Scaling-up Christian Social Policies?

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Putting High-Quality Relationships First

- Promoting high-quality relationships is a central concern in the Church social teaching (in particular for peace and development):

1. The relations between created beings and the Creator are the foundations of all high-quality relationships.

2. They can loose their quality (through «sins»).

3. They are central to individual Well-Being and create «Meaning».

4. High-quality relationships lead to a sustainable development path.

5. But can it be scaled-up? Or must they stay local?

First barrier against scaling-up: systems

- A self-serving equilibrium can be very efficient and hard to beat:

1. Self-centred agents, who would like to put the quality of their relationships before their own interests, have a hard time to prosper in an social equilibrium with only self-serving agents.

2. Their social success depends on their ability to connect with other self-centred agents.

3. But if they succeed, they can outperform the self-serving equilibrium (,which often «progresses» through crisis).

4. Even in that case, such evolutions remain fragile at the beginning, because high-quality relationships are normally more complex and, as such, less robust, although they create more motivation.

Second barrier: efficient bargaining

- Self-centred agents need to find an agreement with other self-centred entities. Even if those relations are more profitable, high-quality relationships remain hard to establish, because of:

1. Asymmetry of information
2. Difficulties in checking abilities and decisions
3. Lack of reputation (history in the relationship)
4. Lack of credible commitments
5. Difficult and costly communication
6. Complexity when multi-dimensions are at stake.

The Central Role of Institutions

- In order to overcome those two essential barriers, self-centred agents have developed social institutions:

1. After a long historical development, institutions become ingrained in all behaviours, where «reciprocity» is expected.

2. Non-self-serving institutions are the most important factor for multi-dimensional growth, and so are a pillar of the Christian social teaching.

3. They deliver credibility more quickly and ease communication.

4. They produce information, often by breaking some asymmetry.

5. Today, new institutions are key for scaling-up social change.

Is scaling-up possible?

- Is it possible to scale-up high-quality relationships, as a method for solving many important social problems?

1. We know today factors explaining how a phenomenon can go viral (like Christianism).

2. New technologies allow today to recognize credibility factors and their multi-dimensional nature in a simpler way.

3. Targeting asymmetric information affecting especially poor households is possible (for example with efficient labour market institutions).

Is scaling-up possible?

4. All social programs requiring some «reciprocity» can benefit from «platforms».

5. It is easier today to accumulate experience globally, while diffusing it locally.

6. It shall not be automatically accessible to everyone.

7. A trust multiplicator in a global network requires a core of credible persons guaranteeing the credibility of institutional services, as well as a strong team for managing it step by step and keeping it simple.

A lot remains to be studied and decided

- Although scaling-up seems possible, many practical questions remain:

1. Blended finance?

2. Managing a central organization based on subsidiarity?

3. Can credibility be maximized without betting everything on it?

4. Can complex social changes be planned?

5. Are there mishaps and unforeseen limits?

6. On which evaluations should constant fine-tuning of the fundamental strategy be based?

Now is the right moment

- There exists a generalized approach for developing «peace institutions» able to gather people and to help their coordination by:
1. Understanding systemic constraints and the sources of problems
2. Overcoming asymmetric information and speeding-up credibility
3. Using new technologies
4. Benefiting from blended finance
5. Popularizing new management and motivation techniques
6. Waiting is not an option, as social problems are huge and getting worse.
7. But we have the most inspired Holy Father for that particular mission!

Overall there is a window opportunity for acting today.

An example: Migration policies

- Spontaneously in the conference, I tried to apply this generalized approach to migration policies. It could look like this:

1. Implementing a coherent migration policy (for ex. with new taxes?).

2. Trying to deal with refugees applications as early, quickly and locally as possible, while jailing human traffickers

3. Setting-up an early warning system for anticipating migration flows (possibly by blocking some routes)

4. Using new technologies for allocating refugees among countries

5. Issuing "migration bonds"

6. Decentralizing administrative decisions and learning from best practices

An example: Migration policies

7. Agreeing on social contracts for integration (including against criminality)

8. Intervening at the source of problems if possible: with more security and less wars, with better public and private governance and public administrations in developing countries which deliver

9. Improving the efficiency of labour market and the effectiveness of social insurances, but last but not least the welcoming culture (which can only bloom with a coherent and credible system)!

10. Making explicit policy goals and setting–up an independent body for reviewing and implementing them.

The main difference with other approaches: It is complete and coherent and high-quality relationships come first!

Thank You

- This general framework can be applied to many social problems: fighting poverty, creating a social fund, reviving local communities, etc.

- Those solutions can all be scaled-up if their conception is well-thought at their beginning.

- I remain at your disposal for answering technical questions (self-centred vs self-serving entities, considering the quality of relationship as a production factor and not as a preference in a general equilibrium, the restricted notion of institutions that I use, defining platforms policies, openness of the system, incentives created, empirical evidence on personal motivation and growth, etc.).