

The Logic of Scale

Introduction

It is fair to say that it is the wish of every good person to live a good life. But whether he will be able to live a good life depends on two different factors. First, there is the economic aspect, which represents the availability of sufficient goods and services and the ability of the individual to acquire them. The other aspect, which I call the moral aspect, is that which is not represented by the first one: all the values we strive for to have in life such as peace and friendship and that cannot be fulfilled by economic activity alone. In order to have a high quality of life both factors must be adequately fulfilled.

It is also fair to assume that it is the task of any good society to provide the necessary means to each of its members such that he or she can achieve that good life. Since it is society who provides and defines both the economic and moral factor for each individual we should be primarily concerned with the society's capacity to provide them. Whether such a society is capable of providing them depends on its organization, level of technology and its scale. With its organization I refer to its non-material technology, its ways of doing things irrespective of its material means. The society's level of technology is a second factor which defines its overall capabilities: the more 'appropriate' its technology the easier and more efficiently it can fulfill its duties. Logically, technology defines the possible forms of organization and vice versa. The third factor – scale – is by far the most underrated one and that is why I will elaborate on it in this article. I would like to make it clear that the scale is the most defining of the three factors. Technologists believe that the success of a society is determined by its technology and political reformists believe that an alternative social organization will fix our problems. Of course, organization and technology are crucial for a promising civilization but as long as it denies the role of scale in its technology and organization it will never succeed in its most important task: to provide an ideal and sustainable environment for all humans and other sentient lifeforms that share the same home.