

Cultura, Cidadania e Políticas Públicas 4



Alvaro Daniel Costa
(Organizador)

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Alvaro Daniel Costa

(Organizador)

Cultura, Cidadania
e Políticas Públicas 4

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APRESENTAÇÃO

A obra *“Cultura , Cidadania e Políticas Públicas”* possui uma série de 84 artigos que abordam os mais variados temas nas áreas relacionadas a área de Ciências Humanas, Sociais Aplicadas e Educação.

O volume I é intitulado “cultura, políticas públicas e sociais” e mostra a diversidade de análises científicas em assuntos que vão desde uma análise sociocultural perpassando pelas questões socioeconômicas da sociedade brasileira e latino-americana.

Já o volume II intitulado *“educação, inclusão e cidadania- práticas pedagógicas na cultura educacional”* é inteiro dedicado a área educacional, com textos de pesquisadores que falam sobre uma educação inclusiva em assuntos como autismo, formação profissional nas mais diversas áreas dentro do espectro educativo, além de uma análise sobre os impactos da reforma do ensino médio e sobre lo direito fundamental à educação.

No terceiro volume o assunto é no que tange as *“práticas educacionais, mídia e relação com as políticas públicas e cidadania”* sendo esse volume uma continuidade dos artigos da parte II com artigos que falam sobre práticas pedagógicas, além de textos que trazem sobre assuntos da área comunicacional.

A quarta e última parte é intitulada *“cultura, literatura, educação e políticas públicas- questões multidisciplinares”* e possui uma versatilidade temática que vai da área literária e novamente sobre algumas práticas pedagógicas.

A grande diversidade de artigos deste livro demonstra a importância da análise de temas que dialogam com as práticas de políticas públicas, sejam através da área educacional, comunicação ou aquelas que analisam a sociedade a partir de um viés histórico, cultural ou até mesmo econômico.

Boa leitura!

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THE UNBEARABLE UNCERTAINTY OF LIVING: ULRICH BECK'S COSMOPOLITAN ITINERARY FOR A WORLD AT RISK

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RESUMO: This essay intends to highlight the main topics of the German sociologist, Ulrich Beck (1944-2015). Taking the concept of Risk Society developed by Beck, we try to investigate how the presence of risk in contemporary societies, industrially developed societies ruled by uncertainty and insecurity due to the rising of environmental and technological threats of global scope and whose effects cannot be totally predicted, has led to fundamental changes in the main institutions in charge of the project of Modernity – science, technology and politics - causing, thus, a breakthrough with the fundamental paradigms of modern thought, compelling the present historical moment, which Beck denominates as Second Modernity, to a critical confrontation with the harmful consequences of its countless victories.

In the presence of threats with a global scope, the solution to the problems of Risk Society can only be achieved through international cooperation on the level of political institutions. So, on the second part of this essay, we focus our attention on how the concept of Methodological Cosmopolitanism, as an essential element of a

new political culture in the age of globalization, can contribute to the solution of the several threats faced by contemporary society in Second Modernity.

KEYWORDS: Risk Society; Second Modernity; Cosmopolitanism; Science; Politics

ABSTRACT: Este ensaio pretende dar a conhecer os tópicos principais do pensamento do sociólogo alemão, Ulrich Beck (1944-2015). Partindo do conceito de Sociedade de Risco desenvolvido por Beck tenta-se averiguar a forma como a presença do risco nas sociedades contemporâneas, sociedades industrialmente avançadas dominadas pela incerteza e pela insegurança devido à eclosão de desastres ambientais e tecnológicos de dimensão global e cujas efeitos não são totalmente previsíveis, conduziu a importantes alterações nas principais instâncias responsáveis pelo desenvolvimento do projecto da Modernidade - ciência, tecnologia e política -, provocando com isso um clima de descontinuidade e ruptura com os paradigmas fundamentais do pensamento moderno, obrigando o momento histórico actual, que Beck designa como Segunda Modernidade, a uma confrontação crítica com as consequências nocivas das suas inúmeras conquistas.

Perante ameaças de dimensão global, a solução para os problemas da Sociedade

de Risco consiste num esforço de cooperação internacional a nível das instituições políticas. Nesse sentido, tenta-se averiguar, na segunda parte deste ensaio, a forma como o Cosmopolitismo Metodológico, enquanto elemento primordial de uma nova cultura política na era da globalização, poderá contribuir para a resolução das diversas ameaças com que se confrontada a sociedade contemporânea na Segunda Modernidade.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Sociedade de Risco; Segunda Modernidade; Cosmopolitismo; Ciência; Política

1 | THE 21ST CENTURY IN UNCERTAINTY VILLE: MEET RISK SOCIETY

There is a word that embraces every aspect of the human condition in the disturbed second millennium of our age: the word crisis. From financial and economic crisis to political, social or environmental crisis – the main axes of a deeper and long-running civilizational crisis - these are expressions that disrupt every realm of our everyday life, turning it into a labyrinth of permanent instability. Besides accompanying closely the last decades of modernity that still is in itself a complex riddle demanding unprecedented answers in human history, the word crisis structures decisively the horizon of our present and future expectations.

It is in the presence of a vertiginous, complex and chaotic modernity that the work of Ulrich Beck gains relevance in the current intellectual panorama. Through his focus on the functioning of western contemporary societies, Beck invites us to an appointment to which we must inevitably attend: an appointment with a modern age molded by the techno-scientific outcomes of human activity, and also with its “inconvenient truths”, those that place our current historic moment in a dynamics of constant discontinuities, metamorphoses and fragilities.

It is in the context of a contemporary society shaped by permanent crisis scenarios at several levels that we find the key concept around which Beck develops his thinking: the concept of risk. According to him, our contemporary society is better described under the label of Risk Society.

The risk society theory, which is also the title of Beck’s first book published in 1986 (*Risikogesellschaft - Auf dem Weg in eine andere Moderne*, translated in 1992 to the English language as *Risk Society – Towards a New Modernity*), proclaims that current western societies are being subjected to a climate of insecurity and uncertainty due to the rising of a series of global threats, technological and environmental threats, which cannot be fully or reliably circumscribed by the risk assessment tools at our disposal in terms of the reach of their possible impacts.

The growing proliferation of threats in the contemporary world, carrying the disastrous possibility of occurrence of technological and environmental anthropogenic dangers of transnational or global scope, emerged fundamentally due to the activities

of science and technology all along the modern age, mainly since the first Industrial Revolution in the 18th century.

Besides introducing drastic changes in the dynamics of current western societies, the occurrence of risks of such nature confronts the human condition in a global way with a singular possibility: according to Beck, what may be at stake with the proliferation of risk events is no less than the decline of human civilization and the collapse of the whole planetary biosphere as well.

So, therefore, more than a way of apprehending and conceptualizing the dynamics of contemporary societies and of systematizing the dangers and uncertainties generated by the technological development of modernity (Beck, 1992: 21), the concept of risk, as we see it, is first and foremost the zeitgeist of our time, and the distinctive and unconditional ontological feature of the human condition in the 21st century.

Given the contemporary lack of social and economic stable conditions, risk shapes decisively the existence of the individuals. When comes to the moment of taking decisions, they are forced to cope with situations in which prevails a partial or sometimes total absence of knowledge. Risk is, thus, not only an intellectual and conceptual framework but also an existential orientation that helps us to trace the faltering coordinates of the human condition, to which is required to answer to a constant adaptation process in face of the scenarios induced by the possibilities or even by the real consequences of risk situations. This is confirmed by Beck's words:

"Being at risk is the way of being and ruling in the world of modernity; being at global risk is the human condition at the beginning of the 21st century." (Beck, 2006: 330).

Notwithstanding the fact that the changes brought by the concept of risk in human existence play a very significant role in Beck's thinking, we do not wish to address them here because the greatest appeal and originality of the risk society theory lies in something more important: in the way that risk was responsible for the introduction of a new moment in the history of modernity (Beck, 1992: 10).

Although we still live under the influence of modernity's classical paradigms – such as the belief in the ineffability of techno-science, the idea of an infinite progress, the inexorability of natural resources, the belief in infinite economic growth and the political efficiency of the nation-state - the concept of risk has confronted them with their own theoretical fragility and insufficiency in face of the contemporary scenarios of uncertainty propelled by global technological and environmental threats.

Along with the theoretical and practical inadequacy of modern paradigms it emerged a process of self-confrontation of the modern age with itself, that is, an effort of revision and critical questioning of its foundations. Modernity became reflexive (Beck, 1994: 2).

Thus, the nature of contemporary threats divided modernity in two substantial and somewhat different moments:

- A first stage marked by the ascension of science and technology in which they

subject nature to their dominion through the indiscriminately exploitation of natural resources, and attached to an idea of infinite technologic and economic progress. An industrial kind of society corresponds to this stage and Beck calls it first modernity;

- A second stage in which scientific and technological development began to produce an astonishing amount of environmental and technological threats of global scope and of difficult assessment in terms of their impacts. This is the second or reflexive modernity and the transition to risk society (Beck, 1992: 9).

It can be argued, perhaps, that the concept of risk does not belong exclusively to the modern era. Ever since, in one way or another, the human condition was exposed to risk situations. However, on one hand, what distinguishes the nature of contemporary threats from previously historical stages is their anthropogenic inception, that is, the production of environmental and technological risks is motivated by human intervention through science and technology, and, on the other hand, their potential of global reach (Beck, 1992: 21).

While in historical periods previous to modernity the occurrence of catastrophes was envisaged and understood as a fatality imposed by fate and its inception was attributed to the divine will, since modern age the techno-scientific developments and conquests are accountable for the greatest share of production of situations of risk.

With the dawn of the Industrial Revolution and with the first threats of environmental degradation arising due to the first waves of industrialization and urbanization in western societies there is a change in the inception and perception of risk situations. The human activity supported by the exploitation of natural resources gradually replaces the natural elements as the primary cause of risk production and the divine will as its prime explanation. The transition from industrial society to risk society increases the level of human participation in risk proliferation, for example, with the development of chemical weapons and the progresses experienced in disciplines such as biotechnology or genetic engineering.

In a social framework in which the total extent of real risk impacts is somehow unpredictable, the theory of risk society brings a new argument in terms of risk definition: the incapacity of institutions responsible for managing risks, that is, the scientific and the political institutions, to develop adequate solutions in order to deal with potential threats of global scope (Mythen, 2004: 57).

Just like the individual human action is subjected to the kingdom of uncertainty, in the social context the political and scientific institutions operate often in a framework of ignorance and confront themselves with the inadequacy of their methods, tools and strategies to deal with the techno-scientific risks (Beck, 1992: 59).

Beck denominates the science and politics inaptitude to deal properly with risk situations as organized irresponsibility, being both realms exposed to its methodological failure and to the questioning of the feasibility of their models. This leads to the acknowledgement of their limits and to the questioning of their authority. Let's see more in detail how risk forced a readjustment of science and politics in contemporary

societies.

2 | UNVEILING THE TECHNO-SCIENTIFIC PARADIGM: RISK AND THE SCIENTIFIC REALM

With the dawn of the modern age it emerges a new conception of science that will remain in the following centuries and which still prevails to a certain extent as one of the greatest contemporary paradigms, being the great instigator of the current environmental crisis.

Established in the 17th century, and proclaiming a plan of total transformation of the natural world through the alliance between science and technology, this new scientific model and rationality supported by the idea of an infinite progress aimed at the liberation of the human existence from the natural realm by improving substantially its material conditions.

In order to do so it promoted an indiscriminate exploration of nature and the natural resources which were gradually exhausted with the successive industrial revolutions motivated by the technological advancements of 18th, 19th and 20th centuries.

In the context of the classical framework of modernity, the triumph and expansion of the techno-scientific rationality are almost entirely undisputable (Beck, 1992: 155). Any risk created by techno-science was quickly assessed and mitigated in a framework of consensus between the political and social stakeholders involved. These showed no opposition to the progress of scientific activities, giving science their full support. In this stage of classical modernity, the scientific agents were still capable of presenting adequate solutions to cover the potential dangerous consequences of their work.

However since the second half of 20th century, the growing awareness that man through the techno-scientific activities is interfering irreversibly with the balance of the planet's ecosystems, and the rise of a global environmental crisis and a culture of risk that came with it, changed radically the image of science both inside and outside the scientific mainstream.

The nature of the contemporary technological and environmental threats, and the inoperancy of the scientific agents in dealing with them, tore down science's pretension to an absolute monopoly of knowledge, confronting it with a process of reflexivity of its own paradigms and praxis. No longer does science possess the predominance it held in the first half of the 20th century.

On one hand, the disempowerment of the scientific authority lies in its own working model based on disciplinary specialization, tightening science in a vast and complex labyrinth of disciplines that work with no communication between them.

On the other hand, and according to Beck, another motive that led to the demonopolization of the scientific authority has to do with its loss of credibility motivated by the critique exercised by the environmental movement since the 1960's on the techno-science itself

and on its notion of perpetual progress. A third reason is what we could call the techno-science's Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde syndrome: contemporarily science is simultaneously instigator of technological and environmental risks and their main tool of assessment and resolution (Beck, 1992: 156).

Under such circumstances, the techno-scientific rationality is forced to recognize its own epistemological limits because the answers provided by science for the resolution of the contemporary anthropogenic threats possess only a provisional character and are not able to determinate with certitude the scope of risk impacts.

The acknowledgement of science's epistemological bankruptcy forces it to work in a climate of shared competencies with other agents involved in the process of definition and management of risks. In a contemporary culture of global uncertainty and vulnerability, scientific laboratories and research units have lost the monopoly of influence they had and no longer dictate the priorities in research (Beck, 1992: 172).

Although from the techno-scientific point a view the loss of the epistemological monopoly may seem a defeat of its own paradigms, Beck claims it is foremost a victory of science because this way it can confront with itself by acting reflexively, and to proceed to an evaluation of its conditions of possibility casting the seeds of an alternative model of science (Beck, 1992: 180) free of the creed in the idea of infinite progress and its positivist heritage of nature's vision as mere extraction of resources.

3 | THE RISE AND FALL OF THE MODERN POLITICAL RATIONALITY: RISK AND THE POLITICAL REALM

Just like the scientific realm, the political institutions are confronted with their own inoperancy in dealing with the contemporary risk scenarios. In face of the inability of the political agents in coping with the dynamics of transnational environmental and technological threats, the political activity according to Beck needs to be reinvented.

In the context of the classical modernity, the political realm acted always successfully in solving the issues related to risk situations, but the transition to the reflexive modernity marks an absolute break with that historical moment and, not differently from the changes it induced in the techno-scientific reality, it confronts the political institutions with their own vulnerability and impotency in order to deal with anthropogenic threats. The risk's unexpected and uncontrollable deterritorialized consequences come as political explosive and lead to the questioning of the political rationality and its paradigms as well.

However, the contestation of the political exercise does not arise only from the nature of risk situations. Along with there is also an unbinding process of the individual from the dominant values of the first modernity that will be determinant to the discredit of contemporary political institutions and their political rationality.

The disbelief in the capacity of the political institutions to address properly the

most challenging issues of our time confronts the individual with sudden changes in his existential project and requires from him an adaptation to increasing transitory realities. In the land of uncertainty the individual is almost abandoned to himself in the search of new certainties to live his life (Beck, 1994: 7).

Through the detachment of the traditional values of first modernity like religion or the family – this is what Beck proclaims to be the ascension of the individualization and means both the disintegration of the certainties known in old industrial society and the existence of new global interdependencies (Beck, 1994: 14) - the role played by the individual in the political sphere is subjected to several drastic changes. In a world made vulnerable in face of the boundless scope of risk impacts, and because of the global answer needed to address them, individualization and globalization according to Beck are two interrelated concepts (Beck, 1994: 14).

Unlike the panorama of industrial society, in which the individual played a more passive role in his relationship with the political institutions, in the context of the risk society theory the autonomy of the individual, supported by an increasing awareness of risk perception and the responsibility held by the scientific and political agents in their perpetration, places severe constraints to the political action of the institutions.

The interdependence contained in the process of individualization becomes institutional given the growing dependency of political institutions on individual agents out of the political sphere in field of risk management, envisaged as a clear sign of the current politics inoperancy.

The nature of the contemporary anthropogenic threats fosters the appearance of new opportunities of activity in order to deal with them adequately because the very nature of risks requires new competencies and, therefore, they impose an enlargement of the decision-making processes to disciplines and fields of knowledge that were previously entire absent of this process. These new opportunities of activity are taken by individuals outside of the political realm and lead to a change in the dynamics of the decision-making processes. Beck defines this new dynamic as sub politics being this

“(…) a non-institutional renaissance of the political.” (Beck, 1994: 17).

The sub politics movement is constituted mainly by groups of scientific experts in risk management, environmental/ecological or human rights NGO's and civil society movements that unite their forces in protest against the effects of the certain political decisions.

We find this more clearly stated in environmental issues with the emergence of new sociopolitical actors in the design of new public policies. Through the pressure made by environmental NGO's (Beck, 1994: 18), members of the scientific community in discordance with it expressing their opinions against the dominant position in a determined issue or through the contestation exercised by local participative citizenship movements, the political institutions face several constraints in terms of their activity and sometimes have to review or simply to give away of their decisions (Beck, 1992:

182).

Being a sort of counterpower, the sphere of sub politics of western contemporary societies is not all absolutely a defeat but a victory of the political system. In face of the global anthropogenic threats, the collective action open to new institutional actors and the climate of shared competencies in decision-making processes represent not only a democratization of the political democratic structures but the possibility of the creation of new paths that will lead to a profound revision of our political culture.

As Beck asserts in *Risk Society*:

“In the fields of politics (and sub politics) there is neither a single nor a ‘best’ solution, but always several solutions. As a consequence, political decision-making processes, no matter on what level they occur, can no longer be understood as the enforcement or implementation of a model determined in advance by some wiser man or leader (...).” (Beck, 1992: 191).

However, this new political culture will not be achievable unless is supported by a cosmopolitan outlook in consonance with the global scope of anthropogenic threats. More than any other issue, the environmental crisis turns a Risk Society into a World Risk Society (Beck, 1999: 19) in search for a new kind of contemporary cosmopolitanism or forms of cosmopolitanization to face the challenges of our time.

4 | A WORLD GOING GLOBAL: THE COSMOPOLITAN PERSPECTIVE OF WORLD RISK SOCIETY

The most striking conclusion of the World Risk Society theory is undoubtedly this: our contemporary world is living under the effects of several threats that possess a global range and, in contradiction to this, we are still trying to thrive in the contours of a modern age incapable of reacting to them, a modernity that requires a new structural frame in face of the absence of territorial boundaries induced by globalization in the last decades.

According to Beck, the exit of this labyrinth can only be achieved through a political solution that involves the whole reform of the political system. This reform must lead to the creation of new models and institutions (Beck, 2002: 17) which can operate beyond of states national territory, that is, institutions that possess a transnational scope of action in consonance with the nature of risks, even them not confinable to the frontiers of a single nation- state.

But this transnational character is also the trend of our world. Rushed by the vertiginous speed of globalization our reality is becoming increasingly cosmopolitan, pushing the vital horizon of the individual beyond its local and national frontiers (Beck, 2008: 4). Thus, in world risk society, the human condition can only be understood and focused on under a global perspective (Beck, 2002: 17).

The cosmopolitan perspective is latently implied in the nature of the contemporary threats. Its impacts in a global scale compromise the whole of humankind and not

just a part of it. Therefore, risk's global dimension force both individuals and political institutions, whatever they want or not, to adopt a new conceptual framework that goes entirely beyond the usual horizons of the nation- state in which occurred the majority of political issues.

The transition from a first modernity of national scope to the world risk society meant a conceptual rupture and a turning point to some of the classical paradigms we inherited from the Peace of Westphalia (1648), among them the complete soundness of the nation-state and of national sovereignty conceptually defined.

However, we have to be clear about the contemporary cosmopolitan perspective. The end of the Westphalian moment of our societies comes not as logical political sequence of an economic globalized world, but it is mainly driven by the very circumstances introduced by risk's proliferation. As an essential narrative that allows us to describe the contemporary world, risk requires a widening of our existential horizons as individuals (Beck, 2006: 330) and at the institutional level forces the nation-state to reevaluate the idea of sovereignty in face of the global scale of the main of our challenges.

The World Risk Society theory introduces new data in the functioning of contemporary political institutions:

1) The need of interdependence among states (Beck, 2008: 4). A single state acting alone will not be able to address all by itself the global nature of environmental and technological threats;

2) The progressive weakness of national and territorial dimension of the nation-state and the loss of part of its sovereignty in key areas such as economy to transnational political institutions.

The foundation of transnational institutions is based primly on the need of forced cooperation, and to not put their own interests in danger states must necessarily transnationalize themselves, that is, to give away of part of their sovereignty to transnational political institutions in order to deal efficiently with threats common to all countries.

5 | METHODOLOGICAL COSMOPOLITANISM: A NEW POLITICAL CULTURE FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

In order to address the nature of contemporary risks, the political action in a transnational context must be addressed in a cosmopolitan light. Not following the same footsteps of the 18th century Enlightenment cosmopolitanism thinkers, but regarding a new understanding of the concept.

In spite of reintroducing a concept of modern political philosophy authors such as Abbe St. Pierre or Immanuel Kant, Beck detaches himself from the intellectual territory the concept possessed in such thinkers. The cosmopolitanism envisaged by Beck is first and foremost a methodological and operative concept used by social sciences

(Beck and Grande, 2007: 12) and

“(...) a specific way of *dealing socially with cultural difference*” (Beck and Grande, 2007: 12).

More than a political conception, Beck’s notion of cosmopolitanism is the state’s institutional capacity to dialog and to act in a context of transnational or global political cooperation facing problems of the same scope, and in a context of action marked by the acknowledgement and acceptance of divergent positions (Beck and Grande, 2007: 13).

If in Kant’s political philosophy cosmopolitanism was the main axis of a transnational legal and political project aiming at a perpetual peaceful world, to Beck it represents the main ingredient of a new political culture sensitive to otherness and to others interests. It is precisely in this point that Beck breaks decisively with Enlightenment authors to whom cosmopolitanism was thought of as a universal and hegemonic project destined to impose western supremacy without regarding specific cultural identities and minorities.

The concept of cosmopolitanism, applied to the world risk society theory full of global civilizational challenges that may shape the future of the planet in a decisive way, must neither be monological nor one-dimensional (Beck, 2002: 17). And it must also get rid of an imperialistic and expansionist cultural identity based on the western intellectual supremacy common to our modern heritage.

In other words, the methodological and reflexive cosmopolitanization of both political institutions and of everyday life is not a viable concept if it still embraces some western prejudices such as dogmatism and universalism or as Beck states their modern transcendental elements.

By being simply a methodological lens destined to read accurately the paradigms of our contemporary societies, cosmopolitanism here does not possess any parallelism with the cosmopolitan projects of first modernity.

Instead of that, Beck’s methodological cosmopolitanism or cosmopolitanization, tries to be a realistic contribution to a society deeply confronted with challenges of planetary scope that demand transnational cooperation between political agents, but also the widening of possibilities for civil society to have a more decisive word and participative role in the more important issues at stake in our time.

One of the primary paths open by Beck’s arguments is this: the environmental threats of global reach such as climate change, as a clear evidence of what he denominates World Risk Society, bring the need of a full revision of the national and transnational democratic structures of our societies, ranging from the political institutions to civil society.

6 | THE SOLUTION FOR A WORLD AT RISK: CITIES AS COSMOPOLITAN AGENTS

But totally plunged in a political culture that Beck defines as methodological nationalism is there still a path for the implementation of a notion of methodological cosmopolitanism compatible with the global challenges of the Second Modernity?

Ulrich Beck left us a partial answer to this question in a posthumous work, *The Metamorphosis of the World*, published in 2016, a year after his sudden and unexpected death on the 1st of January 2015.

In the first essay of this book, “Why Metamorphosis of World, Why Not Transformation?”, he claims that Second Modernity is witnessing an historical metamorphosis that not only challenges our capacity of perception of its processes (Beck, 2016: 3), but is also miles away from the concepts of change or revolution because this metamorphosis is happening due to unintended consequences of the risks generated by Modernity’s own success (Beck, 2016: 5).

According to Beck, the concept of metamorphosis is descriptive, not normative, and

“(…) it is not about the negative side effects of goods but about the positive side effects of bads. They produce normative horizons of common goods and propel us beyond the national frame towards a cosmopolitan outlook.” (Beck, 2016: 4).

However the key essay that gives us a substantial insight of his intellectual shift concerning the concept of cosmopolitanism is “Cosmopolitan Communities of Risk: From United Nations to United Cities”, written with Danish sociologist Anders Blok.

Considering climate change as the greatest agent of sociopolitical metamorphosis of Second Modernity (Beck, 2016: 4), Beck displaces his methodological cosmopolitanism thesis from the space of nation-state to the political orbit of the city.

In face of Second Modernity’s global challenges nation-states remain mostly attached to a framework of national political culture and to an anachronistic concept of sovereignty. Cities, on the contrary, as “imagined cosmopolitan risk communities” (Beck and Blok, 2016: 165) and due to their long historical sociopolitical autonomy, can pioneer a new, still slow and ambivalent, way of political action in the contours of World Risk Society.

As Beck claims,

“Climate risk teaches us that the nation is not the center of the world.” (Beck, 2016: 6).

So, therefore, it is in transnational political organizations of cities destined to forge solutions to the global environmental crisis like C40 or United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) that Beck sees a possible future and the best of hope for the development of methodological cosmopolitanism in the 21st Century.

Acting as privileged stakeholders in the climate political arena, cities through transnational political organizations are acquiring a new power and are designing new ways of political action in both cooperation and competition with the nation-state, but

without the constraints of its political culture.

According to Beck,

“The United World Cities, not the United Nations, could become the cosmopolitan agency of the future because, by comparison with nation-states, alliances of world cities are acquiring a new sovereignty, power and pioneering role in world politics, which is confronted, on the one hand, with global risks and, on the other, with the fact that nation-states are more or less capitulating in the face of these challenges.” (Beck and Blok, 2016: 167).

With their different world’s visions mainly due to the rich diversity of their sociopolitical actors, and also as the concrete territory where most of climate change effects will be felt, cities can be envisaged as kind of laboratory to the experimentation of cosmopolitanism in Second Modernity (Beck and Blok, 2016: 168).

By exploring and developing new paths destined to enrich conceptually a possible cosmopolitan political culture in the 21st century, cities as transnational political agents through environmental cooperation may be able to fulfill one of Risk Society’s requirements, that is, a revaluation and a reform of the democratic principles of our political system.

In a Second Modernity full of global problems of unprecedented scale in human history, and as the threat of nationalist and unilateralist political discourses and practices seem to be arising in the last years, Beck places a strong bet on the role that cities might play in the environmental political arena:

“The cities – in history the social ground for civic liberation movements – might be in today’s cosmopolitized world of global threats once again become democracy’s best hope.” (Beck and Blok, 2016: 183).

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