

WEAVING THE TRANSITION:

An inclusive regenerative economy from the complexity of the Global South

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1. INTRODUCTION

The world is facing a multidimensional civilizational crisis, manifested in ecological collapse, extreme social inequality, the precariousness of life, and the loss of collective meaning. These symptoms, far from being isolated events, respond to a systemic structure based on an economic paradigm that prioritizes unlimited growth, capital accumulation, and the exploitation of nature as a resource. This model has reached its biophysical, ethical, and cultural limits, generating irreversible consequences in many regions of the planet, especially in the historically vulnerable territories of the Global South.

In this context, there is a compelling need to move toward new models of economic organization that are not only sustainable but truly regenerative and inclusive. This entails going beyond technocratic or cosmetic solutions and embarking on a profound paradigm shift that questions the epistemological and ontological foundations of Western modernity. In this quest, complexity sciences offer an alternative perspective that allows us to understand the economy as a living, interconnected, nonlinear, and constantly evolving system.

The inclusive regenerative economy approach, grounded in these principles, proposes a transformative approach that integrates the ecological, social, and cultural aspects into a dynamic web of relationships. Far from being a theoretical abstraction, this vision is being embodied in concrete practices across multiple territories of the Global South: from community agroecological systems to solidarity

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economy networks, including food sovereignty, water justice, and care economy initiatives. These examples represent not only alternative ways of doing business, but also expressions of resistance, creativity, and hope in the face of an exhausted civilizational model.

This essay argues that the inclusive regenerative economy, when approached from the perspective of complexity sciences, offers epistemological, ethical, and political tools for rethinking development from a relational, situated, and pluriversal perspective. In a world marked by uncertainty, this proposal becomes a compass for guiding just, resilient, and sustainable transitions from and for the Global South.

2. THEMATIC DEVELOPMENT

2.1. Complexity Sciences and the Paradigmatic Shift

Complexity sciences represent a break with the Cartesian-Newtonian thinking that has predominated since modernity. In contrast to linear, deterministic, and reductionist logic, complexity sciences approach systems as open, nonlinear, adaptive, and self-organizing wholes (Morin, 1990; Prigogine & Stengers, 1984).

Complexity implies recognizing the interdependence between ecological, social, economic, and cultural levels, as well as the uncertainty and emergent nature of phenomena. This perspective opposes the vision of economic growth as the only path to development and opens the way to alternative approaches that recognize the plurality of values, knowledge, and ways of life (Leff, 2004; Max-Neef, 1993).

From this perspective, the economy cannot be reduced to an exact science or an instrumental technique, but must be understood as a complex system embedded in networks of symbiotic, cultural, and ecological relationships.

2.2. Foundations of the Inclusive Regenerative Economy

The foundations of the inclusive regenerative economy are articulated through a conceptual, ethical, and practical interweaving that challenges the dominant paradigm of economic development based on extractivism, accumulation, and inequality. This model is based on three central pillars: ecological regeneration,

socioeconomic inclusion, and systemic complexity as a framework for synthesis and action.

2.2.1. Ecological Regeneration

Ecological regeneration implies a transition from the logic of intensive use of natural resources to a relationship of care, restoration, and co-evolution with ecosystems. According to Fullerton (2015), a truly inclusive regenerative economy is inspired by the principles of the functioning of living systems: diversity, resilience, closed material cycles, renewable energy, and dynamic equilibrium. This entails a radical transformation of production and consumption patterns, as well as a redefinition of economic value in terms of its contribution to the well-being of life as a whole.

2.2.2. Social Inclusion

Social inclusion is understood not only as access to goods and services, but as the effective capacity of peoples and communities to co-construct their own economic systems, based on their worldviews, needs, and aspirations. As Max-Neef (1993), points out, development must focus on the satisfaction of fundamental human needs in specific cultural contexts, which implies an economy that serves dignity, participation, and equity.

2.2.3. Critical Latin American Thought

The inclusive regenerative economy also draws on critical Latin American thought, especially the contributions of Buen Vivir, political ecology, and the epistemologies of the South. In the words of Escobar (2012), it is about decolonizing the economy and reimagining it from the perspective of territorial practices of life that have historically been marginalized. These proposals are aligned with struggles for territorial defense, food sovereignty, eco-feminism, and the care economy, which center the interdependence between human beings and nature.

2.3. Economy as a Complex Adaptive System (CAS)

The epistemic framework of complexity allows us to understand the economy as a complex, open, and constantly evolving adaptive system. As Capra and Luisi (2014),

argue, economic systems cannot be reduced to simple supply and demand mechanisms, but are interactive networks that emerge from ecological, cultural, technological, and institutional relationships. From this perspective, regenerative solutions must be contextual, collaborative, and based on collective learning.

2.4. Alternative Indicators of Comprehensive Well-being

A central aspect of the inclusive regenerative model is the construction of indicators that go beyond GDP and measure comprehensive well-being, ecosystem health, equity, and social resilience. Authors such as Raworth (2017), propose models such as the donut economy, which integrates planetary boundaries with the minimum social foundations for a dignified life. This approach is in dialogue with the proposals of Buen Vivir, which reject the idea of development as linear progress and, consequently, promote ways of living well and in harmony with others and with nature.

2.5. The Ethics of Care

The inclusive regenerative economy promotes an ethic of care as a guiding principle. This implies recognizing the tasks of social, affective, and community reproduction as fundamental to the sustainability of life, as proposed by the currents of ecofeminism and the care economy. Leff (2004), argues that this ethic demands an environmental rationality that replaces instrumental rationality with a holistic, intersubjective, and symbolic understanding of nature.

In short, the foundations of the inclusive regenerative economy constitute a political and civilizational commitment to reorganizing economic life based on ecological justice, social equity, and cultural diversity. This proposal draws on complexity as a paradigm, the struggles of the Global South as an ethical horizon, and life as a guiding principle.

2.6. Challenges and Opportunities of the Inclusive Regenerative Economy in the Global South

The Global South faces a triple challenge: structural poverty, technological dependence, and the pressure of extractive models imposed by the global market.

However, it also possesses unique strengths, such as biodiversity, cultural richness, ancestral practices of caring for life, and community experiences of self-sufficiency. In this sense, experiences such as indigenous bio-entrepreneurship in the Amazon, agroecological peasant economies in Mesoamerica, or barter systems in Afro-descendant communities in the Colombian Pacific are examples of regenerative economies in action (Escobar, 2012).

From a complex perspective, the inclusive regenerative economy allows us to overcome the dichotomy between nature and society, promoting forms of development rooted in territories, relational, and based on mutual care.

2.7. Critique of the Technocratic Paradigm and Western Modernity

The dominant paradigm has promoted a one-dimensional conception of development, centered on GDP, technical efficiency, and neoliberal globalization. This rationale has rendered other forms of knowledge invisible and reinforced colonial relations of power and knowledge (Quijano, 2000).

From a critical and decolonial perspective, the inclusive regenerative economy demands recognizing epistemodiversity and dismantling the supremacy of technocratic knowledge. The sciences of complexity, with their openness to uncertainty, transdisciplinarity, and relationality, constitute fertile ground for this paradigmatic transition (Nicolescu, 2008).

3. CRITICAL AND PROPOSITIVE SYNTHESIS

The inclusive regenerative economy, approached from the perspective of complexity sciences, allows us to rethink the foundations of contemporary economic and social organization. This model does not seek to correct capitalism from within, but rather to transcend it, based on practices and principles that value life, relationality, diversity, reciprocity, and care.

The structural critique of the technocratic and modernizing paradigm is only the starting point; the true power of this proposal lies in its creative and hopeful capacity. In a world wounded by inequality, environmental devastation, and knowledge

fragmentation, the inclusive regenerative economy offers real paths to transformation, especially in the Global South.

First, it recognizes that ancestral, Indigenous, Afro-descendant, and peasant knowledge are not vestiges of the past, but bearers of the future. These communities have practiced, for centuries, relational, agroecological, circular, and symbiotic forms of economics with the environment. Incorporating their visions is not only an act of epistemic justice, but an opportunity for clear civilizational innovation. Second, regeneration and inclusion complement each other by proposing a decentralized, plural, redistributive, and adaptive economic model capable of responding to the specific conditions of each territory. This opens the door to participatory governance models, short production chains, local currencies, regenerative cooperatives, barter networks, seed banks, community biofactories, and other creative strategies that are already flourishing in many corners of the South. Third, complexity sciences, by recognizing emergence, nonlinearity, and self-organization, provide a methodology to support transformation processes that cannot be centrally or technocratically directed. This perspective encourages the cultivation of networked ecosystems of social, cultural, and ecological innovation, where each node, a school, a community, a business, becomes a regenerative agent.

In this context, the Global South should not be seen as a passive victim or a territory of intervention, but as a protagonist of a planetary transition. The biocultural wealth of Latin America, Africa, and Asia constitutes a reservoir of living alternatives that can nourish new civilizational horizons. As Arturo Escobar (2012) asserts, there are worlds to come that are already being experienced.

On the other hand, hope also lies in the possibility of forging intersectoral and translocal alliances that articulate social movements, universities, local governments, NGOs, cooperatives, and purpose-driven businesses. These alliances can catalyze processes of training, advocacy, and co-creation of regenerative, sustainable, and inclusive public policies.

Finally, the inclusive regenerative economy is not a single or closed solution. It is a horizon under construction, an evolving process, strengthened with each

transformative practice, with each community that cultivates resilience, with each political decision that prioritizes life. It is a radically ethical and profoundly realistic commitment to caring for the planet and its people.

4. CONCLUSIONS

The inclusive regenerative economy represents an emerging paradigm that responds to the need to rebuild our relationships with nature, with others, and with ourselves. Its articulation with the sciences of complexity allows us to understand socio-ecological systems through uncertainty, interconnectedness, and creativity.

In the Global South, this proposal takes on particular relevance, as it allows us to redefine development from the territories, recognizing the diversity of knowledge, practices, and worldviews. It is a political and ethical commitment to a good, plural, just, and regenerative life.

The transition toward this model implies questioning the foundations of capitalist modernity, rethinking indicators of progress, and building a new economy of care, territory, and life.

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