shelters. These are wars, which represent attempts of fighting and opposing 'consequences of global processes using local means and local resources', that is why they have to be extremely violent (Tester, 2004: 166-168).

The negativity of globalisation is recognisable by its social, but also other types of consequences, one of which is manifested in the area of **-education**.

Education is becoming more and more neoliberally oriented. It develops in accordance to pragmatic and commercial interests. Its purpose is to 'improve the results' of the employees in order for them to perform the 'duties' they are supposed to perform, more efficiently. Seen from that perspective, education has to be useful and to develop skills needed for 'corporative business strategies.' For this type of organisation education the human being is not even important (Bauman, 2009b: 148).

Our contemporary society is a- *consumer society*, i.e. *consumerist society* or *society of consumerism*.

Consuming is not an explicit phenomenon of the contemporary man, or human society alone, because 'all human beings, all living creatures actually, have 'consumed' since the beginning of time'. However, a 'consumer in consumerist society is a highly different creature from a consumer in all the societies which existed so far'. In 'the older type of modern society', i.e. in pre-industrial period, society obliged 'its members to be above all the producers', while modern society 'does not have much need for a numerous industrial labour force' and 'instead it requires the participation of members with their consumer abilities'. A consumer society cannot be observed separately from the psychology of the consumers themselves. Namely, consumer societies not only impose needs but also those needs emerge as 'the desire' of consumers. Bauman is decisive when he mentions that it is often 'said that the consumer market seduces its consumers'. But, to achieve that, consumers who *want* to be seduced are needed (as the director of a factory needs staff with firmly embedded habits of discipline and command obeying so he can order them around). In a consumer society that functions properly, consumers actively seek to be seduced. Their grandfathers who were producers survived from one spin of the moving band to another one, identically. They alone, for a change, lived from lure to lure, from one tempt to another, from smelling one treat to searching for the other, from swallowing one bait until the search for the next one – each lure, tempt, treat and bait were new, different, and attracted more attention than the previous one. This type of behaviour is a must, a coercion for the trained, mature consumer; yet, that 'coercion', that internalised pressure, the impossibility to live in a different way, disguises itself in the free will performing. The market has maybe already chosen them as consumers and by that the freedom of ignoring their persuasions has been taken away from them; but every following visit to some of the market places gives them a reason to feel that they are – and they alone perhaps – the masters. They are the judges, critics, and the ones who choose. Finally, they can decline the loyalty to any of the numerous choices they are presented with. In other words, except the choices of choosing one of them, but that choice

is not a matter of 'choosing'. And when we speak about 'the desire' for spending, Bauman notices poignantly that under the conditions of high social inequalities, not all of them can be 'successful' consumers. 'Every person can be *implemented* in spender mode; everyone can *wish* to become a consumer and to let himself/herself to the advantages which such a lifestyle offers. But not everyone *can* be a consumer. It is not enough to wish for it; in order for that wish to be desirable indeed and in that way pleasure derived from it, a reasonable hope has to exist in getting closer to the desired object. This hope, which some people justifiably have, for many others is pointless. All of us are condemned to a life filled with choices, but we do not own the means to be the ones who choose.' (Bauman, 2003: 253, 254, 257, 259).

A consumer society is not an egalitarian society, but rather a stratified one, just as every other society is stratified. Bauman presents this stratification as differentiation to 'those who are up' and 'those who are down', and as a criterion of that division he uses the – *mobility degree*.

The 'mobility degree', i.e. 'the freedom of choosing the place where they will be' is the exact criterion of division to the ones who are 'up' and the ones who are 'down'. Of course, this 'mobility degree', the freedom of choosing the place where they will be, 'division to the ones who are 'up' and the ones who are 'down', is socially determined.

This is how the world is divided, according to Bauman, the 'first' and 'second world', i.e. the *globally mobile and locally restrained* – the rich are *mobile*, while the poor are *locally restrained*.

The globally mobile live in a time where space does not mean anything to them; they are active, enterprising. 'The other world' is made up by those who are locally restrained to the area where they live, and they are 'prevented from moving'. As the 'narrowing of the space abolishes the time flow', it is characteristic for residents of the 'first world' living in the eternal present, they are 'constantly preoccupied with and always 'lack time'. Residents of the 'second world' are broken 'under the burden of abundant, excessive and useless with nothing that could fulfill it'. For 'first world' residents, space has no significant meaning, because they 'live in *time*', while residents of the 'second world' live exactly 'in *space*' and their time can be described as 'empty' and 'with no events whatsoever'. And, finally, the residents of the 'first world' are 'more cosmopolitan' and 'extraterritorial', while the residents of the 'second world' are local and territorial. Their life is completely different from the life of 'first world' residents. (Bauman, 2003: 260-262).

This shows that Bauman sees globalisation as some kind of '*spatial war*'. It is thought that *mobility*, i.e. *motility* became the most important and differentiating factor of social stratification in the contemporary world.

In this 'spatial war', the winners are the ones who are mobile and who travel all around the world and form real meaning for themselves according to that. Winners move without spatial obstacles, freely, and when they want to be immobile, they isolate themselves in some area protected by walls and secured by the police, in order to protect themselves from *losers*. On the other hand, the losers are not mobile; they are restricted by their territory, which lacks meaning and the ability to formulate meaning. And while the winners, as the elite, show their mobility and boast about it, losers are trapped in their homes where they feel humiliated and excommunicated both because of a lack of mobility and because of observing the elite which moves freely. That is how the territory becomes a 'battle field' where winners and losers of 'spatial war' are clashing. (Ricer, 2009: 400).

As a consequence of consumer orientation, a huge amount of solid, fluid and gas *waste* is created which contaminates the natural environment mechanically, chemically, biologically and radioactively, and endangers the health of the ecosystem, the animals and humans. Seven and a half billion people on the planet who live in various urban and rural areas, cities and villages, create land fields where they throw out the waste which contaminates nature and makes civilisation progress and the development itself questionable.

Waste is produced in large amounts, so the 'garbage disposal industry finds (itself) in big trouble. Such ways of human waste problem solving, which have become a modern tradition, are not feasible anymore, yet new methods have not been invented so far, and let alone applied. Along the crack of world mess, piles of human waste are growing, and the first signs of a self-ignition tendency and upcoming explosion are more and more common.' (Bauman, 2009a: 145).

Speaking of that 'upcoming explosion' and soon-to-come cataclysm, it is interesting that Bauman, just as Giddens, mentions the movie *Titanic*, but in different contexts.

Namely, Giddens speaks of *Titanic* as a movie, which reflects the *cultural imperialism* of the West over the rest of the world, an imperialism, which destroys national cultures and identities. He points out that the movie fable refers to the 'possibility of a romantic love realisation despite class differences and family tradition'. The movie shows personal attitudes towards marriage questioning 'the force of local practices and tradition'. In this way, 'cultural imperialism' is spread where values, style but also viewpoints characteristic for the West, which spread so aggressively that if they continue, they will quench individual national cultures'. (Giddens, 2005: 68-69).

On the other hand, Bauman uses *Titanic* as a metaphor for society and its 'destiny' of a catastrophic future.

While Giddens argued about *Titanic* in one way, Bauman reconsidered it differently following Attali (Jacques Attali). And this way is related to a social disasters discourse, i.e. social disaster. 'Titanic is our triumphalist, self-sufficient, blind, hypocritical society, ruthless towards the poor – a society where everything is planned except for resources for plans... All of us suspect that there is an ice berg which waits for us, hidden somewhere in the foggy future, and which we will hit and then sink accompanied by music'. Even in the last century mankind came to a point of – **self-destruction**. It owns 'all the weapons needed for a collective suicide, whether it was planned or not, all the necessary weapons for a complete self-destruction, to leave behind a planet sentenced to failure' (Bauman, 2010: 21, 87). Bauman opposes the spreading of nuclear weapons, which can be 'distributed in any of the local clashes with clearly non-localised consequences.' (Bauman, 2010: 11).

Negative globalisation leads to an inevitable humankind disaster because it leaves people without safety.

As globalisation offers 'safety in a form of non-freedom' it is clear that 'mankind can grow only small hopes that the disaster will be avoided'. That is why Bauman says 'the only certain beginning of therapy against growing, and in final lines, disabling fear is its analysis from the root – because the only certain way for continuing that therapy requires confrontation with the task of cutting those roots' (Bauman, 2010: 206).

This way it is shown that the fundamental terms of *Modern*, and even *postmodern*, must be revised, and among them, the term **progress** takes a special place for sure. Some time ago 'progress' reflected not only optimism and hope, but also 'a promise of general and permanent welfare' but in the meantime, it switched to 'its opposites, dystopian and fatalistic pole of anticipation' representing 'the threat of ruthless and inevitable change which does not predict peace and harmony, but rather continuous crisis and pressure...' (Bauman, 2009b: 85).

Risks mankind is facing with are very serious. But, a particular problem, which emerges with globalisation refers to our wrong perception of globalisation and its risks.

Our perception of globalisation shows us **the incapability of predicting the future**. Namely, 'unique globalisation, limited to business undertakings is primarily perceived as the loss of control over the present and an incapability of predicting what the future can bring, and by that the incapability of resources designed for putting the future under control' (Bauman, 2009b: 177).

As humankind is one step away from self-destruction, one thing is necessary for its rescue **planetary responsibility**.

According to Bauman, 'the logic of planetary responsibility' is directed towards 'facing the globally generated problems'. That logic 'stems from the

assumption that permanent and really efficient solutions for the world's problems could be founded and created only via the transformation and reformation of global interdependence and interaction networks. Instead of aiming at local damage limiting and local benefits...from global economic forces, new varieties of global environment should be created, where the paths of economic initiatives anywhere on the planet will no longer be moody and driven by exclusively current gaining, without focusing attention on side effects and 'collateral victims', and without giving attention to social dimensions of balance between the price and the avails' (Bauman, 2009b: 182).

As seen here, Bauman just like other theoreticians worried for the current state of humankind, insists on the need for 'reforming' human practice related to nature, and therefore to man also. But, whether it is possible to do that in a world of 'negative globalisation', is a question we still cannot give an affirmative response to.

Conclusion

Bauman's globalisation hermeneutics is highly negative. Although he alone considers that globalisation carries positive characteristics as well, Bauman still points out that neoliberally funded globalisation is negative indeed, because it is catastrophic. It is negative because it deteriorates national economies, state sovereignty and cultures, and it develops multiple risks (social inequalities, poverty, nuclear weapons, wars) which endanger safety and lead towards our- self-destruction.

The reality of self-destruction is real so, it is still alarming that there is no clear perception and method of problem solving, as well as a capability of predicting future. That is why Bauman speaks about 'the ice berg' which is hidden somewhere and waits for us 'in the foggy future', just to submerge us 'with musical accompaniment' in the end.

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