Leopold Kohr

To be small or not to be at all. That is the question. The large have no future!

The future is not great - it will be small

slow is not only beautiful, but viable

Awareness of size and scale are key factors

Leopold Kohr

small-scale operations, no matter how numerous, are always less likely

"[Bigness] is the one and only problem permeating all creation. Whenever something is wrong, something is too big."

growth of competition finally ends competition

Leopold Kohr

Question: "By warning about all the horrible crises and breakdowns, how do you keep your own humor?"

Leopold Kohr: "Because I know I will not be alive when the real global crash happens". (Leopold Kohr died in 1994 in the age of 84)

Leopold Kohr

"If I would listen to all the talks around me, my brain would become floated and there wouldn't be any space for my own thoughts and creativity." (Kohr needed for decades a hearing device and switched it off during boring lectures and talks.)

Leopold Kohr

Leopold Kohr commented Friedrich Schiller's "Ode an die Freude" including the sentence "seid umschlungen Millionen" ("embrazing millions of people"):
"If a charming woman embrazes me, I will enjoy it, also with two or three more, from five on conflicts are increasing. But imagine one million - they would smash me!"

Leopold Kohr

Efficient censorship

One of the most efficient mechanisms of censorship is the overflow and domination through information. (Adapted from an unknown Swiss author)

Comments by Matthias Reichl

Too big to fail - banks, financial markets, states...

Too small to be supported/ subsidized/ financed... - independent alternative projects with political goals

Nuclear and genetical nanotechnology are in their size super-small but in their physical influence and consequences giantic, global and in their destructivity never ending. Even only a few irresponsible acting people can destroy a whole system.

Tyrannic heads of small units - families, enterprises, local political, religious, cultural... communities - can be also damaging the whole social living system - but in a smaller size.

Let's embraze - not oppress

Make love - not (political) oppression

Make nonviolent revolution - not peace negotiations and -treaties

My impression of the "kisses" relates also to a dialog with my old friend Leopold Kohr:

Moskito-strategy by Manfred Max-Neef : a cloud of moskitos irritating and attacking a rhino (or other huge offenders) until it surrenders.

LEOPOLD KOHR

Extracts from his books

[1941] Leopold Kohr, **Disunion Now** : A Plea for a Society Based upon Small Autonomous Units, Telos, n. 91, Spring 1992

- *"We have been educated in the worship of the bulk, of the large, of the universal, of the colossal, and have come away from the minuscule, the completeness and universality on the smallest scale - the individual, which is the protoplasm of all social life. We have learned to praise the unification of France, Britain, Italy and Germany in the belief that they would give birth to a unified humanity. But they created only Great Powers."* (p. 96)

Extracts from:

[1957] Leopold Kohr, **The Breakdown of Nations,** Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1986

- *"The real conflict of today is between Man and Mass, the Individual and Society, the Citizen and the State, the Big and Small Community, between David and Goliath."* (Preface, p. xviii)

- *"Mass executions and related monstrosities were perpetrated in Germany under the nazis, in India under the British, in France under the Catholics, in Russia under some of the most savage, and in Italy under some of the most enlightened, princes. There could not have been a vaster difference of conditions." "This common denominator ... seems to be the simple ability, the power, to commit monstrosities. As a result, we arrive at what we might call a power theory of social misery." "... because the vital element is not so much power but the sizeof power which ... depends in turn on the size of the social group by which it is generated, we might call the theory also the size theory of social misery."* (p. 26)

- *"... the only reliable method of coping with large-scale brutality and criminality [is] : the establishment of a system of social units of such small size that accumulations and condensations of collective power to the danger point can simply not occur. The answer therefore is not increase in police power, but reduction of social size - the dismemberment of those units of society that have become too big."* (pp. 34-35)

- *"It is not by accident that the politically and socially most advanced countries of the world today are states such as Switzerland (4 million inhabitants), Denmark (4 million), Sweden (7 million), Norway (3 million), Iceland (less than 160 thousand). Large powers, on the other hand, can get away with stupidity for prolonged periods."* (p. 69)

Extracts from:

[1976] Leopold Kohr, **The Over-developed Nations**, Christopher Davies, Swansea, Wales, 1976

- *"The size of society, as the size of everything, is determined by its function, and its function depends on whether we give it an individualistic or collectivist content. From an individualistic point of view, society must fulfil a fourfold purpose: ensure to its members companionship, prosperity, security, and culture. For these are the only four blessings man cannot obtain except by joinig society. We may therefore distinguish between four individualistic societies - the convivial, economic, political, and cultural society. Each may exist separately, and each has its own optimum size. To enjoy the summum bonum, however, all four are needed. As history has shown and logic suggests, a society numbering from 100,000 to 200,000 members seems sufficient to furnish it."   "Three factors - technological progress, education, organization - may, however, permit social growth beyond this figure to perhaps 15,000,000 without affecting optimum conditions. Beyond this point optimum size turns into critical size, with social difficulties now tending to increase faster than the human talent necessary to cope with them, so that further growth can be sustained only at the price of diminishing the services connected with the original four social functions."* (pp. 23-24)

- *"... once a society has become large enough to furnish the convivial, economic, political and cultural needs of man in satisfactory, though not necessarily gluttonous abundance ... further growth can no longer add to its basic purpose. We have reached the point of diminishing living standards."* (p. 30)

- *"The principal question of our time is not : how to continue growing in an ever expanding economy, but how to stop growing; and the answer must therefore lie not in union and integration but in splitting and duplication. This is the biological way of advance. It seems to suggest itself all the more as many units of social organization - in the economic field : the big corporations; in the political field : the big powers - have long started to outgrow the requirements of their purpose and their form."* (p. 171)

Leopold Kohr's
arguments for Great Britain (UK) and Austria to join the EC/ EU

Students of a British university asked him in the early 70ies during a debate about the accession of the UK to the EC (now EU) about his opinion and expected a „No". Kohr answered: „I am for the accession!" And explained: „Look at the EC-boat in troubled waters! If the UK with all it's problems and burdens will enter it, it could sink. That's my only reason to say 'Yes'!
(The UK joined the EC/ EU 1973 on Jan. 1st.)

During a discussion in Austria in the late 80ies he added to his story: „Yes, my expectations had been too optimistic. But since the accession of the UK, the EU-boat is in much bigger troubles than before. So, if Austrians will enter it with all their problems, maybe they can turn it over!" The listening Austrian politicians were not at all amused about.
(Kohr died 1994, one year before Austria joined the EU in 1995.)